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Adaptive and Maladaptive Motivational Responses In On-line Learners

Phillip Alexander Towndrow

Degree of Doctor of Education

University of Durham

School of Education

2001

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28 MAY 2002

Abstract

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The speed at which on-line technologies are being adopted in the learning of English as a second or foreign language creates an urgent need to establish links between theoretical positions and professional practice in the digital realm. As far as issues in motivation studies are concerned, much of what is known about the way learners of English behave is classroom and print-based and may not illuminate operational matters on-line to their fullest extent.

This thesis describes the trial of English academic reading skills materials designed for Chinese scholars attending a tertiary-level institution overseas and attempts to identify and understand the variables that affected their performance on-line. The data collected from both quantitative and qualitative sources were considered within a framework that identifies distinct patterns of behaviour, classified either as adaptive or maladaptive, insofar as they affect the ways learners use their talents in the classroom.

Analysis of the data showed that some participants seemed to obstruct their own learning on-line through their negative affective responses to the technology, materials and pedagogy used on the course. Others were able to achieve to a certain extent personally challenging and valued achievement goals. The data also highlighted challenges facing language tutors on-line in relationship building, fostering reflective practice and promoting independence, and self-direction. Such areas of research are considered to be of particular value to practitioners who work in on-line contexts and have difficulty in identifying and managing the dynamics of the environment they are involved in.

Several implications are drawn from this study concerning the exploitation of on-line learning environments with Chinese students. Chief among these concern the claim that cultural factors have a powerful influence on the manner in which these students study and react on-line. In particular, issues of 'face-management' and the operation of the 'self-worth motive' are highlighted and commented upon.

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Declaration

The author hereby declares that none of the material presented in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Background to the Research Study

This thesis investigates adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses in on-line learners and as such, requires an inter-disciplinary approach. The research study draws on two bodies of extensive literature that share a concern with educational theory and practice. In the first place, it deals with the long-standing endeavour to understand the internal processes that give human behaviour its energy and direction. Secondly, the thesis considers the developing field of on-line education particularly as it relates to the design, production and use of materials in the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language. Overall, the aim is to demonstrate that the areas of motivation and on-line learning studies have the potential to inform one another for the benefit of theorists, researchers and educational practitioners working in both disciplines.

1.1 The Researcher's Interest in the Topic

The researcher's interest in the topic arises from a mixed background of teaching English as a second or foreign language to students in various countries and working experience as a specialist in the field of computer-assisted language learning. As part of his duties, the researcher has designed on-line courses and tutored on-line students studying English language test-taking skills as a pre-sessional requirement for entry into a tertiary-level educational institution. On more than one occasion, the researcher has noticed that some students seem to take more of an active interest in his on-line materials than others and this has led him to question why this is so. In the interests of professional development and continual improvement, the

researcher is of the opinion that his on-line teaching would improve if he were more aware of the variables impacting on learning behaviour on-line.

1.2 The Significance of the Issues to be Considered

The issues under consideration in this thesis impact directly on educational policy-making and its implementation in a world where information is growing at a tremendous rate (Duffy *et al.* 1993). As Duffy and his associates note, increasing levels of information raise questions concerning what children need to know and how they can be helped in becoming effective lifelong learners. In turn, these matters have led educators to note that issues of personal control and self-reliance are central to the process of allowing individuals to know how to be respectful towards themselves and others (Roehler & Cantlon 1997).

Research, it is maintained, has a key role to play in raising levels of attainment in contemporary educational policy-making by establishing links between theoretical positions and professional practice. Towards this end, this thesis proposes that a useful link of this kind can be provided by attempting to understand on-line learning behaviour given the exponential growth in the: (1) availability of computers over the past twenty-five years and (2) use of the Internet.¹

However, in the midst of the current enthusiasm for digital learning environments there is a body of opinion that seriously questions the wisdom of giving computer-based technologies high status profiles in educational practice. For example, in a cutting criticism, Stoll (2000) claims that the computers placed in North American classrooms are distractions from the learning of concepts at hand. Instead of empowering learners with tools for constructing meaning, Stoll argues that computer technology (especially the Internet) actually enfeebles the developing mind.

Despite Stoll's proclivity, at times, towards overgeneralisation, localised research findings do support the moderate view that not all on-line learning experiences are positive for the learner (Kannan & Macknish 2000). Consequently, there are grounds for suggesting that given the uncertainties surrounding an emerging field, it will take time before the strengths of the underlying technologies are fully understood by practitioners. Thus, if it is accepted that on-line learning is becoming a new way of teaching and learning, then the need for appropriately trained teachers and learners is of paramount importance in order for these new tools to be used most effectively (cf. Salmon 2000). This research study, then, aims to assist in this important developmental work by contributing to the debate on what might be considered best practice in on-line material design and production given the cultural backgrounds, needs and interests of the participants involved. This endeavour, it is hoped, will provide information that is relevant at both the theoretical and practical levels in addressing the questions of what students need to know on-line and how they can be helped to be adaptive lifelong learners in this medium.

1.3 Outline and Methodological Approach

The research study set itself a limited number of research questions relating to the motivational responses of on-line learners. The research questions were centred on the specific area of the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language and were framed to: (1) highlight the theories that underpin on-line teaching, learning and materials design and (2) explore ways in which adaptive learning patterns can be fostered on-line.

In order to address the research questions, the project passed through a number of stages. To begin with, an on-line language learning environment was established and used to trial a set of specially written materials with a group of learners. These materials and the learning environment itself were then evaluated in motivational terms using a range of quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures administered before, during and after

the course of study. This methodology is justified on the grounds that virtual classrooms are complex environments and that research conducted under clinical conditions may not always be best suited to an explanation of complex behaviour that is greatly influenced by a variety of contextual factors.

Through its various methods, one of the aims of the study was to produce a detailed description of an on-line learning environment that was faithful from the participants' perspective. One way this was achieved was by writing short biographies of learners displaying distinct patterns of motivational responses during the course.

1.3.1 Outline of the Thesis

Following this introduction, chapter 2 of the thesis overviews the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the research questions as they relate to the field of motivation and asks if concepts used in the motivation literature are of use in the endeavour to explain learners' successes and account for their failures. Chapter 3 forms the second part of the literature review and deals with the theoretical and conceptual issues surrounding the study of on-line learning. The issues discussed illustrate the emerging nature of the discipline by defining the meaning of the term 'on-line learning', examining the nature of on-line pedagogy and by assessing the claimed benefits and shortcomings of on-line teaching and learning environments. The chapter concludes with a statement and justification of the research questions guiding the study.

Chapter 4 describes and provides support for the methodologies used to address the research questions. The areas dealt with concern the design and establishment of an on-line course of study for English as a second or foreign language learners, a specification of the target profile and selection of the study participants and a description of the procedures and instruments used to evaluate the study in motivational terms.

In chapters 5 and 6, findings are presented from the perspectives of the participants and the researcher (as tutor) respectively. In both cases, interpretations of events are offered that highlight salient organisational patterns found through the analysis of the multiple data sources.

Finally, chapter 7 discusses the results of the research and concludes with a restatement of the guiding issues in light of what has been learned in the study. The chapter outlines the achievements of the study and closes with an identification of avenues for potential future work in the area of on-line motivational studies.

Chapter 2

The Study of Motivation

2.0 Introduction

The literature review for this research study is divided into two parts. The scope of the present chapter is to give an overview of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the research questions as they relate to the field of motivation. It will be shown that the study of motivation affects the educational and social outcomes of learning at all levels. Apart from the fact that there is a need to question the attitudes and values that are learned, there is also a need to explain learners' successes and account for their failures (Ames & Ames 1984). It is considered appropriate, therefore, to ask if concepts used in the literature on motivation are of use in this endeavour.

2.1 Understanding the Concepts of Motivational Psychology

One way of understanding the concepts pertaining to the study of motivational psychology is as attempts to explain, 'why human and subhuman organisms think and behave as they do' (Weiner 1992a, p. 1). This approach, it can be argued, views motivation as the study of the internal processes that give behaviour its energy and direction (Reeve 1996) and has produced a range of explanations dependent upon differing theoretical perspectives. For the purposes of this review, five stages in the development of motivational studies, namely, drive theory, achievement motivation, attribution theory, goal theory and the recognition of adaptive and maladaptive motivational patterns are outlined below in order to show the progression of thinking in the literature. A sub-section is also included that mentions a number of key motivational issues in second and foreign language learning.

2.1.1 Drive Theory

The concept of 'drive' has its origins in the early twentieth century and is marked by laboratory experimentation designed to observe the effects of activating stimuli on largely non-human organisms. Such procedures led theorists to claim, for example, '... when a condition arises for which action on the part of the organism is a prerequisite to [the] optimum probability of survival of either the individual or the species, a state of need is said to exist' (Hull 1943, p. 57). According to Hull, needs (either actual or potential) precede and accompany actions and can be regarded as motivating or driving them. Needs have, therefore, a motivational aspect and produce the so-called 'animal' drives of which hunger and thirst are prime examples.

By way of explaining the principles of behaviour, Hull (1943, p. 239) postulated, for example, that drives could be used as a factor in determining the magnitude of an organism's 'reaction potential' to a given stimulus when multiplied with another factor identified as 'strength of habit' or the extent to which an organism has been conditioned (through multiple reinforcements) to react to a stimulus in a certain way. Despite later refinements to Hull's motivational concepts (Hull 1951; Weiner 1992a), the generalisation of views such as these to human contexts conjures up a deterministic notion of man as a mechanism. Nonetheless, even though it has been noted that a major limitation of mechanistic explanations of human behaviour is that they fail to illuminate: (1) how people adapt to particular situations (Galloway *et al.* 1998) and (2) human cognition (say in decision-making), drive theorists have still been credited for making an important contribution to the understanding of motivated behaviour (Weiner 1992a).

2.1.2 Achievement Motivation

Following what can be identified as a decline in the popularity of mechanistic explanations, Atkinson's (1964) theory of achievement motivation attempted to quantify the determinants of human behaviour by considering how the

consequences of actions could lead to either favourable or unfavourable evaluations based on expectations of success or failure respectively. Accordingly, two situational factors made possible by an individual's past experiences were considered of importance when individuals assessed tasks before them; namely: (1) the expectation that performance could lead to the desired goal and (2) the attractiveness of success in that task. A major assumption of achievement motivation was that individuals had both a motive to achieve success and a motive to avoid failure and that these were inevitably aroused at the time of performance. As is to be expected, the stronger of the two motives was considered the dominant force in determining whether an individual approached (was excited by) or avoided (was inhibited to approach) a task or a set of actions.

A notable shortcoming of Atkinson's theory of achievement motivation is that it is confined to the consideration of achievement-related behaviour even though it does focus specifically on the human realm. What seems to remain unclear is whether achievement motivation theory can be generalised as a model to explain other forms of human action (Weiner 1992a). A second area left unexplored by the theory concerns how humans understand their place within the environment in which they interact.

2.1.3 Attribution Theory

One way in which individuals might be able to better understand their achievements is to seek knowledge of the causes of events. Attribution theory (Weiner 1992b) analyses the ways in which people make decisions about the causes of events and shows how these 'explanations' can influence future behaviour. These considerations are especially important in an educational context because 'knowing', for example, why one has failed at a task might increase later chances of success in the same or another task. Weiner (1992b, pp. 20-23) outlines three dimensions of causality that are relevant to the explanation of successes and failures in individuals: (1) locus of control, that is, whether causes can be located within or outside of the individual; (2) constancy, that is split between 'temporal stability' (for example, 'ability'

which is stable and 'luck' which is temporary) and 'cross-situational generality' (for example, general intelligence which is 'global' versus subject-specific aptitude) and finally (3) Responsibility, that is divided into 'controllability' (for example, whether an actor would have done otherwise, say through the dint of effort) and 'intentionality' where low levels of effort signal irresponsibility.

These points can be used to support the view that causal dimensions play an essential role in affective life. Importantly, they impact on issues surrounding levels of personal control and the extent to which an individual holds beliefs about the causal impact of his or her actions in bringing about desirable actions and preventing undesirable ones (Reeve 1996).

One of the early research studies to focus on the importance of environmental factors in a school-based context is the work of deCharms (1976), which introduced the concepts of 'origins' and 'pawns.' DeCharms shows that individuals can fall along a dimension from origin to pawn in terms of their motivational states. Like chessmen, pawns are considered to be people who are pushed around by others. In contrast, origins are thought to pursue their personal goals and originate their own behaviour. Although deCharms is careful to note that the origin-pawn concept is not a motive, it does have motivational effects on individuals. For example, origins are characterised by their optimism, confidence and willingness to accept challenges, whereas pawns are distinguished by their defensiveness and powerlessness.

An interesting aspect of deCharms' research is presented in the finding that people are not always origins or pawns. Although it would seem better to be an origin, situations (depending upon the relative amount of freedom they afford) may induce more origin or pawn feelings in individuals. This point poses a challenge for attribution theorists to account for change in attributions (Pintrich *et al.* 1993).

2.1.4 Goal Theory

One avenue to explore in understanding how attributions may change is through a consideration of the way in which people go about achieving the goals that they consider to be of value (Nicholls 1989). On the basis that values are acquired through experience and thought, goals can be viewed as motivators of action that are open to high levels of variability based on belief and perception. For example, in learning situations, Dweck (1986) maintains that children's theories of intelligence appear to orient them towards different goals depending on whether they perceive intelligence to be either a fixed or malleable quality. According to Dweck, the achievement-actions of children correspond to one of two classes of goals involving competence, namely, 'performance' or 'learning.' With performance-oriented children, there is a focus on current levels of ability that must remain high for appropriately challenging tasks to be pursued otherwise there is a tendency to avoid challenging tasks. Conversely, learning-oriented children adopt goals that allow them to increase their competence and master new things. From this position, it is possible to view motivation as a question of how important it is for an individual to succeed or fail and this perceptual information is considered useful in attempting to explain complex achievement patterns.

2.1.5 Adaptive and Maladaptive Motivational Patterns

Most recently, the motivation literature has recognised, in the fullest sense, that an individual's goals, intentions, purposes, expectations and needs operate in social domains (Pintrich *et al.* 1993). As far as pedagogy is concerned, this acknowledgement opens the way for teachers to play a critical part in the progress children (and perhaps, all learners) can make (Galloway *et al.* 1998). In addition, an individual's associates within and beyond his immediate learning context are also factors to be considered in explaining why humans think and behave as they do.

The development of goal theory and the notion that individuals can set goals for themselves (Reeve 1996) also acknowledges that individuals make choices about how they will behave. As a consequence, the discussion of motivational patterns arises from the fact that these choices can evolve into distinct patterns of behaviour. Two types of motivational patterns have been identified at the superordinate level, 'adaptive' and 'maladaptive':

Adaptive motivational patterns are those that promote the establishment, maintenance, and attainment of personally challenging and personally valued achievement goals. Maladaptive patterns, then, are associated with a failure to establish reasonable, valued goals, to maintain effective striving toward those goals, or, ultimately, to attain valued goals that are potentially within one's reach. (Dweck 1986, p. 1040)

This framework allows for a number of motivational responses to be interpreted within educational settings. For example, the previous description of deCharms' (1976) origin and pawn motivational states, is consistent with the view that origin feelings are adaptive in the sense that they are likely to promote effective learning whereas pawn-like states are likely to be a hindrance.

In addition, the work of Nicholls (1989) complements that of Dweck insofar as it relates to an individual's involvement in a situation given his or her expectations of success. Nicholls developed measurement scales for a wide range of school-age children that distinguish between three types of orientation, namely: (1) task, (2) ego and (3) work avoidance. With task orientation, pupils act adaptively as they are reported to feel most successful when they understand schoolwork and are made to want to find out more. Ego-oriented pupils are said to feel most successful if their work is better than that of others. To the extent that ego orientation promotes a narrow or instrumental focus on task, it could be interpreted as maladaptive in the long term. On the other hand, an ego-oriented focus of attention may be necessary for some goals and can be highly effective for some kinds of students. Thirdly, work avoidance oriented pupils are said to feel best when they manage to avoid doing work at all and this orientation, by implication, would not seem to be reasonable over an extended period of time.

Nicholls (1989, p. 102) is careful to explain that the motivational orientations he identifies are not simply different types of wants and goals. Importantly, they involve 'different world-views' that can be taken to represent varying perspectives on the collection and interpretation of events. Whilst useful, this final point belies a weakness in the consideration of motivational responses as orientations.

Simply put, it may be the case that motivational orientations fail to take full account of the extent to which context can influence motivational responses in particular instances. To illustrate this point, it will be shown in section 2.2.1 below how one of the complicating factors in identifying and describing motivational patterns is their susceptibility to change from one context to another. Under these circumstances, it can be argued that perhaps a more context-sensitive approach is needed that suggests a consistency of responses.

In response to the need to provide a term that signifies a consistent pattern of motivated behaviour in a given context, Leo and Galloway (1996a, p. 38) suggest that there are three motivational 'styles' that appear to be particularly helpful in explaining students' responses to difficult or challenging tasks. These are: (1) mastery orientation, (2) self-worth motivation and (3) learned helplessness.

2.1.5.1 Mastery Orientation

Mastery orientation is an optimistic response to difficult or challenging tasks. Simply put, mastery-oriented individuals perceive learning as valuable and worthwhile. They also persist in the face of failure and try to solve difficult problems through the use of effort (Leo & Galloway 1996a). As Reeve (1996, p. 99) explains, rather than regarding their failures as uncontrollable and therefore insurmountable, the mastery-oriented '...resist making low-ability attributions in the face of failure.' Over time, it can be argued, an adaptive motivational style emerges based on the growing awareness that success leads to further successes through effort and effective strategy use (Seifert 1995).

Whilst it can be shown that high persistence is a feature of the mastery-oriented, low persistence on the part of other individuals can lead to repeated and debilitating failure. From this point at least two motivational responses are possible: failure avoidance or failure acceptance.

2.1.5.2 Self-worth Motivation

A strategy for avoiding failure or the implications of failure, especially in high-status tasks, is that of self-worth motivation. According to Covington (1984, p. 78) the self-worth motive is concerned with the ways in which individuals act to promote a 'positive self-identity in order to gain the approval of others.' Covington (1984) also usefully notes that the self-worth motive (especially as it relates to failure-avoiding behaviours) arises from the scarcity of rewards that exist in competitive educational systems.

Self-worth motivation can also be viewed as a matter of protecting self-esteem in the sense that the self-worth motivated may believe they have the ability to deal with difficult tasks, but they fear what might happen if they fail (Galloway *et al.* 1996). Resultant behaviors in the classroom include, lack of participation or a preference for expending the minimum amount of effort. Another pair of responses includes ensuring success by choosing easy tasks or safeguarding against criticism by attempting exceptionally difficult tasks where there is little chance of being blamed for failure. A final characteristic is to blame failure on factors beyond the individual's control or responsibility (Covington 1984).

The previous points highlight an interesting feature of motivation studies. It would seem that individuals displaying the self-worth motive are 'highly motivated to avoid engaging in educational tasks' and thus it would be wrong to say that they were simply 'unmotivated' (Galloway *et al.* 1998, p. 4). However, addressing this maladaptive style is a separate issue that is fraught with difficulty. As Craske (1988, p. 153) noted in relation to the expenditure of effort, '... the harder we try to avoid low performance, the more

convincingly will failure establish incompetence.’ This realisation impacts on the ways in which self-worth motivated individuals can be dealt with in the classroom, as their difficulties do not stem from a lack of ability. For example, in classroom-wide experimental work, Craske (1988) found that self-worth motivated individuals did not respond well to attempts by researchers to change their perceptions of the causes of their failures. One explanation for this finding might be that the subjects were made to feel uncomfortable by their public exposure and this suggests that the problems faced by the self-worth motivated are socially oriented and relate more to the ways in which learning tasks are organised and assessed.

2.1.5.3 Learned Helplessness

The learned helpless pattern is maladaptive from an educationalist’s perspective as it is likely to prevent pupils from making the most of whatever talents they possess (Galloway *et al.* 1998). The learned-helpless are said to perceive failure as inevitable and attribute their lack of success to a lack of ability rather than effort (Dweck 1975). As a result, they tend to cease trying (Craske 1988) and avoid challenges whenever possible. This, in turn, leads to a deterioration of performance (Dweck & Bempechat 1983) and then to further or ‘accumulated failure’ (Covington 1984, p. 95) perhaps due to the fact that individuals come to learn that they are powerless to influence the environment with which they interact (Reeve 1996).

Learned helplessness is another complex behavioural pattern. Whilst it has been shown to predict deficits in achievement-oriented behaviours (Au 1995) there is a sense in which its adoption from the failing learner’s perspective could be interpreted as having its own benefits. For example, a helpless response could be perceived as serving a positive function in the resistance to change in early adolescence. Having said that, as a pessimistic response, helplessness ultimately inhibits long-term growth if it persists.

Although learned helplessness can be difficult to break once established, some researchers have claimed that its effects can be prevented, or reversed through a process known as 'attribution retraining' (Dweck 1975; Craske 1988). The matter of attribution retraining is considered in detail in section 2.2.1 below, but it is worth noting at this point that Reeve (1996) has proposed addressing helplessness in students by empowering them with the resilience to cope with the biases, uncontrollability and unresponsiveness of the world. Teachers it is argued can do this in their faltering students by fostering beliefs of self-efficacy that have the power to increase performance accomplishments.

2.1.6 Motivational Issues in Second and Foreign Language Learning

It is worth mentioning that the study of motivational issues has also been a long-standing area of interest in the literature relating to the acquisition of second or foreign languages. Although criticised, the extensive work of Gardner and Lambert (1972) has remained helpful in identifying the socio-psychological variables that can influence the performance of individual language learners. As these researchers explain:

The learner's ethnocentric tendencies and his attitudes toward the members of the other group are believed to determine how successful he will be, relatively, in learning the new language. His motivation to learn is thought to be determined by his attitudes toward the other group in particular and toward foreign people in general and by his orientation toward the learning task itself. The orientation is said to be *instrumental* in form if the purposes of language study reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement, such as getting ahead in one's occupation. In contrast, the orientation is *integrative* if the student wishes to learn more about the other cultural community because he is interested in it in an open-minded way, to the point of eventually being accepted as a member of that other group. (Gardner & Lambert 1972, p. 3)

Although these orientations do not exclude each other (Littlewood 1994, p. 57), there are those who have argued that Gardner and Lambert's concepts are in need of elaboration and / or refinement. For instance, Au (1988) mentions that some of the component propositions of the integrative motive

lack precision and are difficult to evaluate. For his part Gardner (1988, p. 104), has explained that '... the term integrative motive is used to refer to a complex of attitudes and motivation that tend to relate to each other' and that it is, therefore, not a unitary concept. This clarification undoubtedly heightens the hypothetical nature of the proposition and reduces the scope of its explanatory power.

Alternatively, researchers with a more education-centred focus have attempted to build on Gardner and Lambert's work by suggesting strategies for motivating learners in specific situations. Dörnyei (1994) is an interesting development in this direction.

2.2 Discussion of Motivational Patterns

There are a number of issues to arise from the preceding description of motivational patterns as far as they relate to educational practice. The following discussion deals with: (1) some of the ways in which knowledge of motivational patterns impacts on professional practice, (2) a critique of the concepts used in the motivational 'styles' literature and (3) perceived shortcomings in the research methodology relating to adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses.

2.2.1 Motivational Patterns and Professional Practice

One of the major goals of education has been identified as the promotion of mastery orientation in students in an effort to best develop the 'personal resources they need to meet the requirements they will face in their personal lives and in ... society at large' (Reeve 1996, p. 13). To this end, no doubt, attempts have been made in the motivation research to prevent maladaptive patterns of behaviour and develop mastery orientation. Consequently, the case has been made on a number of occasions for persuading individuals to try harder by modifying their maladaptive responses through training (Dweck 1975, 1986; Ames 1984; Craske 1988). For example, in Dweck's 'attribution retraining' experiments, helpless children were studied to determine whether

their perceptions of the relationship between their behaviour and the occurrence of failure would result in a change in their maladaptive responses to failure. Dweck found that these perceptions could be changed as did Craske (1988, pp. 159-60) who reported that after training, learned helpless children came to place less importance on a lack of ability as a cause of their failure.

If accepted, the preceding points have an important implication for classroom practice. On the basis that a distinction can be made between tasks and an individual's reaction to them, then the nature of a teacher's feedback and its effects on achievement are of relevance to the discussion of human motivation and learning. By way of illustration, Butler and Winne (1995) set out to show what is possible when students are in control of their own learning by contrasting the nature of common feedback practices with information that is designed to enhance their cognitive engagement with tasks. The most common type of feedback is identified as 'outcome feedback' that is defined as '... binary information describing whether or not results are correct ... or, if given at steps in the midst of a task, whether or not work is on a path that can lead to achievement' (Butler & Winne 1995, p. 250). On the other hand, elaborated or 'cognitive' feedback (Balzer *et al.* 1989) can provide students with information that links tasks and learning objectives through the application of learning tactics and strategies. Overall, the suggestion is that greater achievement levels can be attained through elaborated feedback practices.

Thus, it can be argued that providing feedback to students that is 'meaningful' and of use in developing competence in current learning tasks (Johnson & Johnson 1985, p. 260) requires teachers, in all likelihood, to exercise considerable professional judgement and skill (Galloway *et al.* 1998). It is also necessary to take into consideration that success in fostering adaptive learning strategies (Covington 1984), and in giving feedback, will depend very much on the nature of the tasks set and subject area involved and herein lies a considerable difficulty for teachers and learners alike.

For instance, if one accepts that classroom activities that are designed to be more open-ended are also more likely to facilitate cognitive activity (Pintrich *et al.* 1993), then the scope for ambiguity (say in an English language creative writing exercise where no single approach is likely to be correct) is widened. This situation, as reported by Galloway *et al.* (1996; 1998) may indeed work against the promotion of mastery orientation as uncertain feedback may leave individuals with the impression that their responses are unacceptable or that the teacher is satisfied with their efforts so far (and so they need do no more). This situation may not be as likely to occur in a mathematics class (even for the same individual) where there is less likely to be ambiguity in relation to the nature of tasks (Galloway *et al.* 1998).

There are two key points to be drawn from the dilemma of open-endedness in tasks militating against mastery orientation in certain fields. Firstly, the finding that individuals may display different motivational behaviours in response to task- or subject-sensitive factors, lends support to the notion of referring to adaptive and maladaptive motivational 'styles.' Secondly, teachers may be faced with the problem of keeping students (and perhaps even the same individual) engaged in difficult tasks across seemingly invisible task- or subject-based boundaries. This, it can be proposed, places a burden on educators to create learning environments where there is a high tolerance of ambiguity that is combined with high levels of cognitive activity.

Fortunately, there is evidence that suggests that altering the contextual variables that impact on a student's choice of goals can improve learning strategies and raise adaptive motivation. Anderman and Maehr (1994, p. 296), propose that the 'psychological environment' of the classroom (and indeed schools as a whole through their culture and climate)² has a strong influence on the goals students adopt. If this is the case, then there is a sense in which schools and classrooms can be exploited to facilitate students' personal control over their learning.

2.2.2 Critique of the Concepts Used in the Motivational 'Styles' Literature

As mentioned above, Leo and Galloway (1996a) have suggested that there are three motivational 'styles' that appear to be particularly helpful in explaining students' responses to difficult or challenging tasks but this is not a widely accepted term in describing the phenomena under consideration. In addition, there is evidence to suggest from the motivational styles literature, that the terms employed may be in need of refinement. For example, Seifert (1995) contends that correlational studies may hide certain behavioural characteristics based on the fact that an individual's goals may interact. As a case in point, Seifert identified a group of mastery-oriented students who could then be divided into those who were confident, capable and enjoyed the school experience and those who had a slightly lower sense of self-worth and adopted some of the characteristics of failure avoidance. Given this finding, it is not unreasonable to suggest that there could be an 'at risk' transitional style between the adaptive and maladaptive styles.

Seifert's contention would seem to suggest that the boundaries between motivational styles are somewhat fuzzy. Furthermore, even though it is accepted that an individual may display more than one style depending on context, there may be circumstances in which the behaviour or stated attitudes of some individuals requires clarification within the styles framework. For example, it is not difficult to find mastery-oriented students who also place high value in protecting a sense of self-worth, as is the stereotypical case with a group of Chinese students studying together (Bond 1986, 1991, 1996). Under these circumstances, one is tempted to ask how it is possible for a student to display the characteristics of motivational styles that are seemingly in opposition. One possible suggestion is to recognise that the motive to protect a personal sense of self-worth is only to be considered maladaptive in situations where there is accompanying pessimism about the causes of failure. In other cases, the variability in a learner's attitudes may perhaps be accounted for by cultural factors.

A second concern relates to the difficulty some teachers have had in distinguishing between children displaying maladaptive styles (Galloway *et al.* 1998). This is unfortunate because there may be some unintended consequences in treating a learned-helpless child in the same way as a self-worth motivated one. As Galloway *et al.* (1998) explain, if a helpless child is told that a task is difficult, this information may confirm the child's view that the task is not worth attempting. In contrast, given the same information, a self-worth motivated child might be encouraged to attempt the task knowing full well that he would not be thought of as stupid if he failed.

Whilst it is clearly important for teachers to better understand their pupils' motivational styles, an underlying difficulty with socio-cognitive approaches in psychology is that learners' attitudes may not always be reflected in their behaviour and vice versa (Galloway *et al.* 1998). An associated issue concerns uncertainty about the length of time required for a student's motivational responses to be clear enough to establish a consistent pattern.

Unfortunately, there are research findings that suggest that some teachers' ill-informed beliefs may make the task of identifying and evaluating a child's motivational characteristics all the more difficult. For example, in a small-scale American study of 3rd graders, Carr and Kurtz-Costes (1994) noticed that students' responses to a self-concept questionnaire did not tally with the teachers' impressions of the same students' beliefs. The researchers speculated that this was because teachers relied primarily on measures of academic ability when evaluating their pupils' motivational characteristics and thus tended to view higher ability children more favorably than those with low ability. In a similar vein, Marsh *et al.* (1988) show through a focus on theoretical issues and complex statistical analyses that when teachers inferred that bright students had consistently high self-concepts across all academic facets, these students may have only had average or even below average academic self-concepts in their (relatively) poorest subjects. The reverse case was also true.

Even though these findings are reported from educational contexts where there is a preference for attributions to be made in favour of academic ability over effort, they can, nonetheless be interpreted as discouraging in the sense that if teachers' perceptions of their pupils can be wayward, then their chances of establishing relationships that are supportive of mastery orientation could be compromised. On the other hand, outcomes could well turn out to be very different when there is a strong emphasis on the virtues of effort as is the case with conceptions of learning within the Confucianist tradition (Bond 1991; Lee 1996; Stevenson & Shin-ying Lee 1996). The significance of this point resides, once again, in paying attention to the culturally loaded assumptions in the motivation literature and being aware of the educational background of the informants in published research studies.

In sum, the message of the preceding paragraphs could be viewed as somewhat daunting for teachers. They are faced with dealing with issues relating to motivational responses in the classroom that they may not be able to discern accurately with the tools and experiences available to them. Of course, the validity of this comment rests on the ability of researchers to identify the behavioural patterns they write about in the first place. This matter is taken up in more detail in the following sub-section.

2.2.3 Perceived Shortcomings in the Research Methodology

A case can be made for the suggestion that there are, at times, weaknesses in the techniques used to establish the validity of research data collected under experimental conditions. For instance, Carr and Kurtz-Costes' (1994) findings mentioned in the previous sub-section, raise an important question concerning the ability of student informants to accurately self-report their perceptions and attitudes. Further problems concerning the reliability of data can be said to occur in Butler (1994) who makes a case for clarity in providing performance feedback based on students' responses to complex scenarios concerning a third-party receiving performance feedback. While it is acknowledged that in ordinary classrooms students often hear their teachers

giving other students feedback and draw inferences from these events, one can speculate if more progress might not have been made by requesting and analysing first-person accounts directly. Indeed, such an approach would not preclude, *a priori*, information about third parties. For instance, a useful enquiry to make of informants in this direction might proceed along the lines of, 'How did you feel when you saw that X was scolded for staring out of the window when you were doing the same not five minutes earlier?'

Another perceived weakness with short diagnostic procedures conducted under experimental conditions relates to the methods employed to categorise subjects. For example, in Dweck's (1975) study, a small sample of children took part in an attribution retraining exercise. The first stage of the experiment involved inducing failure by requiring the completion of a set task against a time limit where effort was not really in question. Later, in a 'repetition-choice' task (the reconstruction of a jig-saw puzzle), children were deemed 'helpless' if they chose to reconstruct a puzzle they had previously completed successfully. This choice was interpreted as indicating a tendency to avoid the risk of failure on an unfamiliar puzzle. However, one might argue that given the seriousness of being categorised as helpless, the identification of subjects' complex cognitive processes cannot be adequately decided in the completion of a single task. For the sake of argument, what is to say that Dweck's helpless subjects simply chose the first puzzle a second time because they liked the picture.

Bearing in mind a number of points raised in this discussion of motivational patterns, educationalists and researchers still need to face the challenge of identifying motivational responses in complex environmental conditions. Whilst it is accepted that attitudes may not always be reflected in behaviour and vice versa, the collection of rich data, that is data collected from a number of sources, may go some way to counteract the shortcomings of research methodology. This approach may be particularly useful when multiple perspectives are employed to interpret occasions where performance in a task is in crisis. For example, take the naturally occurring instance of failure to log on to a computer network. For some, this event (especially if it occurs repeatedly) becomes a major obstacle and easily evokes strong

negative emotions towards computer-based technology. This motivational response may either be displayed overtly or may only become evident in moments of reflection, for example, during personal journal writing on the usefulness of computer-based technology. The researcher, then, needs to be aware that attitudes and perceptions can be manifested in a variety of formats.

2.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter set out to establish the extent to which concepts used in the motivation literature are useful in accounting for learners' successes and their failures. In order to do this, a number of theoretical perspectives were overviewed that attempt to explain why humans think and behave as they do. Broadly speaking, the development of theories relating to motivated behaviour can be viewed as running in parallel with the growing recognition of the importance of social and environmental contexts. These theories have passed through a number of significant phases. For example, it was shown that drive and achievement theories claimed that levels of motivation could be derived mathematically. Later, attribution theory sought knowledge about the ways in which people make decisions about the causes of events and how these explanations can influence future behaviour.

As far as education is concerned, it was shown how issues of personal control, namely the extent to which individuals feel they can influence contextual factors, are of importance. Following a consideration of goal theory that maintains that people set out to achieve the goals they consider of value, a discussion followed concerning distinct patterns of behaviour that were classed as either adaptive or maladaptive insofar as they affect the ways pupils use their talents. It was also shown that a number of concepts have been suggested to explain behavioral patterns. In particular, the term 'styles' was mentioned as a potentially useful way of referring to a consistency of responses that arise especially in the face of difficult or challenging tasks. The strength of this concept is that it can take into account variables relating to situational context. However, it was also noted that some teachers have

had difficulty in distinguishing between the maladaptive styles displayed by pupils in their classrooms.

A further point relating to the impact of the motivational styles literature on educational practice concerns how teachers' feedback practices can influence students' motivational responses. Whilst it is acknowledged that feedback designed to raise cognitive engagement in students is preferable to feedback that simply informs if a response is correct or not, the ambiguity inherent in some open-ended tasks may actually work against the promotion of mastery learning in subjects like English reading comprehension. This finding highlights the need for teachers to exercise considerable professional judgment and skills in their handling of classroom-based motivational issues and it is not always evident that they have the tools and experiences to do this efficiently and effectively.

The major point to arise in this chapter is that for the motivational research to be of use to teachers in understanding 'live' classroom events (Leo & Galloway 1996b, p. 41), researchers need to present evidence that strongly supports their theoretical assumptions. It should also be clear that classrooms are complex environments and that motivation research conducted under clinical conditions may not always be best suited to an explanation of complex behaviour that is greatly influenced by a variety of contextual factors. Fortunately, Galloway *et al.* (1998) demonstrate that useful ground can be covered in the study of motivated behaviour by adopting qualitative research procedures that attempt to understand motivational issues from the learner's perspective. The present research study is based on such an initiative and seeks a similar type of understanding of on-line motivational issues by collecting first-hand evidence as the primary source of information to be analysed.

The following chapter, the second part of the literature review, considers the nature of on-line learning environments and their relevance to English language learning. The chapter concludes with a statement of three research questions relating to how the topic of on-line adaptive and maladaptive motivational patterns is to be studied in greater depth.

Chapter 3

On-line Learning and the Learning of English as a Second or Foreign Language

3.1 Introduction

This chapter, the second part of the literature review, deals with the theoretical and conceptual issues surrounding the study of on-line learning. Whenever possible, specific mention will be made of issues of importance to the learning of English as a second or foreign language (ESFL). This information is of particular importance to the discussion of the research methodology in chapter 4 insofar as it relates to the skills required for successful on-line independent language learning. The present chapter concludes with a statement of the research questions arising from the issues and interpretations outlined in the literature review.

Despite a growing literature, there are grounds to observe that the study of on-line teaching and learning is still in its infancy (Wells 1995; Salmon 2000). As a result, teachers, in particular, have been reported to face 'significant challenges' in identifying and developing the necessary skills for effective practice (Kemshal-Bell 2001). There are three areas in the literature that characterise the emerging discipline: (1) the need to clarify the meaning of the term 'on-line learning' (2) questions concerning 'on-line pedagogy' and (3) the existence of an extensive list of claimed benefits of on-line learning which can be turned against itself depending on the interpretation and experiences of students and teachers alike. These issues are dealt with in more detail below.

3.2 What is On-line Learning?

There are a number of competing terms and concepts used to define 'on-line learning.' Taken together, these have the potential to conceal the essential nature of the medium. Therefore, before any research study can begin relating the practicalities of on-line learning, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the scope and limitations of the terms used.

It can be shown that definitions of on-line learning have various starting points and that these are often dependant upon the popularity of the medium in which they appear. For example, on-line instruction can be thought of as teaching and learning that is mediated by a computer (University of Illinois 1999). Whilst there is some element of sense in this conception, its major weakness is that it does not indicate the type of computer that is employed. This is an important consideration in understanding the nature of on-line learning because loose definitions leave, for example, the way open for learning materials that are stored on non-networked computers to be described as existing 'on-line' (Cozens 1999) and this view, as will be demonstrated below, is too wide.

An alternative starting point is to consider on-line learning as falling within the purview of the equally slippery concepts of 'distance education' or 'distance learning' (University of Georgia 2000; University of California, Riverside 2000). An even wider perspective is available that subsumes distance learning under the umbrella of 'e-learning' which is defined as any learning that utilises a computer network, LAN (local area network), WAN (wide area network) or Internet, for delivery, interaction or facilitation (elearners.com 2000).

There are two difficulties that can be identified as arising from this view. Firstly, by equating on-line learning with education that takes place at a distance, the interpretation fails to account for the growing trend of on-campus university students who subscribe to on-line courses (University of

Illinois 1999). Secondly, it is popular under this view to consider on-line learning as distance learning or e-learning that occurs over the Internet as opposed to a LAN or WAN (elearners.com 2000; Foothill College 2000; Texas A & M University 2000; University of Illinois 2000; learnframe.com 2000) and this interpretation is considered too narrow to account for the range of technologies (including telecommunications) that can be used in on-line education and training (Salmon 2000).

Bearing in mind the preceding points, this research study adopts, therefore, the view that on-line learning is conducted on a computer that is attached to, or available through, a central computer or computer network.

Correspondingly, off-line activity occurs when a computer is not connected to, or material is not available through, a central computer or computer network. This conception of on-line learning allows for students who study on-campus to participate in on-line learning courses and for a number of non-Internet-based technologies to be taken into account.

3.3 On-line Pedagogy

Of all the computer-based technologies available to teachers, the Internet through its most popular graphical interface, the World Wide Web, is reported as being a highly valued learning resource (Becker 1999). This comment needs to be understood within the context of the spread of digital communications systems that are believed to create new opportunities for learning (Peyton 1999), bring about new behaviours and ways of perceiving things (Toffler 1981; Negroponte 1995; Gergen 1995, Becker 1999).

If 'Digital Age' commentators like Tapscott (1997) are correct in their assessment, the 'Net-Generation' (those children in 1999 who were between the ages of two and twenty-two) is a force for educational transformation given their unique exposure to digital media. Thus, it should not come as any surprise to learn that there is a good deal of support for the view that there are areas in education that are set to be irrevocably changed by Internet usage. One area likely to be affected by this development, it has been

suggested, is ESFL (Sevier 1997). Before moving on to a consideration of the claimed benefits of using Internet-based technologies in (language) teaching and learning, it is first necessary to overview a theoretical framework that usefully informs innovation in on-line materials design, teaching and learning.

3.3.1 Technology and Constructivism

According to Zucchermaglio (1993) the 'traditional' approach to the introduction of technologies into educational contexts tends to emphasise their technical aspects. Furthermore, this perspective views technology as substitute teachers and considers that knowledge is embedded in the machinery itself (Jonassen *et al.* 1999). In order to find a way of foregrounding the 'cultural, cognitive and educational aspects of technology' (Zucchermaglio 1993, p. 249), an alternative view focuses on the role of technology as a partner in the learning process. Thus, as Jonassen *et al.* (1999) explain, when students use technology as a tool, it can engage their thinking and facilitate knowledge construction.

The engagement of students' thinking and the facilitation of knowledge construction with technology can be achieved by adopting a teaching approach that involves, for instance, the learning of skills and concepts in the context of using them to do something (Becker 1999). As Becker points out, such an approach follows a constructivist theory of learning and maintains that subject matter becomes meaningful, and therefore, understandable only when it used in context-rich activities (University of Illinois 1999, p. 6).

Although it is necessary to note that constructivism is not a unified point of view (Duffy *et al.* 1993), the following list of theoretical principles may be thought of as usefully informing the design and exploitation of constructivist learning environments:

1. In contrast to the view that knowledge must conform to an external reality, constructivists maintain that individuals learn from experiencing phenomena (objects, events, activities and processes) and

- interpreting and reflecting on these experiences on the basis of what is already known (Duffy *et al.* 1993; Gale 1995; Jonassen *et al.* 1999).
2. It follows, therefore, that concepts cannot simply be transferred from teachers to students. In order for the greatest 'conceptual understanding' (von Glasersfeld 1995, p. 5) to occur, knowledge construction results from activities that help learners to construct their own meanings from the experiences they have (Jonassen *et al.* 1999).
 3. Knowledge is grounded in the context in which learning activities occur. What we understand about skills and knowledge is their application (Jonassen *et al.* 1999) given individual purposes (von Glasersfeld 1995).
 4. On the basis that meaning is in the mind of the individual knower, the meaning-making process produces multiple perspectives on the world that contain unique combinations of experiences and beliefs (Jonassen *et al.* 1999). As a consequence of this, there will always be, for example, more than one way of solving a problem or achieving goals. Within constructivist learning environments, a preference for doing things in a certain manner cannot be justified by an appeal to an external judge of rightness. Rather it only makes sense to refer to other evaluative scales such as speed, elegance or economy (von Glasersfeld 1995).
 5. The diversity of individual perspectives and preferences is compounded by the fact that meaning in language is context dependent and that our agreements with others regarding the relationship of language to its referents is always located within particular sociological, cultural and historical circumstances (McMahon & O'Neill 1993; Gergen 1995).

With constructivism, the social nature of understanding highlights the importance of social interaction insofar as it relates to the mechanisms of learning. In this respect, Vygotsky (1978) proposes that learning,

... awakens a variety of developmental processes that are able to operate only when the [individual] is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. (Vygotsky 1978, p. 90)

The manner in which teachers and learners engage in dialogue with each other can illustrate these developmental processes well.

3.3.1.1 Scaffolding Learning

From within a Vygotskian perspective, teacher - pupil dialogue creates a 'scaffold' that supports and challenges learners. Successful scaffolded learning requires teachers to lead learners towards a shared understanding of learning tasks before they are able to develop their own conception of those tasks. An essential feature of scaffolded learning is that the support provided by teachers is gradually reduced as learners become more comfortable with taking responsibility for their learning (Roehler & Cantlon 1997). As Roehler and Cantlon further explain, scaffolded learning is facilitated when learners have the opportunity to communicate their thoughts and two types of conversation are identified that provide such opportunities: (1) 'instructional conversations', where teachers build on students' background knowledge of a topic towards new levels of understanding and (2) 'learning conversations', that go one step further and provide opportunities for teachers to co-construct information with students and gain new knowledge themselves (Roehler & Cantlon 1997, pp. 9-11).

Scaffolded learning needs to be understood as being an extremely complex activity that requires considerable expertise to execute successfully. First of all, students are always at varying places in their learning (Roehler & Canton 1997) and in their acceptance of the role as a learner that constructivism advocates. This in turn places teachers in the difficult position of having to devote a great deal of individual attention to learners in order to establish the kind of partnerships that are necessary for learning conversations to occur. Commensurately, learners need to invest an equal amount of time in learning the skills necessary to allow them to take greater responsibility for their learning and this requires teachers to employ a battery of strategies and techniques.

The work of Lepper *et al.* (1997) is useful in identifying the strategies and characteristics of teachers who most effectively scaffold learning. Although the following information originates from the context of one-to-one tutoring in remedial mathematics, it would also seem to be relevant to ESFL where individual tutorial support is offered as a part of a learning service.

According to Lepper *et al.* (1997, pp. 129-138), 'expert' tutors are marked by characteristics and their use of tutoring strategies that fall under seven categories covered by the clever acronym, INSPIRE, which stands for Intelligent, Nurturant, Socratic, Progressive, Indirect, Reflective and Encouraging.

In summary, expert tutors are noted, in particular, for the amount of intelligence and knowledge that they bring to tutoring sessions. This allows them to draw on a range of related subjects when explaining or exemplifying concepts that are not easily understood at first. Experts can be expected to display high levels of affective support and nurturance in their interactions with students. This characteristic sees successful tutors having high levels of interest and enthusiasm for their students, empathising with their difficulties and spending more time than less successful tutors in building rapport.

Expert tutors are noted for the way in which they attempt to build on their tutees' strengths. They rely on questions rather than statements or directions in order to make learning an active and constructive process. In the best tutoring sessions, experts also extend their learners by presenting them with a progression of increasingly difficult problems to solve, but this strategy also requires tutors to provide both cognitive and motivational scaffolding when needed.

The motivational aspects of expert tutoring are also evident in the indirect approach that is adopted in feedback practices. According to Lepper *et al.*'s observations, negative feedback is never given directly. Rather there is a preference for hints to be given that imply that something is wrong. Other points to note in relation to ground covered in chapter 2, are that expert

tutors not only encourage their students to work hard, they also attempt to motivate them to enjoy their work and feel challenged and empowered by it.

A final teaching strategy adopted by some expert tutors requires tutees to describe the general lessons that they think they may have learned by working through the problems set. Lepper *et al.* note that this form of reflection helps students to generalise and apply knowledge to subsequent related problems and there is a great deal of affinity here with the applications of Schön's (1991) writings on reflective practice.

3.3.2 On-line Learning and Constructivism

Based on the assumption that helping learners develop their knowledge through interactions with others is best achieved using a constructivist model (Roehler & Cantlon 1997), there are strong indications in the literature that on-line environments offer interesting opportunities for this development to take place (Gergen 1995). Furthermore, Felix (2001) has gone as far as to suggest that the World Wide Web lends itself perfectly to co-operative and collaborative activities between students at the same or different institutions.

In summary, this section has attempted to show that the form of pedagogy that usefully supports the exploitation of on-line technologies is constructivist in nature. Constructivism foregrounds the social nature of understanding and places particular emphasis on teaching and learning strategies that build on prior knowledge and experiences rather than relying totally on the transfer and memorisation of facts. It should be noted carefully, that there is nothing in the previous discussion that suggests that there is a unique pedagogy that relates to on-line learning environments. Having said that, the following section outlines features of on-line learning, in general, and on-line ESFL, in particular, that are perhaps only possible with the use of digital media.

3.4 The Claimed Advantages and Disadvantages of On-line Learning Environments

The growth of computer networks in general and the Internet in particular is matched by the existence of an extensive list of claimed benefits for teachers and learners in using this medium. Paradoxically, this list can also be turned against itself depending on the interpretation and experiences of students and teachers alike. The purpose of this section is to present both the positive and negative aspects of on-line learning environments and then to show how positive on-line learning experiences might be crafted within a constructivist framework.

3.4.1 Advantages

The following items serve to illustrate the benefits of on-line learning environments:

1. Digital technologies widen the range of modes in which on-line teaching and learning can occur (University of Illinois 1999). This is due, in part, to the asynchronous features of computer-mediated communication (CMC), which add flexibility to the timing and pacing of learning. CMC also supports place-independence but at the same time, allows for communication to occur on a many-to-many basis (Warschauer 1996). Other points to note in relation to CMC include: its appeal to inexperienced computer users (Salmon 2000) and the various opportunities made available for users to participate in real-time interactions with other users and materials (Pathak 1999).
2. In comparison with traditional methods, there is greater potential for achieving certain educational aims. For example, learner independence (Peyton 1999) and reflective practice (Salmon 2000).
3. Support is also possible for a wider range of pedagogical techniques and learning styles. For instance, when individuals participate in on-line discussions, they are required to articulate their points of view and

reflect on other people's perspectives as well as their own. This type of interaction has the potential to empower the individual and lead to work that is enhanced by collaborative effort (also see Jonassen *et al.* 1999). It has also been noted that shy students who have had trouble participating in traditional classroom discussions are said to feel more comfortable in on-line settings (University of Illinois 1999; Warschauer 1999). This may be because of the anonymity that exists in certain on-line interactions and that learners are able to transcend perceptions of status and social-transactional distance due to the reduction of social context cues related to race, gender, handicap, accent and status (Wells 1995; Sevier 1997; Dias 1998; Peyton 1999; Pantelidis 1999; Becker 1999; Warschauer 1999).

4. Due to the 'virtual' existence of on-line teaching and learning materials, modifications to materials can be made more easily and frequently (Pathak 1999). Given the inherent flexibility of working with digital media (Negroponte 1995), on-line production allows for materials to be written and preliminarily tested in ways that are distinct from traditional print-based publication practices. With particular reference to ESFL, working with 'digital-sketches', or working drafts of learning materials in production, does away with the constraints of publishers' deadlines and means that on-line media are constantly modifiable and open to comment from the on-line community. This paves the way for learners to contribute to the collaboration process of on-line materials production. Given sufficient opportunity, this type of input favours on-line English language tutors and tutees in reaching a consensus on the content and direction of on-line tutorials (Towndrow & Kannan 2001).

Taken together, the previous points mark CMC and other on-line technologies as providing new and potentially interesting media for teaching and learning to occur. However, on-line learning environments have also been criticised for their complexity and unreliability. It also has to be accepted as a limitation of the research to date, that what motivates a language learner using a computer might not operate for learners studying other subjects (Warschauer 1996). Finally, it should be noted that many of the features cited as benefits

in digital learning can also act as impediments to successful practice. The following sub-section outlines some of the concerns raised in the literature.

3.4.2 Problems, Concerns and Challenges in On-line Learning Environments

The problems, concerns and challenges facing participants in on-line learning contexts can be shown to fall into a number of interconnected areas: (1) time and distance; (2) technology; (3) pedagogy and (4) communications. These issues are dealt with in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

As far as time is concerned, Rimmington (1999) has demonstrated that on-line learning contexts are potentially active twenty-four hours a day, every day, and this can have a debilitating effect on teachers who feel compelled to act promptly to learners' queries and contributions. In addition, the immediacy of the medium also has the power to 'collapse' time and this has created problems for students in keeping up with the constant flow of language that can sometimes occur (Peyton 1999). A third challenge relates to dealing with asynchronous computer-mediated communications which can sometimes be difficult to follow when multiple discussions are under way and the sequencing of messages becomes disrupted (Salmon 2000).

The inherent distance involved in on-line learning can be shown to lead to deficits in two key areas of a learner's 'transactional' experiences. Firstly, it can foster feelings of isolation in students and the lack of face-to-face contact may make relationship building difficult. This could be due to a fear of exposure when class sizes are large or through initial feelings of a sense of anonymity (Peyton 1999). Secondly, Dolby (2001) argues that even synchronous on-line education can fail to replicate the informal, spontaneous conversations between students that take place away from the classroom. What seems to be missing are opportunities to test out new ideas and begin the type of intellectual engagement that can, when taken advantage of, sustain learners for a lifetime. Thirdly, students can feel that the lack of physical presence permits communication that is impersonal and even insensitive (Burniske & Monke 2001). These observations have particular

relevance for language learners as they have the potential to impact negatively on how they relate to the language acquisition process as described, for example, by Krashen (1987).

Apart from the difficulties relating to the 'usability' of computers in terms of their ever-changing operating systems and software applications (Landauer 1995), operational issues invariably arise in on-line learning environments as participants (irrespective of their previous exposure) come to terms with the technology employed (Rimmington 1999; Oliver & Omari 2001). For example, demonstrating the perennial nature of the difficulties involved, Chua (2000) reported initial teething problems in setting up and logging on to a professional on-line training system. Difficulties such as these also have the potential to impact negatively on study habits causing time to be wasted in the adoption of unnecessary 'trial and error' approaches.

Overall, it seems that issues in digital on-line pedagogy cannot be disentangled from the technology they depend on. By way of illustration, Sevier (1997) contends that as a medium of ESFL instruction, computers may not, in fact, enable learners to transcend perceptions of status and social position. Support for this view is provided by (further) negative reactions relating to the transactional distance inherent in CMC concerning feelings of insecurity (Pantelidis 1999) and anxiety about posting messages on-line through a fear of public exposure (Sevier 1997). Language learners have also recorded feelings of worthlessness when their contributions were not responded to by colleagues on-line (Sevier 1997).

One of the areas of concern in on-line teaching and learning relates to the role tutors' feedback can play in motivating students to work successfully. Empirical evidence from various sources illustrates the complex nature of the perceptual issues involved. For instance, it was proposed in chapter 2 that greater achievement levels can be attained through the use of 'elaborated' feedback practices. However, Wells (1995) notes that on-line university lecturers found that it was often impossible to know whether students were interpreting their feedback as supportive or critical. A further level of difficulty was added when attempts by the same tutors to be nondirective or

deliberately quiet were sometimes interpreted as signals of passivity or unavailability.

Corroborative findings in the Asian context are reported by Kannan and Macknish (2000) working with Chinese students on an on-line English as a second language writing course. The tutors in Kannan and Macknish's work encountered difficulty in getting students to agree with them on the form and meaning of 'good' feedback. For the students, good feedback meant the identification and correction of all language and content errors. On the other hand, the tutors' preference was to offer positive and encouraging comments designed to help the students reflect on their work and make improvements. The resulting mismatch of purposes and expectations led students, at times, to report feelings of frustration due to what they perceived as their tutors' lack of help when they asked leading questions that promoted thought. Indeed, students viewed long comments from their tutors as signaling a poor answer. Finally, for some students, long, detailed feedback from the tutor, however positive, was equated with faultfinding and loss of face.

The significance of the previously reported findings for the present research study relate in the first instance to the cultural factors that clearly surround the roles teachers and learners are expected to adopt in learning contexts. Secondly, it should be clear that unless teaching and learning expectations are aligned, the potential for on-line technologies to foster critical thinking and language skills is called into question (Sevier 1997).

The final area of difficulty concerns the challenges facing participants in on-line communication. Reports of experiences and interpretations in this area are extensive and relate to failings in active participation and barriers to interpersonal communication from various sources inherent in the medium. All of these aspects can be shown to impact negatively on participants' patterns of behaviour.

As far as active participation is concerned, it has been noted from case study findings that CMC groups can sometimes fail because of a lack of leadership in discussions (Salmon 2000). Further difficulties have been reported by

participant observers in CMC who noted that students complained about classmates who were constantly late in posting on-line discussion forum comments because they felt that the late posters reduced the number of contributions and had a negative impact on the quality of the academic discussions (Muirhead 2000). In addition, Muirhead observes that his primary learning problem involved students who failed to do their portion of the weekly group projects thus signaling weaknesses in CMC to promote team working and collaborative effort.

There is great scope to speculate upon the reasons why CMC fails to promote the language and communication that it sets out to facilitate. Part of the difficulty, perhaps, is located in the fact that desires to protect self-worth are heightened due to the fact the electronic text is monitored by many and can be saved and printed at will (Peyton 1999). However, in a comprehensive review, Pathak (1999) has detailed a range of factors indicating that there are other prominent interpersonal communication barriers to effective computer-mediated communication.

Pathak's method is to compare and contrast what is known about barriers to effective print-based communication with their digital counterparts. Of the many factors considered, the following are worthy of mention:

- **Extended textuality:** electronic communication generally adopts more visual codes, for example, fonts and colours. These added visual effects can hinder the readability of text (through the inappropriate use of colour) and negatively impact on readers due to the cultural associations certain colours have (Horton 1991).
- **Frames of reference:** While conventional writing strategies generally assume that a text is written by a single author for a relatively homogeneous audience, CMC may be for an audience that the writer is unfamiliar with. This anonymity could lead to difficulties in predicting how a message will be received.
- **Filtering:** in print-based social situations, messages are often screened by 'gatekeepers' before transmission to others. With on-line media, the role of gatekeepers is minimised due to the lack of

central authorities controlling the reliability of the information that is transmitted.

- Distractions: there is a high probability of miscommunication due to poor on-line materials design. The lack of consideration of users and their needs can lead, for example, to World Wide Web pages being overloaded with content, hyperlinks, and gratuitous features such as sounds and animations.

These points signal the need for care and caution to be taken in handling CMC. Pathak usefully draws attention to the importance of well-designed on-line materials and supports the view that poorly-designed on-line learning methods often meet with resistance and a despondent yearning for traditional face-to-face methods (Delio 2000).

3.4.3 Towards Positive On-line Learning Experiences

The previous consideration of the claimed advantages and disadvantages of on-line learning environments presents a picture that is highly instructive for on-line materials designers, tutors, and learners alike. On the one hand, the problems and difficulties experienced by on-line participants have led to disappointments (Salmon 2000) and questions have been raised in the literature concerning the: (1) assumption that access to on-line information can serve teaching and learning needs (Maddux 1996a; Harris 1996; Becker 1999; Stoll 2000; Cleary 2001; Hamilton 2001); (2) extent to which computers can be considered to be useful and usable (Landauer, 1995; Stoll 2000;); (3) quality of materials available on-line (Maddux 1996b; Stoll 2000) and (4) ways in which on-line English learning materials are developed and used (Towndrow 1999).

On the other hand, it is possible to consider that the positive and negative aspects of on-line learning are not irreconcilable and to move forward to a position that maintains that on-line learning formats have their own advantages (University of Illinois 1999). The purpose of this section, then, is to consider how positive on-line learning experiences might be crafted.

This research study supports the view that many of the disappointments surrounding on-line learning experiences, stem from a lack of tutor experience in aspects relating to the design and purpose of on-line materials and in knowledge of how participants are likely to exploit the technology (cf. Salmon 2000). In order to avoid the common pitfalls associated with on-line teaching and learning environments, there is an urgent need, therefore, to draw on the insights of practitioners and researchers involved in this emerging field of study. Secondly, there is also a need to realign certain pedagogical beliefs and practices relating to on-line learning and changes seem necessary particularly in the role tutors play in teacher-learner relationships.

Perhaps the first realisation that needs to be made is that teachers have an important role to play in moderating on-line interactions (Salmon 2000). Indeed, it could be argued that teachers are central to the process of creating opportunities for on-line students to interact and this requires continual shaping and monitoring of on-line situations (cf. Peyton 1999). The previous comments suggest, in the strongest terms, that teachers have a role in motivating students on-line to feel they are members of a learning community and to engage with teaching and learning materials that are provided on-line (University of Illinois 1999). Of course, such a statement begs the questions of how this sense of community can be fostered and how (and where) motivation to engage in material can be derived. These issues are taken up again in the following section concerning the research questions arising from this literature review.

However, it may be suggested in the meantime that on-line teachers need to employ approaches that begin by compensating for the limitations of the technology outlined above. As faculty at the University of Illinois (1999, p. 2) suggest, an important step requires '... professors to make the effort to create and maintain the human touch of attentiveness to their students.' Furthermore, the Illinois approach maintains that high-quality on-line teaching is not tenable by simply transferring classroom-based teaching formats to on-line environments. What is required is a form of interaction that appreciates academic maturity and promotes critical thinking and the

synthesis of knowledge. It should be clear that there is much in common here with the concepts of constructivism, scaffolding and reflective practice.

Finally, it should be recognised that great care needs to be exercised in managing the changes proposed in educational practice suggested above. Firstly, it cannot be assumed that the simple advancement of notions concerning the use of technologies as constructivist tools will lead to educational reform and the acceptance of the point that greater meaning can be extracted in learning situations by adopting a different approach (Jonassen *et al.* 1999). Further empirical evidence is required before the efficacy of the approaches proposed is accepted. Secondly, it needs to be recognised that when tutors work with highly motivated and confident students, they have greater scope to focus on learning rather than on the students' feelings of self-esteem and confidence (Lepper *et al.* 1997). What is largely unknown in on-line situations is how students react to challenging on-line tasks where the risk of failure is present. These are evaluative scenarios that require a delicate and sensitive approach given their uncertain and human nature.

3.5 Research Questions

This final section provides details on how the topic of adaptive and maladaptive motivational patterns is to be studied in greater depth. The following paragraphs outline three research questions arising from the theoretical and conceptual issues and interpretations presented in this literature review.

Issues relating to motivation in English language learning on-line have been identified in the literature; see, for example, Oxford and Shearin (1994), Wells (1995), Warschauer (1996), and Skinner and Austin (1999). Nevertheless, the question remains whether language teachers are in possession of sufficient information to make their teaching more relevant and motivating. These circumstances lead to the first research question for this study:

1. Are adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses, derived from recent literature, evident in on-line learning environments?

The driving force for the enquiry into the validity of motivational concepts in a different environment is to seek to identify and understand the variables affecting the performance of teachers and learners on-line (cf. Galloway *et al.* 1998). This research aim involves providing a detailed description of an on-line learning environment that will be deemed 'ethnographically adequate' (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995, p. 106) to the extent that it is faithful to an on-line participant's perspective. In particular, the research aim will also usefully serve to establish the 'ecological validity' (Mertens 1998, pp. 68-9), of Galloway *et al.*'s motivational 'styles' concepts. In the other words, the research will seek to establish whether the discussion of motivational 'styles' or 'patterns of response' is generalisable to other on-line learning environments including ESFL.

In the unlikely event that the consideration of motivational 'styles' or 'patterns of response' is unhelpful for teachers operating in on-line learning environments, then this finding in itself might lead to the identification of other factors that are relevant to on-line learning environments. These circumstances lead to the second research question for this study:

2. Which theories of teaching and learning are used to underpin on-line teaching, learning and materials design?

The second research question draws on the hopes of futurists like Gates (1996) and Dwyer (2001) relating to the possible formation of digital communities in education where administrators, teachers, parents and students work together more efficiently and frequently than before. If this is the case, then it is likely that teaching and learning practices will need to adopt more open and flexible approaches that are designed to reduce learners' dependence on teachers or their text-books as the sole sources of information (Flake 1996). A concomitant development is likely to be that learning will be based a lot more on discovery, interaction and collaboration, and teachers will need to adopt a role that is forged from a concern with care

and empathy (Rogers & Frieberg 1994) rather than a desire to instruct and lead from the front. These points raise the third and final research question for this study:

3. In what ways can adaptive learning patterns be fostered on-line and how do these relate to ESFL?

The third research question is addressed by focusing on the area of ESFL reading comprehension. This limitation in the scope of the project is justified by the researcher's interest in determining whether Galloway *et al.*'s (1996, p. 206) observation that '... English [reading] comprehension tasks ... could fail to promote mastery orientation', also relates to ESFL on-line learning contexts. In order to do this, the research project passes through three distinct phases as shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 The Phases of the Research Project

Phase 1	The establishment of an on-line ESFL learning environment and the design of a bank of learning materials that will be used to address research questions 1-3.
Phase 2	The trial of the materials produced in Phase 1 of the project with a group of on-line ESFL language learners.
Phase 3	The evaluation of Phases 1 and 2 of the project in motivational terms.

Further details concerning the elaboration and implementation of the three phases of the project are contained in the following chapter on the research methodology. However, it is worth emphasising at this juncture that the bank of learning materials were designed, in general, to promote mastery orientation and metacognitive skills. Of course, it is understood that teachers in traditional classrooms can also set out to promote adaptive learning patterns using print-based media, but it needs to be acknowledged that a great deal more can be potentially achieved when digital media are the main focus of attention in learning environments (Negroponte 1995; River Oaks Public School 1999).

The question of whether digital on-line learning contexts can foster mastery orientation is raised as a matter of concern for educationalists working with digital media. As previously mentioned, views on this matter are divided, but there would seem to be a more urgent need to develop new and effective teacher education techniques in order for on-line learning tools to be used most effectively. This research study aims to assist in this important developmental work by contributing to the debate on what might be considered best practice in on-line material design and production given the cultural backgrounds, needs and interests of the participants involved.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and provides support for the methodologies used to address the research questions outlined at the end of chapter 3. The specific areas dealt with concern: (1) the design and establishment of an on-line course of study for ESFL learners in academic reading comprehension skills; (2) the target profile and selection of the study participants and (3) the procedures and instruments used to evaluate the study in motivational terms.

4.2 Fitness for Purpose of the Research Methodology

As explained previously in section 2.2.3, it is desirable for contemporary motivational research to focus on live classroom events. Therefore, this thesis considers that an experimental or quasi-experimental research design that seeks to empirically test a specific set of knowledge claims under controlled conditions, for example Dweck (1975), would be an inappropriate method of addressing the research questions set for this study. Two reasons that call into question the validity of experimental findings are offered in support of this claim (see Mertens 1998, pp. 61-63).

First, in order to study human behaviour under experimental conditions, it is customary to control the variables that can potentially impact negatively upon the subjects involved. This practice can result in oversimplified and decontextualised explanations that distort how the phenomena under study occur in the real world. Second, the laboratory settings used in experimental research can come across as unnatural, and as a result, prove to be inadequate in reflecting the complexities of human experiences.

Thus to avoid the aforementioned methodological shortcomings in this study, a mainly qualitative research methodology was adopted that was informed by the principles of constructivist learning (Jonassen *et al.* 1999) and took into account a wide range of contextual factors. Essentially, the research employed methods that were as open and flexible as possible. This allowed, amongst other things, for detailed participant profiles to be drawn up that captured subjective perceptions and intentions. Furthermore, scope was also provided for all participants to reflect upon, and evaluate, their experiences in the hope that learning practices could be changed for the better (Nunan & Lamb 1996; Towndrow 1998).

4.2.1 Action Research and Grounded Theory

The notion that a study be undertaken with the purpose of changing practice for the better is consistent with an action research model that involves participative inquiry. The term 'action research' has its origins in the field of social psychology and was used by Lewin (1946) to describe a spiral of steps taken by participants in a particular social context each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, observation and reflection. Although action research can be conducted with various purposes in mind, the importance of action itself cannot be underemphasised. This is because it is through action in a particular situation that the sources of understanding of the events that occur can be located. Thus, as explained in the later sections of this chapter, it was through the researcher's participative action in the on-line learning environment that he sought to identify and demonstrate the factors that influence motivation on-line.

In contrast to an experimental research design that attempts to verify or test theories in a particular context, the researcher in this study adopted a more exploratory, hypothesis-seeking methodology. That is, he sought to understand the events that unfolded on the on-line course by grounding his theories in the data that were collected. In this respect, Glaser and Strauss

(1967) explain that 'grounded theory' is theory that is generated from a qualitative study. Accordingly, grounded theory must:

... fit the situation being researched, and work when put into use. By "fit" we mean that the categories must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to and indicated by the data under study; by "work" we mean that they must be meaningfully relevant to and be able to explain the behaviour under study. (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.3)

By way of demonstration of the degree of fit of the research methodology adopted in this study, it is maintained that the researcher's findings enable other practitioners in the field of on-line language learning to understand and control the variables that impact on their everyday situations (cf. Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 245). Further details are supplied in chapters 5, 6 and 7 below.

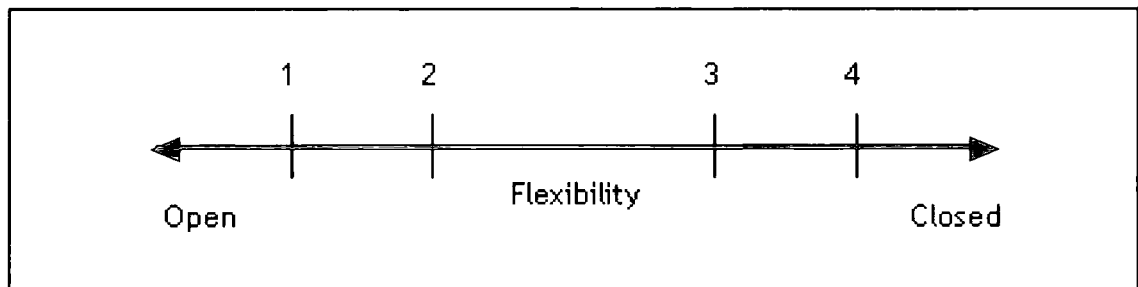
4.3 The Design and Establishment of the On-line Course

It will be recalled that one of the major aims of the study is to explore the ways in which adaptive learning patterns can be fostered on-line. From an educational technologist's point of view, the researcher is of the opinion that the successful promotion of mastery learning on-line is dependent upon a clear understanding of the nature of 'open' and 'flexible' learning environments. Unfortunately, as far as the present study is concerned, the meaning of the terms 'open' and 'flexible' has been disputed in the literature (Rumble 1989; Hodgson 1993) and the resulting plethora of interpretations can be said to impact negatively on the choices that can be made concerning the focus of on-line courseware and the kinds of activities that will be perceived by learners as being worthy of their time and effort (cf. Collis 1996).

In order to facilitate the design of on-line learning materials, a model of open and flexible learning is adopted that expands on the concepts of Zucchermaglio (1993) by utilising the notion of a continuum of openness and closure in learning systems. As shown in Figure 4.1, the model suggests that

flexibility spans the continuum as the critical factor in determining how open or closed a learning environment can be. This is possible, in the first place, by reserving the meaning of the term 'open' for situations where course content issues are open to negotiation. Once this is done, the term 'flexible' can be assigned when attempting to delimit the middle ground that surrounds the constraints of time, place and pace that operate in on-line learning environments. Four points are shown along the flexibility continuum as examples of possible design scenarios.

Figure 4.1 The Flexibility Continuum



Scenarios 3 and 4 are defined as closed or restricted systems that feature high levels of directiveness (Zucchermaglio, 1993). A series of closed activities could easily be produced by converting existing print-based materials into Web format without modification. In the case of ESFL reading comprehension, further restrictions could be imposed upon the materials by limiting follow-up exercises to multiple choice, matching or gap-filling tasks that provided controlled and repetitive practice in discrete language areas like grammar and vocabulary.

Alternatively, scenarios 1 and 2 are defined as open or 'empty' (Zucchermaglio 1993, p. 251) and are designed to take into consideration relative degrees of a constructivist view of learning. Such frameworks provide learners with opportunities to explore their own ideas and interests using a range of research strategies. Wherever possible, learners are also given the opportunity to share their learning and thoughts in the on-line environment (Towndrow 1999; 2000).

4.3.1 Description of Teaching and Learning Materials

The research study teaching and learning materials consisted of an on-line course designed and produced by the researcher entitled the 'English On-line Reading Comprehension Project 1' (EOLRCP1). In order to gain access to tools that facilitate on-line course building, management, communication and collaboration at minimum cost, EOLRCP1 was hosted at the highly popular 'Blackboard.com' learning system at the following address:

http://www.blackboard.com/bin/login.pl?course_id=EOLRCP1&new_loc=/courses/EOLRCP1

As shown in Appendix 1, EOLRCP1 comprises of five core units of work designed to: (1) elicit a variety of responses from the participants to ESFL reading comprehension texts (Grellet 1981) through assignments, projects, evaluations and assessments; (2) address ESFL issues, general linguistic concerns and study skills and (3) include training in the technical aspects of using on-line courseware and explain the intentions and expectations of the materials used (Race 1994). These areas are explained and supported in the following sub-sections that deal with the scope of EOLRCP1 and the methods employed to design the syllabus.

4.3.2 Scope of EOLRCP1

In order to elicit a variety of responses to the texts and tasks used, EOLRCP1 featured, in the first place, a combination of 'closed' and 'open' stages in an attempt to cater to the widest spectrum of learning needs and possible motivational responses. For an example of a closed stage, see Appendix 1, Unit 2, Stage 2; for an example of an open stage, see Appendix 1, Unit 3, Stage 3. Secondly, the structure of EOLRCP1 supported a materials and tutoring approach that was consistent with promoting independent language learning skills through the provision, for example, of elaborated feedback (Balzer *et al.* 1989). Engagement in the learning environment was planned to occur by: (1) developing interpersonal relationships between the participants; (2) providing clear information on desired academic outcomes (for example, see Appendix 1, Unit (1) and (3) supporting participant autonomy by allowing

participants to set their own learning goals based on their interests and values (Reeve 1996). It should also be mentioned that in keeping with Galloway *et al.*'s (1996, 1998) curriculum-based adaptation of the Craske (1988) procedures for categorising subjects according to their motivational style, the participants were given the opportunity to be formally assessed in their reading comprehension skills at the end of each unit of work. These tests were designed to measure levels of achievement based on the objectives of the course and to stimulate learner reflections on pre- and post-test performances.

Finally, it was envisaged that the participants would work both on- and off-line and be involved in activities that required regular participation in the on-line medium. Thus, success in learning was made dependent upon an on-line presence (Race 1994; Wells 1995) and this potentially guaranteed high levels of participation on the understanding, of course, that non-participation in on-line activities did not necessarily signal an absence of learning.

By way of illustrating the points made in this sub-section, Table 4.1 represents a schematic of the possible interactions for Unit 2 of EOLRCP1 (Comparison and Contrast) for a typical learner. It is to be noted that the actions identified for both the learner and tutor are representative of the minimum amount of work expected.

Table 4.1 Possible Interactions For Unit 2 of EOLRCP1 For a Typical Learner

Stage	Purpose	Actions	
		Learner	Tutor
1. Introduction	Handout for information and attention	Read; Input for Learning Journal	
2. Picture Descriptions			
2.1 The Picture	Handout for information and attention	Read; Input for Learning Journal	
2.2 Response A	Handout for information and attention	Read; Take quiz; Input for Learning Journal	
2.2 Response B	Handout for information and attention	Read; Take quiz; Input for Learning Journal	
2.3 Comparison of Responses	Handout for information and attention	Read; Complete chart; Free writing; Input for Learning Journal	Feedback on free writing; Input for tutor's Journal
3. Durians and Pineapples	Handout for information and attention	Read; Mini-research project; Free writing; Input for Learning Journal	Feedback on free writing; Input for tutor's Journal
4. Assessment Test	Task	Download passage; Take test; Input for Learning Journal	
5. Learning Journal	Task	Learning Journal submission to tutor	Personal feedback on Learning Journals; Input for tutor's Journal

4.3.3 Syllabus Design and Selection of Content

For the purposes of the research study, a syllabus was defined as a detailed operational statement used as the basis for planning courses (Dubin & Olshtain 1986; Nunan 1988). The organisational principles of the syllabus were drawn, in the first place, from Yalden (1987) who identifies a set of options that are answerable to one of three views of language: (1) how it is learned; (2) how it is acquired and (3) how it is used. These viewpoints can be reflected in the dichotomy between a 'product-oriented' syllabus where content is stated in

terms of the outcomes of instruction and a 'process-oriented' syllabus where content is specified in terms of learning tasks and activities.

However, in contrast to some classroom-based practice that has a narrow and inflexible predetermined structure, the product - process dichotomy was considered unhelpful in the design of EOLRCP1. Alternatively, greater assistance was derived by viewing the products and processes of language learning as the two sides of the same experiential coin. Thus, an 'integrated' approach to the design of the syllabus was adopted to better match the language learning needs and interests of the participants.

The content of EOLRCP1 was determined by drawing initial insights from Munby's (1978) language-centred focus on the target situation. Although Munby's approach has been criticised for failing '... to give sufficient consideration to the learner in the [syllabus design] process' (Flowerdew 1995, p. 21), it was nonetheless useful in identifying the main communicative events in which the participants would be involved; namely:

1. ESFL reading comprehension and the demonstration of understanding through required tasks.
2. Independent learning training through the maintenance of a learning journal.

Based on these events, a list of language skills or 'enabling factors' that the course participants would require to complete the required tasks was drawn up. Following Munby (1978, pp. 116-132), these skills included, for example:

- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items through understanding word formation and contextual clues;
- Understanding and expressing explicitly stated information;
- Understanding information in a text that is not explicitly stated;
- Understanding and expressing conceptual meanings (for example, quantity, time, comparison/contrast);

- Understanding and expressing relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices (for example, repetition, antithesis);
- Understanding and expressing relations between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices (for example, anaphoric and cataphoric referencing,³ comparison, logical connectors);
- Recognising and using indicators in discourse (for example, introducing and concluding ideas, emphasising a point, anticipating an objection or contrary view);
- Identifying and indicating the main point or important information.
- Distinguishing main ideas from supporting details;
- Extracting salient points to summarise;
- Skimming and scanning texts;
- Relaying information directly and/or indirectly.

In order to teach and practice the target language skills, it was envisaged that the course participants needed to deal with texts that were grammatically complex, featured high levels of specificity and covered a range of styles and subjects. In addition, it was also considered important to plan EOLRCP1 to conform to a recognisable and practical structure. Consequently, the course content was organised according to the notions that academic '... textbook chapters or sections often follow a few generalisable, predictable formats or frames' (Gittinger 2000) and that it is possible to employ content reading strategies to deal with these. It is also worth noting that the decision to adapt Gittinger's reading comprehension frames for on-line purposes was inspired by Race (1994) who makes a compelling case for economy in open learning materials production.⁴

Insofar as the teaching and practice of learning skills was concerned, the course content required the use of 'metacognitive strategies' to allow the participants to control their cognitions and 'affective strategies' to help them regulate their emotions, motivations and attitudes (Oxford 1990, p. 135). The application of affective strategies involved the participants in maintaining a learning journal as a self-reporting mechanism to reflect upon the performance of the researcher, the behaviour of fellow learners and the

quality and scope of the courseware materials. As Genesee and Upshur (1996) show, learning journals are of particular use for teachers working with students through the medium of a second language and the hope was that this practice could be used equally well with students on-line to monitor progress and facilitate reflection.

Wilson and Wing Jan (1993) explain that reflection involves analysing and making judgements about what has happened in learning and this input was considered useful in helping the participants to adopt supporting attitudes and beliefs in relation to their language learning (see Robles 1998). Given this, due attention was paid to guiding the participants in the subject matter and style of their journal entries and these were reviewed by the tutor upon the completion of each unit of work. It was also anticipated that this review process would inevitably lead to a reduction of privacy but the negative effects of this action were minimised by the guarantee of confidentiality (see section 4.8 below).

The content of EOLRPC1 also provided avenues for the application of metacognitive learning strategies and the participants were encouraged to focus on the following key areas of independent language learning (Oxford 1990, pp. 157-163, Centre for Individual Language Learning 1998):

- Setting goals and objectives (for example, reaching a superior reading proficiency level in English);
- Identifying the purpose of a learning task - and realising that different text types require different purposes in reading;
- Planning for a language task - identifying the general nature and specific requirements of a task, deciding on actions to take, resources to use, time-frame and what will count as acceptable evidence of learning;
- Evaluation of learning - involving the self-monitoring of achievements and difficulties in learning, and self-assessment of performance.

It should also be mentioned that the researcher was aware of the issues surrounding the construct validation of the research. Thus, it was noted that as far as ESFL teaching practice is concerned, misgivings have been expressed in the literature concerning the extent to which diary or journal-based data is useful in research designs (see Gower 1999). As Gower notes, diary forms have their limitations unless they extend over a long period and force powerful generalisations out of the writers about their personal experiences. On the other hand, diary or journal-based data has been characterised as a rich source that is useful in promoting reflection (McDonough 1994). On balance, there was some risk involved in using journals over a short period of study but this was considered minimal given that other sources of data were also used.

4.4 Preliminary Testing of Materials

The process of the instructional design and production of materials for EOLRCP1 began by researching and analysing the potential needs of ESFL reading comprehension learners on-line. In order to gain immediate access to on-line resources, the author registered a private World Wide Web domain name <http://philliptowndrow.com/> and procured advertising-free hosting with a popular service provider.

The purpose in developing the trial site was to explore the spectrum of on-line materials design possibilities from 'closed' to 'open' on an informal basis. The approach taken involved: (1) the development of thirteen draft ESFL reading comprehension lessons that were open to comment and reactions from on- and off-line teachers and learners and (2) the establishment of working relationships with ESFL colleagues around the world as a way of tapping the potential teaching and learning power of the Internet.

Over a period of approximately a year, the trial site received over 15,000 visitors and was popular with colleagues worldwide. During this time, the lessons were modified to take into account visitors' feedback and the researcher gained invaluable experience in providing written comments to ESFL learners who submitted responses to a number of open-ended reading

comprehension questions. More importantly, perhaps, the preliminary testing of the materials led to a number of important insights into the design and production of on-line ESFL materials including: (1) page layout; (2) the sourcing of on-line material and (3) the grading of teaching and learning resources.

First, the researcher used the initial trial period to experiment with screen designs in order to ensure that the reading activities were formatted to achieve maximum readability and ease of navigation (Lynch & Horton 1999) for all types of Web-browser. A number of colour schemes were used including a 'theme' of matched colours and font faces that was eventually abandoned in favour of a plain background, neutral colours and a fixed page width.

A second issue related to the researcher's desire to provide authentic texts and the concurrent realisation that the amount of reading material that could be supplied from personal, unpublished, sources was severely limited. Fortunately, three solutions to the researcher's difficulty arose during the trial period: (1) by using E-mail and browsing Web-sites, arrangements were made with a number of authors to collaborate with EOLRCP1 by allowing their published material to be reproduced without cost; (2) activities were designed based on third-party texts accessible through hyperlinking and (3) through sharing on an Internet-based discussion list, a large catalogue of text was located in the public-domain (for example, Project Gutenberg, <http://www.promo.net/pg/>) and it was assumed by the researcher that extracts from this material could be used legally for the purposes of educational research.

Third, as far as the grading of the teaching and learning resources was concerned, the researcher's initial conception was to structure the materials to take account of a wide range of factors relating to the participants' linguistic skills and performance levels (cf. Nunan 1988). However, following reflection on comments made by a number of visitors to the trial site, the researcher realised that given the 'open' nature of some of the draft activities, it was not possible to specify how easy or difficult they were. This view was held in the constructivist belief that the open frameworks presented

opportunities to be taken up at various levels of academic challenge. Overall, the researcher's aim was to observe the extent to which a student's choice of activity was indicative of a particular pattern of motivational response.

The issue concerning the nature of open learning materials continued following the transfer of the trial teaching and learning materials to the Blackboard.com courseware. A particular concern at this stage involved the provision of clear statements of purpose for each set of learning tasks and this led to further redrafting of some introductory material. Another issue to arise related to the supposed ethnic bias in the reading materials as the majority of texts provided by the researcher were clearly of Western origin. The proposed strategy for broadening the ethnic mix of material was to provide a number of opportunities for participants to provide their own texts to read (see, for example, Appendix 1, Unit 3, Stage 3; Unit 4, Stage 3 and Unit 5, Stage 3).

A final stage in the preliminary testing of materials process involved seeking the opinion of colleagues with first-hand experience of teaching previous cohorts of the study participants. Both Chinese and Western lecturers inspected printed copies of the finalised Blackboard.com materials and commented that they were suitable for the intended purpose. They also added that the materials were potentially interesting and challenging.

In summary, the preliminary testing of EOLRCP1 was conducted with the aim of providing extensive exposure of the materials in terms of time and breadth of audience. The testing, it can be argued, served a number of purposes in the design and production of the ESFL on-line learning materials. First, based on the feedback received from ESFL teachers and learners from around the world, there are grounds to support the assertion that the courseware was valid in terms of its content and its potential to provide the conditions for language learning to occur (Heigelheimer & Chapelle, 2000; Flowerdew 1995). For instance, the courseware presented an authentic learning situation that was interactive, open and flexible. In addition, similar to the desired qualities of a valid language test, the courseware was expected to have a positive influence on students and their learning (Bachman & Palmer 1996).

Second, the preliminary testing protocol served to offset some of the negative points associated with defining a subject area of study in advance of having specific details of the study participants themselves. Whilst it would be foolhardy to attempt to predetermine learning outcomes in a print-based environment, the trial of EOLRCP1 demonstrated that final decisions concerning the subject matter could be delayed almost indefinitely given the flexibility of dealing with digital media.

4.5 Profile and Selection of the Study Participants

This section describes the steps involved in identifying and selecting the group of ESFL learners to act as participants in the research study. Following that, a brief description of the participating students will be given along with an indication of how they were recruited on to the course of on-line study.

In order to facilitate the preliminary testing of the teaching and learning materials described in Section 4.4 above and to assist in the final determination of participants' language learning needs and interests, it was necessary for the researcher to devise a target specification of the study participants in advance of finding a specific group of learners to work with. This pre-course planning exercise produced a broad identification of the typical course participant and the linguistic functions and topics considered to be most relevant to the learners' needs and interests based on the researcher's intuition, teaching experience and observation of students in comparable learning contexts (cf. Littlewood 1981).

In brief, the researcher envisaged a small group of young, adult ESFL learners studying through the medium of English. These learners were expected to be modest users of the target language in academic reading contexts⁵ with the educational purpose of improving reading effectiveness by raising ability levels in reading comprehension (Munby 1978). In terms of the collective characteristics of the target participants, it was considered advantageous to operate with a homogeneous group with regard to previous academic assessment experiences (Carr & Kurtz-Costes 1994), but previous exposure to

on-line learning environments was not a prerequisite for participation (cf. Salmon 2000). Finally, from the perspective of the logistical constraints operating upon the implementation of the on-line course, it was of paramount importance that the course participants had regular access to information and communications technology (i.e. an Internet capable computer with printer) and be familiar with the use of a Web Browser, E-mail programme and CD-ROM technology.

The selection of the study participants coincided with the transfer of the trial materials to Blackboard.com and involved discussions with programme coordinators at the researcher's place of employment concerning access to, and the suitability of, students for the study. Permission was granted to seek the cooperation of a class of visiting scholars attending a 28-week intensive English communication skills programme. The stated objectives of this programme were to simultaneously develop the students' general language proficiency and foundation language skills for academic purposes through five skill-based courses:

- Introduction to Computers (2-hours / week)
- Oral Communication (12-hours / week)
- Reading Comprehension (6-hours / week)
- Writing (6-hours / week)
- Tutorial / Self-access (1-hour / week)

Two key principles of the pedagogy adopted on the scholars' course are worth noting as they resonated closely with approaches of the on-line course. First, it was believed that learner motivation is increased when learners can use language for purposes appropriate to their needs and interests. Thus, the above-mentioned courses were designed to reflect 'real-world' tasks. Second, the scholars were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning to help them direct and manage their own progress effectively.

Following negotiation with a willing colleague, it was agreed that EOLRCP1 would be integrated into one of his Reading classes as a non-credit supplement that provided additional practice in understanding long academic-style passages and dealing with new vocabulary. This work was recommended for completion during the weekly self-access hour and at other free times.

The chosen scholars' class consisted of fifteen adults from several provinces in China in the third year of senior-middle school. This level is comparable with the second year of the advanced level of General Certificate in Education or pre-university studies in the British or Singaporean education systems. This group of students was considered not only to match closely the researcher's target specification of study participants, but also presented a number of other interesting characteristics.

First, as 'gifted' students, the Chinese scholars were expected to be able to cope intellectually with the quite complex tasks set in the Blackboard.com courseware despite the known difficulties Chinese students experience in learning English (see Chang 1987 for a detailed analysis). More importantly, the researcher perceived that there would be considerable benefit in working on-line with a body of students from the Confucian-heritage culture (CHC) (Watkins & Biggs 1996) for the following reason. There is a perception in the Western literature that presents a 'deficit model' of CHC students studying overseas. As Volet and Renshaw (1996) explain, the stereotypical CHC student is described as respectful of the lecturer's authority and preoccupied with fulfilling his or her expectations; uncritical of information; reserved and non-participative in tutorial situations and so on. However, there is considerable support for the view that the CHC deficit model misrepresents CHC students' essential characteristics. CHC students are marked by high levels of achievement motivation, mastery-orientation and are far more likely to ascribe their performance to controllable factors such as effort and study methods than their Western peers (Watkins & Biggs 1996; Stevenson & Shin-ying Lee 1996). Thus, these features represent a positive profile that was, in fact, highly suited to the collaborative nature envisaged for EOLRCP1.

Second, the researcher took advantage of the fact that all parties were present on the same campus and invited them to a briefing where the features of EOLRCP1 were outlined and the purposes of the research study explained. A lengthy question and answer session followed the presentation and doubts and queries were settled. The scholars indicated their willingness to participate in the research study by signing an informed consent form that specified the terms and conditions of the study (see Appendix 2).

4.6 The Role of the Researcher

In the interests of economy and efficiency in the design, use and evaluation of EOLRCP1, the researcher assumed the role of course tutor or 'instructor' (the default name for the course tutor within the Blackboard.com learning environment). Apart from dealing with ESFL issues and general linguistic concerns, the researcher also considered it important to foster a collaborative learning environment and promote: (1) individual and interactive thinking and (2) reflective practice.

As far as the promotion of individual thinking was concerned, the researcher was guided by Raddaoui's (2000) categorisation of critical thinking skills and emphasised at every opportunity the value of:

- Offering ideas or resources and inviting a critique of them;
- Asking challenging questions;
- Articulating, explaining and supporting positions on issues;
- Exploring and supporting issues by adding explanations and examples;
- Reflecting on and re-evaluating personal opinions.

At a higher level of exchange, Raddaoui shows how individual thinking can be expanded to include interactive thinking skills that are of benefit to learners. These include:

- Offering a critique, challenging, discussing and expanding the ideas of others;
- Negotiating interpretations, definitions and meanings;
- Summarising and modelling previous contributions;
- Proposing actions based on ideas that have been developed.

Turning to the issue of promoting reflective practice in the participants, the researcher began by being mindful of the fear that some teachers have that learners will become self-critical and discouraged during moments of introspection (Cram 1992). A concurrent concern was to raise levels of awareness of the benefits of self-assessment so that the participants could potentially feel more confident about their achievements. The approach adopted for dealing with these matters involved: (1) defining the role of self-assessment in EOLRCP1 and designing activities that encouraged reflection on achievements and (2) striving towards the goal of providing 'expert' tutorial support along the lines of the learning conversations identified in chapter 3.

Finally, with reference to the evaluation in motivational terms of EOLRCP1, the researcher kept a journal of his purposes, reactions and observations of the students' learning behaviour (Taylor 1988; McDonough 1994). This instrument was particularly useful in assisting the researcher to plan, monitor and fine-tune his tutoring approach as the course progressed. The journal was also useful in the triangulation of data and in preparing for the end-of-course interviews based on the tutor's reflections and growing appreciation of trends that emerged in the data.

4.7 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedures used in the research study were designed to identify and demonstrate the influences on motivation on-line. Given the complexities of motivational studies and on-line learning environments, the researcher considered it important to collect data at various points in time in the study and this allowed for a longitudinal picture of the performance and

motivational responses of the participants to emerge. In total, data were collected on four occasions through: (1) a pre-course motivational responses questionnaire; (2) learning journals and computer-mediated communications; (3) post-course evaluations and (4) post-course interviews. In addition, a questionnaire was prepared for participants in the event of withdrawal from the course. Further details of these procedures and instruments are given below.

4.7.1 Pre-course Questionnaire

In order not to rely on the learning journals as the sole source of data in the study, a questionnaire (Appendix 3) was administered to all participants at the beginning of the course to get an initial impression of their previous motivational experiences and to find out about their reading habits and what they thought about reading in English. The instrument was inspired by Leo and Galloway (1994) and Reeve (1996) and contained 27 items. Responses were made on the following scale: 'almost always true for me', 'often true for me', 'seldom true for me' and 'very seldom true for me.'

The statements used were selected from a variety of sources in the motivation literature and covered areas such as learned helplessness (items 2 and 13), mastery orientation (7 and 11), peer esteem (4), self-worth motivation (12 and 19), Nicholl's (1989) motivational strategies (15, 20 and 25) and de Charms' (1976) distinction between positive internal control (8) and negative internal control (23). In reaching a decision about the design of the scale, the researcher was aware of the need to balance the importance of gathering good quality data against the risk of deterring subjects from completing the instrument by making it over-complicated.

Two other measures were taken to facilitate the successful completion of the questionnaire. Firstly, the complexity of language used was assessed by a Chinese lecturer familiar with the participants and their levels of proficiency in reading comprehension at the time of the administration. Following his feedback the wording of a number of descriptors was modified. Secondly,

knowledgeable colleagues advised the researcher that the participants may not have had experience in completing research questionnaires, thus it was duly explained that the form was not a test with correct answers.

4.7.2 Learning Journals and Computer-mediated Communications

The participants' learning journal entries and computer-mediated communications were key elements in the identification of the constructs or variables affecting on-line ESFL learning. Apart from the pedagogic value of sharing reflective material on a regular basis (Genesee & Upshur 1996), the researcher wanted to monitor the extent to which his comments were received and interpreted through the participants' written comments.

As the research project moved into its later phases, the researcher collected the participants' completed journals with the intention of analysing them for general trends of comment. In this respect, Farrell's (1998) work in investigating the place of journal writing as a reflective tool for experienced EFL teachers provided a useful starting point in the possible development of a coding scheme for the reflective comments made by the study participants.

4.7.3 Post-course Evaluations

The final Unit of EOLRCP1 (Appendix 1, Unit 6) was written with the purposes of obtaining a general impression of the participants' feelings and opinions of using the course materials, the support provided by the researcher and self- and peer-performance. Three on-line instruments were produced and administered on-line. The aims of the instruments were to: (1) identify an initial set of factors that influenced the participants' on-line learning behaviour and (2) identify candidates for follow-up interviews. Due to unforeseen limitations of the courseware, the researcher was unable to identify the respondents in these surveys. Furthermore the courseware generated a restricted set of data limited to describing central tendencies.

The first of the post-course evaluations dealt with aspects of the materials and the tutor's performance and consisted of 15 items. Ratings were on the following scale: 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neutral', 'agree' and 'strongly agree.' The statements were drawn from two main sources pertinent to the research study: (1) previous post-course evaluation instruments developed by the researcher and used by Kannan and Macknish (2000) and (2) items adapted from Warschauer (1996).

The second evaluation survey invited participants to rate their own learning performance on the course and that of their peers. This instrument consisted of 20 items. Ratings were on the following scale: 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neutral', 'agree' and 'strongly agree.' As with the previous instrument, the items were drawn from Kannan and Macknish (2000) and Warschauer (1996). A number of other items were drafted based on the researcher's experience of tutoring students with a similar background to those of the study participants. The third instrument used provided space for the participants to make any other comments they wanted.

4.7.4 Post-course Interviews

In order to follow-up on the responses to the data collection procedures mentioned so far, the researcher conducted a round of post-course interviews with eight of the participants. The interview format was semi-structured (Appendix 4) and the conversations were taped-recorded and transcribed for further analysis. The purpose of the interviews was to draw together previously collected data that would be of use in producing a series of short biographies (O'Donoghue & Dimmock 1997; Mertens 1998) of learners displaying distinct patterns of motivational responses in on-line learning situations. The interviewees were selected on the basis of the distinctiveness of their motivated behaviour during the on-line course.

4.7.5 Early-exit Questionnaire

Even though it was envisaged that attrition was likely to be low, if not entirely ruled-out given the nature of the participant profile and selection procedures described above in Section 4.5 above, an early-exit questionnaire (Appendix 5) was prepared in the event of withdrawal on the understanding that participants who decided not to continue with the course were as potentially interesting as those who continued to the end from a motivational point of view.

As mentioned in the informed consent form (Appendix 2), the researcher specified that withdrawing participants would be asked to complete the questionnaire about why they decided to leave the course. The instrument consisted of twenty-six descriptors (broadly based on the topics covered in the post-course evaluations mentioned in Section 4.7.3) suggesting factors that may have played a part in the participant's decision to withdraw. Respondents were required to indicate these relationships by selecting one of three options: (1) a tick in the 'Yes' box meant that the factor had a definite relationship with the decision; (2) a tick in the 'No' box meant that the factor did not have a definite relationship with decision and (3) a tick in the 'To Some Extent' box indicated that there was some connection between the factor and the decision. Space was provided under each item and at the end of the instrument for respondents to add any other relevant comments.

As with the pre-course instrument, the early-exit questionnaire was constructed in such a way as not to deter subjects from completing it. The use of the three-point scale was justified on the grounds that any participant's decision to withdraw was likely to be complex and multi-factorial; a stark yes - no response might well have hidden the subtleties behind any action. Finally, it needs to be explained that in addition to the information given in response to the questionnaire items, the researcher invited withdrawing participants to talk about their decision. As stated at the end of the instrument, the motive behind this request was not to try to

persuade participants to change their minds. Rather, it was hoped that an oral exchange would highlight factors in the decision-making process that may not have been expressed so well in writing.

4.8 Ethical Issues

The study took into consideration the ethical principles and norms that guide research involving human subjects. Two main features of the study made this requirement particularly important. First, it was recognised that there can be difficulties in using real learners as trial teaching subjects. This concern was all the more pressing given the role of the researcher outlined above (Goodyear 1991; Hitchcock & Hughes 1995). Second, given the problems often experienced by participants in on-line learning contexts, the researcher was mindful of acting in a sensitive manner to ensure that: (1) good outcomes emerged from the research; (2) participants were shown respect and were dealt with courteously and (3) procedures were reasonable, non-exploitative and fair (Mertens 1998).

As the participants in the study were involved in authentic learning tasks, it was considered necessary for all concerned to agree to participate without threat or undue inducement. Apart from guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity throughout (points of importance given that some of the data to be collected was likely to contain descriptions of feelings or references to personal events (Genesee & Upshur 1996)), the researcher also made provision for the participants to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty (see Appendix 2). However, it is to be noted that the right of withdrawal was not extended to the participants to veto on-line transactions after the event. This decision was necessary to allow the researcher the freedom and scope to work with unedited material during the evaluation phase of the study. But it was also made in the knowledge that certain participants may have been unduly reticent or guarded in the knowledge that their communications were being recorded. In the end, the researcher considered that his offer of free tuition compensated the participants for the right to use unedited material.

4.9 Methods of Data Analysis

In order to make sense of the quantitative and qualitative data collected, a variety of methods of analysis were used to formulate the researcher's interpretations of events as they unfolded on the on-line course. Wherever possible, inputs were triangulated by comparing and contrasting a variety of sources of information in order to identify and confirm categories and patterns of response that emerged from the data. The majority of the procedures employed were executed manually.

As far as the quantitative data were concerned, a simple tally of responses to the statements in the surveys was made. Frequencies of response were then computed and expressed as percentages indicating the strength of agreement or disagreement with the statements given. In one particular case, raw data were available and computer software was used to calculate Pearson product-moment correlations between the inputs received from individual respondents. This assisted in determining the strength of relationships between survey items in both positive and negative directions.

The processing of the qualitative material involved a number of steps. First, all sources of information were gathered together into sets and each set was printed on a distinctive shade of coloured paper. This made it easier to identify the sources of information in the later stages of the analysis. Then, the individual data sets were scrutinised and concept-maps for each one were drawn up. Next, the data sets were re-examined and a number of modifications to the original concept maps were made based on the development of the researcher's understanding of the evidence before him. At this point, examples of distinctive behaviour, for example, a comment made in an e-mail message or a learning journal, were identified and given a code number. The coded data were then regrouped into provisional categories of relevance. This was done with the intention of finding a consistent pattern of events both within and between the categories of data. The data were reconfigured a number of times until it was possible to account for events on

the on-line course from the perspectives of the students and the tutor in the most efficient way. The format of categories and patterns of data that finally emerged are referred to as 'salient organisational patterns' in the following chapters of the thesis.

The validity of the researcher's interpretation of the data was tested in the post-course interviews. The participants were asked questions to assess the extent to which the researcher's understanding of events on the course was consistent with their own.

This chapter set out to describe and provide support for the methodologies proposed to address the research questions. The areas dealt with concerned the design and establishment of an on-line course of study in English reading comprehension skills, the specification of the target profile and selection of the study participants, and the description of the procedures and instruments used to evaluate the study in motivational terms. In the next two chapters, the findings from the study are presented from the perspectives of the participants and the tutor.

Chapter 5

Findings and Interpretations: The Participants' Perspectives

5.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies salient organisational patterns found in the data as seen from the participants' perspectives. The material examined provides insights into the research question relating to the extent to which adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses were evident in the on-line learning environment. In order to do this, the quantitative data is used to highlight the participants' views at the beginning and at the end of the course. These viewpoints are then compared and the resulting analysis shows that the participants' views developed in a number of directions as they interacted with the learning opportunities available. Finally, the qualitative data is used to identify and explain factors that seemed to influence the participants' behaviour as events on the course unfolded.

5.2 Initial Impressions of the Participants

The pre-course questionnaire had two purposes: (1) to get an initial impression of the participants' previous motivational experiences and (2) to establish a reading habits and attitudes to reading in English profile. As far as reading habits and attitudes were concerned, Table 5.1 shows that the majority were interested in books and reading. Furthermore, the responses relating to reading in English were generally positive. For instance, 73% indicated that their interest in reading in English was often high (item 5). The same percentage often felt excited about reading in English (item 17). There is also evidence to suggest that the participants' ability in reading English was not an issue of contention (item 21).

Table 5.1 The Participants' Reading Habits and Attitudes to Reading in English

Item / Statement	Almost always true for me %	Often true for me %	Seldom true for me %	Very seldom true for me %
5. My interest in reading in English is always high.	20	73	7	0
14. I get a lot of encouragement from others to read in English.	20	40	40	0
17. I feel excited when I read in English.	7	73	13	7
21. I feel frustrated when I read in English.	0	20	60	20
22. I find books and reading interesting.	33	60	7	0
27. I read something in English whenever I have the opportunity.	33	60	7	0

As far as establishing an initial impression of the participants' previous motivational experiences was concerned, Table 5.2 provides evidence for a positive profile that was characterised by strong indications of adaptive motivation. In terms of mastery orientation, 67% always tried to solve problems by as many means as possible (item 7). A further 33% said they often adopted a mastery approach. When faced with failure in English reading comprehension, 100% claimed they would often or always try harder next time (item 11) thus signalling the potential power of effort to overcome difficulties in learning. There was also an indication that the group members were task-oriented as all agreed to a certain degree that they felt most successful when learning led to a wish to find out more (item 25).

The positive motivational profile was also supported by correspondingly low ratings in key areas marking maladaptive responses. For example, learned helplessness was hardly in evidence; only 2 participants (13%) claimed that they would give up without trying if they were given a difficult text to read in English (item 13). Furthermore, the majority disagreed that they could not avoid getting a low score in tests of English (item 2). These promising approaches to challenge were complemented by ratings in items 12 and 19

that showed that self-worth motivated behaviour was unlikely to account for poor learning performance. Additionally, few claimed to feel successful if all of the work in class was easy (item 20). Overall, the group members demonstrated that they did not believe they were underachieving and this finding was not surprising given that they were carefully selected by the relevant authorities in China.

The results from the pre-course questionnaire also provided an indication of levels of collegiality within the class. 100% claimed to a certain degree to have some friends in the class (item 1). The feelings of high social integration were reinforced by the fact that the majority were interested in each other's welfare (item 9) and were helpful (item 24). These trends were corroborated by the finding that the tendency towards troublesome behaviour (item 26) was rated very low.

Table 5.2 The Participants' Previous Motivational Experiences

Item / Statement		Almost always true for me %	Often true for me %	Seldom true for me %	Very seldom true for me %
1.	I do not have many friends in class.	0	0	20	80
2.	I often feel that I cannot avoid getting a low score in tests of English reading comprehension.	0	13	53	33
3.	I am an easy person to motivate in the classroom.	7	40	47	7
4.	When I am given a difficult text to read in English, I do whatever I can to look good in front of my classmates.	33	40	27	0
6.	I have the same reading ability in English as my classmates.	20	53	20	7
7.	When I am faced with a difficult problem, I try as many ways as possible to solve it.	67	33	0	0
8.	In class, I feel that the teacher lets me do things in my own way.	20	67	13	0

9.	I am not very interested in what happens to my classmates.	0	13	53	33
10.	I am behind my classmates in reading ability in English and I know that I cannot do any better.	7	0	20	73
11.	If I get a low score in an English reading comprehension test, I try harder the next time.	67	27	0	7
12.	When I am given a difficult text to read in English, I tell myself that it is boring and make no serious effort to understand it.	0	13	33	53
13.	When I am given a difficult text to read in English, I often give up without trying.	0	13	13	73
15.	Success for me means doing better than the other students in the class.	20	13	60	7
16.	I am better than my classmates in reading English.*	8	31	61	0
18.	I am behind my classmates in reading ability in English but I know I can do better.	7	27	53	13
19.	If I get a low score in an English reading comprehension test it is often because I had some bad luck.	0	13	27	60
20.	I feel successful if all the work in class is easy.	0	27	60	13
23.	In class, I feel under the control of the teacher.	0	53	40	7
24.	I am helpful towards others in class.	13	73	13	0
25.	I feel most successful if something I learned makes me want to find out more.	53	47	0	0
26.	Sometimes I deliberately make trouble for my classmates.	7	7	20	67

* Only 14 students responded to this statement.

As raw data were available from the pre-course questionnaire, it was possible to compute Pearson product-moment correlations between the inputs

received from individual respondents. A correlation matrix of the items presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 above at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance (2-tailed) is shown in Table 5.3.⁶

Table 5.3 Correlation Matrix of Significant Relationships in the Pre-course Questionnaire

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	24	26
1														
2														
3														
4														
5														
6					0.54									
7														
8						0.60								
9														
10														
11														
12				-0.68*										
13		0.60					-0.60							
17			0.63	0.56					0.54	0.71*				
18		0.63	-0.59								0.68*	0.53		
19											0.68*			
20								0.58		0.53				
21	0.53													
24								-0.59						
25					0.52								0.52	
26														
27							0.58							0.64

* Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

All other correlations significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This information shows that strong positive relations existed between mastery orientation (item 11) and levels of excitement when reading in English (item 17); self-worth motivation (item 12) and underachieving (item 18) and both items relating to self-worth motivation (12 and 19). Additionally, a strong negative relation existed between peer esteem (item 4) and self-worth motivation (item 12). The other relationships shown were moderately strong in either a positive or negative direction.

Analysis of the correlation matrix supports the claims that mastery orientation applied to the study of English and that all effort was made to understand English coupled with a disinclination to attribute failure to temporary external

causes. Interestingly, there was a concern shown for protecting self-image but this was probably not due to perceptions of a lack of ability or achievement in reading and studying English. In this respect, the relationship between interest in reading English (item 5) and comparable reading ability with classmates (item 6) is illuminating when interpreted as an instance of Chinese social interaction that was designed to protect the structural harmony within a group. As Bond and Kwang-kuo Hwang (1986) show, it is important for the Chinese to preserve the other's face (*mianzi*). The participants were probably cautious in their responses because they did not wish to imply any criticism of their new colleagues through the comparison of interest or ability levels. Issues surrounding the participants' face behaviour are revisited below in the discussion of approaches to challenge in English language learning on-line (Section 5.3.3).

Overall, the pre-course questionnaire findings support the views that the participants were interested in reading and that they were disposed to a mastery approach to learning. Additionally, the participants seemed evenly matched in terms of ability and there were favourable signs indicating close social integration within the group. The pre-course findings also provided an early indication that cultural factors had a bearing on the participants' behaviour. In short, the participants' perspective at the start of the course seemed to be positive and hopeful as they moved into a mode of study that was largely unknown to them.

5.3 The Participants' Reactions at the End of the Course

Following a period of five and a half months, the participants' reactions at the end of the course were recorded in three surveys administered on-line. These were: (1) materials and tutor evaluation; (2) self- and peer-evaluation and (3) any other information. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen limitations in the courseware, these surveys were administered anonymously and raw data for each respondent was not subsequently available.⁷

5.3.1 Materials and Tutor Evaluation

The participants' reactions to the course materials and the instructor's performance were highly instructive. As far as the materials were concerned, Table 5.4 indicates a rather mixed response. While, 67% agreed that the course materials were well organised (item 1) and 80% agreed or strongly agreed that the purpose of the materials was clearly stated (item 3), trends associated with working through the course were less encouraging. For instance, a third of respondents agreed that there were too many tasks set (item 8). Interestingly, 53% were neutral on this matter and the speculation is that they were perhaps unsure about the quantity of material involved. Although the majority liked the interactive features of the tasks (item 9), fewer agreed that the on-line assessments performed a useful function as measures of progress on the course (item 11). The negative trends were reinforced by item 7, where less than 50% were in agreement that the course had been academically challenging. The high neutral rating for this item suggested unwillingness on the part of the participants to commit to strongly held views on sensitive issues (also see items 4 and 5).

Overall, a question mark hung over the value of the course materials from the participants' perspective. It was disappointing to note that only 27% agreed that the course was relevant to their needs (item 5) and that fewer were of the opinion that the objectives of the course had been achieved (item 4).

Table 5.4 Results From the Post-course Materials Evaluation

Item / Statement		Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
1.	The course materials were well organised.	0	7	27	67	0
3.	Then purpose of the materials was clearly stated.	0	7	13	67	13
4.	The objectives of the course were achieved.	0	27	60	13	0
5.	The course was relevant to my needs.	0	20	53	27	0
6.	The instructions were easy to understand.	7	0	7	40	47
7.	The course was academically challenging.	0	13	40	40	7
8.	There were too many activities.	0	13	53	33	0
9.	I liked the interactive features of the tasks.	0	13	27	53	7
10.	The course was frustrating to work with.	0	33	40	27	0
11.	The on-line assessments were useful in helping me measure my progress.	0	20	40	40	0

Table 5.5 records the participants' appraisal of the tutor's performance on the course. As can be seen, 94% agreed or strongly agreed that the tutor had made his role clear (item 12). Opinions were highly favourable concerning the tutor's efficiency in responding to requests for help on-line (item 15), the value of his feedback in providing encouragement (item 14) and the service he provided in developing thoughts and ideas (item 13). Finally, it is worth mentioning that item 2 was included in the survey to get a broad measure of

how secure the participants felt working without close contact with a teacher. As can be seen, there was somewhat of a mixed reaction and this usefully highlighted a topic that was further investigated in the post-course interviews. The manner in which the participants approached the distance inherent in the learning environment turned out to be a key factor in characterising their overall patterns of motivational response. This aspect is discussed at greater length below.

Table 5.5 Results From the Post-course Tutor Evaluation

Item / Statement		Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
2.	When I had a question or comment, I wanted to contact the tutor in person rather than send an E-mail message.	7	53	13	13	13
12.	The tutor made his role clear.	0	0	7	67	27
13.	The tutor's feedback helped me develop my thoughts and ideas.	0	0	7	73	20
14.	The tutor encouraged me to learn.	0	0	33	60	7
15.	The tutor responded quickly to my requests for help.	0	0	0	27	73

5.3.2 Self- and Peer-Evaluation

The main purposes of the self- and peer-evaluations were to gain an overall impression of how the participants reacted to the independent language learning methodology adopted on course and how they viewed working with their on-line colleagues. The survey also provided a useful means of comparison with the results from the pre-course questionnaire in the area of motivational responses to challenge.

Table 5.6 shows how the participants rated their own learning performance. To begin with, a salient point to note is that the participants perceived that they understood their roles as learners on the course (item 8). This result is to be kept in mind when considering other results from this study relating to the extent to which participants demonstrated their understanding of their roles as learners through their on-line behaviour patterns.

As far as English language learning was concerned, only 27% agreed that they were satisfied with their on-line learning; a further 40% were not satisfied with their performance (item 3). Nevertheless, the majority did agree that their confidence in reading English had improved (item 4) along with their independent language learning skills (item 5). Overall, what was unclear at this stage of the data analysis was the extent to which the on-line course was directly responsible for these developments.

The data were useful in highlighting levels of social integration within the group. Encouragingly, 80% assessed that they had had a positive relationship with their on-line colleagues and this finding is consistent with Chinese values concerning the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships within a group (Bond & Kwang-Kuo Hwang 1986). However, there was less conviction in other key areas of collegial activity. For instance, in terms of trustworthiness, only 33% agreed that their colleagues could rely on them (item 10). The majority response to this sensitive item was again non-committal. The results relating to the effort expended in on-line discussion

(item 11) were disappointing with only 7% agreeing that they made every effort to participate. This finding calls into question the extent to which the participants understood their roles as it was clearly stated at the beginning of the course that they were expected to initiate and participate in the on-line discussions.

The post-course findings supported the pre-course interpretations of data insofar as they related to mastery orientation. Item 6 revealed that 100% either agreed or strongly agreed that they liked dealing with challenges. Additionally, ratings for underachievement remained low (item 13) as did indicators characteristic of self-worth motivated behaviour (items 14 and 15) and work avoidance (item 16). Despite these positive assessments, which may well have been influenced by a desire to portray a positive self-image, the participants were not prepared to state that they preferred on-line learning to traditional classrooms (item 20) on the basis of their experiences of working on the on-line course.

Table 5.6 Results From the Post-course Self-evaluation

Item / Statement	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
1. I enjoyed using the computer.	0	0	40	47	13
3. I am satisfied with my on-line learning.	0	40	33	27	0
4. I am more confident about reading in English.	0	7	27	67	0
5. My independent language learning skills have improved.	0	0	40	40	20
6. I liked dealing with challenges.	0	0	0	67	33
7. I was in control of my learning.	7	0	20	73	0
8. I understood my role as a learner on the course.	0	7	7	73	13

9.	I had a positive relationship with my on-line colleagues.	0	20	0	80	0
10.	My on-line colleagues could rely on me.	13	13	40	33	0
11.	I made every effort to contribute to the on-line discussions.	0	47	47	7	0
12.	I tried hard to produce good quality work.	0	0	40	47	13
13.	I did not expect to do well in the course because my reading ability in English was poor.	53	33	7	7	0
14.	I did not want my on-line colleagues to know about my standard of reading comprehension.	20	47	27	7	0
15.	The most important thing for me was to gain the approval of my on-line colleagues.	7	67	13	13	0
16.	I did the minimum amount of work possible.	13	47	33	7	0
20.	I prefer on-line learning to learning in the traditional classroom.	13	40	33	13	0

The success of an on-line learning environment that features tasks designed to promote the sharing of ideas requires cooperative working relationships between colleagues to be of the greatest benefit to all. The results of the post-course peer-evaluation are given in Table 5.7 and provide further indications of the levels of collegiality within the group. As can be seen, less

than 50% of the participants agreed that their colleagues acted responsibly on-line, with two participants going as far as to indicate that they were dissatisfied with their colleagues' behaviour (item 2). Although colleagues tended not to dominate the course to any large extent (item 17), there were disappointingly unclear results concerning levels of participation (item 18) and the quality of work done by others (item 19). Overall, these results seem to indicate a reluctance to judge others and are consistent with attitudes that are characteristic of the Confucian-heritage culture (Bond 1986, 1991, 1996; Watkins & Biggs 1996).

Table 5.7 Results From the Post-course Peer-evaluation

Item / Statement		Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
2.	My on-line colleagues acted responsibly.	0	13	40	47	0
17.	My on-line colleagues tended to dominate the course.	0	47	47	7	0
18.	My on-line colleagues rarely offered ideas to others.	7	20	40	20	13
19.	My on-line colleagues produced good quality work.	0	7	47	47	0

5.3.3 Any Other Information

Fourteen participants (93%) supplied a total of 51 comments in response to the invitation to provide additional information on the course. All comments were either encapsulated in discrete phrases or complete sentences and covered a wide range of topics from differing perspectives. As an indication of the general pattern of responses received, three broad categories of response were identified. The comments were either: (1) clearly positive; (2) clearly

negative or (3) expressed mixed feelings. For example, participant 1 was positive in his assessment of the course. He wrote:⁸

The tutor is very kind and warm to the student, we can get his response very quickly after sending him learning journal every time.

The course, in my opinion, is a little interesting. First, because it is taken on line; Second, some articles it gave were very interesting.

I think both my peers and I get a lot of benefit from this on-line course. Though it took a long time, it was worth to do so. One, it can improve our reading skill ; and also, it can develop our computer skill.

In contrast, participant 8 was critical of the course content:

i think that the materials of the on line reading here are not very interesting and attractive. i don't quite like to do the reading here is not because i dislike online reading, it's because these materials here are quite old-fashioned and boring.

Finally, participant 12 registered a mixed reaction to the course content and the use of on-line technology. He commented:

After completing this course, I feel that my English reading ability has de facto improved. On the other hand, I become tired with the Internet. Frankly speaking, I once fell sick after finishing a course. Maybe this is because I had been facing the computer for a long time.

The comments received in the 'Any Other Information' survey were useful in deciding upon and substantiating the motivational reactions to on-line learning discussed at greater length below.

5.4 Comparison of Pre-course and Post-course Findings

The presentation of data above suggests that the participants' views on a number of issues modified as events on the course unfolded. In particular, the comparison of the data reveals four key areas of development that require further explanation and discussion. Firstly, it is clear that the participants began by indicating a high interest in reading English but the post-course data suggest that, in certain respects, the tasks provided did not always meet their learning needs and interests. Secondly, there were strong indications that the participants were mastery-oriented in their stated approaches to dealing with problems. However, by the end of the course, there was some notable dissatisfaction with levels of perceived learning performance and one would be inclined to conjecture at this point that the commitment to effort indicated in Table 5.2 did not always translate into adaptive on-line participatory behaviour in the face of challenge. Thirdly, with respect to self-worth motivated behaviour the data suggested a noticeable concern in many areas to protect self-image and the image of others. For example, this was indicated by a marked unwillingness to commit to strongly held views and may have impacted negatively on the extent to which classroom-based relationships were exploited for learning purposes on-line. Fourthly, the comparison of data suggests that indicators in key areas (for example, independent language learning) did not always support the participants' claim that they understood their roles as learners on the course.

In order to explain these developments, it was necessary to refer to the qualitative data collected during and after the course. Of particular use were the participants' learning journal entries, E-mail correspondence with the tutor and the transcripts of the post-course interviews. The participants' views were presented as interrelated themes and are categorised in the following discussion according to how they interacted with the technology, materials and challenges in English language learning on-line.

5.5 Motivational Reactions to On-line Learning

5.5.1 Technology

There is a limited amount of support in the qualitative data for the view that the use of technology was facilitative of language learning on-line. Some students quickly came to terms with the technology and appreciated the benefits of learning on-line. As participant 14 explained in the post-course interview:

It has brought some convenience to us on this reading ... because we can combine the reading ... doing the quiz and doing some response together. If we do not use this on-line reading, maybe we'll waste a lot of time to do all this kind of work.

However, many other students seemed to be bothered by the technology and experienced difficulty in adapting to the learning environment. Firstly, finding access to the Internet often frustrated work patterns and led to frequent complaints. Participant 4 made this point clear in an E-mail message to the tutor that included the comment:

... I think time is not suitable. Time management for us is not so good. Because the time we connect to the Internet is so limited.

A second major area of difficulty related to the utility of the computer as a reading medium. Many students felt discomfort seated at the computer screen, especially those who wore spectacles. A common reaction in this situation was to state a preference for learning from print-based materials. Participant 6, who incidentally recorded the highest scores in the on-line assessment tests, noted in a learning journal entry:

In my opinion, doing reading comprehensions on the paper is much easier than on line. It won't make the reader so much tired as the latter. When I met new words on paper, I can underline them and look them up latter. I can also have the kind of [posture] I prefer when I am doing the questions.

These comments are instructive given the longstanding concern over the computer as a reading medium in language learning situations. For example, Higgins (1986), an early advocate of computer-assisted language learning, admitted that the computer did not work well in tasks that demanded rapid extensive reading of long texts from the screen. It is also worth noting that experimental research findings from the field of human-computer interaction go some way in explaining the nature of the problems faced when reading from computer screens. In a review of studies, Shneiderman (1992:442-3), identified a range of potential sources of difficulty including:

- Poor fonts, especially on low-resolution displays;
- Glare and flicker;
- Greater reading distance;
- Inappropriate layout and formatting of text;
- Reduced hand and body motion that can cause tiredness.

The extent and manner in which factors such as these affect reading performance is unclear but one consequence borne out by research is that reading speeds can be up to 30% slower from computer monitors as compared with reading from the printed page (Gould *et al.* 1987). The negative effects of this phenomenon may well have been amplified in the case of the study participants given the reported difficulties that Chinese learners encounter in the visual decoding of alphabetic scripts which are not as compact as the ideograms used in written Chinese (Chang 1987). As Chang explains, Chinese learners tend initially to have slow reading speeds in English relative to their overall levels of proficiency.

A third factor that influenced language learning on-line concerned the exploitation of the computer as a communications tool. Those who were adaptive in their approach noted that E-mail messaging was convenient and effective despite some concerns over the use of correct spelling and grammar. However, others had difficulty communicating their thoughts and feelings via electronic messaging and by the end of the course, there was a distinct preference amongst many for face-to-face interactions. When participant 12

was asked to explain why he preferred talking to people directly, he responded:

You can see each other. But using E-mail ... [it is] just typing the sentences and the words ... you want to say. I think ... face-to-face is very good because you can see the other people's face ... the countenance, the feelings.

When viewed alongside the concern for establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships within the Confucian-heritage culture, participant 12's comments hint that the Chinese would see little advantage in using E-mail in relationship building. This is because much of their 'face-work' needs to be done in the physical presence of others (Bond & Kwang-kuo Hwang 1986).

Finally, there is evidence in the data suggesting that in certain cases the participants' experiences with the technology had a negative impact on their language learning performance. For instance, participant 14, who generally worked hard to find ways of integrating her work on the course with other aspects of her studies, noted:

Sometimes we just finish reading the articles and when we come to the questions, we just cannot remember what we have read.

It is likely that experiences of this kind placed a heavy burden on recalling the entire contents of any particular reading passage and that concentration levels suffered as a result. To their credit, some participants eventually developed strategies to manage information on the computer screen more efficiently, but at some considerable expense. Participant 6 usefully reflected on her learning experiences as follows:

I remember once we met a unit ... and the article in the unit is very difficult for us. And at that time I didn't open two windows (and just one window) so, after I had read the article, I can't remember the text part. For the article is too long and the question is in details and I can't remember the text and I find the questions too difficult to answer. And at that time I really feel very angry with the questions.

Overall, the responses to the challenge of working with technology mentioned may not have been that unusual given that the learners were unused to assessing and dealing with the strengths and weaknesses of electronic media. On the other hand, it is worrying to note, for example, that the participants did not realise that it was possible to print the courseware pages for use at a later time under more comfortable and convenient circumstances.

5.5.2 Materials

The way the participants reacted to the design and content of the learning materials provided on-line depended very much on their overall disposition towards the course and its objectives. On the one hand, some were glad to join the course and looked forward to exploiting the learning opportunities provided. As time progressed, there was a growing appreciation that the course materials were useful and pitched appropriately according to levels of difficulty.

Other participants became less enthusiastic about the material and attempted, on a number of occasions, to pinpoint the causes of their growing dissatisfaction. For instance, the challenge of dealing with new vocabulary caused some to lose interest in the materials and / or to turn to the tutor for advice that was not always easy to give. Participant 8 wrote in a learning journal entry:

i have already finished the second unit and completed the quiz (Malay Archipelago).

i found that if i just have a quick look through the test,i can catch the brief meaning of it , but unfortunately , i can't understand the detailed information very well.So, my question is :how can I improve the persentage of comperahension while the speed is very fast, can i find a way to ballence the reading speed and the comperahension rate?

i can understand that the reading improvement really needs time, but , is there a shorter cut to solve the problem?

Subsequent E-mail messages revealed a vocabulary related issue and that the effort required to develop appropriate reading improvement strategies (for example, guessing the meaning of unknown lexical items from context) was not forthcoming. Eventually, this student's participation in the project diminished to zero.

A second cause of dissatisfaction with the materials related to their design. Whilst the researcher was keen to provide units of work that followed a clear and consistent format, a minority of students was unhappy with this approach. Participant 7 was unequivocal in his assessment during the post-course interview:

I think the format of the course is a little boring maybe. Of course, every unit provides a same format like in unit 2 ... in the step 2, maybe, there's a short passage and you read it and answer several questions. In the latter step, there's a big passage and you ask maybe ten questions. It's a bit like the lessons given by our teachers. Although we have used it to that kind of lessons but sometimes, in my opinion, I'm tired of that kind of format.

Two participants were, however, more constructive in their criticisms of the course content. Participant 9 wrote in a learning journal entry:

Generally speaking, your initial purpose of this on-line programme is very good and it is helpful for students like us. However, there are some thing which I think need to be improved.

First, the range of your materials seem a little out of date. They can not attract our interests. As you know, lack of interest's study sounds like compulsory.

Meanwhile, participant 6 offered the following suggestions to the researcher in the post-course interview:

Maybe I would like to give you a ... advice. Would you mind next time when you design the article, maybe make the page seem like a newspaper? For example, you can highlight the title and make it colourful or add some interesting pictures in the article, not just on the top of the page. Then the article will not seem to be so boring.

These remarks are open to interpretation. One view might be that the researcher's choice of material was indeed out of keeping with the participants' interests and preferences. It was hardly surprising, then, that some of the participants were hindered by the on-line format. However, this view fails to take into account the fact that not all of the course material was fixed in advance. In fact, at least one stage in each unit of work provided scope for the learners to find their own texts to read based on their interests. That said, there are grounds to believe that the problems these students experienced may have rested less on the materials than on other aspects of the on-line environment. These matters are explored in greater detail in the next section.

5.5.3 Approaches to Challenge in English Language Learning On-line

Analysis of the data shows that there were two main approaches to challenge in the on-line environment. The participants either made some progress in the development of a mastery-oriented approach or were obstructed in their capacity to capitalise on the learning opportunities available. Having said that, a performance factor that was common to both groups was the appeal to effort as a means of tackling challenge.

Most of participants mentioned effort at some time in their learning. Many began the course with strong declarations to do better or work harder in the future. After experiencing difficulty, the mastery-oriented typically set optimistic learning goals. For example, participant 7 wrote in her learning journal following a reading comprehension assessment test:

The score I got is not very good, half of my answers are wrong in the Quiz given in Stage 4. I do not satisfy about the result, of course. But meanwhile, I find that I have not been familiar with the questions you gave to me and my comprehension is not very good. I'll work harder to do better next time.

True to his word, this participant's score improved by 60% in the following assessment. In contrast, participant 9 was somewhat apprehensive at the beginning of the course but still managed to hold out some hope for the future. In a long E-mail message she wrote:

I've never studied on line before. Though I use internet often, the most time I regard it as a medium to communicate and amuse. In addition, I have hardly enter into an English cite before I came to Singapore. Because when I see so many English letters the majority of which I don't know, I feel very boring. I can't understand. But I feel myself process just now. I will study hard in the future.

A few days later this participant recorded an average score in the first assessment test and followed this with a lower score in the next. Later in the post-course interview, she admitted that she had been discouraged by trends in her performance and as a result had lost interest in the course for reasons that could not be fully explained beyond stating that the learning materials provided were boring.

Apart from using effort in the attempt to overcome difficulties, there were some other notable signs of the development of an adaptive learning approach. For example, a small number of students showed they were task-oriented when they were interested to find out more about a reading comprehension topic based on the content of a particular activity. On another insightful occasion, participant 14 showed that she was tolerant of ambiguity by considering that success on the course was, at times, a subjective matter and that positive learning experiences were just as valuable as objective measures of achievement. In the post-course interview she commented:

Maybe sometimes high scores doesn't mean a well comprehension of the article. The real feelings [are the ones] that you can feel yourself.

Finally, participant 7, illustrating the way that he adopted an adaptive approach to on-line learning, brought the topics of effort and performance indicators together. When he was asked in the post-course interview to speculate on the likely effects of getting a low score in a test, he commented with great fortitude:

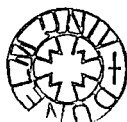
Low score? That's not so important. Because if I got a low score... there are lots of reasons.

He went on to comment that if he were to try harder, then the outcome might well be very different. This attitude illustrates the virtues of effort within the Confucianist tradition of learning. As Lee explains:

... there is an extraordinary emphasis on effort, willpower or concentration of the mind in the Confucian tradition. Because there is a strong belief in attainability by all, there is also a strong belief that one's failure is not due to one's internal make-up or ability, but one's effort and willpower. A weak-willed person making no effort is doomed to failure. (Lee 1996, p. 31)

The views expressed by participants 7 and 14 also provide a telling contrast to the responses of those who found it difficult to master the language learning challenges presented on-line. Three main areas are identified for further discussion: (1) negative achievement focus, (2) unhelpful preferences for teacher-directed learning and (3) face-behaviour.

The concept of 'negative achievement focus' is proposed as a multi-faceted phenomenon that obstructed to varying degrees the on-line language learning that occurred. Many participants were encouraged by their high scores in the assessment tests and considered it important to always score highly. However, in some cases, the pursuit of high achievement standards became an overriding concern at the expense of wider learning objectives. For instance, as the Blackboard courseware allowed for access to the tests and quizzes to be regulated, the researcher decided not to make all of the assessments available at the beginning of the course. This strategy was meant to assist the participants in planning their participation in the course at a reasonable pace, but for some it frustrated their desires to get to the assessments as quickly as possible. Participant 13 made this point clear in an early learning journal entry:



Maybe the tests should be given more quickly so that we can do many more reading comprehensions.

In a few extreme cases, participants limited their participation on the course to only taking the assessment tests as and when they became available. These students misunderstood the objectives of the course and were, without exception, dissatisfied with their grades.

Negative achievement focus also manifested itself in some individualistic behaviour that stood in stark contrast to the indicators from the pre-course survey that the class members would be helpful and caring towards each other. In the post-course interview, participant 15 was asked if she knew how well she did in relation to the other people on the course. Her response took the interviewer by surprise:

Everyone sits there doing their own things. And when we ... go out of the lab we don't want to talk anymore English ...

Subsequently, she explained that this was because the group members did not like going to the computer laboratory where Internet access was freely available, as they were not interested in the reading comprehension project. An alternative perspective on Chinese attitudes to group work was offered by participant 14 in an informal exchange over lunch. She explained that her colleagues were not particularly interested in participating in sharing activities like the Discussion Board exchanges because they did not 'fit in well with individual achievement and effort.' If accepted, this attitude would likely act as a barrier to sharing information and the successful completion of tasks that required the joint construction of knowledge. This matter is closely related to the other aspects of difficulty and challenge discussed below.

The second area of difficulty relates to the manner in which the participants approached the distance from the tutor that was inherent in the on-line environment. Whilst it is not uncommon for learners to want their on-line teachers to do more in directing their learning (Kemshal-Bell 2001), the influence of the Confucian-heritage culture, especially as it related to the role of the teacher was particularly strong.

As reported in the literature, teachers are held in high regard in Chinese culture (Chang 1987; Bond 1991). Bond (1991, p. 31) adds that:

... students respond to teachers as to a stern parent - with attention, silence, and fear. They do not question teachers, or challenge their judgments, provided the teacher behaves with moral integrity. (Bond 1991, p. 31)

The data collected support the claim that this kind of response applied in the on-line environment. Furthermore, whilst it is acknowledged that the participants were novice on-line learners, there was a marked preference for teacher-directed learning. In the post-course interview, participant 4 explained his view of the role of the tutor on the course:

I think is very necessary for us. Because as a students ... more or less you need a teacher to direct the whole comprehension course to you ... so that you can learn it better. [As] a student ... if I don't have the direction, I don't think I can do it well because I don't have the whole picture of the ... reading course. If I had ... whole picture I can see the next step - what I am going to do and I think the time-management for me is more easy to make.

Many other participants asked for guidance in planning their work and appropriate scaffolding was provided. However, there were instances where a wider role for the tutor was envisaged. For example, in an early learning journal entry participant 3 asked the tutor:

Your feedback already helped me a lot, but could you give me some more feedback about my achievement according to my scores and give some suggestions about the weekness I have, or about the aspect I should pay more attention to in the furture.

This request is understandable given that '... other people rather than the individual, often define the standards against which achievement is to be measured' (Bond 1991, p. 17) in Chinese educational settings, but it can also be interpreted as typifying a low tolerance for risk-taking and a reluctance to self-directed learning. In extreme cases, high dependence on the tutor was seen to hinder students in their ability to exploit the openness and flexibility of the on-line course. Participant 13, a talented scholar with a record of high grades in his studies, noted in an E-mail message:

Hello!Sorry for the late letter.These days I have been waiting for your tasks.But there aren't any tests for me to do.So I don't know what to do.As a result,I didn't send you E-mails until now.Could you tell me what can I do at the moment?Thank you very much!

Credit is due to participant 13 as he took the trouble to maintain contact with the tutor. His request was considered reasonable under the circumstances, as he was clearly unsure about what to do. He was, however, willing to embark on further work once it was explained that he had the freedom to set his own learning objectives. Participant 13 demonstrated a mastery-oriented approach by attempting to change his learning routines based on his experiences of studying on-line. Unfortunately, some of his colleagues were decidedly less adaptive in their outlook. As participant 4 confided in the post-course interview:

Unless the teacher ask me to change it. I think my habit will not change.

The third main area of difficulty relating to the adoption of a mastery-oriented approach to language learning on-line relates to face-behaviour. As Goodwin and So-kum Tang (1996) explain, the notion of face permeates every aspect of interpersonal relationships in Chinese culture, and face behaviour or face management, is essential to maintaining role relationships and preserving interpersonal harmony. Face management amongst the Chinese gives rise to a set of complex social behaviours (Bond 1991) and Bond and Kwang-kuo Hwang (1986, pp. 246-249) identify six categories of activity:

1. Enhancing one's own face;
2. Enhancing other's face;
3. Losing one's own face;
4. Hurting other's face;
5. Saving one's own face and
6. Saving other's face.

There is evidence to suggest that the study participants were conscious of the need to target their actions and statements to manage face in all of the above categories. In particular, they were careful not to say or do anything that would put themselves or others in a bad light. An effective strategy towards this dual aim was to avoid revealing personal information. When asked in the post-course interview how well she did on the course in comparison with her peers, participant 6 was succinct:

I just want to compare myself.

Her point was that she was not interested in how well her colleagues had done on the course. This individualistic view can be interpreted as a defensive strategy that: (1) protected her from the possible discomfort of knowing her ranking and / or (2) offered protection to her colleagues by not requiring them to engage in self-disclosure. The motive for this behaviour was confirmed by participant 7 who stated in his post-course conversation:

... in fact, it's not [necessary] to tell other people that I'm very successful.

As far as he was concerned, a personal awareness of his status was sufficient. The less that people knew about his high scores, the better it was for everyone concerned.

However, face management requires striking a balance between saving face and enhancing it. As far as face enhancement was concerned, it can be argued that some scholars considered it important to promote a positive self-image. As participant 9 remarked of her colleagues' actions:

They want to be perfect or they want to be better than anyone else.

She added that her colleagues might well be motivated to considerable lengths (including deception) in order to gain respect from each other. They were also concerned not to lose their own face under any avoidable circumstances.

In closing, it needs to be acknowledged that the face behaviour that occurred in the on-line environment seemed to be based on a complex set of values and interests. The survey data suggested that the participants were socially oriented and disposed to providing collegial support. As the course progressed, it became increasingly clear that the desire to maintain the social harmony of the group often led to guarded and defensive responses. These, in turn, would have the potential to negatively affect the success of tasks that required a more open and flexible approach to learning. This conjecture is supported by various reflections recorded during the interviews concerning the value of the English On-line Reading Comprehension Project as a primer for further periods of study on-line. For instance, participant 12, who relied heavily on the tutor's directions, noted:

I think from now on we must try to be used to on-line course

Although he was uncertain about how he could make better use of the medium, an acknowledgement was made to the effect that some kind of action was required. Participant 4, on the other hand, had a clearer idea that the influence of the Confucian-heritage culture insofar as it related to the role of the tutor was in need of overhaul in on-line contexts. He began:

... we know that in the college period we ... must do something independently - that's the need for us. If we do not adapt that situation, we will not be [so lost].

And he went on to explain:

... the important thing I think is the time management - for every student I think they are facing the same problem. They had to ... I and my colleagues have to deal with the time ... management. We have to do everything ourselves because learning is our thing, it's not the teacher's thing.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to describe salient organisational patterns found in the data as seen from the participants' perspectives. The material presented provides insights into the research question relating to the extent to which adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses, derived from recent literature, were evident in the on-line learning environment. To begin with, the pre-course survey findings portrayed a positive and hopeful profile of the participants as they embarked on a mode of study that was largely unknown to them. There were strong indications of high interest levels in reading and studying English coupled with a disposition to adopt a mastery-oriented approach in dealing with challenges. An interesting point to note was that the data also showed signs of close social integration within the group.

Following an extended period of on-line study, the post-course survey findings provided support for the claim that both adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses were evident in the on-line environment. Specifically, the manner in which the participants approached the distance inherent in the learning environment turned out to be a key factor in characterising their overall patterns of motivational response. For instance, some showed a willingness to approach tasks independently and gained some benefit from the flexibility inherent in the course design. Alternatively, other participants regarded the course materials as fixed and tended to rely on the tutor for step-by-step guidance. The result of heavy reliance on the materials and tutor, it can be argued, caused these students to be unsure of the benefits of the course. Furthermore, through their reactions, these participants (perhaps unknowingly) seemed to obstruct their own learning by adopting negative

affective responses to the technology, materials and challenges in English language learning on-line.

In the discussion of the results, three factors were highlighted as possibly hindering the adoption of mastery-oriented English language learning on-line. Firstly, the notion of negative achievement focus was introduced to describe students whose sole focus was on taking the assessment tests at the end of each unit of work on the course. Secondly, the preference for teacher-led instruction, a characteristic feature of the Confucian-heritage culture, restricted the extent to which the participants were able to grasp the potential benefits of self-directed study. Thirdly, certain aspects of face-behaviour were identified as not being particularly conducive to the sharing of information or the joint construction of knowledge.

It is important to note that what were identified as instances of face behaviour in the on-line environment were probably motivated by a complex set of values and interests. Although the participants were highly conscious of the need to protect their perceptions of self-worth, the findings do not generally indicate that they were directed by the fear of failure in high status tasks. Rather, the variability that existed in the learners' performance had as much to do with the expenditure of effort as it did with cultural factors.

Finally, the data presented in this chapter also provide the background for the discussion in chapter six of the ways in which the tutor attempted to foster adaptive learning patterns in the study of English as a second or foreign language on-line.

Chapter 6

Findings and Interpretations: The Tutor's Perspectives

6.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies salient organisational patterns found in the data as seen from the tutor's perspective. The material examined serves two main purposes. Firstly, it provides the basis for further insights into the research question relating to the extent to which adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses were evident in the on-line learning environment. Secondly, it provides the background to the discussion in chapter 7 of how adaptive learning patterns can be fostered in on-line English language learning.

A number of sources of information are used to illustrate the tutor's points of view concerning relationship building, reflective practice and the promotion of independence in language learning. These include the participants' computer-mediated communications, extracts from the tutor's electronic correspondence and reflections from the tutor's journal that was kept during the course. The chapter concludes with the presentation of a model of on-line motivational response patterns arising from the research study. These patterns are supported by short illustrative participant biographies.

6.2 Relationship Building in On-line Language Learning

In order for the learners to be able to make progress in developing shared understandings in the on-line environment, the tutor considered it necessary to be proactive in fostering supportive working relationships with them as individuals and as members of a group. Additionally, it was recognised that the nature of the partnerships created would have a direct impact on the tutor's success in scaffolding the learning that took place and in using

elaborated feedback to promote mastery in response to challenging academic tasks.

The tutor's initiatives in building rapport began immediately after the recruitment of the participants onto the course. Each member of the group was hand delivered a letter stating his or her personalised user name and password for the on-line materials along with instructions on how to use the Blackboard 'Communication Center.' Once the participants were familiar with the tools available, they were requested to send an E-mail message to the tutor confirming that they had successfully accessed the project Website. Following receipt of this first E-mail, the tutor encouraged the participants to keep in touch on a regular basis; the intention was to engage them by as many means as possible.

The following exchange illustrates the tutor's approach in providing encouragement in order to scaffold the learning process.

Participant 11 (after taking assessment test 2):

I'm so sorry for having done so badly in the assessment test. I don't know why it comes out like this, I mean when I was reading the passage, I couldn't remember anything, that is, nothing went into my mind, I was just reading. Maybe it is because I went to bed too late last night. Please don't be disappointed at me, I will do much better next time.

Tutor's feedback:

Perhaps you are right to be disappointed with your score, but let's not forget that it was the first test and we can learn a lot from this experience.

My advice for the next test or quiz is to download and print the text - it will be a lot easier for you to read from the printed page. Secondly, you are recommended to make notes as you go along. Other reading strategies of getting a general idea of the passage before concentrating on the details will also be useful.

Your experiences in taking this test are useful and should be recorded in your learning journal. If you think about what has happened (and why), you will be in a better position to change your strategies for the next Unit. This kind of planning is essential

for making improvements. So, what kind of changes can you make to get a better score next time?

I'm looking forward to reading your learning journal for Unit 2. Once that is done you can then start Unit 3.

On other occasions, the tutor's feedback was designed to provide the participants with information that linked tasks and learning objectives through the application of learning tactics and strategies. For example, in the early stages of the course, participant 3 identified a learning problem relating to her performance in the assessment tests and asked for help. The tutor responded as follows:

Thank you for your message. I'm pleased that you liked some of the reading material in Unit 3. You also say that even when you understand a test passage, you can't do very well in the quiz.

Well, there could be many reasons why this happens. Let me try to explain one situation and then you can tell me if I'm right or not.

When you say you understand the passage, you mean that you can see the main ideas and the supporting details. You also 'see' how these ideas are connected together to make larger ideas. The quiz questions fall into two kinds: questions about specific details and questions about how ideas fit together. You have to read the questions very carefully indeed and then check the text for details. This is not a reading skill as such. It's more of a test-taking skill. My advice is to ignore the suggested time limit for the tests. Let's try to develop the necessary study skills before anything else.

Finally, the tutor's feedback was used to promote a mastery-oriented approach to challenge in the on-line tasks. For example, when participant 1 momentarily lost interest in the course, the tutor responded with a detailed message that began:

Thank you very much for your message and for your feedback on the materials used on the course. I note that you feel that some of the articles are 'a bit difficult', 'very boring' or 'unattractive' for you. As a result, you and some of your classmates have decided only to read one article so that you can finish the course quickly. I'm sure you will allow me the opportunity to respond to your comments. I hope I can show you that there is another way of looking at the situation.

The tutor went on to stress the desirability of sharing ideas on-line and recommended use of the Discussion Board as a means of finding solutions to learning problems. Later, participant 1 reported that his interest in the course had increased but it is important to note that he did not use the on-line communication tools as suggested. Additionally, he never responded directly to the feedback on this occasion and the tutor was unsure of the manner in which his comments had been taken. This point raises the wider issue of the way in which communication patterns impacted negatively on the tutor's attempts to build rapport with the participants on-line.

6.2.1 Electronic Communication Patterns

There were many occasions during the course when the tutor's requests for information were slow in arriving or were seemingly ignored. The tutor also expected responses to his questions raised in feedback but these were seldom forthcoming. These events caused considerable concern and investigations led to the following discoveries, some of which were quite unexpected.

Two factors can be immediately discounted as having a negative effect on the participants' effectiveness in computer-mediated communication. Firstly, there was little unfamiliarity with the medium. Indeed, the participants demonstrated that they were 'keen adopters' (Warschauer 1999) of Chinese E-mail and Internet Relay Chat and saw the immediate benefit of using these tools to communicate with friends and family overseas. Secondly, as far as the tutor was aware, the campus servers provided a reliable service, and few, if any, of his messages were undelivered.

Extensive discussions with the participants' Group Advisor (a Chinese national) and data collected in the post-course interviews revealed that the manner in which the participants interpreted the tutor's questions and prompts were reflected in their actions as opposed to their words. To illustrate this, a direct request was made to participant 3 in her interview to explain why she did not respond to some of the tutor's messages. She responded:

Maybe I ... haven't found the habit to answer E-mail. And sometimes I read your E-mail and I directly go to the course and finish the jobs.

This answer is usefully explained from a Chinese cultural perspective. In the Group Advisor's opinion, the participants probably thought that the tutor's attempts at engagement did not require a response. In other words, they were misinterpreted as instructions. A second possibility is that they may not have known how to reply appropriately, perhaps due to a lack of language skills, and so it was preferable for them not to say anything at all for fear of losing face. Furthermore, any linguistic gaffes would risk spoiling the relationship with the tutor (a consideration that was also designed, no doubt, to save the tutor's face).

It was only towards the end of the course that the tutor became aware of the participants' preferred modes of communication. Understandably, the participants were in the constant physical presence of each other and post-interviewees confirmed that they often spoke about non-sensitive issues concerning the course. Later, the tutor took greater advantage of the fact that the participants were on campus and passed personal messages to them in the canteen and library. This strategy improved the effectiveness of the communication between the tutor and the participants.

The tutor discovered that the Group Advisor was a useful conduit of information to and from the participants and he subsequently became an intermediary who was able to protect the face of all parties (also see Goodwin & So-kum Tang 1996). On one occasion the Group Advisor mentioned that he had 'heard' that the participants were reluctant to submit their responses to the quizzes and tests on the course because they felt they had done badly. This information was conveyed, the tutor believed, not only to excuse the lack of communication but also to explain why it would not be forthcoming on other face-losing issues in the future.

These events were a revelation to the tutor. Importantly, they raised issues concerning the extent to which cultural factors influenced the manner in which relationships could be fostered on-line. These experiences also highlighted a point concerning the importance of learning 'about' electronic communication (Warschauer 1999). Warschauer insightfully notes that students working on-line need '... to learn enough about cultural ... differences to choose the right communication strategies for the particular audiences that they are likely to encounter in a new medium' (Warschauer 1999, p. 163). Clearly, the participants were as yet unaware of the dynamics of the 'Western academic networking culture' (Warschauer 1999) where establishing a working relationship with a teacher is perhaps as important as achievement based measures of performance. The tutor expected to engage the participants in a direct form of correspondence based on a 'prompt-response' model of communicative interaction. In short, the participants' face-saving concerns and respect for the tutor's authority hindered, to varying degrees, the ability of the tutor to establish workable on-line relationships. These points are further illustrated in the following section that deals with the tutor's attempts to foster reflective practice in on-line language learning.

6.3 Reflective Practice in On-line Language Learning

As far as the teaching and practice of language learning skills was concerned, the course promoted the use of strategies designed to assist in the regulation of emotions, motivations and attitudes. The principal mechanism used was reflective journal writing and this involved the participants analysing and making judgments about their experiences on the course. It is important to note that the tutor was aware that the participants were probably unused to this aspect of Western pedagogy and that time and individual attention would be required to develop the necessary enabling skills.

The data show that a small number of participants appreciated the freedom they were given to reflect on their learning experiences. Participant 7, as the following journal extract shows, was positive about the benefits of the exercise:

My learning journal always write some information about the process of doing the ... project. I think from the learning journal I learned that to maybe revise the process when I took the project. And I think again for the process. And I know what did I do during the ... every unit and It's help me a lot.

However, these views were not representative and the group as a whole responded poorly to maintaining and submitting their learning journals.⁹ Due to the lack of data, it was not considered worthwhile, therefore, to develop a means of categorising the reflections obtained. Unfortunately, none of the journal data collected were particularly 'rich' because the participants were unable to generalise about their personal experiences.

Nonetheless, close inspection of the material did reveal that the majority of participants either: (1) could not find the time to write their journals; (2) considered the practice excessively complex or (3) were unsure about the purposes of the exercise from the outset. The third category of response proved to be the most illuminating from the tutor's perspective.

Understandably, some participants were uncertain about how their journals could be of assistance in on-line learning. As participant 3 commented in the post-course interview:

In my learning journal, I wrote something about my learning experience and the feeling ... about the article and something ... but ... I'm still not very clear about what to write in the learning journal and what is the learning journal mean.

Interestingly, this participant had requested assistance in writing her journal entries and the tutor duly referred her to the guidelines provided (see Appendix 1, Unit 1, Stage 1). The tutor also mentioned that developing reflective practice required an exploratory approach and that it was necessary for her to take the first steps in writing up some comments on her learning. Despite this encouragement, the tutor sensed there was a reluctance to begin without all the necessary facts and skills in place beforehand.

In other instances, some participants were resistant to the concept of reflective practice. For example, when participant 6 was asked in the post-course interview whether she thought she would change her approach if she were to write another journal, she responded:

I think we can't write our learning journal ... just every week we finish or every month or after we've finished one unit. I think the period is too frequent. We can't make so much progress just after one unit.

In her post-course interview remarks, participant 15 was the most outspoken in her negativity towards the pedagogy:

I think it is not necessary to write learning journal because ... you improve. I think you can feel ... you improve. No need to write down.

These comments came across as being motivated by the achievement focus identified in chapter 5. They also indicated that certain participants largely missed the point about the claimed benefits of self-monitoring (Oxford 1990) and that they could not have possibly understood, as well as they thought, the roles that they had been expected to take up in the learning environment. If correct, this supposition suggests that expectations between the tutor and the participants were misaligned.

6.3.1 The Mismatch of Tutor-Participant Expectations

Evidence to suggest that there was a mismatch of expectations between the tutor and the participants is taken from the participants' responses to the on-line task set in Unit 1, Stage 1 (Appendix 1). The 'My Job - Your Job' activity invited the participants to express their ideas and feelings about their previous learning experiences either on- or off-line and then to explain their expectations concerning the ways in which the course would develop. Once these views were collected, the intention was to compare them with the tutor's view of his job in a Discussion Board exchange. The participants were moderately responsive in the first round of discussion and a total of nine E-mail messages were received that expressed a Confucian-heritage culture

view of learner-teacher relationships. In response, the tutor sent an E-mail message to all participants explaining the emphasis given to regular participation, self-regulation, self-evaluation, cooperation and collaboration in the design of the course materials.

The response to the next round of discussion was very disappointing as far as the tutor was concerned. Only one participant made a short posting to the on-line forum and this did not address any of the issues raised:

I just want to say that we can't make our schedule for this on-line cause well. As you know we don't have enough time on-line, maybe we sometimes forget to send our feedbacks on time. Sorry.

In other contexts, the tutor (Towndrow 1998) has enjoyed a certain amount of success with the 'My Job - Your Job' task and the version developed for the on-line environment was in keeping with trends in the recent literature (for example, Salmon 2000). The tutor was prepared to devote as much individual time as necessary to establishing reflective learning relationships but these did not materialise. Whatever exchanges occurred tended to remain at the level of instruction and there were no occasions where the tutor co-constructed information leading to knowledge with the participants. In other words, no 'learning conversations' (Roehler & Cantlon 1997) transpired.

Through these experiences, the tutor learned that on-line reflective practice requires a high degree of self-discipline and as far as novices are concerned, close supervision. Unfortunately, the tutor had few, if any, means at his disposal to reinforce the desirability of keeping a learning journal. He was totally reliant on the participants' good will and this was not available for this aspect of the course. Upon reflection, the tutor formed the opinion that the journal-writing component of the course may have been too ambitious for novice on-line Asian students. On the other hand, the tutor was, and remains, unaware of anything in the published literature to suggest otherwise.

The failure of the tutor's efforts to promote reflective practice undoubtedly impacted negatively on the participants. What is more, the apparent reluctance / resistance of many to setting their own learning objectives etc. may go some way to explain why only 27% stated they were satisfied with their on-line learning (Chapter 5, Table 5.6, Item 3). Ultimately, the lack of participation in the 'My Job - Your Job' discussion was an early warning that the participants were in unknown territory and that they may well have been confused or anxious about the tutor's Western-style pedagogical inclinations. This final point is further substantiated in the following discussion of the tutor's attempts to promote learner independence in the on-line language-learning environment.

6.4 Promoting Independence in On-line Language Learning

In order for the participants to exploit the flexibility inherent in the design of some of the tasks set, a certain level of independence in language learning was required so that ideas and interests could be explored and shared freely. Two examples are offered to demonstrate how this was done successfully.

Participant 9 showed her high level of interest in reading and learning English by submitting a fascinating description of a building in her home city (see Appendix 1, Unit 3, Stage 2). The tutor responded with supportive and congratulatory feedback. Participant 9, then did something that is characteristic of self-directed learning behaviour; she asked the tutor to give her further comments in an area she had identified for herself as one in which improvements could be made (i.e. writing style).

Secondly, participant 2 showed that she was capable of composing a passionate personal reaction to the material provided in Unit 5, Stage 3 (see Appendix 1) relating to the phenomenon of global warming. The following heart-felt commentary was sent to the tutor in an E-mail message:

I think professor peter is right. Maybe in the year 61.A.D. there is pollution on the earth, as soon as the human make the first fire in the world. We have to admit that the earth is developing faster and faster, every day we have a lot of invention come out. However, we have to cut down thousands of acre forest everyday to build new house and factory. The green in the earth is less and less. The god is fair, we destroy the environment, the environment will punish us. He give us the flood, the desert, and when we face these things, we cannot do anything but wait for death, it is true. If the human continue damaging the environment, the earth will die one day. We have already kept on giving the dust to the environment for thousands of years, please, human, please, stop, for us and for our next generation.

In contrast to these moments of excellence, there is evidence to suggest that the majority of participants experienced difficulty in coming to terms with the requirements of independent on-line language learning. Two major factors are identified for further discussion: (1) a lack of familiarity with self-evaluation and (2) a negative disposition towards self-direction.

On the whole, the participants were not particularly open to learning about a wide set of performance indicators. Rather, there tended to be a wish for fairly immediate and noticeable achievement to occur. This reaction is partially understandable given, as Bond (1991, p. 17) explains, that in Chinese teaching contexts '... other people rather than the individual often define the standards against which achievement is to be measured.' Nonetheless, the tutor felt that he was unduly restricted in what he could achieve given his difficulties in building on-line rapport with the participants and their difficulties in coming to terms with reflective journal writing.

As far as self-direction was concerned, the students came across on many occasions as passive and submissive. The Group Advisor, who characterised them as generally lazy and in need of regular coaxing, confirmed the tutor's perceptions in this respect. The tutor also believed that unless closely monitored, the participants were easily distracted from their work. Participant 7, in a telling admission, confirmed this tendency towards a lack of self-discipline:

I am busy nowadays and I'm afraid I cannot finish Unit 3 on time, I'm really sorry that I haven't taken it seriously. When I get on the net, I always do other things like reading news, communicating with my former classmates in China.

Given such behaviour, and in the interests of maintaining contact and momentum on the course, the tutor was left with little alternative but to issue on occasions explicit instructions to the participants. For example, when visible participation levels dropped for a sustained period, the following E-mail message was sent to the entire group:

Subject: Deadline for the Completion of Unit 3

Dear Students,

My suggested deadline for the completion of work for Unit 3 (including, of course, the submission of learning journals) is [date]. For students who have finished Unit 3, kindly note that the quiz for Unit 4, Stage 2 and the Assessment Test for Unit 4 are now available for your use. Have a good week ahead and thank you for your participation.

Best wishes,

This message galvanised some of the participants into action but the tutor was not pleased about what he had done. Although it is acknowledged that time and confidence are required to set, monitor and evaluate learning objectives, the participants' marked and continued preference for guidance and structure had the overall effect of limiting the amount of flexibility on the course thus turning it into a fairly closed or restricted learning environment.

This concern impacted strongly on the tutor's perception of his role and led to frequent reflection in his journal concerning the difficulties he encountered in balancing openness and structure in the design of the on-line learning materials. A particularly disappointing aspect of the implementation of the course related to the participants' reactions to the Stage three activities in Units two, three, four and five of the course (see Appendix 1). These tasks were relatively unregulated as they invited reactions to a variety of topics using unspecified sources of information both off- and on-line. However, those

who expressed views were unappreciative or misunderstood the course designer's intentions. For example:

To be frank, if we really have the time to do that, we prefer reading the articles just from book ... that's more convenient ... just to go to borrow some book and read it, that's all. (Participant 6, post-course interview)

... to find some articles is not very important ...because ... find the article in my opinion is ... a little bit troublesome so I didn't do that. (Participant 7, post-course interview)

Since [the tutor] gave the answers of Stage 2 and Stage 4 of each unit, I thought that there were no answers in Stage 3. That's why I didn't do them. (Participant 13, learning journal entry)

These comments give rise to a number of observations. Firstly, a signal was given that the exploitation of the flexibility on the course required participants to channel effort away from other concerns and this may have caused a conflict with their other achievement-focus objectives. Unfortunately, the widespread failure of the Stage three tasks meant that the participants themselves imposed limitations on their opportunities to view suggested topics from a variety of perspectives (cf. Kemshal-Bell 2001).

Secondly, through his experiences, the tutor came to realise that his carefully designed and painstakingly produced on-line learning environment was not fail-safe. This realisation served to illustrate a point that is often lost on educators who are overly enthusiastic in their support for contemporary approaches to the use of technology; namely, it has the potential to widen the range of modes in which on-line teaching and learning can occur but there is no copper-bottomed guarantee that this will happen or that it will add any value to teaching and learning experiences. Faced with this situation, the tutor became aware of the fact that he needed to take advantage of the fact that the participants were physically present on campus and that he had to be more proactive in finding out directly from them what their difficulties and concerns were in dealing with the demands of the course. These points lead to the wider discussion in the next section concerning the manner in which adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses were evident in the on-line learning environment.

6.5 Further Discussion

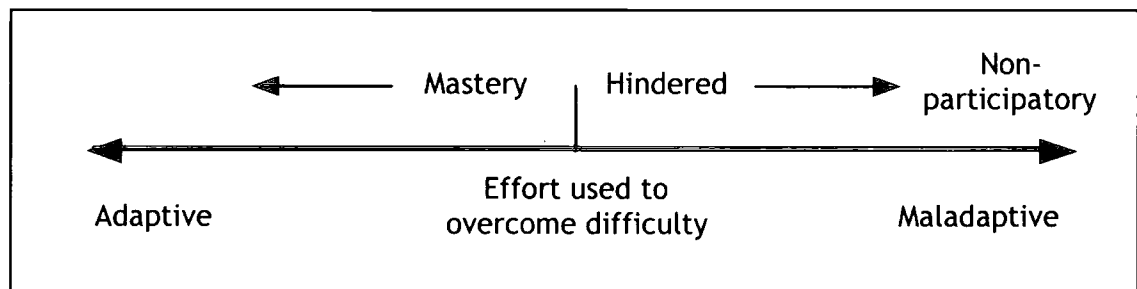
The description of the participants' on-line learning behaviour in this chapter and in chapter 5 is paralleled by stages one, two and three of Salmon's (2000) five-step model of teaching and learning on-line through computer-mediated conferencing. Most participants in the study easily surpassed Salmon's stage 1; that is, they learned to gain access to the learning environment, became familiar with its features, overcame technical problems and sent their first message using the communication tools available. Additionally, the majority of participants reached stage 2 by establishing on-line identities. However, there were few signs of anyone moving on to stage 3 where information was exchanged in a meaningful way. Needless to say, the participants in this study were a long way from Salmon's stage five or 'Development' where a constructivist approach to learning is exploited. In order to explain why the participants in this study were unable to progress towards a constructivist approach to on-line language learning, the following model of motivational responses patterns is proposed as being helpful.

6.5.1 Proposed Model of Motivational Response Patterns in the On-line Language Learning Environment

In light of the difficulties identified in section 2.2.2 concerning the distinguishing features of motivational 'styles,' for the purposes of this thesis, a pattern of motivational responses refers to a series of consistent actions in a 'single' learning context. The proposed model of motivational response patterns in the on-line language-learning environment is derived from the recent classroom-based literature and relates specifically to the study participants' profile. That is, a small group of gifted Chinese scholars undertaking a course of study in English language academic reading comprehension skills. None of the participants had studied overseas or on-line prior to the course.

Figure 6.1 presents the motivational response patterns that were evident in the on-line learning environment. Three broad patterns are identified: (1) mastery, (2) hindered and (3) non-participatory along a continuum of 'adaptiveness.' The response patterns are distinguished by the amount of effort used to overcome difficulty, or approach challenging academic tasks, and fall into two main categories: adaptive and maladaptive. Maladaptiveness was associated with the extent to which participants' seemed to obstruct their own learning through their negative affective responses to the technology, materials and pedagogy used on the course. In the most extreme cases, the hindered pattern resulted in non-participatory behaviour. At the other end of the spectrum, participants demonstrated adaptive learning traits and the potential to be mastery-oriented in on-line learning contexts.

Figure 6.1 Proposed Model of Motivational Response Patterns in On-line Language Learning by Gifted Chinese Students



In order to illustrate the on-line motivational response patterns of mastery, hindered and non-participatory, three short biographies are presented below of students who participated in the course.

6.5.2 Illustrative Participant Biographies

6.5.2.1 Mastery

Participant 14 was a talented student who demonstrated on more than one occasion that she was able to establish, maintain, and attain personally challenging and valued achievement goals. Overall, her performance showed that adaptive learning was possible in the learning environment given a

sufficient investment of time and effort in overcoming the challenges presented.

Participant 14's successes were based on an early expression of interest in the course material and in using on-line resources to fulfill her research requirements. As the course progressed she felt that the quality of her reading experiences had improved even though she did not score highly in the assessment tests. This student took initiatives, was accepting of ambiguity in English language learning tasks and occasionally asked for the tutor's guidance. She distinguished herself from others by attempting one of the 'open' Stage 3 tasks and agreeing to share her findings with her colleagues on the Blackboard Discussion Board. Most notably, she regularly spoke to the tutor in on-campus social contexts and actively engaged him in conversation on a wide range of topics. Given this level of enterprise, the tutor was not in the least surprised to learn that following completion of the scholar's programme, Participant 14 was granted direct entry into an undergraduate science degree programme six months ahead of her peers.

This performance would have been exemplary if not for a number of difficulties experienced with the demands of independent language learning and reflective practice. On more than one occasion, she asked for close direction from the tutor and showed in her responses to a series of questions in the post-course interview, that she was unfamiliar with the notion of taking personal control over her learning. That is, she was unsure about evaluating the extent to which she thought she could pursue personal goals and originate her own behaviour. Perhaps, most disappointingly, she did not contribute to the 'My Job - Your Job' task and only submitted a single learning journal for Unit 4. Towards the end of the course, she seemed to be short of time and rushed the final activities. This caused her to record a low score in the assessment test and to regret that she did not invest more time in completing this task.

Fortunately for this participant, what she did not manage to achieve on-line, she made up for in her face-to-face interactions with the tutor. She was appreciative of the experience of taking the on-line course and indicated in

her interview responses that she was open to change in her approaches to learning. For example, with respect to reflective journal writing she noted:

While doing the learning journal it is also a procedure of thinking and improving the procedure at the same time. Maybe without this learning journal ... just let us thinking ... think about what we have learned maybe we were sometimes too lazy to do this. But with this learning journal, while writing it, it is the procedure for us to think ... about learning.

I think I will try new ways because after all this is our first time to do this kind of on-line reading and we do not have much experience. If ... you give me another chance to do it, I will use some new methods. I think this new methods may let me do it ... better.

The tutor was pleased to have worked with participant 14. She was intelligent, forthcoming and most importantly, open to the possibilities on-line technology had to offer.

6.5.2.2 Hindered

In the tutor's opinion, the manner in which participant 15's behavioural profile developed over time is particularly illuminating for on-line courseware developers and tutors. Despite her talent, she seemed to obstruct her own learning to the extent that she was no longer able to establish and work effectively towards valued learning goals. Her failings were largely attributable to her narrow achievement focus and prohibitive cultural sensitivities.

Participant 15 showed early promise on the course. She was enthusiastic about the novelty of learning on-line and reading from the enormous stock of material available in digital format. Additionally, she claimed to see the benefit of using on-line tools to share information and to make improvements in her academic reading performance. Typical of many of her colleagues, she gave the initial impression that she was favourably disposed to using effort to achieve learning goals. However, she quickly encountered difficulties with the requirements of independent language learning and reflective practice.

Unlike her mastery-oriented colleague mentioned previously, participant 15 was resistant to pedagogical change and was openly concerned to protect her self-esteem. She considered the process of on-line learning adopted unnecessarily complex and made it clear that she preferred a programme of study that allowed her to make immediate progress with the minimum expenditure of effort. She reported in the post-course interview that she valued performance goals and that she felt most successful when she got high scores in the end-of-unit assessment tests.

There is a possibility that participant 15 was not sufficiently challenged by the course materials and this would partly explain her reactions. She often complained that the material was inadequate for her needs and that she was not interested in the learning opportunities presented in the project. As she explained in the post-course interview:

To me it's a little bit boring and sometimes I have the other things to do, so I don't want to go to lab ... maybe do some research or ... do some vocabulary exercise ... I don't want to go to lab and do the reading project. Maybe the other things I have arranged ... the other things ...

Another area of dissatisfaction related to the lack of exhaustive feedback in the on-line quizzes and tests. She seemed to have a low tolerance for ambiguity in English language comprehension tasks and was also generally unappreciative of the tutor's efforts to build an on-line relationship through the provision of elaborated comments on work done. This may have been due to a lack of confidence in her ability to express herself in writing; a fact that surfaced after the completion of the course.

Interestingly, participant 15 also mentioned in the post-course interview that she preferred face-to-face interactions with her peers but she was taken aback when the tutor suggested that she could have met with him for a consultation in his office to discuss her progress on the course. She ruled this possibility out by stating she was afraid to talk to people who did not share her culture and ethnicity. This attitude, she bravely admitted, did not bode

well for future Western-style tutoring relationships. Overall, there are grounds to believe that participant 15's on-line attitudes prevented her from making the most of the talent that she possessed. Furthermore, her experiences suggest that the on-line environment was not effective in reducing social context cues. In fact, it may well have intensified them.

6.5.2.3 Non-participatory

Participant 8 presented by far the most difficult form of on-line behaviour for the tutor to come to terms with. She was uncooperative and made very little attempt to explore the learning opportunities available. Ultimately, the tutor believed that she was hindered by her negative reactions to the course materials and her inexplicable aloofness.

Paradoxically, this participant began the course optimistically. She was one of the very few to establish a Student Home Page using the Blackboard tools. She also distinguished herself by asking for the tutor's advice in increasing her reading speed whilst maintaining comprehension levels. This concern arose after she recorded a score of 30% in assessment test 2. Although challenged, the tutor tried his best to provide supportive and useful feedback as requested.

Notably, participant 8 was also one of the few learners to respond to a Stage 3 task by posting a message on the Blackboard Discussion Board. She also took the trouble to read the small number of contributions to the other discussion threads and posted a useful addition of her own. This effort went unacknowledged by her peers on-line and she may have been disheartened by the lack of response. Coincidentally, from this point onwards, participant 8 tended to avoid the work on the course.

Interestingly, participant 8's start to the course was prophetic. It took her many weeks to send her first E-mail message in English despite the tutor's repeated off-line requests to obtain a free E-mail account. Once this simple task was completed, communications with the tutor came to a permanent

end. Initially, the tutor was alarmed by this response as this participant had indicated in her 'My Job - Your Job' contribution that she perceived her role as a learner on the course as requiring prompt and positive action. In contrast, she complained bitterly about the materials as this feedback in the end-of-course survey shows:

i think that the materials of the on line reading here are not very interesting and attractive. i don't quite like to do the reading here is not because i dislike online reading, it's because these materials here are quite old-fashioned and boring. so i am so sorry that i didn't finish the tasks that i once promised to accomplish.

The tutor had difficulty in accepting this apology and was perturbed by the fact that a lack of interest in the course materials could have had such a profound effect on this participant's behaviour. Despite the possibility of on-campus contact, the tutor rarely saw participant 8 during or after the course. Additionally, there was no response received to his request for a post-course meeting. These conditions imposed an unmanageable constraint on the tutoring relationship.

Participant 8's on-line behaviour was maladaptive in the extreme although it is unlikely that she fully perceived failure as inevitable or due to a lack of ability on her part. Then again, in the pre-course survey, she mentioned that she found reading interesting and that she read something in English whenever she had the opportunity. But, she also mentioned that she often felt frustrated when reading in English and denied that when she was given a difficult text to read in English she would tell herself that it was boring and make no serious attempt to understand it. Taken in light of the poor score recorded in the first assessment test, her reaction, as interpreted from the citation above, would indicate otherwise. Based on the facts available, participant 8 demonstrated a helpless response to academic challenge on-line and behaved in a self-defeating manner.

6.5.3 The Contribution of the Model of On-line Motivational Responses Patterns to the Literature

The three participant biographies used above to illustrate the on-line motivational response patterns presented in Figure 6.1, resonate with many aspects of Nicholls' (1989) Task, Ego and Work Avoidance orientations. Notably, Task orientation was evident in the on-line Mastery pattern insofar as participants reported that they felt most successful when they understood the activities set and wanted to find out more about the topic areas mentioned. The negative aspects of Ego orientation were noted in students who hindered themselves by adopting a narrow, instrumental focus on tasks. Finally, and most obviously, Work Avoidance was evident in the Non-participatory pattern.

However, in order to take a wider account of how contextual factors influenced the participants' motivational responses, Nicholls' categorisations, which involve different 'world-views', were not considered to be entirely appropriate in the description of specific events in the on-line context.

Furthermore, Leo and Galloway's (1996a) motivational 'styles' of mastery, self-worth motivation and learned helplessness were helpful in developing explanations of the participants' responses to the difficult and challenging on-line tasks. However, the 'styles' literature does not easily account for two aspects of the participants' on-line behaviour and this assisted in the development of the Hindered and Non-participatory patterns. First, there was a need to embrace the fact what appeared to be 'self-worth motivated' behaviour was not accompanied by pessimism about the causes of failure. The participants' lack of success in the on-line tasks was more likely to be explained by deficits in levels of effort expended rather than ability. Second, the Non-participatory pattern was created to deal with a limited number of cases where the expenditure of effort on-line was for the best part exhausted. In no way does the Non-participatory category suggest that academic ability was in question even though it is framed as a response pattern that brings few, if any, long-term benefits.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to identify salient organisational patterns found in the data as seen from the tutor's perspective. The discussion centred on three areas of importance in assisting learners to make progress in developing shared understandings in on-line learning environments. These were: (1) relationship building; (2) fostering reflective practice and (3) promoting independence and self-direction.

As far as relationship building was concerned, the tutor strived to engage and encourage the participants. He also sought to scaffold learning by providing information that linked tasks and objectives through the application of learning tactics and strategies. Despite some limited success, the tutor's efforts in promoting mastery on-line were thwarted by the participants' electronic communication patterns. Often, the tutor's questions and prompts were misinterpreted as instructions that required no written response. The participants were observed to prefer face-to-face interactions and communicating their feelings through a face-protecting intermediary.

The tutor's attempt to promote reflective practice through a regular journal writing exercise was largely unsuccessful. The data collected were notably thin and the participants demonstrated that they were unsure of the purposes of the exercise. The tutor considered that there was a mismatch of expectations that resulted in his exchanges remaining at the level of instruction rather than construction.

Finally, a small number of participants showed that they were capable of working independently on-line. However, the majority was uncomfortable with self-directed learning. In response, the tutor was left with little alternative but to play a more directive role. This development was regretted as it was judged to limit the amount of flexibility on the course. The participants' actions and the tutor's reactions turned the course into a fairly closed and restricted learning system.

In order to explain why the participants were unable to attain the level of constructivists, a model of motivational response patterns in the on-line learning environment was proposed as helpful. Three broad motivational patterns, mastery, hindered and non-participatory were shown in relation to each other on a continuum of adaptiveness where effort was used to overcome difficulty or approach challenging tasks. The illustrative participant biographies showed that adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses as derived from the recent classroom-based literature, were indeed fully evident in the on-line learning environment. The question remaining for discussion now concerns how adaptive learning patterns can be fostered in on-line English language learning. This matter is taken up in the final chapter where the findings of this research study are put into a wider context.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study was to demonstrate that the areas of motivation and on-line learning studies have the potential to inform one another for the benefit of theorists, researchers and educational practitioners working in both disciplines. In this final chapter, it is proposed to set out the achievements of the study by reviewing the three research questions guiding it and then stating what it is believed has been learned in the case of each one. Following the discovery that on-line English reading comprehension tasks could (also) fail to promote mastery orientation (cf. Galloway *et al.* 1996), the researcher considers whether more could have been achieved given different aspects in the research design. The final sections of the chapter suggest avenues for potential future research and place the findings of the study in the wider context of the challenges facing on-line educational studies.

7.2 Achievements of the Research Study

As articulated at the end of Chapter 3, three research questions relating to how the topic of adaptive and maladaptive motivational patterns could be studied in greater depth in on-line learning environments were identified from the theoretical and practical issues presented in the literature review. The context of the study was limited to the trial of English academic reading skills materials designed for use by Chinese scholars attending a tertiary-level institution overseas. To recall, the first question asked whether adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses, as derived from recent literature, were evident in on-line learning environments. The second question sought to

identify the theoretical positions underpinning on-line teaching, learning and materials design. Finally, the third question related to challenges faced by on-line teachers in identifying and developing the necessary skills for effective practice and asked in what ways adaptive learning patterns could be fostered on-line with particular reference to the learning of English as a second or foreign language. The achievements in these areas of enquiry are summarised in the following sub-sections.

7.2.1 Research Question 1: Motivational Responses in On-line Learning Environments

Based on the researcher's findings, there is evidence to suggest that adaptive and maladaptive motivational response patterns were evident in the on-line learning environment. Furthermore, there are also grounds to believe, following Dweck (1986), that viewing the behaviour of the participants on the course in terms of their levels of success in establishing, maintaining and attaining personally challenging and valued achievement goals was useful as a device in understanding the development of their responses to the learning materials under trial.

As far as the motivational responses were concerned, a model of on-line patterns was proposed that identified three broad categories of behaviour in the 'single' learning context: (1) mastery, (2) hindered and (3) non-participatory. These patterns were placed along a continuum of 'adaptiveness' that indicated the amount of effort used to overcome difficulty, or approach challenging academic tasks. The model of adaptiveness could, no doubt, be further refined, but it was useful at this stage in understanding a number of critical events during the course of the research.

The model helped to demonstrate that on-line learning environments are multi-faceted and that the behaviour displayed within them is greatly influenced by a variety of contextual factors. For instance, with the case of the maladaptive patterns of hindered or non-participatory, the participants seemed to obstruct their own learning through their negative affective responses to the technology, materials and pedagogy used on the course. In

other words, the commitment to effort indicated in Table 5.2 did not always translate into adaptive on-line participatory behaviour. Reflecting on these events, the tutor identified three areas of interrelated behaviour that accounted for these reactions. These were: (1) a negative 'achievement focus' that restricted the participants' views to narrow perceptions of the merits of individual effort and achievement; (2) strong preferences for teacher-directed learning that resulted in a low threshold for risk-taking and a reluctance to self-direct and (3) concerns to protect and enhance the 'face' of self and others that led to defensive rather than proactive social behaviour. For example, there was unwillingness on the part of participants to commit to strongly held views on sensitive issues for fear, one can reasonably assume, of not wishing to disturb the harmony of the group.

These points lend support to Kannan and Macknish's (2000) claim that cultural factors have a powerful influence on the manner in which Chinese students study on-line. They also give rise to another important realisation specific to this study concerning the way the self-worth motive operates with gifted Chinese scholars. As noted in the pre-course questionnaire findings (and later in the course through other sources), the participants were not only talented but also positive about studying in English. However, given that the risk of failure was always present in the on-line learning materials through the quizzes and end-of-unit assessment tests (see Appendix 1), the participants' concerns for protecting a sense of self-worth did not seem to generally arise through a fear of failure on these potentially high-status tasks. Rather, their responses had as much to do with effort as they did with cultural factors. They also had difficulty exploiting the flexibility in the course structure and in defining their own roles as learners. Leaving Western-oriented pedagogy aside for the moment, the suggestion is that the motive to protect a personal sense of self-worth is only to be considered maladaptive in situations where there is accompanying pessimism about the causes of failure.

At the other end of the motivational spectrum, a small number of participants demonstrated adaptive learning traits and the potential to be mastery-oriented in on-line English language learning. However, for reasons explained

below, the researcher is of the opinion that he was unable to do a great deal more in promoting mastery on-line.

A final matter to address in this sub-section is whether Leo and Galloway's (1996a) concept of motivational 'styles' was valid in the on-line learning environment. It will be recalled that Leo and Galloway's suggestion was that individuals may display different motivational behaviours in response to task- or subject-sensitive factors and that over time these may develop into consistent patterns of motivated behaviour. Whilst the researcher is confident in claiming that recognisable patterns of behaviour developed during the study period, there are insufficient grounds to maintain that 'styles' emerged. Clearly, further investigative work would be required in studying the participants in other subject areas on-line (see section 7.4.1 below). Having said that, the claim that the on-line motivational patterns of mastery, hindered and non-participatory were observed, is the first step towards possibly identifying these trends or patterns as 'styles.' There is no *prima facie* evidence to suggest, therefore, that motivational 'styles' do not apply to the study of English as a second or foreign language on-line, and for this reason, it was not considered necessary to look for other concepts to help explain the events as they unfolded on the course. Overall, encouragement should be drawn from these findings to investigate whether the concept of motivational 'styles' is generalisable to other on-line learning contexts.

7.2.2 Research Question 2: Theories of On-line Teaching and Learning

The second research question sought to identify the theories that are used to underpin on-line teaching, learning and materials design. The writing of futurists who envision the possible formation of digital communities in education, but who fail at the same time to mention how this might be done, prompted this enquiry.

The review of the varied and, at times, contradictory literature concerning on-line learning revealed that there was nothing to suggest that a unique form of pedagogy related to this kind of learning environment. Nonetheless,

commentators have attempted to show how education could be made more effective and efficient by contrasting traditional and contemporary approaches to the uses of technology in the classroom. Thus, the old school tended to view technology as substitute teachers where machines were considered to hold knowledge. Now, educators are increasingly convinced by the view that technology consists of tools that can assist in the construction of knowledge (Zuccheromaglio 1993; Jonassen *et al.* 1999), and this resonates with constructivist 'theories' of learning that maintain that subject matter becomes meaningful, and therefore, understandable only when it used in context-rich activities (University of Illinois 1999). Overall, the contemporary approach requires a more open and flexible learning system that provides space for the knowledge construction process to operate.

This research study explored a number of implementation issues within the on-line constructivist movement in greater detail. The first notable finding from the literature was that the meaning of the terms 'open' and 'flexible' were generally unclear. The resulting confusion was resolved by the development of the 'flexibility continuum,' presented in Figure 4.1. This model, it is suggested, served to achieve a number of useful objectives. Firstly, the meaning of the term 'open' was restricted to situations where course content issues were open to negotiation. The term 'flexible' was then used to delimit the ground that surrounds the constraints of time, place and pace that operate in on-line learning environments.

Secondly, the model allowed for a number of materials design scenarios to be classified according to the extent to which planned activities imposed restrictions on the extent to which learners were able to explore their own ideas and interests using a range of research strategies. From an instructional design point of view, this was useful because it meant that the researcher was able to experiment with a range of design features that served to gauge the participants' willingness to accept open learning constructs. As it transpired, they were generally uncomfortable about, or were not interested in, entering into discussion about the content and direction of the course. Rather, they seemed to prefer working with a fixed set of materials. This finding led the

researcher to reflect on his methods of course design and his justifications for them.

The participants' reactions to the design of the course materials suggested that the provision of tools to construct meaning and knowledge requires considerable thought about how these items are to be perceived and then utilised. On the basis that a hammer is only a hammer when its proper uses are known, the participants showed that they were not skilled enough to participate in the design of the course. That is, they were given a constructivist's tool but they were not always sure why they had it or what it did. As a result, the tutor, realised that he could have done more to design tasks that emphasised the fact that the participants were part of an 'on-line' educational community and that they were empowered to change its nature according to their needs and interests. The following sub-section documents the challenges faced by the tutor in fostering adaptive learning patterns on-line.

7.2.3 Research Question 3: Promoting Adaptive English Language Learning On-line

In the interests of professional development and continual learning, the researcher-tutor is of the opinion that his on-line teaching would have been immeasurably improved if he had been more aware of some of the variables impacting on the learning environment. The following discussion, therefore, can be considered as being useful in identifying some of the things teachers of Chinese scholars, and perhaps other students in similar situations, need to know about on-line learning to help them become adaptive users and learners in the medium. It will be recalled that the participants indicated at the beginning of the course that they were interested in reading and disposed to a mastery-oriented approach to learning. Furthermore, they seemed to be evenly matched according to ability levels and the indications were that they valued close social integration. However, by the end of the course, findings from a number of sources suggested that there had been mixed reactions to the materials and pedagogy adopted by the tutor. In turn, these developments raised concerns about the relevance of the materials to the

participants' needs and interests. Ultimately, a question can be said to have hung over the issue of whether the course met its stated objectives. New opportunities for learning were created but these did not necessarily lead to new behaviours and ways of perceiving things. The tutor's difficulties in promoting mastery on-line can be summarised as follows.

The manner in which the participants approached the distance inherent in the courseware design was a key factor in characterising their overall patterns of motivational response. Some seemed to be insecure about not working in close contact with the tutor and this led to a number of important discoveries about on-line relationship building with Chinese scholars. The first point to note relates to communication patterns. Evidence showed that the participants tended to interpret the tutor's prompts and questions as instructions. This resulted in much confusion and bewilderment in the early parts of the course concerning the purposes of communication within Chinese hierarchical relationships. Later, the tutor learned that the participants preferred face-to-face interactions and that the on-line tools provided could be best deployed when the least amount of physical distance was involved. This is borne out by the fact that the participants did not exert leverage on the asynchronous features of computer-mediated communication. This reduced the range of modes in which on-line learning could occur and may have been because they were in regular contact both on- and off-campus or that logging on to the Internet imposed an unnatural distance between them. These points would be well borne in mind for future courseware planning.

Secondly, the participants showed that they were unclear about their roles as learners on the course. In addition, they wanted the tutor to function in the same way that traditional classroom-based teachers did in China. As a result of the perceived mismatch of expectations between the tutor and the participants, the tutor felt that the participants failed to take advantage of learner-centred activities such as journal writing and self-monitoring. Clearly, the participants were thrust into unknown territory and that may well have accounted for some of their negative reactions towards the course.

As a result of these events, the tutor considered that he had little choice but to assume a more directive role towards the end of the course. As far as the interests of independent language learning were concerned, these actions turned the learning environment into a fairly closed and restricted system. This development led to an important finding in the area of fostering personal control and self-reliance in Chinese students. The participants' responses showed overall that empowerment in learning is a slow process and that they may well have been enfeebled by their experiences. If correct, this discovery would require any explanation of learners' successes and failures that referred to their individual goals, intentions, purposes, expectations and needs to take account of their previous learning experiences and cultural heritage. This point may be obvious to some but it is a regular practice to find teaching and learning materials on-line that are acultural and insensitive to personal preferences.

For his part, the tutor attempted to tailor his feedback strategies to take account of the participants' motivational patterns, as they seemed to emerge on the course. However, as reported, the participants seemed to hinder themselves in this, thus making the tutor's job that much more difficult. In short, when the line in on-line communication went dead, there was little that could have been done to restore it. Again, this point may be a commonplace but it serves to illustrate that materials designers should be cautious about placing all of their eggs in one on-line basket.

It is now time to address directly the issue of how adaptive English language learning can be promoted on-line. Two main points are offered for consideration to educators of on-line language tutors dealing with Chinese students. The first area relates to scaffolding independent learning and the second concerns maladaptive response patterns to difficult and / or challenging academic tasks.

Although it is generally understood that scaffolded learning is an extremely complex activity that requires not only considerable expertise to execute successfully but also time for students to accept their roles as learners, the findings from this study suggest that scaffolding with Chinese learners may

have to remain closer for a longer period until a learning style is developed that is facilitative of sharing and collaborative effort. Although one is reluctant to suggest how much longer the scaffolding is required, the study suggested that Chinese students' practices are deeply rooted in a teacher-led culture and are not easily amenable to rapid change. However, following an extended period of study, there were some encouraging signs that Chinese students can be led to appreciate the constraints of over-reliance on teacher direction in the effort to maximise the potential of digital media in learning.

As far as the tutor was concerned, the study also highlighted the fact that scaffolding can only be useful when the tutor has clear ideas about what it is he is attempting to do and why he is doing it. To take a worksite analogy, workmen erect temporary structures called scaffolds to gain access to hard to reach places while building or repairing a permanent structure. Rarely do they use scaffolding to support the building they are working on. Indeed, when there is a risk of collapse they erect a buttress that provides permanent support. In education, it can be argued that scaffolding may be used with the purpose of buttressing the learning process. If correct, it would be more accurate to describe this kind of assistance in less temporary terms. Consequently, when permanent support is placed very close to the learner, there is a danger it may become an edifice that towers over the person concerned. The tutor is of the opinion that this may well have happened with his attempts to promote independent language learning with the Chinese participants. That is, his purposes became overpowering ends in themselves as opposed to a set of enabling skills that allowed improvements to be made in academic reading comprehension skills. Thus, contrary to the tutor's preferences (and perhaps his prejudices) what he failed to notice was that the participants actually wanted closer teacher direction, given that they knew that this was how they could make the best use of their considerable academic talent.

The second area of concern relates to dealing with maladaptive learning patterns in Chinese learners on-line. As far as the hindered and non-participatory behaviours are concerned, the researcher recommends designing tasks that give greater prominence to controllability and personal

responsibility. Such activities would be crafted to build resilience and teach learners that their contributions are indispensable to the progress of others. Additionally, tasks of this nature are truly collaborative in that end results are, or should be, greater than the sum of individual parts.

The matter of how the self-worth motive operates with Chinese students is a more challenging hurdle to negotiate. Given that the study participants were not overly pessimistic about the causes of their failures and shortcomings, then it was quite plausible for them to be both mastery-oriented and concerned to protect their perceptions of self-worth at the same time. In this situation, the researcher recommends designing tasks that provide space for face-management to occur. For example, an English language reading comprehension activity could be arranged that allows individual participants to enhance their own face and give face to others in the class, at the same time.¹⁰

Finally, it remains in this sub-section to ask whether the research generated findings to support the claim that English reading comprehension work on-line has the potential to go hand-in-hand with mastery orientation. Clearly, the proposal that a 'mastery' category of motivational response was observed is based on the fact that some participants were tolerant of ambiguity in the tests, quizzes and tasks. However, there is perhaps stronger support in the findings to state that these tasks could (and did) fail to promote mastery orientation thus validating Galloway *et al.*'s (1996) claim to this effect in on-line English as a second or foreign language contexts. This discovery, leads to the following discussion of whether more could have been achieved given different aspects in the research design.

7.3 Could More Have Been Done Given Different Aspects of the Research Design?

Given the complexity of the issues investigated in this exploratory study, it is necessary for the findings reported above to be validated through replication. That said, three changes in the design of the research are proposed that could have enhanced the participants' learning experiences and the richness of the

data collected. Two of the suggestions relate to generating greater interest levels in the content of the course and the third concerns intensifying the risk factors surrounding the course in order to provoke stronger reactions indicative of maladaptive response patterns.

7.3.1 Not English Reading Comprehension

It could be argued that EOLRCP1 was not of the greatest utility to the participants given their study conditions. First, they were recent arrivals from overseas and some faced communication difficulties. Second, the scholars' course included an academic reading skills module that involved intensive practice in many of the areas covered by the on-line course. To avoid the charge of unnecessary duplication of material, the researcher's course content could have focused on the grammar of English. In particular, morphology, word classes and syntax were not part of the scholars' curriculum and some participants were interested in these areas. Additionally, the unedited citations from the participants included in this thesis show that they needed assistance in crafting correct and effective prose. In the researcher's experience, the study of English grammar basics does generate debate concerning the existence and applicability of the 'rules' of language, but it is unknown whether the ambiguities involved are as great as those associated with some aspects of reading comprehension.

7.3.2 Closer Curriculum Integration

It will be recalled from the information provided in chapter 4 that the participants were recruited on a voluntary basis onto the course. Although the Group Advisor was supportive of the use of on-line technologies in language learning, he was not in any position to appeal to the students to participate in the course as a study requirement. Although time was available for the work on EOLRCP1 to be done, the on-line course lacked formal academic status. This factor could have led to a lack of interest in the course materials.

Given a second chance, the researcher would spend more time with the Group Advisor and senior faculty members in establishing the on-line course as a recognised credit-bearing component of the scholars' course. The on-line work could then be more closely integrated with the complementary themes and objectives of the scholars' classroom-based reading work. If this were to happen, then there would be a definite advantage in the same person acting as the teacher both on- and off-line.

7.3.3 Publication of Test Scores

If it were considered that the on-line motivational patterns identified and illustrated in chapter 6 were too broad and lacked clarity, then one way in which greater precision could have been introduced into the analysis would have been to intensify the perceptions of failure on the course. This could have been done, as with much classroom-based practice, by making the participants' scores in the tests and quizzes openly available to all. Although there is no automatic function in the Blackboard.com courseware that allows the publication of scores, the tutor could have made this information available in other ways. As it was, the participants had little idea how they were performing in relation to their peers and probably drew comfort from the fact that their scores were not in the public domain. As a negative result, they were not bothered sufficiently to mention their performance records in computer-based communications and learning journals.

7.4 Main Avenues of Potential Future Work

This study examined adaptive and maladaptive motivational responses in on-line English language learners. The findings presented in answer to the research questions set suggest a number of other avenues of investigation. Three topics are outlined below that are considered worthy of further study. These relate to: (1) continuing directly where this research study left off in the field of on-line English language learning; (2) changing and expanding the conditions of the research site and (3) varying the profile of the participants

studied. A brief statement of the potential benefits for educational practitioners is given to support each suggestion.

7.4.1 From English Language Learning Patterns of Response to Styles

As mentioned in section 7.2.1 above, whilst the researcher was confident in claiming that recognisable patterns of behaviour developed during the study period, there were nonetheless insufficient grounds to maintain that 'styles' or different motivational behaviours in response to task- or subject-sensitive factors existed. In order to determine that the concept of motivational 'styles' is generalisable to other on-line learning contexts, it would be considered necessary to study the participants' behaviour in other subject areas on-line and then compare these with their responses in English language work. Considerations such as these would seem to feed into a comparison of on-line and conventional classroom behaviours and the crossover between the two environments could be a rich source of new material in motivational studies. For example, it might transpire that learners adopt one 'style' when learning on-line and another in traditional contexts. It might also turn out that individual informants adopt differing motivational 'styles' on-line depending on the nature of the tasks involved. A further issue to address might be how differing motivational 'styles' are then distinguished on-line and how an on-line tutor's feedback strategies needs to change to deal with these differences.

7.4.2 Expanding the Research site

Although it was considered of interest studying a group of participants working on-line whilst attending the same educational institution, it would be particularly interesting to work with Chinese subjects within a learning environment where there was spatial and temporal distance. Such conditions would have both their positive and negative points but it is likely that greater emphasis would be placed on all interactions taking place on-line. Thus, if it could be demonstrated that an on-line presence was indispensable to success on the course, then greater value would be potentially added to on-line

experiences. A second suggestion for expanding the scope of the research site would be to study a variety of research locations over a longer period. Warschauer's (1999) findings provided rich material leading to powerful generalisations from his cross-site comparisons and his methodology would be of value in on-line motivational studies. A final suggestion that could yield interesting comparative data would be to work with a group of students who were less gifted academically.

7.4.3 Varying the Participants' Profile

Finally, there was undoubted merit in working with a homogeneous group of informants in terms of ethnic background and general ability levels. However, the validity of the various points made in this thesis relating to behaviour deriving from the Confucian-heritage culture, would be strengthened through comparison with the behaviour of individuals in the same learning environment from different ethnic backgrounds. Perhaps the most interesting area (and potentially most threatening for Chinese students) would be working with a heterogeneous group at a spatial and temporal distance. As far as the Chinese members of such a group would be concerned, their reactions to working with people they had little or no chance of previously knowing or meeting would make for fascinating findings in the area of cross-cultural adaptive and maladaptive motivational response studies. Such an area of research would be of particular value to practitioners who currently work in on-line multicultural contexts and have difficulty in identifying and managing the dynamics of the environment they are involved in.

7.5 Closing Remarks

One finding from the research study that is worth repeating is that despite the researcher's best intentions, the learning environment was not fail-safe. Indeed, despite the rhetoric of the futurists, the potential of technology to widen the modes in which teaching and learning occurred, remained largely unfulfilled. If accepted, this point would seem to challenge those who purport that the Internet is 'perfectly suited' to cooperative and collaborative

activities between students (Felix 2001). Such statements of enthusiasm rarely include details of how these objectives can be achieved.

Thus, what remains clear is that education on the Internet is still 'a grand experiment' (Gilster 1997). Then again, given the speed at which technology and implementations are changing, it is not possible to provide a definitive picture of anything as complex as English language learning and motivational studies on-line in a single study (cf. Felix 2001). Future research in these areas is urgently required in order to illuminate and understand the digital world we inhabit.

Endnotes

1. In 1979, there were one million computers globally (Ingram 1998). According to the Computer Industry Almanac (2001) there will be over 625 million computers-in-use by year-end 2000. The Almanac also predicts that there will be about 673 million Internet users worldwide at year-end 2002 and over 1 billion users by year-end 2005.
2. Hoy and Tarter (1997, p. 6), define school climate as, 'a general term that refers to teachers' perceptions of their work environment; it is influenced by formal and informal relationships, personalities of participants, and leadership in the organisation.' Seminal work in this field was conducted in American elementary schools by Halpin (1966).
3. According to Halliday and Hassan (1976, pp. 14-17) an anaphoric reference points back to or presupposes a previously-mentioned person or thing in a text. A cataphoric reference, in turn, points forward or presupposes an element that follows in a text.
4. Dr. Gittinger gave his written permission to the researcher to freely adapt his materials.
5. A modest user of English in an academic reading context is defined as a student expected to score at least 5.0 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).
6. The full 27x27 cell matrix is not reproduced here in order to give prominence to the salient patterns in the data.
7. The researcher was, however, able to trace the authors of comments submitted in the 'Any Other Information' survey through a subsequent classroom-based activity.
8. All students' comments are reprinted verbatim, including spelling, grammar and typographical errors.
9. Only 15 learning journals were received during the course. This represented a 25% participation rate on the basis that a submission was expected at the end of units 2-5 of the course.
10. Such an activity builds on the socially-oriented nature of Confucian-influenced achievement motivation (Yu 1996) and involves splitting the class into two teams that are in competition with each other to complete a task that requires cooperation and deliberation by all. This could be arranged on-line by getting the participants to choose colleagues they like working with best. It is believed that open competition is a potentially effective classroom management strategy to use with Chinese students for the following reasons. Firstly, large group work is less threatening to individual face than: (1) teacher to whole class interactions where power is stacked in the teacher's favour and (2) pair-work where honour in the completion of the task would ultimately reside with one participant at the expense of the other. Secondly, participants in large groups can draw support from their peers who may be more willing to share information safe in the knowledge that they are not in competition with each other. This is a win-win situation because individual contributions will serve to enhance a sense of group membership and if victorious, honour will be shared by the group. The 'winning' team would, more likely than not, attribute its success to effort over ability. The 'losers' would be encouraged to try even harder the next time. I am grateful to the Group Advisor in this research study for his help in understanding the merits of large group work and competition with Chinese students.

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Appendix 1

English On-line Reading Comprehension Project 1

http://www.blackboard.com/bin/login.pl?course_id=EOLRCP1&new_loc=/courses/EOLRCP1

Course Information
Units 1-6
Tests, Quizzes and Surveys
External Links

by

Phillip Towndrow

Staff Information

[\[Top\]](#)

English Language Instructor Phillip Towndrow

E-mail: philliptowndrow@yahoo.com
Personal <http://www.geocities.com/philliptowndrow>
Link:

Other Information:

I've been an English language teacher for many years. I've taught in England, Spain, the United Arab Emirates and Singapore. My main areas of interest include courseware development and evaluation, computer-assisted learning, motivation and reading comprehension skills. In my spare time I like to relax by walking and playing the guitar.



Course Information

- **Introduction**
- **Course Goals**
- **Course Materials**
- **Site Map**
- **Test Information**
- **Participation Policies**
- **Technical Troubleshooting**

Course Information

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Handout

Hello again!

As previously mentioned, this course is designed to improve your English reading comprehension skills in academic contexts. You will be involved in work that requires a variety of responses to texts. Apart from reading, you will also be involved in note-taking tasks, sending E-mail messages, participating in on-line discussions and some journal writing. Your interactions with your on-line classmates and the Course Instructor, Phillip Towndrow, will deal with questions about English as a Second or Foreign Language, general linguistic matters and study skills.

For your information, the course is divided into a number of **Units** of work. Each Unit has a number of sections or **Stages** and you are strongly recommended to follow the sequence of activities the first time around. Later on, you can look at any of the pages again as many times as you like.

Finally, you are invited to contact Phillip Towndrow at any time to discuss your progress on the course.

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Handout

The aim of this course is to improve your reading effectiveness by raising your ability levels in reading comprehension. To do this, it is proposed to focus on two skill areas: (1) your ability to understand written texts (both electronic and print-based) and (2) your ability to demonstrate your understanding of what you have read by completing another kind of task - e.g. writing a short essay or participating in an on-line discussion. At the end of this course you should be closer to being a **competent** and more **confident** reader in English.

In addition, the course aims to stimulate your interest in reading in English. During your participation you will also gain experience in independent language learning skills. This means helping you take control of your learning experiences by focusing on three key areas of independent learning:

1. Planning a learning task by setting personal goals and objectives.
2. Keeping track of your progress on the course by noting your achievements and areas for improvement.
3. Evaluating your overall learning experiences on the basis of what you planned to do at the beginning of the course.

There is a chance that you may not know how to express your learning goals and objectives. If this is the case, then you should contact Phillip Towndrow and he will help you plan your new learning journey.

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Course Information

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Handout

The materials used on this course have been specially written for you and are designed to exploit the possibilities of learning on-line. In order to do this it will be necessary to deal with texts that vary in style, difficulty and content. Overall, the purpose of the course is to give you experience in reading and understanding texts that follow predictable formats, such as, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect etc.

Each unit of work is made up of sections or stages. These stages feature **Handouts** that contain useful reference information or **Tasks** that describe reading comprehension activities.

Some of the activities are more **open** than others. In the open activities, you will have greater freedom to select the content of your work and respond to questions in the way that you want. Other activities have fixed content and explicit guidance on what to do.

You are strongly recommended to consider the following questions at the beginning of each new activity:

- Why am I performing this activity?
- What do I need to do at the end of the activity?
- How can I decide if I have completed the activity successfully?
- How can I keep myself focussed on the activity?

You are also advised to check out the **External Links** section if you are interested in following up on any of the topics covered on the course.

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Handout

This course consists of over forty pages of information stored in various **folders**. In turn, these folders include numerous **sub-folders**. You are advised to print this site map and then use it to help you find your way around. If you get lost, either click on the **Back** button or use the **navigation buttons** on the left-hand side of the screen.

Course Information

- Introduction (Handout)
- Course Goals (Handout)
- Course Materials (Handout)
- Site Map (Handout)
- Test Information (Handout)
- Participation Policies (Handout)
- Technical Troubleshooting (Handout)

Unit 1 - Introduction

- Learner Training
 - On-line Etiquette (Handout)
 - Learning Journal (Handout)
 - My Job - Your Job (Task)
- Personal Introductions (Task)

Unit 2 - Comparison & Contrast

- Stage 1 - Introduction (Handout)
- Stage 2 - Picture Descriptions
 - The Picture (Handout)
 - Response A (Tasks)
 - Response B (Tasks)
 - Comparison of Responses (Tasks)
- Stage 3 - Durians & Pineapples (Tasks)
- Stage 4 - Assessment Test (Task)
- Stage 5 - Learning Journal (Task)

Unit 3 - Description

- Stage 1 - Introduction (Handout)
- Stage 2 - Reading Accurately (Tasks)
- Stage 3 - Show & Tell (Tasks)
- Stage 4 - Assessment Test (Task)
- Stage 5 - Learning Journal (Task)

Unit 4 - Proposition and Support

- Stage 1 - Introduction (Handout)
- Stage 2 - Today's Topic is ... (Tasks)
- Stage 3 - The Digital Soapbox (Tasks)
- Stage 4 - Assessment Test (Task)
- Stage 5 - Learning Journal (Task)

Unit 5 - Cause and Effect

- Stage 1 - Introduction (Handout)
- Stage 2 - Is it Getting Hotter? (Tasks)
- Stage 3 - More Hot Topics (Tasks)
- Stage 4 - Assessment Test (Task)
- Stage 5 - Learning Journal (Task)

Unit 6 - End of Course Evaluations

- Stage 1 - Introduction (Handout)
- Stage 2 - Materials & Instructor Evaluation (Task)
- Stage 3 - Self & Peer Evaluation (Task)
- Stage 4 - Any Other Information (Task)

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Handout

In order to measure your understanding of texts and your general progress in reading comprehension work, two kinds of assessment are used on the course. These are:

1. **Quizzes** that follow reading passages in the various Stages of the Units. These usually provide you with instant feedback that can assist you in your understanding.
2. **End of Unit Assessment Tests** that will help both you and Phillip Towndrow measure your achievements based on the objectives of the course.

You should keep a careful record of your scores in the quizzes and tests and note these in your Learning Journal; refer to the Handout under [\[Unit 1 - Introduction\]](#):[\[Learner Training\]](#):[\[Learning Journal\]](#).

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Course Information

[[Top](#)] : [[Course Information - Participation Policies](#)]

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Handout

On-line learning is very different from learning in a classroom where everyone can see each other. Therefore, as participants on this course, we need to behave in a way that helps us all get the best out of the materials and facilities available to us. In order to do this you are, of course, expected to participate fully in the activities that have been specially designed for you. This means that you will need to do the following things:

- Keep in regular contact with **Phillip Towndrow** using the **Communication** tools available to you. Kindly note that Phillip's E-mail address is philliptowndrow@yahoo.com.
- Keep in touch with your fellow on-line students by reading and responding to their E-mail messages and postings on the Discussion Board.
- Get on-line assistance whenever you feel it is necessary. Use your fellow on-line students as learning resources by sharing as much information as you can with them. Phillip Towndrow will also be able to assist you.
- Maintain and submit your **Learning Journal** on a regular basis.

Your participation and contributions will be valued by your colleagues. You will be fully rewarded for your efforts in giving and sharing on-line.

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Course Information

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Handout

Need help using Blackboard.com?

Excellent advice is just a few clicks away. To get to the **Support Site**, click on the **Student Tools** button and choose the **Student Manual** utility.

What do I do if my computer crashes?

The best thing to do is to leave your computer as it is and find someone locally who can help you. It might be useful to note down the events that happened before your computer stopped working properly. Can you recall which keys you pressed?

How can I contact Phillip Towndrow in an emergency?

Try sending an E-mail message to me at philliptowndrow@yahoo.com and I will get back to you as soon as I can. Alternatively, you can call or send me a fax on the special number that I gave you when you registered for this course.

Prevention is better than cure!

To avoid costly problems, try to do the following things:

- Keep a print-out of all of your messages, documents etc. that you send or receive.
- Make regular back-up copies of all of your computer files onto a floppy or Zip disk.
- Install and use an anti-virus software program on your computer.

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- Stage 1 - Learner Training
 - On-line Etiquette
 - Learning Journal
 - My Job - Your Job
- Stage 2 - Personal Introductions

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Handout

It is important to note that you are a new member of an on-line community. To help you get the maximum benefit from working with your colleagues, it is important to provide some guidelines on good on-line learning behaviour before we start on our learning journey.

1. Try to be polite. Of course, you are free to disagree with another person but remember to respect the feelings and opinions of others.
2. Be clear in your messages and postings. This will save you time and energy.
3. Add your name at the end of your on-line correspondence.
4. Check your spelling, grammar and punctuation.
5. Avoid on-line arguments.
6. Include descriptive titles in the subject line of your messages and postings.

Finally, if there is something that you do not understand or you feel lost, take immediate action to get help or advice. Your colleagues are all potential learning resources and should be consulted at every opportunity.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

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Handout

[Download Learning Journal Template](#)

What is a Learning Journal?

A Learning Journal is document that helps you and Phillip Towndrow keep track of your progress on the course. You can download the Learning Journal template by clicking on the link above. The template is a Microsoft Word file which you can edit and complete as and when necessary. Kindly take note that your Journal will **only** be seen by you and Phillip Towndrow.

Why do I need a Learning Journal?

Think of your Journal as a kind of tool that you can use to manage your learning. Your Journal is a document that helps you plan and evaluate your learning. Your Journal entries will help keep you on track especially when things are new and you find that you need to deal with a lot of information at the same time.

Keeping a Learning Journal is a useful way of measuring your progress and keeping in touch with your feelings and opinions about language learning. For example, you can use your Journal to note your achievements and successes. It is also a place for identifying areas for improvement in your learning. This is done by thinking about occasions where you have a learning problem and need to find a solution to it. Your Journal entries will be of use at the end of the course when you need to look back over your work and evaluate your overall achievements. For example, you will need to judge how well you have done based on the learning objectives that you set at the beginning of the course.

How do I keep my Learning Journal?

Begin by setting a regular time for Journal writing. The best way to complete your Learning Journal is at the end of each activity and unit of study on the course - use your word-processor for this. Send your completed Journal sheets to Phillip Towndrow as E-mail attachments. You are **strongly recommended** to keep print-outs of your Journal sheets as back-ups of your electronic files.

Here are some tips on completing the various sections of the Learning Journal sheet:

Name:	This information assists the Course Instructor to identify you.
Date(s):	This information records the date of the Learning Journal sheet and when the activities were done.
Description of work done:	This section should include a detailed description of the tasks completed. You also need to note the name of the relevant Unit and Stage .
Resources used:	This section records the resources and materials that you have used during the activity and / or unit. This information will be useful for your future reference and should include the titles and authors of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print-based materials (books, magazines, newspapers etc.) • CD-ROMs and other electronic resources • Web page addresses
Amount of time spent on activity / unit of study:	Useful information to help you and the Course Instructor keep track of the amount of time that it takes you to complete a piece of work.
Achievements:	This section is designed to allow you to reflect upon the positive aspects of your learning. Think about the things that went well, express your feelings and attempt to explain why you succeeded in the activities that you did.
Application of skills:	Can you think of ways in which you can apply the things you have learned about reading comprehension to other aspects of your studies - either on- or off-line?
Difficulties:	This section is designed to allow you to reflect upon areas where you can make improvements in your learning. Think about the things that did not go so well, express your feelings and attempt to explain why you experienced difficulties in the activities that you did.

Help requested:	Did you seek help during the on-line activity or unit? What kind of help did you request? Who did you contact? Was the assistance that you received useful?
I would now like to know ...:	Based on your entries in the preceding sections of the Learning Journal, what actions logically follow next? This is something that you may need to discuss with the Course Instructor .
My learning goals for the next activity / unit are ...:	Can you now formulate a learning objective for the next reading comprehension activity? Again, this is something that you will probably want to discuss with the Course Instructor .
Any other comments:	Finally, you can use this space for any other comments that you wish to make about your on-line learning experiences.

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Learning Journal

Instructions: Complete one Learning Journal sheet at the end of each Stage and Unit of work. Provide as much detail as possible

Name:

Dates:

Description of work done:

Resources used:

Amount of time spent:

Comments on learning:

• Achievements	
• Application of skills	
• Difficulties	
• Help requested	
• I would now like to know ...	
• My learning goals for the next Stage / Unit are ...	
• Any other comments	

Course Documents

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Current Location: Unit 1, Stage 1 - 'My Job - Your Job'

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Task

What are the roles of the Course Instructor and learners in this on-line learning environment?

The purpose of this activity is to give you the opportunity to express your ideas and feelings about your previous learning experiences either on- or off-line and then to explain your expectations for the learning you will do on this course. It will also be useful for you to share your ideas with your fellow learners and then compare all of your views with the Course Instructor's view of his job. In this way we will be able to come to a shared understanding of our roles and hopefully avoid some of the problems that can happen when people meet for the first time in a new learning situation.

Instructions:

1. Prepare to make two lists of your ideas. In the first, note down the things you think the **Instructor** should do on this course. In the second list, note down the things you think **you** should do on this course.
2. When your lists are ready, send them to Phillip Towndrow. You can do this in one of two ways: either as E-mail attachments or via the **Student Drop Box** which you will find under **Student Tools**.
3. When Phillip Towndrow has received all of your lists, he will post a summary of your ideas as an **Announcement** for all of you to read. He will also provide you with information about his views on on-line teaching and independent learning.
4. Finally, we will use the tools available at the **Communication Center** to clarify our ideas and share our experiences of on-line teaching and learning.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

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Current Location: Unit 1, Stage 1 - Personal Introductions

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Task

Hello. We'd like to get to know you!

You can introduce yourself to Phillip Towndrow and to your on-line learning classmates by creating a **Personal Page** that we can access through the **Communication Center**. To update your page, click on the **Student Tools** button and then choose the **Edit Your Homepage** utility.

As you will see, your page has a number of sections for you to complete. Please include a photograph of yourself if you can.

Here are some suggestions for the kind of information that you can include on your Homepage:

- first language
- knowledge of other languages (spoken and/or written)
- the length of time you have been studying English
- the kinds of things you like to read in your spare time
- explain why you need to study English reading comprehension
- tell us if you have studied on-line before and what you did
- tell us what you use the Internet for (you can also share your favourite URLs)
- share with us your favourite language learning experience
- anything else that you would like us to know

Thank you for sharing.

Acknowledgement:

- Adapted from Oxford, R., 1990. *Language Learning Strategies*. New York, Newbury House Publishers.

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Unit 2 - Comparison & Contrast

- **Stage 1 - Introduction**
- **Stage 2 - Picture Descriptions**
 - **The Picture**
 - **Response A**
 - **Response B**
 - **Comparison of Responses**
- **Stage 3 - Durians and Pineapples**
- **Stage 4 - Assessment Test**
- **Stage 5 - Learning Journal**

Course Documents

[[Top](#)] : [[Unit 2 - Comparison & Contrast](#)] : [[Unit 2, Stage 1 - Introduction](#)]

Current Location: Unit 2, Stage 1 - Introduction

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Handout

It's all the same to me!

Reading and understanding texts that compare and contrast two or more things is a regular item for academic study. Fortunately, texts that deal with similarities and differences often follow a **frame** or **pattern** and effective readers should be able to recognise these without too much difficulty.

There are a number of techniques that can be used in understanding a text that compares and contrasts. These include recognising the relationships between words and ideas in sentences, paragraphs and entire texts. Another skill that will be important is identifying the writer's purpose in comparing and contrasting items.

This unit of work provides you with a number of opportunities to explore comparison and contrast texts. You will learn how to identify the differing viewpoints of writers, focus on details that describe objects and carry out a short investigative project that will highlight the similarities and differences between familiar and not so familiar items of your choice.

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Course Documents

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Current Location: Unit 2, Stage 2 - Picture Descriptions

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Handout



The Picture

Introduction: Two English language teachers were asked to write a short descriptive response to the photograph above. This **Stage** of the **Unit** deals with how they interpreted the picture.

Instructions:

1. Click on the link below for Response A; read the passage and then take the quiz under **Course Documents** called **Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparing Picture Descriptions: Response A**.
2. Next, click on the link below for Response B; read the passage and then take the quiz under **Course Documents** called **Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparing Picture Descriptions: Response B**.
3. Once you have read both passages and taken the quizzes, click on the link below called **Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparison of Responses**.



[Unit 2, Stage 2 - Response A](#)



[Unit 2, Stage 2 - Response B](#)



[Comparison of Responses](#)

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Current Location: Unit 2, Stage 2 - Response A

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Tasks

[Download Response A](#)

Comparing Picture Descriptions

Exercises:

(1) Read the following passage and make notes to help you remember the main points.

Response A

by Cynthia Macknish

(used with permission)

It's a sunny day and this has probably contributed to the size of the colourful crowd watching the event. In the background spectators are standing three deep against the railing that lines the road three metres above the square. A child sits on the shoulders of an adult in an attempt to get a better view.

Both sides of the square are lined with more people. Five tiers of benches are filled with men, women and children; several are spilling over onto the stairs including a baby in a stroller.

In the foreground only the backs of the spectators can be seen as they watch the event. Blond, dark, greying and balding heads are in the crowd. All faces are turned toward the centre.

Chips of pale wood are scattered over the paving stones. A few logs lie in pieces having been successfully chopped through. The event now focuses on two competitors, both wearing white trousers and singlets, balancing on their logs while racing to swing their axes. One is wearing an athletic band to keep the sweat out of his eyes. Four men are close by watching the action carefully, perhaps as officials waiting to declare the axe-wielding winner.

From the number of logs and the size of the crowd, this appears to be a popular, regular event.

(2) When you are ready, go to the **Quizzes & Tests** folder under **Course Documents** and take the quiz called **Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparing Picture Descriptions: Response A**.

(3) Finally, return to the folder called **Unit 2, Stage 2 - Picture Descriptions** and read **Response B**.

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Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparing Picture Descriptions: Response A

Instructions:

For questions 1-4, select the correct meaning of the word in the context of the passage.
For question 5, select the answer which you consider to be the most appropriate.

Question 1 (1 points)

Square

- An equilateral rectangle.
- An open area at the meeting of streets.
- An academic cap with a stiff square top.
- A conventional person.

Question 2 (1 points)

Chips

- Short shots in the game of golf.
- Counters used in some gambling games.
- Strips of deep fried potato.
- Small pieces removed by chopping or cutting.

Question 3 (1 points)

Swing

- Move with a curving motion.
- Move by gripping something and leaping.
- Change from one opinion to another.
- Play music with a swing rhythm.

Question 4 (1 points)

Sweat

- Having a pleasant taste of sugar.
- To work long hours in poor conditions.
- Moisture from the pores of the skin.
- Boil slowly in fat or water.

Question 5 (1 points)

Overall, the author's response to the photograph is best described as ...

- Factual
- Critical
- Interpretive
- Emotional

Submit Answers

**Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparing Picture
Descriptions: Response A**

Answer Key

1	B
2	C
3	A
4	C
5	A

Course Documents

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Current Location: Unit 2, Stage 2 - Response B

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Tasks

[Download Response B](#)

Comparing Picture Descriptions

Exercises:

(1) Read the following passage and make notes to help you remember the main points.

Response B

by Jaya Kannan

(used with permission)

I had seen many AMAZING GAMES shows on television, but this one was unusual. I had never dreamt that I would participate in the game one day.

As our team got ready for the event, I realised how much I hated competition. How can I shut out the throngs of people jeering at me from my mind and focus on cutting wood? Yes, that's what the competition was about. Two teams were competing to determine who could split five logs of wood in a relay-like fashion in the fastest time possible.

We had practiced for weeks before the tournament, focusing on mental callisthenics, physical fitness and technique. We learnt to hold the axe at the right angle tightly between our hands, to move it in a single smooth sweep landing it on the centre of the piece of wood with great force, not to mention mastering the art of balancing perfectly while standing on the wooden log.

(2) When you are ready, go to the **Quizzes & Tests** folder under **Course Documents** and take the quiz called **Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparing Picture Descriptions: Response B**.

(3) Finally, return to the folder called **Unit 2, Stage 2 - Picture Descriptions** and select the link for **Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparison of Responses**.

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Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparing Picture Descriptions: Response B

Instructions:

For questions 1-4, select the correct meaning of the word in the context of the passage.

For question 5, select the answer which you consider to be the most appropriate.

Question 1 (1 points)

Games

- Number of points in a competition.
 - Competitions decided by skill.
 - Pieces of fun or jokes.
 - Policies or actions.
-

Question 2 (1 points)

Shut out

- Block from view.
 - Block from consciousness.
 - Exclude a person from a place.
 - Stop the flow of something.
-

Question 3 (1 points)

Split

- Betray secrets.
 - Suffer great pain.
 - Leave suddenly.
 - Break into two parts.
-

Question 4 (1 points)

Right angle

- An angle of 90 degrees.
 - A fair or just angle.
 - The most effective angle.
 - A healthy angle.
-

Question 5 (1 points)

Overall, the author's response to the photograph is best described as ...

- Factual
 - Critical
 - Interpretive
 - Emotional
-

Submit Answers

Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparing Picture Descriptions: Response B

Answer Key

1	B
2	B
3	D
4	C
5	C

Course Documents

[[Top](#)] : [[Unit 2 - Comparison & Contrast](#)] : [[Unit 2, Stage 2 - Picture Descriptions](#)] : [[Comparison of Responses](#)]

Current Location: Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparison of Responses

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Tasks

[Download Similarities and Differences Chart](#)

Comparing Picture Descriptions - Post-reading Activities

Instructions: The following activities are designed to assist in the comparison and contrast of ideas in content areas. Try to complete these tasks with as much detail as possible.

Exercises:

- (1) Think about the main elements of the **Responses** to the photograph that you have just read.
- (2) Now analyse how the responses are **alike** and how they **differ**. Summarise your thoughts by completing a **Similarities and Differences Chart** which you can download by clicking on the link above.
- (3) Free writing. Based on the information that you have recorded in the **Similarities and Differences Chart**, write 3 sentences about the **Responses** to the photograph you have read and analysed. To get feedback on your writing, go to the **Communication Center**, select **E-mail** and send a message to Phillip Towndrow.

Need some help? These comparison and contrast signal words might be of use: **on the contrary**, **still**, **nevertheless**, **however** and **on the other hand**.

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Unit 2, Stage 2 - Comparing Picture Descriptions
Comparison of Responses
Similarities and Differences Chart

Response A

Response B

Similarities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Differences

- | | | |
|----------|-----|----------|
| 1. _____ | < > | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | < > | 2. _____ |

Acknowledgment:

- Adapted from Gittenger, J.D., 2000. 'Content Reading Strategies.' Downloadable from, http://www.graceland.edu/~jackg/middle2/strategic_strategies/menu.html

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Tasks

Durians and Pineapples



Introduction: Do you know what a durian is? Have you ever eaten one? How could you explain to another person what a durian was if they had never seen or eaten one before? These activities follow on from Stage 2 and require some reading and research in an area of your choice.

Exercises:

1. One way of trying to explain an unfamiliar thing is to compare and contrast it with a more familiar item of the same class. For example, here is a sample **Similarities and Differences Chart** for durians and pineapples:

Similarities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both are tropical fruits with unique flavours.• Both have rough inedible exteriors.• Both are high in nutritional values.	
Differences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Native to S.E. Asia; rare outside of region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Native to Central and South America; grown in tropical regions around the world.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A large green fruit that grows on big trees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perennial plant with large pointed leaves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contains an edible custard-like pulp with a very strong smell.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contains sweet and juicy flesh.

Conclusion: Although durians and pineapples may seem alike they have some important differences. Now, I'm interested enough to try a piece of durian for myself!

2. Now it's your turn to select two items of your choice and then to compare and contrast them. Of course, you will need to do some reading to get further information on your items before you start this mini-project. Be sure to end your research with a conclusion and a possible recommendation for action.

3. Suggested follow-up activities for sharing your information gathered in Exercise 2:

- Prepare a **Similarities and Differences Chart** (see Stage 2 of this Unit) and post your findings on the **Discussion Board** for comments.

Instructions:

- Click on the **Communication** button.
- Click on the **Discussion Board** icon.
- Open a new "Discussion Thread".
- Return to the Discussion Board from time to time to check the responses to your posting.
- Send an E-mail message to another student on the course that begins: Did you know that ...
- Think of your own way of sharing your information on-line.

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Task

[Unit 2, Stage 4 - Assessment Test Passage](#)

Instructions:

1. Click on the hyperlink above and download the reading passage for the Unit 2 Assessment Test.
2. Read the passage carefully.
3. When you are ready, find your way to the **Quizzes & Tests** folder under **Course Documents** and select the **Unit 2, Stage 4 - Assessment Test**.
4. Answer the multiple-choice questions based on the information in the passage.
5. Set yourself a time limit of twenty minutes for the test.

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Unit 2, Stage 4 - Assessment Test Passage
Extract from The Malay Archipelago
by Alfred R. Wallace

Contrasts of Vegetation. -- Placed immediately upon the Equator and surrounded by extensive oceans, it is not surprising that the various islands of the Archipelago should be almost always clothed with forest vegetation from the level of the sea to the summits of the loftiest mountains. This is the general rule. Sumatra, New Guinea, Borneo, the Philippines and the Moluccas, and the uncultivated parts of Java and Celebes, are all forest countries, except a few small and unimportant tracts, due perhaps, in some cases, to ancient cultivation or accidental fires. To this, however, there is one important exception in the island of Timor and all the smaller islands around it, in which there is absolutely no forest such as exists in the other islands, and this character extends in a lesser degree to Flores, Sumbawa, Lombok, and Bali.

In Timor the most common trees are Eucalypti of several species, also characteristic of Australia, with sandalwood, acacia, and other sorts in less abundance. These are scattered over the country more or less thickly, but, never so as to deserve the name of a forest. Coarse and scanty grasses grow beneath them on the more barren hills, and a luxuriant herbage in the moister localities. In the islands between Timor and Java there is often a more thickly wooded country abounding in thorny and prickly trees. These seldom reach any great height, and during the force of the dry season they almost completely lose their leaves, allowing the ground beneath them to be parched up, and contrasting strongly with the damp, gloomy, ever-verdant forests of the other islands. This peculiar character, which extends in a less degree to the southern peninsula of Celebes and the east end of Java, is most probably owing to the proximity of Australia. The south-east monsoon, which lasts for about two-thirds of the year (from March to November), blowing over the northern parts of that country, produces a degree of heat and dryness which assimilates the vegetation and physical aspect of the adjacent islands to its own. A little further eastward in Timor and the Ke Islands, a moister climate prevails; the southeast winds blowing from the Pacific through Torres Straits and over the damp forests of New Guinea, and as a consequence, every rocky islet is clothed with verdure to its very summit. Further west again, as the same dry winds blow over a wider and wider extent of ocean, they have time to absorb fresh moisture, and we accordingly find the island of Java possessing a less and less arid climate, until in the extreme west near Batavia, rain occurs more or less all the year round, and the mountains are everywhere clothed with forests of unexampled luxuriance.

Contrasts in Depth of Sea. -- It was first pointed out by Mr. George Windsor Earl, in a paper read before the Royal Geographical Society in 1845, and subsequently in a pamphlet "On the Physical Geography of South-Eastern Asia and Australia", dated 1855, that a shallow sea connected the great islands of Sumatra, Java, and Borneo with the Asiatic continent, with which their natural productions generally agreed; while a similar shallow sea connected New Guinea and some of the adjacent islands to Australia, all being characterised by the presence of marsupials.

We have here a clue to the most radical contrast in the Archipelago, and by following it out in detail I have arrived at the conclusion that we can draw a line among the islands, which shall so divide them that one-half shall truly belong to Asia, while the other shall no less certainly be allied to Australia. I term these respectively the Indo-Malayan and the Austro-Malayan divisions of the Archipelago.

On referring to pages 12, 13, and 36 of Mr. Earl's pamphlet, it will be seen that he maintains the former connection of Asia and Australia as an important part of his view; whereas, I dwell mainly on their long continued separation. Notwithstanding this and other important differences between us, to him undoubtedly belongs the merit of first indicating the division of the Archipelago into an Australian and an Asiatic region, which it has been my good fortune to establish by more detailed observations.

Acknowledgment:

- The passage used in this test was downloaded from the **Project Gutenberg** Website at <http://www.promo.net/pg/> and is used on the understanding that this material is in the public domain and can be freely used for a non-profit educational purpose.

Unit 2, Stage 4 - Assessment Test

Instructions:

Select the correct answer for each of the following questions.

Question 1 (1 points)

According to the author, a 'general rule' applying to the various islands of the Malay Archipelago is that:

- forest vegetation is always located at sea level.
 - they are surrounded by extensive oceans.
 - they are covered by extensive forest vegetation.
 - they are placed immediately upon the Equator.
-

Question 2 (1 points)

The island of Lombok is mentioned in the text as:

- an example of a small, unimportant island.
 - having more forest than Timor.
 - being accidentally destroyed by fire.
 - an example of an unimportant exception.
-

Question 3 (1 points)

It is the author's opinion that there are:

- some Eucalyptus forests in Timor.
 - no Eucalyptus trees in Australia.
 - no Eucalyptus forests in Timor.
 - no Eucalyptus forests in Australia.
-

Question 4 (1 points)

What according to the author accounts for the condition of vegetation on the islands between Timor and Java?

- The South-East monsoon that blows over Australia.
 - The damp and gloomy conditions on other islands.
 - The moist climate on other islands.
 - The height of thorny and prickly trees.
-

Question 5 (1 points)

Why is there a different climate on the Ke Islands?

- Because the monsoon lasts for two-thirds of the year.
 - Because the islands are rocky.
 - Because the islands are not close to Australia.
 - Because the wind blows over the forests of New Guinea.
-

Question 6 (1 points)

We can infer from the description of the forests near Batavia that the author:

- was very impressed by them.
 - thought they were too wet.
 - considered them to be satisfactory.
 - had no strong opinion about them.
-

Question 7 (1 points)

What is the significance of the depth of the connecting seas as first pointed out by Mr. Earl? The information:

- supports the view that marsupials can swim.
 - supports the view that Java and Australia were once physically connected.
 - supports the view the Sumatra, Java and Borneo are islands.
 - supports the view that the Malay Archipelago has two geographical regions.
-

Question 8 (1 points)

Mr. Earl and the author:

- emphasise different things.
 - have nothing in common.
 - emphasise the same things.
 - are in an academic dispute.
-

Question 9 (1 points)

The author's information is:

- based on his reading.
 - based on his personal experiences.
 - mostly inaccurate.
 - very theoretical.
-

Question 10 (1 point)

What opinion does the author have of his views concerning the origins of the Malay Archipelago?

- He thinks his views are based on good luck.
 - He doubts the truth of his views.
 - He is convinced of the truth of his views.
 - He thinks his views deserve some merit.
-

Submit Answers

Unit 2, Stage 4 - Assessment Test

Answer Key

1	C
2	B
3	C
4	A
5	D
6	A
7	D
8	A
9	B
10	C

Current Location: Unit 2, Stage 5 - Learning Journal

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Task

Congratulations! If you have accessed this page, then you have probably finished all of the activities for Unit 2 of the course. If you have not quite finished, please go back and complete what you need to do and then return to this page.

It is now time for you to sit down and think back over all of the work that you have completed so far and to bring your **Learning Journal** up to date and ready for submission to Phillip Towndrow.

In addition to the guidelines on Journal writing given to you in **Unit 1, Stage 1 - Learner Training [Learning Journal]** you might also like to consider the following questions:

- What were your reactions to the scores you got in the quizzes and test for this Unit? Did you do as well as you expected or do you think you could do better next time?
- What were your reactions to the feedback you received from Phillip Towndrow? Did his comments assist you or do you think that he could have helped you in a different way?
- What were your reactions to your on-line colleagues? Did they assist you or did they make your learning more difficult?
- Do you think you did as well as your on-line colleagues in the quizzes and the test? Give reasons for your answer.
- Finally, if you had any difficulties with this Unit, how were they caused and what do you plan to do about them so that they do not happen again in the next Unit?

When you are ready you can submit your Journal to Phillip Towndrow either as an E-mail attachment or via the **Student Drop Box** which you can find under **Student Tools**.

Thank you.

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Unit 3 - Description

- **Stage 1 - Introduction**
- **Stage 2 - Reading Accurately**
- **Stage 3 - Show and Tell**
- **Stage 4 - Assessment Test**
- **Stage 5 - Learning Journal**

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Handout

Painting Pictures with Words in the Reader's Mind

This is one way of defining what writers do when they refer to the qualities and recognisable features of people and things. Getting information from a description involves understanding the organisational structure of a text and being aware of the ways in which information can be presented. It will also be necessary to pay careful attention to details and facts as information of this kind can sometimes appear confusing without a proper understanding of the relations between the parts of a text.

This unit of work provides you with a number of opportunities to explore descriptive texts. You will practice reading accurately, sharing resources you are interested in and writing a description of something you have seen or a place you have visited.

Reference:

- Grellet, F., 1981. *Developing Reading Skills*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

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Tasks

[The Hanging Bridge of Biscay](#)

Reading Accurately

Introduction: It is important to pay careful attention to the details given in a text. In order to avoid confusion, you are recommended to read a passage from start to finish at least twice before attempting to answer any questions on it.

Exercises:

1. **Bridges** are structures that carry a road, path etc. across a stream, river or another road. Think for a moment about a bridge that you know of and make a list of its most important features.

Now you will find out about a famous bridge in Spain. Click on the hyperlink above to download the passage entitled, **The Hanging Bridge of Biscay**. Once you have read the text, go to the **Quizzes and Tests** folder under **Course Documents** and take the quiz called **Unit 3, Stage 2 - Reading Accurately**.

2. Write a description of something you have seen (e.g. a bridge) or a place you have visited (e.g. a museum). Send your writing to Phillip Towndrow either as an E-mail attachment or via the **Student Drop Box** which you can find under **Student Tools**. Suggested length of description: 250-350 words.

Further information on The Hanging Bridge of Biscay and the towns surrounding it is available on the Web. Check out the **External Links**.

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Unit 3, Stage 2 - Reading Accurately

The Hanging Bridge of Biscay

by Phillip Towndrow



Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao



The Hanging Bridge of Biscay

1. The city of Bilbao in Northern Spain has gained world-wide recognition as the location of the Guggenheim Museum - a shrine dedicated to 20th Century American and European art. Since its opening in October 1997, designer Frank O. Gehry's titanium-clad construction has become a local landmark that symbolises the city's great industrial past and its cultural and artistic future. For me, part of the magic of the Guggenheim is that it leaves in the visitor a lasting impression of the immense power of the human mind to create things from contemporary materials. Then again, just twenty kilometres from Bilbao at the mouth of the river Nervion, stands another architectural masterpiece that speaks of human ingenuity in equally powerful but lesser known terms.
2. The Hanging Bridge (El Puente Colgante) as it is popularly known, links the municipalities of Guecho and Portugalete. This unusual iron-built structure consists of a suspended platform that is used to carry a small number of vehicles and foot-passengers between the towns of Las Arenas and Portugalete. During my stay in and around Bilbao between 1987-1993, I travelled on the bridge many times to and from work. Each journey I made was an adventure that brightened my life even on the rainiest of days!
3. El Puente Colgante is a masterpiece of late 19th Century engineering. Opened on 28th July 1893, it is the work of Alberto de Palacio (1856-1939) and was the first transporter bridge of its kind. Electrically powered, the vast iron construction weighs 800 tons and is 63 metres high. The platform hangs from 18 heavy steel cables and makes its short journey (160 metres, one-way) as part of a round-the-clock service to the public.
4. Despite its appearance, one gets a chilling sense of fragility as a passenger on the bridge. Although the maximum payload of the platform is not displayed, the cables that reach up into the sky seem to be under immense strain. Nevertheless, the bridge rarely breaks down and is serviced on a regular basis. It is operated by a team of ticket clippers (picas) who work shifts. The picas direct cars and lorries on and off the platform and collect, and clip, tickets. They wear baggy blue uniforms and distinctive blue berets.
5. A one-way journey only takes about 90 seconds but getting everyone on and off the bridge takes longer. During peak hours, the picas have, at times, the rather annoying habit of closing the doors and setting off just as one arrives. However, at other times in the day, the operation is more relaxed and the picas are quite happy to wait until the platform is full before setting off.

6. El Puente Colgante, then, is a unique mode of transport that has served an important function for over a Century. Of course, some would disagree with this heart-felt statement. They would say that the bridge has outgrown its usefulness and that it needs to be replaced by a fixed bridge or tunnel that can accommodate a much larger volume of traffic. I, of course, disagree and would add that the Hanging Bridge has rightfully gained its place alongside the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, as a local, if not, national engineering achievement. I am not alone in this opinion. There are even some lines from a local song that mention the bridge's fame and beauty, "... puente de Portugalete, tu eres el mas elegante, el mejor puente colgante" (Portugalete bridge, you are the most elegant, the best hanging bridge).

7. Visitors to Bilbao, then, will want to see the Guggenheim Museum in all its modern glory. However, tourists wishing to widen their exposure to the locality should travel down the coast to see the distinguished Hanging Bridge of Biscay. The trip will undoubtedly add depth to the visitor's experiences and perhaps even leave a longer-lasting impression!

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Unit 3, Stage 2 - Reading Accurately

Instructions:

For questions 1-5, select the correct answer.

Question 1 (1 points)

In paragraph 1, what symbolises Bilbao's artistic future?

- Titanium.
 - The Guggenheim Museum.
 - Frank O. Gehry.
 - The River Nervion.
-

Question 2 (1 points)

In paragraph 2, what is unusual about the Hanging Bridge?

- It is made of iron.
 - It has a popular name.
 - It consists of a suspended platform.
 - It is an adventure.
-

Question 3 (1 points)

In paragraph 4, why does the writer say that 'one gets a chilling sense of fragility on the bridge?'

- Because the cables seem to be under a lot of strain.
 - Because it is cold on the bridge.
 - Because the maximum payload is not displayed.
 - Because the bridge is not very strong.
-

Question 4 (1 points)

In paragraph 6, why do some people criticise the Hanging Bridge?

- Because it is an unattractive structure.
 - Because it has been replaced by a tunnel.
 - Because it is not an engineering achievement.
 - Because it is unable to meet present demands.
-

Question 5 (1 points)

In paragraph 7, which statement is closest to the writer's point of view?

- Visitors to Bilbao do not leave with a good impression.
 - Visitors to Bilbao must see the Hanging Bridge.
 - Visitors to Bilbao should avoid the Guggenheim Museum.
 - Visitors to Bilbao should see the Hanging Bridge.
-

Submit Answers

Unit 3, Stage 2 - Reading Accurately

Answer Key

1	B
2	C
3	A
4	D
5	D

Current Location: Unit 3, Stage 3 - Show & Tell

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Tasks

Show & Tell

Introduction: It is usual for teachers to choose the texts that are read in the classroom. However, in the outside world of reading, readers select what to read based on their needs and interests. In this Stage of the Unit you will have the opportunity to choose a text to read and then explain why you like it.

Exercises:

1. Choose a text in English that you are interested in. Your selection must describe something in detail.

2. Answer the following questions about the text you have chosen. Provide as much detail as possible.

- Where is your text located?
 - Web (provide URL)
 - Book, CD-ROM etc. (provide title, author and publisher)
 - Magazine, newspaper etc. (provide title, date, page number(s))
- What does your text describe?
- How is the information in your text organised?
- Why did you choose the text?
- Why should another person read your text?

3. Share the joy of reading with your on-line classmates. Post your answers to the questions in Exercise 2 on the **Discussion Board** for us to read and learn from.

Acknowledgement:

- Adapted from Kennedy, A., 2000. 'Did you like the text?' Reading without language-focused questions.' *Modern English Teacher*, 9(2).

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Task

[Unit 3, Stage 4 - Assessment Test Passage](#)

Instructions:

1. Click on the hyperlink above and download the reading passage for the Unit 3 Assessment Test.
2. Read the passage carefully.
3. When you are ready, find your way to the **Quizzes & Tests** folder under **Course Documents** and select the **Unit 3, Stage 4 - Assessment Test**.
4. Answer the multiple-choice questions based on the information in the passage.
5. Set yourself a time limit of twenty minutes for the test.

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Unit 3, Stage 4 - Assessment Test Passage
Extract from The Civilisation of China
by Herbert A. Giles

The Feudal Age

It is a very common thing now-a-days to meet people who are going to "China," which can be reached by the Siberian railway in fourteen or fifteen days. This brings us at once to the question--What is meant by the term China?

Taken in its widest sense, the term includes Mongolia, Manchuria, Eastern Turkestan, Tibet, and the Eighteen Provinces, the whole being equivalent to an area of some five million square miles, that is, considerably more than twice the size of the United States of America. But for a study of manners and customs and modes of thought of the Chinese people, we must confine ourselves to that portion of the whole which is known to the Chinese as the "Eighteen Provinces," and to us as China Proper. This portion of the empire occupies not quite two-fifths of the whole, covering an area of somewhat more than a million and a half square miles. Its chief landmarks may be roughly stated as Peking, the capital, in the north; Canton, the great commercial centre, in the south; Shanghai, on the east; and the Tibetan frontier on the west.

Any one who will take the trouble to look up these four points on a map, representing as they do central points on the four sides of a rough square, will soon realize the absurdity of asking a returning traveller the very much asked question, How do you like China? Fancy asking a Chinaman, who had spent a year or two in England, how he liked Europe! Peking, for instance, stands on the same parallel of latitude as Madrid; whereas Canton coincides similarly with Calcutta. Within the square indicated by the four points enumerated above will be found variations of climate, flowers, fruit, vegetables and animals --not to mention human beings--distributed in very much the same way as in Europe. The climate of Peking is exceedingly dry and bracing; no rain, and hardly any snow, falling between October and April. The really hot weather lasts only for six or eight weeks, about July and August--and even then the nights are always cool; while for six or eight weeks between December and February there may be a couple of feet of ice on the river. Canton, on the other hand, has a tropical climate, with a long damp enervating summer and a short bleak winter. The old story runs that snow has only been seen once in Canton, and then it was thought by the people to be falling cotton-wool.

The northern provinces are remarkable for vast level plains, dotted with villages, the houses of which are built of mud. In the southern provinces will be found long stretches of mountain scenery, vying in loveliness with anything to be seen elsewhere. Monasteries are built high up on the hills, often on almost inaccessible crags; and there the well-to-do Chinaman is wont to escape from the fierce heat of the southern summer. On one particular mountain near Canton, there are said to be no fewer than one hundred of such monasteries, all of which reserve apartments for guests, and are glad to be able to add to their funds by so doing.

In the north of China, Mongolian ponies, splendid mules, and donkeys are seen in large quantities; also the two-humped camel, which carries heavy loads across the plains of Mongolia. In the south, until the advent of the railway, travellers had to choose between the sedan- chair carried on the shoulders of stalwart coolies, or the slower but more comfortable house-boat. Before steamers began to ply on the coast, a candidate for the doctor's degree at the great triennial examination would take three months to travel from Canton to Peking. Urgent dispatches, however, were often forwarded by relays of

riders at the rate of two hundred miles a day.

The market in Peking is supplied, among other things, with excellent mutton from a fat-tailed breed of sheep, chiefly for the largely Mohammedan population; but the sheep will not live in southern China, where the goat takes its place. The pig is found everywhere, and represents beef in our market, the latter being extremely unpalatable to the ordinary Chinaman, partly perhaps because Confucius forbade men to slaughter the animal which draws the plough and contributes so much to the welfare of mankind. The staple food, the "bread" of the people in the Chinese Empire, is nominally rice; but this is too costly for the peasant of northern China to import, and he falls back on millet as its substitute. Apples, pears, grapes, melons, and walnuts grow abundantly in the north; the southern fruits are the banana, the orange, the pineapple, the mango, the pomelo, the lichee, and similar fruits of a more tropical character.

Acknowledgment:

- The passage used in this test was downloaded from the **Project Gutenberg** Website at <http://www.promo.net/pg/> and is used on the understanding that this material is in the public domain and can be freely used for a non-profit educational purpose.

Unit 3, Stage 4 - Assessment Test

Instructions:

Select the correct answer for each of the following questions.

Question 1 (1 points)

According to the author, what is a very common thing?

- People are travelling on the Siberian Railway.
 - People are going to China.
 - People are unsure of the extent of China.
 - People do not understand the term 'China.'
-

Question 2 (1 points)

How many definitions of the term 'China' are given by the author?

- One.
 - None.
 - More than two.
 - Two.
-

Question 3 (1 points)

Why does the author limit his discussion to the 'Eighteen Provinces?'

- Because the other areas of the empire are too wide and expansive.
 - Because the other areas of the empire are not relevant to the discussion of civilisation.
 - Because the other areas of the empire have not been civilised.
 - Because Mongolia, Manchuria and Eastern Turkestan are not trading centres.
-

Question 4 (1 points)

The question, 'How do you like China?' is absurd:

- because China is too large and varied.
 - because it is grammatically incorrect.
 - because no one takes the trouble to ask.
 - because China is not like Madrid or Calcutta.
-

Question 5 (1 points)

Based on the information in the extract, how likely is it to snow in Canton?

- As likely as seeing snow in the capital.
 - As likely as seeing cotton-wool fall from the sky.
 - Unlikely, even in the bleak winter.
 - Quite possible given the dampness in summer.
-

Question 6 (1 points)

The author means to imply in his comments about monasteries on a particular Cantonese mountain that:

- they are generally inaccessible.
 - they are really hotels for the rich.
 - they are glad of the money from guests.
 - they do not have any funds.
-

Question 7 (1 points)

Before the railway, travelling in southern China was:

- slow but comfortable.
 - fast but uncomfortable.
 - a) but not b).
 - both a) and b).
-

Question 8 (1 points)

What can be said about the advent of steamers?

- They did nothing to improve communications.
 - They made travelling long distances easier.
 - They carried mostly doctors.
 - They only ran for three years.
-

Question 9 (1 points)

When the author uses the phrase "sheep will not live in southern China" he means that:

- they are really unreasonable animals.
 - they are not suited to the climatic conditions.
 - they are not as palatable as goats.
 - they are forbidden animals.
-

Question 10 (1 point)

Overall, the author intends to:

- wander from point to point.
 - tell an interesting story.
 - argue a point of view.
 - describe and educate.
-

Submit Answers

Unit 3, Stage 4 - Assessment Test

Answer Key

1	B
2	D
3	B
4	A
5	C
6	C
7	D
8	B
9	B
10	D

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Task

Congratulations! If you have accessed this page, then you have probably finished all of the activities for Unit 3 of the course. If you have not quite finished, please go back and complete what you need to do and then return to this page.

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- What were your reactions to the scores you got in the quizzes and test for this Unit? Did you do as well as you expected or do you think you could do better next time?
- What were your reactions to the feedback you received from Phillip Towndrow? Did his comments assist you or do you think that he could have helped you in a different way?
- What were your reactions to your on-line colleagues? Did they assist you or did they make your learning more difficult?
- Do you think you did as well as your on-line colleagues in the quizzes and the test? Give reasons for your answer.
- Finally, if you had any difficulties with this Unit, how were they caused and what do you plan to do about them so that they do not happen again in the next Unit?

When you are ready you can submit your Journal to Phillip Towndrow either as an E-mail attachment or via the **Student Drop Box** which you can find under **Student Tools**.

Thank you.

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Unit 4 - Proposition and Support

- Stage 1 - Introduction
- Stage 2 - Today's topic is ...
- Stage 3 - The Digital Soapbox
- Stage 4 - Assessment Test
- Stage 5 - Learning Journal

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Handout

I Wouldn't Go as Far as to Say That!

Writers often have the specific aim of trying to convince their readers to accept or reject a particular line of argument. There are, of course, many ways of conveying information of this kind and effective readers will certainly need the skill of identifying propositions and supporting details in various situations.

A proposition is usually a statement in the form of a proposal that requires support before someone will consider accepting it. Evaluating propositions requires critical reading skills and these can be developed with practice.

This unit of work provides you with a number of opportunities to read and respond to the arguments put forward in a text. You will also have the chance to practice organising and presenting your ideas in a mini-research project on a topic of your choice. A final aim of this unit is to assist you in finding good information on the Internet.

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Tasks

Today's Topic is ... Renewable Energy and Green Electricity

Introduction: The exercises in this Stage are about identifying and evaluating propositions and supporting details in a text.

Exercises:

1. Pre-reading - Make a list of ways in which people you know or have heard of waste energy or natural resources. Now think of some ways they can prevent this kind of waste.
2. **The American Solar Energy Society** or **ASES** is an organisation dedicated to advancing the use of solar energy for the benefit of U.S. citizens and the global environment. The Society has written a number of reports trying to persuade the American federal government to use renewable energy. Tasks to complete:
 - a) [Click here](http://www.ases.org/solarguide/execsum.html) <<http://www.ases.org/solarguide/execsum.html>> to open a new Browser window and view a Position Paper written by ASES on Federal Purchases of Renewable Energy and Green Electricity. You are strongly recommended to **print** the report as it is quite long.
 - b) Next, read the **Executive Summary** of the report. When you are ready, go to the **Quizzes and Tests** folder under **Course Documents** and take the quiz called **Unit 4, Stage 2 - Renewable Energy**.
3. Post-reading: Write a response to the ASES' proposition from the point of view of the American federal government. Send your writing to Phillip Towndrow either as an E-mail attachment or via the **Student Drop Box** which you can find under **Student Tools**. Suggested length: 150 words.

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Unit 4, Stage 2 - Renewable Energy

Instructions:

For questions 1-4, select the correct answer.

Question 1 (1 points)

How much does the federal government spend per year on electricity?

- \$4.5 billion
 - \$11.5 billion
 - \$3.5 billion
 - \$8 billion
-

Question 2 (1 points)

Which of these sentences is not a valid proposition put forward by ASES?

- The government could reduce pollution.
 - The government could influence the renewable energy market.
 - The government could increase private market demand.
 - The government could produce more carbon emissions.
-

Question 3 (1 points)

What according to ASES will result in an increase in private demand in the renewables market?

- Large federal purchases.
 - More efficient industrial infrastructure.
 - Higher production levels.
 - Lower manufacturing costs.
-

Question 4 (1 points)

What according to ASES is stopping the federal government from benefiting from green power options?

- High up-front costs of fossil fuels.
 - Limited procurement funds.
 - Long-term costs of renewables.
 - Inflexible purchasing regulations.
-

Submit Answers

Unit 4, Stage 2 - Renewable Energy

Answer Key

1	C
2	D
3	A
4	D

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Tasks

[KWL Guide](#)

The Digital Soapbox

Introduction: A soapbox can be a container for holding soap or it can be a stand for a public speaker. The tasks in this Stage are designed to give you a **digital** platform upon which you can express your views on a topic of your choice.

Exercises:

1. You need to choose a topic to work on. You might already know something about a particular topic or maybe there is something that you would like to know more about. Either way, you need to begin by organising your ideas. One way in which you can start doing this is to use the **KWL Guide** which you can download by clicking on the hyperlink above.

Complete the guide by making notes on what you:

- a) Know
- b) Want to know, and have
- c) Learned

about your topic. You might also want to insert a further column between steps 2 and 3 called, "What Digital Strategies Can I Use To Find Out What I Want To Know." We look at one kind of **DS** in the next exercise.

2. Once your ideas are organised, you will probably need to do some research to get supporting details for your proposition(s). Of course, you can get your information from books, magazines, and newspapers or from the World Wide Web.

If you use the Web, you might be wondering how to get good quality information. One place to start is [The Help Web](#) <<http://www.imaginarylandscape.com/helpweb/www/seek.html>> or you might want to take a [tutorial](#) <<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html>> in searching the Web courtesy of the University of California, Berkeley.

3. Before standing up on your soapbox, you might find it useful to fill in the following table for each of the points that you want to make:

Proposition:	
Detail (a):	
Source of Information:	
Detail (b):	
Source of Information:	
Detail (c):	
Source of Information:	
Conclusion:	

4. Now, the floor is yours. You can choose to share your views on the **Discussion Board** or send them to a classmate in an E-mail message. Watch out for reactions to your work.

Acknowledgements:

- Gittinger, J.D., 2000. 'Content Reading Strategies.' Downloadable from: http://www.graceland.edu/~jackg/middle2/strategic_strategies/menu.html
- Ingram, J., 1998. *Information Communications Technology in the High School Classroom: A Practical Guide to Integrating the High School Curriculum, Classroom Management and ICT*. Chicago: Shrew Interactive Multimedia.

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Unit 4, Stage 3 - The Digital Soapbox

KWL Chart

Know	Want to know	Learned

Acknowledgment:

- Adapted from Gittenger, J.D., 2000. 'Content Reading Strategies.' Downloadable from: http://www.graceland.edu/~jackg/middle2/strategic_strategies/menu.html. Used with permission of the author.

Course Documents

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Task

[Unit 4, Stage 4 - Assessment Test Passage](#)

Instructions:

1. Click on the hyperlink above and download the reading passage for the Unit 3 Assessment Test.
2. Read the passage carefully.
3. When you are ready, find your way to the **Quizzes & Tests** folder under **Course Documents** and select the **Unit 4, Stage 4 - Assessment Test**.
4. Answer the multiple-choice questions based on the information in the passage.
5. Set yourself a time limit of twenty minutes for the test.

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Unit 4, Stage 4 - Assessment Test Passage
Extract from Why Go to College? An Address
by Alice Freeman Palmer

To a largely increasing number of young girls college doors are opening every year. Every year adds to the number of men who feel as a friend of mine, a successful lawyer in a great city, felt when in talking of the future of his four little children he said, "For the two boys it is not so serious, but I lie down at night afraid to die and leave my daughters only a bank account." Year by year, too, the experiences of life are teaching mothers that happiness does not necessarily come to their daughters when accounts are large and banks are sound, but that on the contrary they take grave risks when they trust everything to accumulated wealth and the chance of a happy marriage. Our American girls themselves are becoming aware that they need the stimulus, the discipline, the knowledge, the interests of the college in addition to the school, if they are to prepare themselves for the most serviceable lives.

But there are still parents who say, "There is no need that my daughter should teach; then why should she go to college?" I will not reply that college training is a life insurance for a girl, a pledge that she possesses the disciplined ability to earn a living for herself and others in case of need, for I prefer to insist on the importance of giving every girl, no matter what her present circumstances, a special training in some one thing by which she can render society service, not amateur but of an expert sort, and service too for which it will be willing to pay a price. The number of families will surely increase who will follow the example of an eminent banker whose daughters have been given each her specialty. One has chosen music, and has gone far with the best masters in this country and in Europe, so far that she now holds a high rank among musicians at home and abroad. Another has taken art, and has not been content to paint pretty gifts for her friends, but in the studios of New York, Munich, and Paris, she has won the right to be called an artist, and in her studio at home to paint portraits which have a market value. A third has proved that she can earn her living, if need be, by her exquisite jellies, preserves, and sweetmeats. Yet the house in the mountains, the house by the sea, and the friends in the city are not neglected, nor are these young women found less attractive because of their special accomplishments.

While it is not true that all girls should go to college any more than that all boys should go, it is nevertheless true that they should go in greater numbers than at present. They fail to go because they, their parents and their teachers, do not see clearly the personal benefits distinct from the commercial value of a college training.

I wish here to discuss these benefits, these larger gifts of the college life,--what they may be, and for whom they are waiting.

It is undoubtedly true that many girls are totally unfitted by home and school life for a valuable college course. These joys and successes, these high interests and friendships, are not for the self-conscious and nervous invalid, nor for her who in the exuberance of youth recklessly ignores the laws of a healthy life. The good society of scholars and of libraries and laboratories has no place and no attraction for her who finds no message in Plato, no beauty in mathematical order, and who never longs to know the meaning of the stars over her head or the flowers under her feet. Neither will the finer opportunities of college life appeal to one who, until she is eighteen (is there such a girl in this country?), has felt no passion for the service of others, no desire to know if through history or philosophy, or any study of the laws of society, she can learn why the world is so sad, so hard, so selfish as she finds it, even when she looks upon it from the

most sheltered life. No, the college cannot be, should not try to be, a substitute for the hospital, reformatory or kindergarten. To do its best work it should be organized for the strong, not for the weak; for the high-minded, self-controlled, generous, and courageous spirits, not for the indifferent, the dull, the idle, or those who are already forming their characters on the amusement theory of life. All these perverted young people may, and often do, get large benefit and invigoration, new ideals, and unselfish purposes from their four years' companionship with teachers and comrades of a higher physical, mental, and moral stature than their own. I have seen girls change so much in college that I have wondered if their friends at home would know them,--the voice, the carriage, the unconscious manner, all telling a story of new tastes and habits and loves and interests, that had wrought out in very truth a new creature. Yet in spite of this I have sometimes thought that in college more than elsewhere the old law holds, "To him that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance, but from him who hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." For it is the young life which is open and prepared to receive which obtains the gracious and uplifting influences of college days. ...

Acknowledgment:

- The passage used in this test was downloaded from the **Project Gutenberg** Website at <http://www.promo.net/pg/> and is used on the understanding that this material is in the public domain and can be freely used for a non-profit educational purpose.

Unit 4, Stage 4 - Assessment Test

Instructions:

Select the correct answer for each of the following questions.

Question 1 (1 points)

What according to the author is largely on the increase?

- The number of young girls entering the law profession.
 - Opportunities for men to attend college.
 - Opportunities for young girls to enter college.
 - Career opportunities for families living in cities.
-

Question 2 (1 points)

The author means to suggest that:

- American girls will be best prepared for life after attending college.
 - American schools do not provide adequate preparation for the most serviceable lives.
 - American colleges are not aware of the discipline problems in schools.
 - American girls do not need to attend college to be prepared for the most serviceable lives.
-

Question 3 (1 points)

Which of the following statements best describes the author's view of education?

- It provides the guarantee of life-long employment which will benefit many people.
 - It is important to train young girls to fend for themselves.
 - It is important to train young girls for their own benefit.
 - It is important to train young girls for their own benefit and that of society.
-

Question 4 (1 points)

The author's point about expert training:

- is not supported with any details or examples.
 - is supported with details and examples.
 - is confused by the mention of art, music and cooking.
 - does not need any further clarification or support.
-

Question 5 (1 points)

What would the author like to see?

- More boys attending college.
 - Less boys attending college.
 - Less girls attending college.
 - More girls attending college.
-

Question 6 (1 points)

The author is of the opinion that:

- all girls are suitable for a college education.
 - many girls are suitable for a college education.
 - Many girls are not suitable for a college education.
 - Some girls are not suitable for a college education.
-

Question 7 (1 points)

According to the author, the 'amusement theory of life' is:

- compatible with her views.
 - popular in America.
 - incompatible with her views.
 - only for the dull and idle.
-

Question 8 (1 points)

The author:

- does not deny that college life can transform one's character.
 - does not deny that college life can be amusing.
 - does not deny that college life can be boring.
 - claims that college life has no effect on one's character.
-

Question 9 (1 points)

According to the author:

- those who are open and prepared to receive benefit most from college.
 - those who are closed and ungracious benefit most from college.
 - some of those who are open and prepared to receive can benefit from college.
 - only those who start off with a lot can benefit most from college.
-

Question 10 (1 point)

Overall, the author's views can best be described as:

- neutral.
 - egalitarian.
 - highly-principled.
 - unprincipled.
-

Submit Answers

Unit 4, Stage 4 - Assessment Test

Answer Key

1	C
2	A
3	D
4	B
5	D
6	C
7	C
8	A
9	A
10	C

Current Location: Unit 4, Stage 5 - Learning Journal

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Task

Congratulations! If you have accessed this page, then you have probably finished all of the activities for Unit 4 of the course. If you have not quite finished, please go back and complete what you need to do and then return to this page.

It is now time for you to sit down and think back over all of the work that you have completed so far and to bring your **Learning Journal** up to date and ready for submission to Phillip Towndrow.

In addition to the guidelines on Journal writing given to you in **Unit 1, Stage 1 - Learner Training [Learning Journal]** you might also like to consider the following questions:

- What were your reactions to the scores you got in the quizzes and test for this Unit? Did you do as well as you expected or do you think you could do better next time?
- What were your reactions to the feedback you received from Phillip Towndrow? Did his comments assist you or do you think that he could have helped you in a different way?
- What were your reactions to your on-line colleagues? Did they assist you or did they make your learning more difficult?
- Do you think you did as well as your on-line colleagues in the quizzes and the test? Give reasons for your answer.
- Finally, if you had any difficulties with this Unit, how were they caused and what do you plan to do about them so that they do not happen again in the next Unit?

When you are ready you can submit your Journal to Phillip Towndrow either as an E-mail attachment or via the **Student Drop Box** which you can find under **Student Tools**.

Thank you.

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Unit 5 - Cause and Effect

- Stage 1 - Introduction
- Stage 2 - Is it Getting Hotter?
- Stage 3 - More Hot Topics
- Stage 4 - Assessment Test
- Stage 5 - Learning Journal

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Handout

The Chicken and the Egg

Understanding the relationships between words and ideas in texts has already been mentioned as a necessary skill for effective readers. By way of emphasising this point, we now turn our attention to a familiar pattern in academic texts: cause and effect.

The relationship between events is in some cases straightforward and cannot be questioned. For example, when water is heated to a temperature of 100 degrees Celsius at sea level (cause), it boils (effect). However, in many other cases it is not clear what causes something to happen or what the effects of a certain set of actions might be. A further complication is that some effects become causes and when this happens it can be very difficult to determine which event came first.

In this unit of work you will learn how to check your understanding of causal relationships. You will also have the chance to find out more about a topic of your choice and then attempt to convince your on-line classmates to do or believe something.

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Tasks

Is it Getting Hotter?

Introduction: This lesson is about identifying the relationship(s) between causes and effects in texts. One area where there is considerable debate concerning the cause(s) of events is **global warming** or whether our planet is overheating.

Exercises:

1. Can you think of some of the ways in which your life would change if the climate in your geographical region changed dramatically? Share your ideas on the **Discussion Board**.
- 2a. There are many sites and articles on the Web dedicated to the global warming debate. For example, one location providing a good introduction to issues connected to climate change is at www.worldbook.com <<http://www.worldbook.com/>> where there is a slide show called, **Is Earth Overheating?**

To continue, read [Is Earth Overheating?](#) <<http://www.worldbook.com/fun/wbla/earth/html/ed05.htm>> and study the other eight slides that are hyperlinked on that page. You are strongly recommended to print the slides for your future reference.

- 2b. When you are ready, find your way to the **Quizzes & Tests** folder under **Course Documents** and take the quiz called **Unit 5, Stage 2 - Is Earth Overheating?**
3. According to **Professor Peter Raven** who is an expert on the rain forest, "... human beings are putting too much pressure on the environment." What are your personal reactions to this statement? Send your views to Phillip Towndrow either as an E-mail attachment or via the **Student Drop Box** which you can find under **Student Tools**.

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Unit 5, Stage 2 - Is Earth Overheating?

Instructions:

1. Read the following summary of the slide show called 'Is Earth Overheating?'
2. For each of the numbered gaps in the summary, select the correct word from the possibilities given in the questions below.

--oOo--

Many scientists disagree on who or what is responsible for the rise in Earth's average temperature. One claim made by the experts is that the change is the consequence of a [1] cause. Accordingly, changes in Earth's [2] are brought about by its relative position to the [3]. In addition, as the tilt of the Earth's axis increases, this means that the winters in the [4] Hemisphere are getting colder and at the same time the southern Hemisphere is getting warmer. Other scientists believe that humans are largely responsible for the climate changes [5] they release a huge amount of carbon dioxide into Earth's [6]. Rising levels of carbon dioxide are also the result of the destruction of rain forests since plants and trees normally clean the air. The [7] why scientists are worried about these events is that they contribute to the so-called greenhouse effect whereby heat from the Earth's [8] gets trapped. Human activities like these are likely to lead to global warming and could have some undesirable [9]. For example, some areas of the world could be turned into deserts while other regions could be [10].

Question 1 (1 points)

Gap 1

- atmosphere
- because
- climate
- effects
- flooded
- natural
- northern
- reason
- sun
- surface

Question 2 (1 points)

Gap 2

- atmosphere
 - because
 - climate
 - effects
 - flooded
 - natural
 - northern
 - reason
 - sun
 - surface
-

Question 3 (1 points)

Gap 3

- atmosphere
 - because
 - climate
 - effects
 - flooded
 - natural
 - northern
 - reason
 - sun
 - surface
-

Question 4 (1 points)

Gap 4

- atmosphere
 - because
 - climate
 - effects
 - flooded
 - natural
 - northern
 - reason
 - sun
 - surface
-

Question 5 (1 points)

Gap 5

- atmosphere
 - because
 - climate
 - effects
 - flooded
 - natural
 - northern
 - reason
 - sun
 - surface
-

Question 6 (1 points)

Gap 6

- atmosphere
 - because
 - climate
 - effects
 - flooded
 - natural
 - northern
 - reason
 - sun
 - surface
-

Question 7 (1 points)

Gap 7

- atmosphere
 - because
 - climate
 - effects
 - flooded
 - natural
 - northern
 - reason
 - sun
 - surface
-

Question 8 (1 points)

Gap 8

- atmosphere
 - because
 - climate
 - effects
 - flooded
 - natural
 - northern
 - reason
 - sun
 - surface
-

Question 9 (1 points)

Gap 9

- atmosphere
 - because
 - climate
 - effects
 - flooded
 - natural
 - northern
 - reason
 - sun
 - surface
-

Question 10 (1 point)

Gap 10

- atmosphere
 - because
 - climate
 - effects
 - flooded
 - natural
 - northern
 - reason
 - sun
 - surface
-

Submit Answers

Unit 5, Stage 2 - Is it Getting Hotter?

Answer Key

1	natural
2	climate
3	sun
4	northern
5	because
6	atmosphere
7	reason
8	surface
9	effects
10	flooded

Course Documents

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Tasks

More Hot Topics

Introduction: The purpose of this Stage is to provide further practice in identifying the relationship(s) between causes and effects in texts. Now you have the chance to do some reading research on a topic of your choice and share your findings with your on-line classmates.

Exercises:

1. Think of a 'cause and effect' topic that you would like to know more about by doing a short Web-based reading project. If you are stuck, you might want to try one of these:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do cosmetics cause arthritis?• How do volcanoes effect the oceans?• Effects of smoking.• Do mobile phones cause cancer?• Foods that cause weight loss.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do more guns cause more crime?• Effects of acid rain.• What is "Mad Cow" disease?• Effects of alcohol.• Side effects of radiation.
--	--

2. As you do your reading, check your understanding by answering the following questions for each text that you read:

- What are the effects or results described?
- What are the factors that cause ...?
- Which factors are the most important?
- How do the factors interrelate?

3. There are a number of different things that you could do with the information that you have collected in Exercises 1 and 2. For example, you could make a personal decision based on what you now know or you could try to convince someone else to do or believe something. Here's an idea on how you can mount your very own **publicity campaign** in support of your chosen topic.

- a) Find one of your on-line classmates who is interested in working with you on your topic (or perhaps you can combine two topics).
- b) Think of an audience for your campaign (e.g. politician, social group etc.).
- c) Brainstorm ways in which you could publicise your topic to your audience.
- d) Get on-line feedback on one or two of your most attractive ideas from another group. Modify your ideas if necessary.
- e) Plan your campaign in detail by producing a detailed proposal of what you want to say and how you are going to say it.
- f) Finally, display your campaign proposal on the **Discussion Board**. You can also send your ideas to Phillip Towndrow either as an E-mail attachment or via the **Student Drop Box** which you can find under **Student Tools**.

References:

- Grellet, F., 1981. *Developing Reading Skills: A practical guide to reading comprehension activities*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Ur, P., 1981. *Discussions that Work: Task-centred fluency practice*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

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Task

[Unit 5, Stage 4 - Assessment Test Passage](#)

Instructions:

1. Click on the hyperlink above and download the reading passage for the Unit 5 Assessment Test.
2. Read the passage carefully.
3. When you are ready, find your way to the **Quizzes & Tests** folder under **Course Documents** and select the **Unit 5, Stage 4 - Assessment Test**.
4. Answer the multiple-choice questions based on the information in the passage.
5. Set yourself a time limit of twenty minutes for the test.

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Unit 5, Stage 4 - Assessment Test Passage

Child Labour in India: Causes, Governmental Policies and the Role of Education

by Mitesh Badiwala

The complex issue of child labour is a developmental issue worth investigating. India is the largest example of a nation plagued by the problem of child labour. Estimates cite figures of between 60 and 115 million working children in India -- the highest number in the world.

Child labour is a source of income for poor families. A study conducted by the ILO Bureau of Statistics found that children's work was considered essential to maintaining the economic level of households, either in the form of work for wages, of help in household enterprises or of household chores in order to free adult household members for economic activity elsewhere. In some cases, the study found that a child's income accounted for between 34 and 37 percent of the total household income. However, there is a questionable aspect of this study. It was conducted in the form of a survey, and the responses were given by the parents of the child labourers. Parents would be biased into being compelled to support their decision to send their children to work, by saying that it is essential. They are probably right: for most poor families in India, alternative sources of income are close to non-existent. There are no social welfare systems such as those in the West, nor is there easy access to loans, which will be discussed.

What is apparent is the fact that child labourers are being exploited, shown by the pay that they receive. For the same type of work, studies show that children are paid less than their adult counterparts. A comparison of child wages to adult wages obtained by a study of child workers in the Delhi region of India shows that although 39.5% of employers said that child workers earn wages equal to adults, if the percentage of employers admitting that wages are lower for children are added up, a figure of 35.9% is found. This figure is significant when taking the bias of employers into account. Employers would have been likely to defend their wages for child workers, by saying that children earn the same wages as adults. The fact that no employers stated children earned more than adults should be also be noted.

The percentage of the population of India living in poverty is high. In 1990, 37% of the urban population and 39% of the rural population was living in poverty. Poverty has an obvious relationship with child labour, and studies have revealed a positive correlation - in some instances a strong one - between child labour and such factors as poverty. Families need money to survive, and children are a source of additional income.

Poverty itself has underlying determinants, one such determinant being caste. When analyzing the caste composition of child labourers it has been noted that a comparatively higher proportion of scheduled caste children work at a younger age for their own and their families' economic support. Scheduled caste (lower

caste) children tend to be pushed into child labour because of their family's poverty.

The combination of poverty and the lack of a social security network form the basis of the even harsher type of child labour -- bonded child labour. For the poor, there are few sources of bank loans, governmental loans or other credit sources, and even if there are sources available, few Indians living in poverty qualify. Here enters the local moneylender; for an average of two thousand rupees, parents exchange their child's labour to local moneylenders. Since the earnings of bonded child labourers are less than the interest on the loans, these bonded children are forced to work, while interest on their loans accumulates. A bonded child can only be released after his/her parents makes a lump sum payment, which is extremely difficult for the poor. Even if bonded child labourers are released, the same conditions of poverty that caused the initial debt can cause people to slip back into bondage.

From the time of its independence, India has committed itself to be against child labour. Article 24 of the Indian constitution clearly states that no child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or employed in any hazardous employment. The Bonded Labour System Act of 1976 fulfills the Indian Constitution's directive of ending forced labour. The Act frees all bonded laborers, cancels any outstanding debts against them, prohibits the creation of new bondage agreements, and orders the economic rehabilitation of freed bonded laborers by the state. But, the problem of child labour still remains. Enforcement is the key aspect that is lacking in the government's efforts. No enforcement data for child labour laws are available. Although the lack of data does not mean enforcement is nonexistent, the number of child labourers and their work participation rates show that enforcement, if existent, is ineffective.

Furthermore, India's state of education lacks effectiveness in yielding basic literacy in the population. It has been observed that the overall condition of the education system can be a powerful influence on the supply of child labour. The 1991 Census of India shows that 64% of males and 39% of females are literate -- an increase of 17% and 14% respectively from the 1981 census. These increases seem significant, but India's overall literacy rate of 40.8% lags behind other developing countries such as China (72.6%), Sri Lanka (86.1%), and Indonesia (74.1%), all of which have Per Capita Incomes comparable to India's. India's primary-school survival rate of 38.0% is also lower than China's rate of 70.0% and Sri Lanka's rate of 90.8%. This indicates that few students are reaching fifth or sixth grade, and dropout rates support this conclusion.

The concept of compulsory education, where all school-aged children are required to attend school, combats the force of poverty that pulls children out of school. Policies relating to compulsory education not only force children to attend school, but also contribute appropriate funds to the primary education system, instead of higher education. An example of a country where compulsory education has worked to reduce child labour is Sri Lanka where school participation rates rose from 58 percent in 1946 to 74 percent in 1963. The literacy rate also increased from 58 percent in 1946 to 86 percent in 1984.

Child labour cannot be eliminated by focusing on one determinant. The government of India must ensure that the needs of the poor are filled before attacking child labour. No matter how hard India tries, child labour always will exist until the need for it is removed. The development of India as a nation is being hampered by child labour.

Acknowledgment:

- Adapted from the original text entitled 'Child Labour in India: Causes, Governmental Policies and the role of Education' by Mitesh Badiwala, 1998. Used with the author's permission.

Unit 5, Stage 4 - Assessment Test

Instructions:

Select the correct answer for each of the following questions.

Question 1 (1 points)

What according to the author is questionable about the ILO Bureau of Statistics' study of child labour in India?

- Only between 34 and 37 percent of householders were surveyed.
 - Only the parents of child labourers were surveyed.
 - Only poor families were surveyed.
 - Only Indian parents were surveyed.
-

Question 2 (1 points)

Studies of children's wages show:

- the majority earn more than their adult counterparts.
 - the majority earn the same as their adult counterparts.
 - the majority earn less than half of their adult counterparts.
 - the majority do not earn more than their adult counterparts.
-

Question 3 (1 points)

Studies reveal that child labour is linked to:

- rural areas.
 - poverty.
 - urban areas.
 - extra income.
-

Question 4 (1 points)

According to the author, what causes poor people to go to local money lenders?

- The lack of a social security network.
 - The need for two thousand Rupees.
 - Being of the Scheduled caste.
 - Working in return for a lump sum.
-

Question 5 (1 points)

According to the information in the text relating to bonded child labourers, what is extremely difficult for poor parents?

- The danger of slipping back into bondage.
 - Obtaining the qualifications for a bank loan.
 - Finding enough money to release their children.
 - Paying the accumulated interest to the money lenders.
-

Question 6 (1 points)

What in the author's opinion can be said about India's labour laws?

- They are non-existent.
 - They are ineffective.
 - No data is available.
 - They are badly enforced.
-

Question 7 (1 points)

What criticism is made of the Indian educational system?

- Literacy rates are low.
 - Drop out rates are too high.
 - Literacy rates are declining.
 - It is not as good as China's.
-

Question 8 (1 points)

The author cites in respect of the concept of compulsory education:

- negative effects.
 - positive effects.
 - neutral effects.
 - no effects.
-

Question 9 (1 points)

It is demonstrated that:

- decreases in literacy rates are not linked to falls in school participation rates.
 - increases in literacy rates are not linked to rises in school participation rates.
 - decreases in literacy rates are linked to falls in school participation rates.
 - increases in literacy rates are linked to rises in school participation rates.
-

Question 10 (1 point)

The author argues that:

- the problem of child labour is caused by a single factor.
 - the needs of the poor have to come first.
 - the problem of child labour cannot be solved.
 - the needs of the Indian Government come first.
-

Submit Answers

Unit 5, Stage 4 - Assessment Test

Answer Key

1	B
2	D
3	B
4	A
5	C
6	D
7	A
8	B
9	D
10	B

Course Documents

[\[Top\]](#) : [\[Unit 5 - Cause & Effect\]](#) : [\[Unit 5, Stage 5 - Learning Journal\]](#)

Current Location: Unit 5, Stage 5 - Learning Journal

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Task

Congratulations! If you have accessed this page, then you have probably finished all of the activities for Unit 5 of the course. If you have not quite finished, please go back and complete what you need to do and then return to this page.

It is now time for you to sit down and think back over all of the work that you have completed so far and to bring your **Learning Journal** up to date and ready for submission to Phillip Towndrow.

In addition to the guidelines on Journal writing given to you in **Unit 1, Stage 1 - Learner Training [Learning Journal]** you might also like to consider the following questions:

- What were your reactions to the scores you got in the quizzes and test for this Unit? Did you do as well as you expected?
- What were your reactions to the feedback you received from Phillip Towndrow? Did his comments assist you or do you think that he could have helped you in a different way?
- What were your reactions to your on-line colleagues? Did they assist you or did they make your learning more difficult?
- Do you think you did as well as your on-line colleagues in the quizzes and the test? Give reasons for your answer.
- Finally, if you had any difficulties with this Unit, how were they caused?

When you are ready you can submit your Journal to Phillip Towndrow either as an E-mail attachment or via the **Student Drop Box** which you can find under **Student Tools**.

Thank you.

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Unit 6 - End of Course Evaluations

- **Stage 1 - Introduction**
- **Stage 2 - Materials & Instructor Evaluation**
- **Stage 3 - Self & Peer Evaluation**
- **Stage 4 - Any Other Information**

Course Documents

[\[Top\]](#) : [\[Unit 6 - End of Course Evaluations\]](#) : [\[Unit 6, Stage 1 - Introduction\]](#)

Current Location: Unit 6, Stage 1 - Introduction

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Handout

Dear Student,

Congratulations on reaching the end of this on-line course in reading comprehension skills. I hope that it has been interesting and useful.

In order to help me with planning in the future, I would like to ask you to complete three short on-line surveys on various aspects of your learning experiences over the past weeks. The names of the surveys are:

- Unit 6, Stage 2 - Materials & Instructor Evaluation
- Unit 6, Stage 3 - Self & Peer Evaluation
- Unit 6, Stage 4 - Any Other Information

Please note that only I will see your responses and that confidentiality is guaranteed. When you have successfully submitted your responses to the questions, it will then be my pleasure to give you a certificate of completion for the course.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Phillip Towndrow

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Course Documents

[\[Top\]](#) : [\[Unit 6 - End of Course Evaluations\]](#) : [\[Unit 6, Stage 2 - Materials & Instructor Evaluation\]](#)

Current Location: Unit 6, Stage 2 - Materials & Instructor Evaluation

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Task

This survey has two purposes:

1. To find out what you think about the materials used on the course, and
2. To find out what you think about the Course Instructor's performance in helping you learn.

To access the on-line **Materials and Instructor Evaluation** survey find your way to the **Surveys** folder under **Course Documents** and click on the appropriate 'Take survey' button.

Thank you for your participation.

◀ Back

Unit 6, Stage 2 - Materials & Instructor Evaluation

Instructions:

Please respond by indicating your level of agreement or disagreement with the statements given below. Thank you for your participation.

Question 1 (points)

'The course materials were well-organised.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 2 (points)

'When I had a question or comment I wanted to contact the Course Instructor in person rather than send an E-mail message.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 3 (points)

'The purpose of the materials was clearly stated.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 4 (points)

'The objectives of the course were achieved.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 5 (points)

'The course was relevant to my needs.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 6 (points)

'The instructions were easy to understand.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 7 (points)

'The course was academically challenging.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 8 (points)

'There were too many activities.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 9 (points)

'I liked the interactive features of the tasks.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 10 (points)

'The course was frustrating to work with.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 11 (points)

'The on-line assessments were useful in helping me measure my progress.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 12 (points)

'The Course Instructor made his role clear.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 13 (points)

'The Course Instructor's feedback helped me develop my thoughts and ideas.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 14 (points)

'The Course Instructor encouraged me to learn.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 15 (points)

'The Course Instructor responded quickly to my requests for help.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Submit Answers

Course Documents

[\[Top\]](#) : [\[Unit 6 - End of Course Evaluations\]](#) : [\[Unit 6, Stage 3 - Self & Peer Evaluation\]](#)

Current Location: Unit 6, Stage 3 - Self & Peer Evaluation

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Task

This survey has two purposes:

1. To find out how you rate your own learning performance on the course, and
2. To find out how you rate your on-line colleagues' learning performance on the course.

To access the on-line **Self and Peer Evaluation** survey find your way to the **Surveys** folder under **Course Documents** and click on the appropriate 'Take survey' button.

Thank you for your participation.

◀ Back

Unit 6, Stage 3 - Self & Peer Evaluation

Instructions:

Please respond by indicating your level of agreement or disagreement with the statements given below. Thank you for your participation.

Question 1 (points)

'I enjoyed using the computer.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 2 (points)

'My on-line colleagues acted responsibly.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 3 (points)

'I am satisfied with my on-line learning.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 4 (points)

'I am more confident about reading in English.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 5 (points)

'My independent language learning skills have improved.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 6 (points)

'I liked dealing with challenges.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 7 (points)

'I was in control of my learning.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 8 (points)

'I understood my role as a learner on the course.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 9 (points)

'I had a positive relationship with my on-line colleagues.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 10 (points)

'My on-line colleagues could rely on me.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 11 (points)

'I made every effort to contribute to the on-line discussions.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 12 (points)

'I tried hard to produce good quality work.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 13 (points)

'I did not expect to do well in the course because my reading ability in English was poor.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 14 (points)

'I did not want my on-line colleagues to know about my standard of English reading comprehension.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 15 (points)

'The most important thing for me was to gain the approval of my on-line colleagues.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 16 (points)

'I did the minimum amount of work possible.'

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Question 17 (points)

'My on-line colleagues tended to dominate on the course.'

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Question 18 (points)

'My on-line colleagues rarely offered ideas to others.'

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Question 19

'My on-line colleagues produced good quality work.'

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Question 20

'I prefer on-line learning to learning in the traditional classroom.'

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

[Submit Answers](#)

Course Documents

[\[Top\]](#) : [\[Unit 6 - End of Course Evaluations\]](#) : [\[Unit 6, Stage 4 - Any Other Information\]](#)

Current Location: Unit 6, Stage 4 - Any Other Information

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Task

The purpose of this survey is to provide you with additional space for you to give any other information about the course, the Course Instructor, yourself or your peers.

To access the on-line **Any Other Information** survey find your way to the **Surveys** folder under **Course Documents** and click on the appropriate 'Take survey' button.

Thank you for your participation.

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Unit 6, Stage 4 - Any Other Information

Question1 (points)

Please use the space below to include any other information about the course, the Course Instructor, yourself or your peers. Thank you for your participation.



Submit Answers

External Links

[Top] :



[Regional Council of Biscay, Spain](http://www.bizkaia.net/bizkaia/English/in_home.htm)

http://www.bizkaia.net/bizkaia/English/in_home.htm



[City Council of Bilbao Website](http://www.bilbao.net)

<http://www.bilbao.net>



[Guecho, Vizcaya \(Biscay\), Spain](http://www.getxo.net)

<http://www.getxo.net>

Local Council Website.



[Portugalete, Vizcaya \(Biscay\), Spain](https://www.bizkaia.net/bizkaia/english/general_information/routes_and_places/i1portu.htm)

https://www.bizkaia.net/bizkaia/english/general_information/routes_and_places/i1portu.htm

A Web-based tour of the town of Portugalete and the coast of Vizcaya (Biscay).



[American Solar Energy Society \(ASES\)](http://www.ases.org/)

<http://www.ases.org/>

ASES is an organisation dedicated to advancing the use of solar energy for the benefit of U.S. citizens and the global environment.



[Finding Information on the Internet](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html)

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html>

An on-line tutorial from the University of California, Berkeley.



[The Help Web](http://www.imaginarylandscape.com/helpweb/www/seek.html)

<http://www.imaginarylandscape.com/helpweb/www/seek.html>

A guide to using search engines.



[World Book Online Encyclopaedia](http://www.worldbook.com/)

<http://www.worldbook.com/>

In-depth information on a variety of subjects.



[Is Earth Overheating?](http://www.worldbook.com/fun/wbla/earth/html/ed05.htm)

<http://www.worldbook.com/fun/wbla/earth/html/ed05.htm>

A worldbook.com illustrated article on the issue of global warming.



[Earth in the Balance](http://www.worldbook.com/fun/wbla/earth/html/ed04.htm)

<http://www.worldbook.com/fun/wbla/earth/html/ed04.htm>

A World Book Science Year interview with Professor Peter Raven.

Appendix 2

Informed Consent Form

Thank you for volunteering to take part in the English On-line Reading Comprehension Project. The project is designed to improve students' English reading comprehension skills in an academic environment. The researcher is interested in finding out about how to use on-line materials effectively.

Research of this kind develops in light of student feedback and so the focus of the project may change slightly. However, your signature on this consent form shows that you have been told about the nature and conditions of this project as known at this time. Please keep one copy of the signed consent form for your records.

1. You will receive free tuition as specified in the on-line materials from the researcher in English language reading comprehension, study skills and the learning of English as a second or foreign language. In return for these services, and subject to paragraph 2 below, you are requested to give your permission to the researcher to use the transcripts of computer-mediated communications, the transcripts of interviews and learning journal entries produced by you during and after the course. The researcher may wish to write about this research project at a later date and your permission is also requested to publish any material collected during and after the course.
2. Your name will not be used under any circumstances in any of the reports on the course. You will be given a code number in order to guarantee your anonymity. Only the researcher will have access to learning journals and the transcripts of interviews. Your name will be removed from any course materials following completion of the course.
3. Your participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time, and for any reason, without penalty. If you withdraw from the course, the researcher will ask you to complete a questionnaire about why you decided to leave the course. You can also ask for materials you have provided to be returned with an understanding that they will not be used.
4. The researcher is the owner of (a) the teaching and learning materials used on the course, and (b) subject to paragraph 3 above, the data collected in the study.
5. Questions about participation in this study may be addressed to the researcher at the telephone number or E-Mail address given at the top of this form. *[Details removed]*

Thank you for your agreement to participate in the English On-line Reading Comprehension Project.

I have read and understood the information provided and agree to participate in the research project.

signature

date

print name in English

Appendix 3

Pre-course Questionnaire

English On-line Reading Comprehension Project

CONFIDENTIAL

Name: _____

Date: _____

Welcome again to the English On-line Reading Comprehension Project. Before you start using the on-line materials, it will help the researcher to know something about yourself as a learner and what you think about reading and studying English in the classroom.

This questionnaire is **not** a test - in fact, there are no correct responses to any of the questions. Simply think about each question and tick (✓) the answer that seems the best for you.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Phillip Towndrow

		Almost always true for me	Often true for me	Seldom true for me	Very seldom true for me
1	I do not have many friends in class.				
2	I often feel that I cannot avoid getting a low score in tests of English reading comprehension.				
3	I am an easy person to motivate in the classroom.				
4	When I am given a difficult text to read in English, I do whatever I can to look good in front of my classmates.				
5	My interest in reading in English is always high.				
6	I have the same reading ability in English as my classmates.				
7	When I am faced with a difficult problem, I try as many ways as possible to solve it.				
8	In class, I feel that the teacher lets me do things in my own way.				
9	I am not very interested in what happens to my classmates.				
10	I am behind my classmates in reading ability in English and I know that I cannot do any better.				
11	If I get a low score in an English reading comprehension test, I try harder the next time.				
12	When I am given a difficult text to read in English, I tell myself that it is boring and make no serious effort to understand it.				
13	When I am given a difficult text to read in English, I often give up without trying.				
14	I get a lot of encouragement from others to read in English.				
15	Success for me means doing better than the other students in the class.				
16	I am better than my classmates in reading English.				
17	I feel excited when I read in English.				
18	I am behind my classmates in reading ability in English but I know I can do better.				
19	If I get a low score in an English reading comprehension test it is often because I had some bad luck.				
20	I feel successful if all the work in class is easy.				

Continued /

		Almost always true for me	Often true for me	Seldom true for me	Very seldom true for me
21	I feel frustrated when I read in English.				
22	I find books and reading interesting.				
23	In class, I feel under the control of the teacher.				
24	I am helpful towards others in class.				
25	I feel most successful if something I learned makes me want to find out more.				
26	Sometimes I deliberately make trouble for my classmates.				
27	I read something in English whenever I have the opportunity.				

- End -

Appendix 4

Guide To Post-course Semi-structured Interviews with Participants

The purpose of the interviews is to gather information from participants displaying distinct or interesting patterns of motivational responses during the on-line course. It is also an opportunity for participants to reinforce or explain points made through the post-course evaluation questionnaires, learning journals or computer-mediated communications. The interviewer will also have the opportunity to answer questions about his roles as tutor and researcher on the course.

1. Introduction

- Thanks
- Explanation of the purpose of interview

2. Discussion Areas

2.1 Learning Experiences

- Give an example of a positive learning experience that you had. Can you explain why this happened?
- Give an example of a negative learning experience that you had. Can you explain why this happened?
- Do you think that your English reading comprehension and study skills improved during the course? Explain why or why not.
- Levels of motivation during the course:
 - Were you faced with any problems on the course? How did you react to these situations? [MO, LH]
 - When, if at all, did you feel most successful on the course? [Task, Ego, WO]
 - How would describe your performance on the course compared to that of your on-line classmates? [SWM, Ego, Underachieving]
 - To what extent did you feel that you had personal control over your progress and the direction of your on-line work? [Origin, Pawn]
- Looking back on your learning experiences overall, how would your approach change if you were to participate in another on-line course?

2.2 On-line Learning Technology

- Give an example of a positive experience using the computer software or hardware.
- Give an example of a negative experience using the computer software or hardware.
- Do you think the World Wide Web is suitable for English language learning? Explain why or why not.
- Do you think the Blackboard courseware is suitable for English language learning? Explain why or why not.

2.3 Improvements To The Course

- How do you think the course could be improved? Some areas to think about:
 - Use of computer hardware and software (access, speed, ease of use)
 - Tutor's role
 - Student's role (self, peers)
 - Content areas
 - Tasks, quizzes and tests

2.4 Other Areas Arising From the Interviewee's Specific Motivational Responses During The Course

Examples:

- I notice that your reading assessment test scores increased during the course. How do you feel about this? What did you do to make this happen?
- I notice that you chose not to keep a regular learning journal throughout the course. Can you explain why?
- I notice that you did not post any items on the Blackboard Discussion Board. Was there any particular reason why?
- I notice that you did not respond to a number of my E-mail messages. Would you have preferred to communicate in a different way?

2.5 Any Other Comments

3. Closing Remarks

- Thanks and best wishes

Appendix 5

Early-exit Questionnaire

English On-line Reading Comprehension Project

CONFIDENTIAL

Date: _____

Dear _____

Your decision not to continue studying on the English On-line Reading Comprehension Project is noted and your withdrawal from the course will take place immediately.

As mentioned at the beginning of the course, the researcher would like you complete the attached questionnaire about why you decided to leave the course. The information that you provide will be of use in finding out more about how to design and use on-line learning materials effectively.

Please remember that you can ask for any materials you have provided so far on the course to be returned to you with an understanding that they will not be used.

Thank you for your participation in the research study and for the information that you will provide in this questionnaire. I wish you all the best in your future English language studies.

Yours sincerely,

Phillip Towndrow

Instructions: Read the following information carefully. Indicate with a tick in the appropriate box how the following factors played a part in your decision to withdraw from the research study. A tick in the 'Yes' box means that the factor had a definite relationship with your decision. A tick in the 'No' box means that the factor did not have a definite relationship with your decision; a tick in the 'To Some Extent' box means that there was some connection between the factor and your decision. You can also use the lines under each item to add any other relevant comments (in English and/or Mandarin) that you would like to make.

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
1. The organisation of the materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
2. The purpose of the materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
3. The lack of personal contact with the Course Instructor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
4. The relevance of the materials to your needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

5. The difficulty of the materials. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

6. The number of activities. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

7. Using the computer. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

8. The on-line assessments. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

9. The Course Instructor's feedback. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

10. Writing the Learning Journal. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
11. Your relationship with your on-line classmates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
12. Your reading ability in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
13. Time management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
14. Your role as an on-line learner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
15. Your contributions to the on-line discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

16. The quality of your work. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

17. The quantity of work you did. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

18. A preference for classroom-based learning. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

19. Your interest in reading in English. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

20. Lack of time. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

21. Your ability to find solutions to your problems. Yes To Some Extent No

Comments: _____

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
22. Encouragement from others to read in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
23. Your performance compared to your on-line classmates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
24. Your progress depended too much on luck.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
25. Feelings of frustration.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

	Yes	To Some Extent	No
26. Pressure of work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<hr/> <hr/>		

Please use this space to add any other information relating to your decision to withdraw from the course.

Finally, are you willing to talk to the researcher about your decision? He will not try to persuade you to change your mind.

YES

NO

- End -

