

**Uneven second language competency in the English for Academic  
Purposes context: 'spiky profiles' and the role of self-efficacy beliefs**

**By**

**Karen Fiona Smith**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy at the University of Central Lancashire

February 2024



## Abstract

*Uneven language competency has been documented in multiple educational contexts with authors alluding to the ‘spiky profiles’ of English second language [L2] learners. These accounts have thus far been anecdotal, so this mixed-method study contributes original empirical research into the competency profiles and the self-efficacy [SE] beliefs of English for Academic Purposes [EAP] students in the UK Higher Education [HE] context. It is crucial to identify and treat ‘spiky profiles’ where they occur due to the considerable language demands of tertiary study, moreover, understanding the SE beliefs that accompany students’ profiles further informs EAP teaching approaches.*

*In the study’s quantitative phase, 2114 sets of test scores from the skill areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, were collected from students with varying first languages [L1s] from six sittings of a B2 English language test between December 2016 and September 2019. An innovative approach measured these students’ degree of uneven competency, and their score sets were profiled. Correlational and standard multiple regression analyses were conducted, as were t-testing of profiles and ANOVA of three L1 groupings. In the qualitative phase, interviews elicited fifteen students’ SE beliefs vis-à-vis their competency profiles. Bandura’s (1997) model of self-efficacy underpinned the interview guide, but open coding and thematic analysis allowed new themes to emerge.*

*The unique contribution of this study is evidence that uneven competency is very common and patterned. Many students exhibited an uneven profile, with one third of the sample scoring highest in speaking, followed by listening, reading, and writing. Significant differences according to L1 were identified with L1 Arabic students being more unevenly competent. The qualitative findings uncovered SE’s self-regulatory and motivational impacts on L2 development. Differing beliefs across skill areas were implicated in differing reports of self-regulation, motivation, and ensuing language performance via negative, resilient, and positive feedback loops.*

*Both phases of the study highlighted the importance of the productive skills in students’ profiles. The disparities observed were explained by the influence of students’ L1s and educational experiences, as well as students’ conceptions and expectations of these skills areas. It is argued that closing the gap between the speaking and writing competencies of UK EAP students can be achieved through process-genre instruction that incorporates careful management of students’ SE beliefs.*

*Keywords: Uneven L2 competency, spiky profiles, EAP, self-efficacy for speaking and writing*

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ix
List of tables.....	x
List of figures.....	xi
List of appendices.....	xi
Glossary of terms and abbreviations.....	xii
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Preface.....	1
1.2. Background.....	4
1.3. Statement of the problem.....	6
1.4. Purpose and significance of the study.....	8
1.5. Research questions.....	10
1.6. Research design.....	11
1.6.1. Participants.....	11
1.6.2. Instruments.....	12
1.6.3. Procedure.....	12
1.7. Philosophical orientation and assumptions.....	12
1.8. Theoretical frameworks.....	14
1.9. Delimitations.....	17
1.10. Summary and organisation of the thesis.....	18

Chapter 2. Uneven L2 competency .....	20
2.1. Introduction .....	20
2.2. Language competency measures.....	20
2.3. Origins of the ‘spiky profile’ .....	25
2.4. Uneven profiles in EAP contexts .....	29
2.5. The four skills .....	32
2.5.1. Listening .....	33
2.5.2. Speaking.....	36
2.5.3. Reading.....	41
2.5.4. Writing.....	47
2.6. Implications for profile shapes.....	58
2.7. Summary .....	63
 Chapter 3. The role of SE beliefs .....	 64
3.1. Introduction .....	64
3.2. Learner beliefs.....	64
3.3. SE for language learning.....	66
3.4. Sources of SE beliefs .....	69
3.5. SE and L2 performance .....	72
3.6. SE and uneven profiles.....	75
3.7. Summary .....	77
 Chapter 4. Methodology .....	 80
4.1. Introduction .....	80
4.2. Mixed-methods approach.....	80
4.3. Quality criteria .....	82

4.4. Qualitative analysis .....	83
4.5. Design.....	84
Chapter 5. Phase 1 .....	87
5.1. Introduction .....	87
5.2. Phase 1 research questions.....	87
5.3. Phase 1 data collection .....	88
5.3.1. The data source: TELL .....	88
5.3.2. Limitations of using test data.....	90
5.3.3. Sampling approach and student characteristics .....	93
5.3.4. Data collection procedure.....	94
5.4. Phase 1 analytical considerations and procedure .....	96
Chapter 6. Phase 1 findings.....	101
6.1. RQ1: What is the extent and shape of uneven competency in L2 EAP profiles? .....	101
6.1.1. Between-subjects descriptive analysis .....	101
6.1.2. Between-subjects descriptive analysis by quartile .....	103
6.1.3. Normality testing .....	104
6.1.4. Analysis of L1 groupings.....	106
6.1.5. Within-subjects individual standard deviation [SD] analysis.....	107
6.1.6. Within-subjects profile labelling .....	110
6.1.7. Between-subjects profile differences .....	111
6.2. RQ2: Are there relationships between skill areas and with uneven competency? .....	112
6.2.1. Correlation analysis.....	112
6.2.2. Standard multiple regression analysis .....	114
6.3. Summary of Phase 1 analysis.....	116

6.4. Limitations and implications of Phase 1 .....	116
Chapter 7. Phase 1 triangulation.....	118
7.1. Introduction .....	118
7.2. Data collection procedure.....	118
7.3. Analytical procedure .....	119
7.4. RQ1: What is the extent and shape of uneven competency in L2 EAP profiles?.....	120
7.4.1. Between-subjects descriptive analysis .....	120
7.4.2. Normality testing .....	122
7.4.3. Within-subjects individual standard deviation [SD] analysis.....	124
7.4.4. Within-subjects profile labelling .....	126
7.4.5. Between-subjects profile differences .....	127
7.5. RQ2: Are there relationships between skills areas and with uneven competency? .....	129
7.5.1. Correlation analysis.....	129
7.5.2. Standard multiple regression analysis .....	131
7.6. Summary of Phase 1 triangulation.....	132
Chapter 8. Phase 2 .....	134
8.1. Introduction .....	134
8.2. Phase 2 research questions.....	135
8.3. Phase 2 data collection .....	136
8.3.1. Interview method.....	136
8.3.2. Interviewee sampling approach.....	138
8.3.3. Ethical procedure .....	141
8.3.4. Piloting and reflexivity.....	141
8.3.5. Interview materials .....	143

8.4. Phase 2 data analysis .....	145
8.4.1. Thematic content analysis .....	145
8.4.2. Transcription approach .....	147
8.4.3. Coding procedure.....	148
Chapter 9. Phase 2 findings.....	156
9.1. Introduction .....	156
9.2. RQ3: What are students' SE beliefs about their L2 EAP profiles?.....	156
9.2.1. Profile awareness.....	156
9.2.2. Skill-specific beliefs .....	162
9.3. RQ4: What role do students' SE beliefs play in their performance? .....	192
9.4. Summary of Phase 2 analysis.....	201
Chapter 10. Discussion.....	202
10.1. Introduction .....	202
10.2. RQ1: What is the extent and shape of unevenness in L2 EAP profiles? .....	202
10.3. RQ2: Are there relationships between skill areas and with unevenness?.....	209
10.4. RQ3: What are students' SE beliefs about their L2 EAP profiles?.....	217
10.4.1. Bandura's sources of SE .....	220
10.4.2. Emergent themes.....	228
10.5. RQ4: What role do students' SE beliefs play in their performance? .....	236
10.6. Limitations of the study .....	239
10.6.1. Using the TELL .....	239
10.6.2. Quantitative analytical approach.....	240
10.6.3. The qualitative sample .....	241
10.6.4. Socially desirable responding.....	242



10.7. Summary .....	243
Chapter 11. Recommendations for teaching .....	247
11.1. Introduction .....	247
11.2. Raised awareness.....	247
11.3. Diagnosing uneven competency.....	248
11.4. Managing students' expectations and beliefs .....	248
11.5. Scaffolding literacy development .....	252
11.6. Summary .....	255
Chapter 12. Conclusion .....	256
12.1. Introduction .....	256
12.2. Theoretical contribution .....	256
12.3. Methodological contribution .....	258
12.4. Contribution to EAP practice .....	259
12.5. Concluding remarks .....	260
References .....	261
Appendices.....	298
Appendix i. Descriptive statistics of quartiles by overall score 2016/2017 .....	298
Appendix ii. Example writing scripts .....	299
Appendix iii. Participant information sheet .....	300
Appendix iv. Consent form.....	303
Appendix v. Interview transcripts .....	305
Participant 1 .....	305

Participant 2.....	320
Participant 3.....	332
Participant 4.....	350
Participant 5.....	363
Participant 6.....	375
Participant 7.....	384
Participant 8.....	400
Participant 9.....	412
Participant 10.....	429
Participant 11.....	448
Participant 12.....	464
Participant 13.....	482
Participant 14.....	497
Participant 15.....	513

## Acknowledgements

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my Director of Studies, Dr. Daniel Waller, and Supervisor, Dr. Tania Horák, who saw me through all the years to the completion of this study. Without their sustained belief in me, I might have given up long ago! Their insightful and detailed feedback has helped me to formulate this thesis as clearly as possible.

I would also like to thank the interview participants who found the time to talk to me during a period of unprecedented global upheaval. I really enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your learning experiences. I learned much and I have made every effort to represent your views faithfully. Your data will contribute to EAP practice for the benefit of future students.

I must acknowledge the fabulous support from my colleagues. My team made the experience of being as a part-time PhD student much easier; there was always someone with an answer to a question or a helpful suggestion. The enthusiasm for research has inspired me and I look forward to contributing to future research projects with them. I especially want to thank Dr. Nicola Halenko for her moral support and advice, often given at the school gates or on walks in the countryside, and Neil Walker for his willingness to break off from lesson planning to share his perspective on all things analytical and theoretical.

I would also like to thank my family, especially my sister Catherine and my mother Angela, for their insistence that I should see the project through, and my son William, for making me take breaks and the musical entertainment! I thank you all for your unwavering confidence that I would get there eventually.

## List of tables

Table 1 <i>Mixed-method study design</i> .....	86
Table 2 <i>TELL sampling</i> .....	95
Table 3 <i>Range, mean, and SD of TELL scores in 4 cohorts 2016/2017</i> .....	102
Table 4 <i>Quartiles by overall score December 2016</i> .....	103
Table 5 <i>Normality findings 2016/2017</i> .....	105
Table 6 <i>One-way between-groups ANOVA for groups according to L1 2016/2017</i> .....	107
Table 7 <i>Distribution of individual SD values 2016/2017</i> .....	108
Table 8 <i>Proportion of 2016/2017 cohorts considered even</i> .....	108
Table 9 <i>Mean scores according to SD value of individual students 2016/2017</i> .....	109
Table 10 <i>Independent samples t-test comparing profile type scores and SD values 2016/2017</i> .....	111
Table 11 <i>Relationships between skill areas 2016/2017</i> .....	113
Table 12 <i>Relationship of overall and skill area scores, with individual SD value 2016/2017</i> .....	114
Table 13 <i>Descriptives of standard multiple regression of individual SD value 2016/2017</i> .....	115
Table 14 <i>Unstandardised (B) and standardised (<math>\beta</math>) regression coefficients 2016/2017</i> .....	115
Table 15 <i>TELL sampling for triangulation</i> .....	118
Table 16 <i>Range, mean, and SD of TELL scores in 2 cohorts 2018/2019</i> .....	121
Table 17 <i>Mean TELL skill area and overall scores, comparing 2016/2017, 2018, 2019</i> .....	122
Table 18 <i>Normality findings 2018/2019</i> .....	123
Table 19 <i>Distribution of individual SD values, comparing 2016/2017 and 2018/2019</i> .....	124
Table 20 <i>Proportion of cohort considered even 2018/2019</i> .....	125
Table 21 <i>Mean scores according to SD value of individual students 2018/2019</i> .....	126
Table 22 <i>Independent samples t-test comparing profile type scores, and SD values 2018/2019</i> .....	128
Table 23 <i>Relationships between skill areas 2018/2019</i> .....	129
Table 24 <i>Relationship of overall and skill area scores with individual SD value 2018/2019</i> .....	130
Table 25 <i>Descriptives of standard multiple regression of individual SD value 2018/2019</i> .....	131
Table 26 <i>Unstandardised (B) and standardised (<math>\beta</math>) regression coefficients 2018/2019</i> .....	132
Table 27 <i>Interviewees</i> .....	139
Table 28 <i>Transcription key</i> .....	148
Table 29 <i>Examples of initial codes</i> .....	150
Table 30 <i>Top quartile individual SD values from 2016/2017 and 2018/2019</i> .....	205
Table 31 <i>IELTS scores 2022</i> .....	206

## List of figures

Figure 1 <i>Framework for reading comprehension (Perfetti &amp; Stafura, 2014, p.24)</i> .....	42
Figure 2 <i>Hayes' (2012) revised model of the writing process</i> .....	51
Figure 3 <i>Descriptive model of the L2 composing process (Wang &amp; Wen, 2002).</i> .....	54
Figure 4 <i>Mean overall, speaking, listening, reading, and writing scores by exam sitting 2016/2017</i> .....	101
Figure 5 <i>Frequency of profile type 2016/2017</i> .....	110
Figure 6 <i>Mean overall, speaking, listening, reading, and writing scores by exam sitting 2018/2019</i> .....	120
Figure 7 <i>Frequency of profile type 2018/2019</i> .....	127
Figure 8 <i>Pre-interview questionnaire</i> .....	142
Figure 9 <i>Visual prompt for interviews</i> .....	144
Figure 10 <i>Braun &amp; Clarke's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis</i> .....	147
Figure 11 <i>An example of a potential theme arising from Step 3</i> .....	153
Figure 12 <i>An example of a finalised theme</i> .....	154
Figure 13 <i>Reviewing and mapping themes in relation to Bandura's (1997) SE model</i> .....	155
Figure 14 <i>Thematic map of participants' self-awareness</i> .....	157
Figure 15 <i>Thematic map of L2 SE for listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the EAP context</i> .....	162
Figure 16 <i>Thematic map of SE sources and destroyers according to Bandura's (1997) SE model</i> .....	163
Figure 17 <i>Negative SE feedback loop</i> .....	194
Figure 18 <i>Resilient SE feedback loop</i> .....	197
Figure 19 <i>Positive SE feedback loop</i> .....	199
Figure 20 <i>Map of emergent themes related to SE</i> .....	229
Figure 21 <i>A genre process model of teaching writing (Badger &amp; White, 2000, p.159)</i> .....	253

## List of appendices

Appendix i. *Descriptive statistics of quartiles by overall score 2016/2017*

Appendix ii. *Example writing scripts*

Appendix iii. *Participant information sheet*

Appendix iv. *Consent form*

Appendix v. *Interview transcripts*

## Glossary of terms and abbreviations

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.
EAP	English for Academic Purposes: An umbrella term that describes the language codes and conventions of English-speaking academic discourse communities, characterised by specificity and technicality of lexis and an emphasis on formal registers especially in the written mode (Murray, 2016; Murray & Muller, 2019; Ennis & Prior, 2020). Also, a term for the pedagogy of these language codes (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001).
EGAP	English for General Academic Purposes: A sub-category of EAP.
ELT	English Language Teaching.
EMI	English Medium Instruction.
ESAP	English for Specific Academic Purposes: A sub-category of EAP.
ESL	English as a Second Language.
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages.
FE	Further Education: Post-secondary adult education.
FL	Foreign Language.
FLA	Foreign Language Anxiety: "A distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning and arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p.128).
GE	General English.
GPA	Grade Point Average.
GT	Grounded Theory.
HE	Higher Education: Tertiary education at undergraduate and post-graduate level.
Home language	See also L1: A non-gendered, inclusive term that is used instead of 'mother tongue' that refers to a first language, specifically "(a) language/s other than English" that has been acquired either at home or within a community (Mehmedbegovic, 2017, p.540).
IELTS	International English Language Testing System.

L1	First language: a.k.a. home language, learned from birth.
L2	A second or additional language: not learned from birth.
Metacognition/ metacognitive control	Flavell (1979) defines this as “knowledge and cognition about cognitive phenomena” (p. 906). It includes an individual’s knowledge about the beliefs other people hold about cognition as well as that individual’s self-awareness of their cognitive and affective experience of doing tasks. Metacognitive control allows an individual to control their purpose, speed, use of background knowledge, monitor quality and use strategies to overcome problems.
PTE	Pearson Test of English.
SE	Self-efficacy.
SELT, or secure test	Secure English Language Test: A language test conducted under timed conditions with invigilators present.
Spiky profile	A term found in ESOL literature describing discrepant competency levels across the four skills of language (Schellekens, 2007; Paton & Wilkins, 2009; Ward, Bushell, & Hepworth, 2012).
SLA	Second Language Acquisition.
TA	Thematic Analysis.
TOEFL-iBT	Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-based Test.





# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Preface

This phased mixed-method study investigated the English language competency profiles of international students who either hoped to pursue, or were already pursuing, UK degree programmes in a variety of subject areas. Their first language [L1] was not English, so the study was concerned with their profiles as users of English as a second language [L2]. Language competency<sup>1</sup> was investigated holistically across the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, to determine the frequency, severity, and shape of uneven L2 profiles in the English for Academic Purposes [EAP] context. Students' self-efficacy beliefs about their competency profiles were also investigated.

The study was inspired by my EAP practitioner experience. I had noted students who were able to communicate perfectly well using their L2, who would then produce written work that was full of grammatical and orthographic errors, or that had weaknesses in organisation and cohesion. In other cases, students that had struggled to express their ideas in class would subsequently produce accurate and elegant written work. Colleagues frequently used the term 'spiky profile' in describing these students whose performance was uneven across skill areas, and yet no one could explain how spiky one could expect an individual to be, nor what shapes spiky profiles could be expected to take in the HE context, nor what the psychological impacts of this would be on the students in question. My own prior experience as an international master's student prompted me to consider students' perceptions of self-efficacy in addition to investigating their competency profiles. This was because the beliefs I held about my ability to speak, listen, read, and write in my L2 had influenced my learning behaviours and choices, which in turn, had impacted on my language competency profile at that time.

---

<sup>1</sup> Including linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competencies (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018,2020).

The concept of the four skills goes back as far as Quintilian, who in the first century described communication as the “interrelation of four activities” (McLelland, 2017, p.119). The four skills are undoubtedly a familiar concept to language teaching professionals everywhere, especially those who adhere to the principles of the communicative approach, which holds that language competence is best developed through language use in the form of meaningful communication with others. This results in a pedagogical emphasis on developing students’ competency in the four skill areas via tasks, rather than solely through building a declarative knowledge of grammar and lexis (Savignon, 2012). Moreover, in the past half century language competency has been assessed as a multi-dimensional construct comprising the four skills (McLelland, 2017), and this is reflected in the design of internationally recognised exams such as IELTS <sup>2</sup> or TOEFL. <sup>3</sup> Concomitant to this is the possibility of distinguishing between ‘even’ versus ‘uneven’ competency because an individual will, at any given stage of their language development, perform either comparatively better, worse, or equally well, in the skills of speaking, listening, reading, or writing. An uneven profile thus results from discrepancies between these four competencies.

Uneven language competency goes by the moniker of the ‘spiky profile’ in literature related to ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages]. Schellekens (2007), and Paton and Wilkins (2009), give anecdotal accounts of the types of uneven profile that can be seen in ESOL learners from a wide range of backgrounds. These learners can be subject to sub-optimal circumstances as economic migrants or refugees and they may or may not have completed their education in their own countries (Ward, Bushell, & Hepworth, 2012). An interrupted education could explain why an ESOL learner’s literacy skills remain less developed, making their profile uneven. However, the fact that ESOL learners have been noted for their spiky profiles does not preclude the possibility that uneven competency features in other L2 learners, for example, international students in the Higher Education [HE] context. Indeed, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR] companion guide offers up a so-called “realistic graphic profile” of two language learners (see Figures 6 & 7, Council of Europe, 2020, pp.38-39) whose

---

<sup>2</sup> International English Language Testing System.

<sup>3</sup> Test of English as a Foreign Language.

competencies fluctuate between different levels of the framework, which could be interpreted as an implicit acknowledgement of uneven competency. However, the guide makes clear that these profiles are merely illustrative, therefore presenting them as realistic is not substantiated, and surprisingly, no fully focused investigations of spiky profiles have been reported in the EAP literature to date, despite there being some qualitative and quantitative evidence of these from this context (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Craven, 2012; Allen, 2017). Where discrepant profiles have been specifically identified, in studies primarily concerned with the predictive validity of IELTS or TOEFL on grade point average [GPA], they have been shown to have a deleterious impact on achievement (Bridgeman, Cho, & DiPietro, 2016; Ginther & Yan, 2018). This indicated to me the need for focused investigation into how often, how severely, and in what ways EAP students exhibited uneven profiles.

To generate practical outcomes for EAP practice and for fullest understanding, I considered it necessary to view uneven competency from multiple perspectives. Therefore, I also explored international students' perceptions of themselves vis-à-vis their competencies as speakers, listeners, readers, and writers of L2 English using the construct of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Self-efficacy, that will henceforth be referred to as SE, is defined as "an individual's subjective perception of his or her capability to perform in a given setting or to attain desired results" (American Psychological Association, 2023, para.1). There is accumulating evidence that SE beliefs play a role in L2 students' self-regulation, motivation, and subsequent achievement in general (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Tilfarlioğlu & Ciftci, 2011; Phakiti, Hirsh, & Woodrow, 2013; Truong & Wang 2019), and also in relation to specific language skills, for example, public speaking (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019; Zhang, Ardasheva & Austin, 2020), listening (Rahimi & Abedini, 2009), reading (Shehzad, Lashari, Alghorbany & Lashari, 2019), and academic writing (Sun & Wang, 2020; Wilby, 2020). However, very few studies have considered SE across all four skills (Basaran & Cabaroglu, 2014; Saleem, Ali & Ab Rashid, 2018; Truong & Wang, 2019), and no research has yet considered whether varying SE beliefs across skill areas play a role in uneven competency in L2 English. Meanwhile, multiple authors (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2002; Raoofi, Tan, & Chan, 2012; Alrabai, 2016; Bruning & Kauffman, 2016) have

argued that SE beliefs are influenceable by teachers and peers, which meant that my findings could be applied to EAP practice, potentially to redress imbalances in students' competencies.

My study contributes to the field in several ways. Firstly, the quantitative strand provides an original empirical description of uneven L2 competency in the UK HE EAP context and an innovative analytical framework for its identification. The qualitative strand contributes uniquely to the growing body of understanding about the role of SE beliefs in second language acquisition through its holistic approach that has considered all four skills. Having adopted Bandura's (1997) SE model, this thesis proposes an extension to it that describes SE for L2 competency that is specific to the EAP context, which in turn provides recommendations for EAP practice that will lead to comprehensive support for international students.

## 1.2. Background

People from all over the world opt to travel to English-speaking countries, mainly Australia and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2022), to pursue tertiary level education, for which they traditionally have had strong reputations. To survive and thrive in English-speaking countries, international students firstly require a level of communicative competence in English for day-to-day and social purposes. This includes a procedural knowledge of the grammar, lexis, and phonology of English, the Latin script, in addition to discorsal and sociolinguistic competencies, in the afore-mentioned skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This is referred to as General English [GE], namely "a general competence enabling the individual to negotiate the demands of everyday communication in primarily social contexts" (Murray & Muller, 2019, p.258).

However, to succeed as university students, competence in English for Academic Purposes [EAP] is also needed. EAP is an umbrella term encompassing English for General Academic Purposes [EGAP] and English for Specific Academic Purposes [ESAP] (Murray, 2016; Murray & Muller, 2019; Ennis & Prior, 2020). It describes not only the English language pedagogy whose focus is specific to the academic context, but the language code itself that is used in English-

speaking academic discourse communities. EAP is characterised by specificity and technicality of lexis within different academic disciplines, an emphasis on formal registers, especially although not exclusively, in the written mode. It includes unique conventions such as the use of sources and referencing, and there are multiple academic genres and formats. Some of the latter are common across a variety of disciplines, such as oral presentations, written essays, and reports, while others are distinctly subject-specific, hence the distinction between EGAP and ESAP (Murray & Muller, 2019). Programmes of study are mediated and assessed by subject specialists, who, as members of the academic discourse community, use the code and adhere to academic conventions. They have the expectation that all students, if they wish to be successful in their studies, should communicate using their code, abiding by the conventions. However, this has long been recognised as problematic for international students (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Yung & Fong, 2019), resulting in poorer performance on degree programmes than their English-speaking peers (Trenkic & Warmington, 2019) with potential consequences for their self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, as well as career aspirations.

There are many reasons why international students find EAP a challenge, but several of the most immediately obvious will be outlined here to set the context. Firstly, students' previous English language instruction will almost certainly have been in GE, as many will have started learning L2 English at primary or secondary school (Liu, Chang, Yang, & Sun, 2011; Campion, 2016). GE, as previously mentioned, is the English of social contexts, therefore it tends towards informal registers in spoken and written genres such as conversations with, or emails and text messages to friends or family, featuring frequently occurring lexis and grammatical structures. GE is the foundation upon which EAP is built, as it also encompasses more formal language functions such as writing letters and argumentative texts at the higher levels. Nonetheless, instruction in GE is unlikely to have prepared students sufficiently for operating in the subject-specific genres of EAP, hence most HE institutions provide pre- and in-session language courses for international students, attempting to bridge the gap between these different language codes.

A second hurdle for international students is that the UK HE educational culture has a western conception of the ownership of knowledge where intellectual property and originality is respected, even revered, a value system with which they may be unfamiliar. Therefore, students may not understand the need for paraphrasing source material or adopting referencing conventions to avoid plagiarism in their writing and oral presentations. Additionally, they may have learned different rhetorical structures in their prior education leading to confusion around how to appropriately structure academic discourse in English (Raimes, 1987; Kutz, Groden, & Zamel, 1993).

The above three reasons could make international students' transition to a new discourse community and academic culture difficult enough, but a fourth, arguably far more fundamental, problem is addressed by this thesis. They are still learning English as an L2, unlike their L1 peers who have developed their communicative competencies from birth, then literacy throughout schooling before encountering EAP at university. Therefore, not only have international students had far less time to develop competencies, but they also experience interference from their L1(s). Moreover, the educational cultures from which they originate may have prioritised the development of some skills over others, both in their home language/s and L2 English. These factors greatly increase the likelihood of international students exhibiting uneven competence across speaking, listening, reading, and writing, that in turn contributes to a range of outcomes for students' SE, self-regulation, motivation, and ultimately attainment in university study.

### 1.3. Statement of the problem

My colleagues and I believe that spiky profiles are a real phenomenon, as do Schellekens (2007), Paton and Wilkins (2009), and Ward et al. (2012) in their writing about the FE context, however, there appears to be no agreed definition of what a spiky profile is, nor do there

appear to be any research studies that directly give empirical descriptions of L2 uneven competency in the UK EAP context.<sup>4</sup>

Using 'spiky profile' as a search term generates multiple hits related to autism, dyslexia, ELT-related blog pages, and again from the post-compulsory sector, in the guise of the Australian Core Skills Framework [ACSF] (McLean, Perkins, Tout, Brewer, & Wyse, 2012). This document, which focusses on learning needs' analysis, presents the case study of 'Stav' (p.13), whose diagnostic assessment produced a spiky profile. While her ACSF listening score was sufficient for her intended course of study, her writing was judged to be two ACSF levels lower than required. There were also weaknesses in her reading and oral competency, although not as great as that seen in the writing. Reportedly, she struggled with the formality of report writing and scanning academic texts (McLean et al., 2012). These details suggest an unfamiliarity with the requirements of a subject-specific genre, possibly problems with processing and producing complex sentences or passive structures, as well as a limited vocabulary size. However, although this description is a useful illustration of a spiky profile, it neither pertains to the HE context, nor is it fully clear from the document whether Stav is an L2 user of English. Further searches made with synonymous terms such as 'jagged profile' led to the International English Language Testing System [IELTS]' (2022) jagged profile system that treats uneven score profiles as a sign of poor inter-rater reliability, an inconvenience to the testing system rather than a phenomenon that reflects true-score variance (Schoonen, 2012).

The lack of empirical research literature yielded by the term 'spiky profile' is surprising given that the concept is a very intuitive one, as is evident from ESOL and EAP practitioners' use of the term. Some case studies of Generation 1.5 university students describe uneven skill profiles, for example, Riazantseva (2012) closely examined the language competencies of three US college students whose L1 was Russian, and who had only partially completed their secondary education in the US before entering university. She documented these students' very strong English oral interaction skills that merely featured non-impeding errors, which

---

<sup>4</sup> Koizumi et al. (2022) conducted an analysis of TOEFL iBT, TOEIC and TEAP score profiles, collected between 2009 to 2018. However, this study was limited to the Japanese context and not delimited to EAP learners.

contributed greatly to their success at university. This was despite “recurring and serious problems at the sentence and discourse levels” (p.188) in some of their academic writing. They struggled specifically with using articles and prepositions, subject-verb agreement, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and sentence structure. They also failed to compose cohesive and coherent texts, and in some instances, even plagiarised sources (Riazantseva, 2012). While these case studies clearly illuminate some of the potential language areas involved in uneven language competency, again, they are not set in the UK HE EAP context.

Concurrently, when searching for literature on SE beliefs in L2 development, much of the research was limited to specific skill areas and data had typically been collected using questionnaires, meaning that there was scant in-depth qualitative literature on students’ beliefs. None covered all four skills from the perspective of uneven language competency.

#### 1.4. Purpose and significance of the study

The study has several purposes then. To verify practitioner intuitions, the existence of uneven language profiles in UK EAP students needed to be confirmed empirically. Secondly, the frequency, severity, and nature of uneven competency needed to be described systematically. Thirdly, the study needed to explore students’ beliefs searching for reasons why such profiles might develop in the first place, and to better understand the possible ongoing impacts on self-regulation, motivation, and performance.

Investigating the extent and nature of, as well as the variables involved in, uneven competency in EAP students is important for several reasons. Chief of these is that successful completion of a degree programme is contingent upon strong all-round English language competency, above and beyond the communicative competence that is required for other activities in life. Tertiary study involves exposure to linguistically complex texts, higher-order thinking, and the ability to communicate complex and nuanced ideas (Ennis & Prior, 2020). Teaching is delivered through lengthy lectures and seminars, requiring sustained comprehension and interaction. Reading widely and copiously is a recognised pre-requisite for a critical understanding of one’s



discipline, and assessment comes in the form of extended spoken or written tasks, such as presentations or research assignments. In the light of this, the diagnostic value of language competency measurements in all four skills on entry to university should be great.

International students' English competency is routinely assessed, however, composite cut scores are typically used in making admissions decisions, so any diagnostic benefit is left untapped. To my knowledge, currently there is no diagnostic framework for uneven competency, so I provide an initial suggestion for one.

Secondly, the lack of shared understanding about uneven competency arguably hampers conversations about, and potentially the effectiveness of, teaching and learning. EAP practitioners would benefit most from improved understanding because it informs their conceptions and expectations of the students they teach. All language teaching should be about identifying students' strengths and weaknesses and providing focused practice opportunities, and of course, individual teachers probably do scrutinise their students' test scores where they have access to them. They also reflect on their previous experiences when planning schemes of work and lessons, but typically they will be working with anecdotal information limited to their teaching context. This investigation of thousands of scores contributes to the bigger picture, helping to inform EAP practice from year to year, group to group. Likewise, it could help subject lecturers give international students a better chance of accessing the curriculum and meeting their needs in a more targeted way. If lecturers know the extent to which students have strengths in one area and weaknesses in another, and that some language profiles are more likely with specific L1 backgrounds, then remediation can be designed for in advance. Knowing quite how large the gap between students' competencies can be, signals that the focus of formative feedback or the assessment diet may need to change. It helps with planning instruction as lecturers will have a better idea of where students are developmentally, therefore how much input will be needed for the likelihood of success within a set timeframe. On a darker note, knowing the shape of uneven competency may also help identify cases where a student is not presenting their own work, which is a pervasive problem in high-stakes educational contexts. New knowledge stemming from this study could

also help international students better manage their expectations by being aware of the typical competency profile in the UK HE context.

Studying the role of SE beliefs in relation to uneven competency is important because it builds towards an evidenced understanding of the non-linguistic influences on strengths and weaknesses in different language areas, such as the impact of emotions, poor self-regulation or motivation, and the effect of others. This knowledge can be used by EAP teachers, subject lecturers, as well as individual students, given that the literature on SE suggests that beliefs can be influenced for positive outcomes in teaching contexts (Bandura, 1997; Bruning & Kauffman, 2016), in a way that other motivational theories do not propose. This study contributes by identifying international students' motivators and barriers in EAP contexts, then by proposing actionable recommendations for teaching and learning.

### 1.5. Research questions

#### **RQ1. What is the extent and shape of uneven competency in L2 EAP profiles?**

The question relates to the nature of uneven profiles in the international student population. The word 'extent' refers to the frequency of uneven profiles, but also the severity of uneven language competency at an individual level. The word 'shape' refers to the form that uneven competency takes in terms of areas of strength and weakness in students' profiles. I speculated that most international students would have relatively even competency profiles, however, my teaching and assessment experience, as well as the limited literature (Schellekens, 2007; Paton & Wilkins, 2009; Bridgeman et al., 2016; Ginther & Yan, 2018), suggested that a small proportion of students would have an uneven profile, perhaps resulting from L1 interference or influences from their educational background.

#### **RQ2. Are there relationships between skill areas and with uneven competency?**

The rationale for this research question is to gauge the extent to which performance in any skill area is related to another area, as well as identify which skills/s play the greater role in uneven competency in L2 English. L1 and Second Language Acquisition [SLA] research has already

established the shared top-down and bottom-up processes of listening and reading, and that the same lexico-grammatical resources are used for reading and writing (Shanahan, 2016) so I expected that there would be strong relationships between skill areas, however, Berninger and Abbot's (2010) study found discrepancies in children's L1 spoken and written competencies, so it was possible that this would also be the case with L2 EAP students.

### **RQ3. What are students' SE beliefs about their L2 EAP profiles?**

It is important to gauge students' overall awareness of their competency profile, as well as uncover their specific beliefs about what they think they can and cannot do in each skill area, to elaborate on the quantitative findings from the first two research questions. Bandura's (1997) SE model was used in the elicitation and analysis of qualitative data.

### **RQ4. What role do students' SE beliefs play in their performance?**

This question explores the relationship between students' SE profile and their performance in academic contexts, by looking at the extent to which SE beliefs mediated uneven development by influencing emotions, self-regulation, and motivation. I hypothesised that divergent SE beliefs could result in an uneven profile, or that self-awareness of deficits could affect overall SE for EAP as it appeared to do for the L2 students in Gregersen's (2006) study.

## **1.6. Research design**

### **1.6.1. Participants**

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from international students of different nationalities and L1 backgrounds, representing the population of EAP learners in the UK HE context. In the study's first phase, 1836 sets of language test scores were gathered from four cohorts of students attending university centres around the UK between December 2016 and July 2017. For triangulation purposes, a further 278 sets of test scores were gathered from two cohorts of students in August 2018 and August 2019. In total, 2114 sets of test scores were collected between December 2016 and September 2019. In the study's second phase,

qualitative data were collected from fifteen international students between February 2020 and July 2021.

#### 1.6.2. Instruments

The quantitative data were generated by the Test of English Language Level [TELL] designed by the examinations team at the University of Central Lancashire [UCLan]. The test battery comprised equally weighted papers containing tasks that were designed to elicit students' language competency in the four skills at B2 of the CEFR. The qualitative data were generated through semi-structured individual interviews.

#### 1.6.3. Procedure

The study's mixed-method design was conducted over the course of six years with data collection taking place in two phases. In Phase one, following the collection and cleaning of the TELL data, quantitative analysis proceeded using percentage weighted scores in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In addition, an individual standard deviation [*SD*] score for each student was calculated from the above-mentioned set of four scores. Individual score sets were also labelled according to the rank order of the scores from highest to lowest. The data were analysed descriptively, then correlational and regression analysis was conducted on overall, skill-specific and individual SD scores, followed by *t*-testing of different competency profiles generated by the labelling of score sets, and ANOVA of students according to their L1. In Phase two, individual qualitative interviews were carried out on UCLan's Preston campus or via Microsoft TEAMS. These were transcribed, then underwent thematic analysis.

### 1.7. Philosophical orientation and assumptions

The study is located within the interdisciplinary field of Applied Linguistics, one of whose concerns is the implications of SLA theory and empirical research for language teaching (Corder, 1973). Taking a wider perspective than Corder, Brumfit (1997) also defined research in this field as "the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue" (p.93), which is fitting, as this study sought to explore the reality of uneven L2

competency in international students in the EAP context and the SE beliefs that arose from their lived language experiences. Given the 'applied' nature of this field, I was axiologically oriented towards the practice value of the research for practitioners and students alike, therefore, my epistemological stance throughout the research process was that of pragmatism, an orientation that is "pluralistic and oriented toward what works and practice" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p.41). The value of the study would be in the applicability of its findings, and its "relatability" (Bassey, 1981, p.85) to similar educational contexts; it could suggest solutions to the problem of uneven competency for various stakeholders, from admissions teams to EAP teachers and students.

Regarding ontology, the pragmatic researcher views the nature of reality as plastic; knowledge and meaning are constructed through people's experiences of the world, and their ideas about those experiences. These ideas become "practical tools and can be best understood in relation to their consequences" (Wills & Lake, 2020, p.7), meaning that the relationship between people's ideas and any form of objective reality is less important than the practical outcomes of their ideas. In other words, I valued what those ideas enable people to understand and do in the real world. To illustrate, practitioners' ideas about uneven competency feed into their teaching decisions, while students' SE beliefs drive their self-regulation and motivation.

Pragmatism is described by Wills and Lake (2020) as having "its feet firmly planted in the field," (p.5) wherein the value of research lies in its usefulness for specific groups of people. They further specify that "a pragmatic researcher starts by listening to the beliefs, or 'truths' that exist in a community and tries to understand the work they are doing for variously situated community members" (ibid., p.5). In this study I highlight the problem of uneven competency as raised by ESOL and EAP practitioners, then I set out to explore and explain it from a variety of perspectives as I assumed that multiple viewpoints were required for understanding students' language development and self-regulation. This necessitated a mixed-method research design to answer the 'why' and 'how' of uneven language profiles, in addition to the 'what'.

The quantitative phase of the research design was founded on my belief that speaking, listening, reading, and writing are real-world phenomena that could be measured through the evaluation of language products such as sound recordings and text-based responses generated by the TELL test battery. Nonetheless, I also recognised that trait-based measurement approaches of this kind assume language has a stable quality when in fact, it is complex and changeable human behaviour (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). While patterns would likely become apparent in the test data, the dynamic nature of language phenomena meant that these might not prove to be stable over time and space, making universal truths unobtainable. Moreover, judgments of, and beliefs about, language reception and production are constructed (Charmaz, 2014), therefore, I assumed, standardisation and marking criteria notwithstanding, that the test data represented the views of test designers and examiners, while in the qualitative phase the interview data represented a reality co-constructed between the student interviewees and myself. Due to my pragmatic position, I embraced this complexity and considered multiple interpretations of the quantitative and qualitative data. My stance meant that I de-prioritised concerns related to abstract fixed principles that can arise from, and be levelled at, mixed-method research designs (Mirhosseini, 2018). For me, the contradiction between purportedly 'objective' measurement of students' language performance, versus the 'subjective' meaning-making that occurred during the interviews and the ensuing interpretation of these, was not a weakness in the research design. Instead, as a pragmatist, I prioritised a methodological approach that would enable both holistic and practical analyses of the problem. The empirical findings from the study, along with the chosen theoretical frameworks given in the next section, were valued for their utility to generate recommendations for future teaching practice.

## 1.8. Theoretical frameworks

Several theoretical frameworks were potential candidates for a study of uneven language competency and the role of SE beliefs in the EAP context. From an uneven language competency perspective, international students' lexico-grammatical knowledge and sociolinguistic competence, which comprise both their declarative and procedural knowledge of the rules of language and discourse that contribute to social meaning, could be

approached through the lens of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics [SFL]. SFL centres around the notion that the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions of language drive the linguistic forms selected by language users within a social meaning-making system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Communication can be understood as a system of language choices set within specific social contexts, so in this way the SFL framework lends itself well to the analysis of academic discourse (Coffin & Donohue, 2012). Furthermore, SFL can be applied pedagogically via explicit teaching to support students' understanding of their language choices in clearly defined contexts of use. For instance, Yasuda (2015) used the framework to support her EAP students' summary writing, while Zhang and Zhang (2023) applied Martin and White's (2005) Engagement System, which is an SFL-inspired categorisation of the language employed in stance-taking in academic writing, to demonstrate to Chinese EAP students how to develop their authorial stance. However, despite SFL's clear utility for the analysis of spoken and written texts involving the use of language itself at clausal and discoursal levels, the framework does not lend itself as well to an investigation of international students' state of competency across different skill areas. This is because SFL does not focus on the psycho-social elements which also wield an influence, such as language processing capacity, and the self-regulatory, compensatory, or motivational strategies that could help explain why competence in some skill areas can become more or less developed than in others. In consideration of this, the theoretical framework of 'communicative competence' was chosen to underpin the first strand of the study.

The concept of communicative competence developed over the latter part of the twentieth century from its beginnings in Hymes' (1972) critique of Chomsky's (1965) dichotomy of abstract, idealised, grammatical competence versus the actual grammatical performance of individuals. Hymes, along with Savignon (1972), were at pains to emphasise that language competence must comprise sociolinguistic components beyond the individual, namely the ability to use language in interaction with others.<sup>5</sup> Communicative competence can therefore be defined as "knowing not only the language code but also what to say to whom, and how to

---

<sup>5</sup> In SFL terms, this is enshrined in the meta-functions.

say it appropriately in any given situation” (Saville-Troike, 2003, p.18). The concept was then developed by Canale and Swain (1980), and added to further still by Canale (1983) to include pragmatic elements, while in a separate line of enquiry, van Ek (1986) advanced the concept of ‘communicative ability’ through his work with the Council of Europe (Byram, 2021). Research into language testing yielded Bachman's (1990) Model of Communicative Language Ability, with further refinements added by Bachman and Palmer in 1996, which saw the inclusion of strategic aspects into the notion of communicative competence. Bachman’s (1990) model proposes three key dimensions: firstly, language competence that describes a person’s ability to produce language accurately, appropriately, and cohesively, encompassing the grammatical and sociolinguistic aspects; secondly, strategic competence that involves using linguistic resources to express and interpret meaning in real life even in circumstances where language knowledge is lacking, or in instances of communication breakdown; and lastly, psychophysiological mechanisms, which identify the brain processes that are required in language reception and production (Bachman, 1990). Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995) further elaborated the concept of communicative competence, highlighting the overlapping nature of the previously established dimensions and the primacy of discourse as the lens through which the other competencies reveal themselves.

These developments contributed to the present day CEFR descriptive scheme that covers not only the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic aspects of communicative competence, but also communicative language strategies relating to reception, production, interaction, and mediation (Council of Europe, 2020, p.32). Competencies are expressed throughout the framework as ‘can do’ statements for language use. Stemming from the work by Bachman and Palmer (1996), language assessments that map to the CEFR descriptive scheme generally follow this conceptual framework and aim to elicit these competencies and strategies across the four skills in the form of tasks. The tasks in the TELL test battery, the successful completion of which provided evidence for the study’s first phase, are no exception, as will be seen in Section 5.3.1.

Regarding the other major focus of the study, the role of SE beliefs, this concept is an important component of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). The theory posits that learning is in



relationship to other people and the environment, and that the social context influences an individual's capacity for self-control when learning. The concept of self-regulated learning implies that effective learners are active agents who construct their knowledge by setting themselves goals, by analysing tasks, by being strategic, and by monitoring their understanding (Bandura, 1997), all of which are characteristics one would hope to see in university students, especially those whose L1 is not English. Moreover, Bandura specified that the ability to self-regulate was founded on people's SE beliefs, and this component of the theory describes the sources from which people derive information about their ability to do things. While Social Cognitive Theory is not specific to SLA, its SE component can contribute towards a holistic understanding of language competency and elucidate the mechanisms that are involved in strategic competence. The rationale for adopting this theory is further explained in Chapter 3, Section 3.2, and a review of the research studies that have used the construct of SE to better understand language learning is given in Section 3.3.

### 1.9. Delimitations

To understand language learning as a social and cultural practice, Kern and Schultz (2005) state that it is vital to consider contexts, learners, teachers, and the texts they encounter and co-create. For this reason, the study was clearly delimited to the EAP context in phases one and two, specifically, that the research took place with students whose L1 was not English. The focus was EAP because uneven competency was considered a specific issue in academic contexts where written communication is equally vital for success as speaking, and advanced listening and reading are prerequisites for operating successfully at degree level (Evans & Green, 2007). Furthermore, the focus was on adults studying at institutions in the UK, an inner circle (Kachru, 1990) English-speaking country, as opposed to studying in their home country or a non-inner circle country at an English Medium Instruction [EMI] university. Moreover, the study did not consider adult English learners outside of tertiary education because the aim was to inform teaching practices in the HE context.

Although the participants were young, they were no longer children, so it was assumed that they had already developed literacy in their L1 during secondary education in their respective countries, which had enabled them to meet the entry criteria for their intended degree subjects. University students have greater maturity and different motivational forces than younger age groups, therefore, the generalisability or transferability of the findings in this thesis are necessarily limited to this type of language learner.

Another delimitation was that the research sought to establish whether uneven profiles are a feature of typical L2 development in a typical cohort of international students, so the study did not attempt to identify whether any of the participants had diagnosed specific learning difficulties [SpLDs]. This is important because, as alluded to earlier and further noted in Chapter two, spiky profiles have been traditionally associated with SpLDs such as dyslexia and autism spectrum disorders, however, this study did not pretend to contribute to that field, only take conceptual inspiration from it.

#### 1.10. Summary and organisation of the thesis

In this chapter the linguistic challenges facing international students as L2 users of English in the UK HE context were outlined and the nature of EAP was described. The need for an empirical investigation of uneven L2 competency in the EAP context was highlighted, as well as the need for a more holistic understanding of the individual SE beliefs that belie it or lead to it. The research questions and underlying hypotheses were presented, as was the phased mixed-method design. The theoretical frameworks that underpinned the study were also given. For the reader from outside the fields of ELT and EAP, frequently occurring acronyms and terms were introduced. These are also provided in the Glossary for future reference.

Chapter two now traces the probable origin of the phrase ‘spiky profile’. It introduces the terminology that has been used to describe uneven L2 competency and establishes the current state of knowledge. The processes and development of each of the four skills are then summarised with a view to hypothesising potential shapes of L2 profiles.

Chapter three explores some of the background to learner differences then introduces the construct of SE from Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory. It reviews the current evidence related to the role of SE beliefs in L2 English across the four skills.

Chapter four gives the rationale for adopting mixed methods and presents the study's overall phased design in further detail.

Chapter five explains the method followed for the collection and analysis of data from the TELL test battery in the quantitative first phase of the study.

Chapter six reports the findings from Phase one, then highlights its limitations.

Chapter seven reports on the Phase one triangulation exercise that was conducted using the TELL test battery with two further cohorts of international students.

Chapter eight gives the rationale for the interview method followed in the qualitative second phase of the study. It explains the development of the interview guide and outlines the steps in which the data were analysed thematically.

Chapter nine summarises the qualitative findings from Phase two.

In Chapter ten, the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research are brought together and interpreted in relation to the research questions and the literature. Limitations to various aspects of the overall study design are also discussed.

Chapter eleven makes recommendations for teaching practice in EAP settings.

Chapter twelve highlights the theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical contributions of the study and suggests avenues of future research.

## Chapter 2. Uneven L2 competency

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the UK HE sector's English language assessment practices that make it possible to talk about uneven L2 competency. The CEFR descriptor for B2 is outlined to show how international students' English competency can be judged to be either above, at, or below this level in the four skills areas. The origin of the term 'spiky profile', and its equivalent, the 'jagged profile' is traced. Empirical gaps in the literature are identified. Following that, cognitive aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in both an L1 and L2 are examined to highlight a theoretical basis for the language profiles of EAP students. In Chapter three, attention will then be focussed beyond purely cognitive aspects, reviewing the literature pertaining to SE beliefs, their sources, and impacts on language performance.

### 2.2. Language competency measures

It is common practice to verify the English language competency of any individual wishing to pursue tertiary education in the UK, given that university study requires an ability to comprehend academic texts, and all assessment requires well-developed spoken and written language. International students whose first language is not necessarily English must sit a Secure English Language Test [SELT] <sup>6</sup> to verify their level of language competency for their chosen programme of study, as well as to obtain a study visa (UK Visas & Immigration, 2023a). SELTs are provided by a range of exam boards; the most well-known is the International English Language Testing System [IELTS], owned by a consortium of the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge English. There are also competitor tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOEFL] from the Educational Testing Service in the United States, the Pearson Test of English [PTE], and the suites of tests designed by Trinity College London, among others.

---

<sup>6</sup> A test conducted under timed conditions with invigilators present.

SELTs share broad commonalities. They are based on performance models of language, such as the CEFR, that operationalise language as behaviour that can be measured via communicative tasks operating under the notion of successful language use, or in other words ‘communicative competence’, with success being conceived of as “the degree to which the test taker achieves the intended communicative effect” (Fulcher, 2010, p.113). Tasks are designed to allow an individual to demonstrate that they can use a set of cognitive processes and strategies in a way that generates responses or performances that reflect real-life language use (Bachman, 1990; Shaw & Weir, 2007). Admittedly, this aim can be undermined in several ways, not least by the artificial time-limited conditions of a secure test, but also because tasks represent de-contextualised instances of language comprehension and use. In addition, the range of topics or texts used as test prompts are imposed, rather than mutually agreed between interlocutors, or selected by the student, as would be the case in real-life communicative contexts, potentially creating a power imbalance between examiners and examinees. Nonetheless, despite these limitations to their validity, SELTs are accepted by the UK government as a measure of L2 competency (UK Visas & Immigration, 2023b). A minimum of B2 level according to the CEFR is stipulated, as this is the level at which an individual is considered an ‘independent user’ of English (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018, 2020).<sup>7</sup>

Another commonality of SELTs is that competency is measured within the paradigm of the four skills, meaning that each test is, in fact, a battery of tests assessing an individual’s performance through speaking, listening, reading, and writing tasks. Exam boards such as IELTS administer separate papers in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, although others have re-thought this design feature so that their exams now increasingly contain integrated tasks, for example, TOEFL iBT, Trinity College London’s Integrated Skills in English suite of tests (Trinity College London, 2022), and Pearson’s PTE Academic (Pearson, 2022a). In the PTE Academic Speaking and Writing paper, for instance, candidates are asked to listen and re-tell a lecture, as well as read then summarise a text (Pearson, 2024). This better reflects real-world EAP language use where skills are never used in isolation. Integrated writing tasks are also valued for their

---

<sup>7</sup> In the IELTS, a score of between 5.5 and 6.5 is equivalent to B2 level.

greater authenticity (Cumming et al., 2005; Gebril, 2010) as they demand the synthesis of information from reading sources within the writing task, which is an essential competence for successful academic writing, and a requirement of the B2 writing descriptor as will be explained below. These innovations better reflect EAP practice too, in that academic literacy is best taught in an integrated manner, an approach that is enshrined in coursebooks such as *Making Connections* (McEntire & Williams, 2017), aimed at the development of critical reading skills and strategies in conjunction with vocabulary development, or *Academic Encounters* (Seal, 2014), with its focus on reading for gist, note-making and other writing skills. That said, even with the advent of integrated design features for greater real-world authenticity, SELT scoring still works to the paradigm of the four skills (Pearson, 2022b) as they are still viewed as separate constructs, perhaps for the ease of use by test-takers and test-users alike. From one exam board to the next, despite differences in scales, scoring is criterion-referenced and marking criteria are remarkably similar due to shared understandings of successful language use stemming from the CEFR.

Taking a closer look at the CEFR descriptors for receptive skills at B2, criteria for listening cover a wide range of scenarios from being part of a live audience, to following the conversations of others, to listening to recorded audio. The overall ‘can do’ statements stipulate that a person is be able to follow “standard language or a familiar variety”, encompassing “familiar and unfamiliar topics”, pick out the main thrust of “linguistically complex discourse... including technical discussions in their field of specialisation” as well as “extended discourse and complex lines of argument, provided the topic is reasonably familiar, and the direction of the argument is signposted by explicit markers” (Council of Europe, 2020, p.48). Similarly, reading at B2 requires a person to be able to “read with a large degree of independence” (ibid., p.54). Some criteria specify the speed at which a person can accurately read, requiring skimming and scanning skills, as well as their ability to understand a range of subject-specific texts or genres, including “specialised articles outside their field, provided they can use a dictionary occasionally to confirm their interpretation of terminology” (ibid., p.57). These listening and reading criteria demand a large vocabulary, knowledge of spoken and written discourse markers, well-developed phonological or orthographical bottom-up processing skills, and an ability to parse

complex sentences. Furthermore, at B2, having the requisite receptive top-down processing skills are encapsulated in the statement: “use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension, including watching out for main points and checking comprehension by using contextual clues” (ibid., p.60).

Regarding the productive skills at B2, the speaking criteria relate to different contexts of use that range from sustained monologues that either describe experience, give information, or argue a point, to oral presentations. Overall criteria include the ability to speak clearly, “with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail [...] on a wide range of subjects related to their field of interest” (Council of Europe, 2020, p.62). Moreover, there are criteria relating to interaction encompassing fluency, accuracy, adequacy and appropriacy of register, summarised in the ‘can do’ statement: “can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction, and sustained relationships with users of the target language, quite possible without imposing strain on either party” (ibid., p.72). Meanwhile, B2 overall criteria for writing stipulate that a person “can produce clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to their field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources” (ibid., p.66), which alludes to the integration of reading skills within writing. There are also B2 criteria that specifically relate to academic genres, a key word in these being ‘argument’, for example, “can produce an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources” (ibid., p.68). Moreover, strategies for producing language described in the CEFR include planning, compensating, monitoring and repair. B2 speakers/writers should be able to “correct slips and errors” and “make a note of their recurring mistakes and consciously monitor for them” (ibid., p.70). What these productive criteria imply is a sophisticated level of knowledge, skills and strategies, as would be expected of a well-educated L1 speaker. Beyond wide vocabulary and being able to produce a range of grammatical structures, the criteria point to quite advanced communication skills such as the ability to give a cohesive spoken presentation, maintain a conversation with others, as well as compose longer, cohesive and coherent texts.

The required level in a SELT is typically determined by a mean cut score calculated from all four skills that are equally weighted (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019; British Council, 2023b; ETS, 2023b).<sup>8</sup> Surprisingly, there appears to be no literature to support equal weighting, so one can only assume that all four skills are deemed of equal importance to an individual's overall English competency, and that the ideal test candidate would demonstrate a similar level of competency in each skill when measured at a specified level. Equal weighting perhaps speaks to the ultimate purpose of the tests (Fulcher, 2010) as a way of determining if international students can perform at a required minimum standard in all four skills.

Given that current testing practices tend to produce a set of four scores from tasks specifically designed to elicit language competencies in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, any individual obtaining an uneven set of scores could be described as having a 'spiky profile'. A score below the cut-off mark in any specific skill area suggests that a candidate is performing at a lower level than that being tested, so in the case of a B2 SELT, this would be B1 of the CEFR. Alternatively, very high scores could indicate that a test taker has the potential to perform successfully at C1. Receptive SELT tasks seek to quantify candidates' lexico-grammatical knowledge, inference, and comprehension competencies, so in instances where B2 candidates find themselves unable to process language accurately at pace and at some length, nor cope with unfamiliar topics or text types, they would be judged as operating at B1. Indeed, receptive criteria at B1 emphasise "common everyday or job-related topics", with key words in the descriptor being "familiar" (Council of Europe, 2020, p.48) as opposed to unfamiliar, and "straightforward factual texts" (ibid., p.54) as opposed to complex texts with argumentation.

In the productive skills, SELTS share foci on task achievement, lexico-grammatical range and accuracy, fluency, cohesion and coherence, as well as judgments of interactive ability in spoken dialogue,<sup>9</sup> or organisation of ideas in writing (British Council, 2023a; ETS, 2023a). What this looks like in terms of spoken language was investigated by Hulstijn, Schoonen, de Jong, Steinel,

---

<sup>8</sup> An exception is again Pearson PTE Academic where scores from integrated tasks contribute to more than one skill area (Pearson, 2022b).

<sup>9</sup> An exception is Pearson PTE Academic where there is no interlocutor present.



and Florijn (2012). They found that study participants who were judged to be B1 speakers were slower to retrieve vocabulary and form sentences than the participants who met the criteria for B2. They also had less accurate pronunciation and performed worse than the B2 speakers in a grammar test. Furthermore, they had an estimated mean vocabulary size of four thousand words in contrast to the B2 participants whose estimated vocabulary size was seven thousand words. The B1 speakers also exhibited less knowledge of medium to low frequency words (ibid.).

Turning to writing, B2 candidates who cannot compose texts with coherent argumentation, better fit the B1 criteria which specifies “straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within their field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence” (Council of Europe, 2020, p.66). To illustrate this, the British Council’s Take IELTS website gives examples of candidates’ academic writing, including the second task in the writing test which is an essay (British Council, 2024; Appendix ii). In the first example that scored 5.5, which equates to the lowest end of B2/ top end of B1, the candidate did not reach the required word count, nor develop, nor organise the paragraphs in a way that created a fully coherent argument. The text also contains multiple inaccuracies in spelling and word form choices. In the second example, (also Appendix ii), the writer scored 7.5 which is equivalent to C1, going beyond the demands of B2. This sample text has a very coherent overall structure, combined with cohesive paragraphs headed by clear topic sentences and a range of points within each. There are examples of lower frequency lexis such as ‘obesity’, ‘applications’, and ‘trend’, and largely accurate grammar. The text’s strong argumentation, coupled with the accurate use of academic style conventions evident in the use of hedging language, demonstrates why the candidate’s writing exceeds the requirements of B2.

### 2.3. Origins of the ‘spiky profile’

It is not one hundred percent clear where the term ‘spiky profile’ originated in relation to individual language competency, although it is an intuitive choice of phrase when individuals are measured across a range of different competencies, and score differently in each, producing a zig-zag line on a chart. The term is used by bodies responsible for addressing

literacy needs in adults both here in the UK and abroad, and by authors whose practice is in ESOL.<sup>10</sup> For example, the Australian Core Skills Framework (McClean et al., 2012), the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (Kings & Casey, 2013) and ESOL Scotland (2010) all use the term to describe English L2 learners' competency that varies greatly across the four skills. There is recognition that the skills develop at different rates depending on an individual's circumstances and that teaching and assessment strategies should address this. For example, in a report on ESOL qualifications, the now defunct NRDC highlighted the need for separate qualifications in speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Kings & Casey, 2013). This recommendation had the practical outcome of awarding learners with qualifications for the competencies they had developed, while at the same time being an overt recognition of the issue of uneven competency.

Schellekens (2007, p.23), Paton and Wilkins (2009, p.229) and Ward et al. (2012, p.81) also refer to the "spiky profile" of ESOL learners. They claim that the receptive skills are more developed than the productive skills (Schellekens, 2007; Paton & Wilkins, 2009), but then add that some individuals contradict this by being more competent in reading and writing than speaking and listening, suggesting instead an imbalance between literate or oral/aural skills. Schellekens (2007) explains this may be due to the examination culture in certain parts of the world; where speaking and listening are not assessed they are of less value to learners. Paton and Wilkins (2009) hypothesise factors such as L1 interference, self-esteem, confidence, educational backgrounds or life experiences leading to uneven development. They also refer to the context of language use which may have a bearing on if, and how, individuals prioritise one skill over another. It is perhaps unsurprising that spiky profiles commonly feature among adult ESOL learners because this educational context serves a very diverse range of people coming to settle in the UK, either for economic reasons or joining family members who have already emigrated to the UK, or fleeing from war or persecution (Ward et al., 2012). Their educational histories and backgrounds are wide-ranging, for instance, ESOL learners may, or may not, be literate contingent on receiving an uninterrupted, high-quality primary education. Moreover, in the

---

<sup>10</sup> The teaching of English as an L2 to immigrants to an English-speaking country (British Council, 2023c).

case of the ESOL learner, being equally competent in writing as in speaking may not matter, especially if their life and work circumstances do not require it. These descriptions of spiky profiles in the ESOL context are useful in the sense that they help teachers anticipate the diversity of learners' needs, but all the above sources lack reference to supporting evidence from empirical research, so one can only assume that they are based on anecdotal practitioner experience. It is not clear from these sources the frequency with which uneven profiles occur, nor is it clear the extent to which an individual's skill competencies could differ, nor which skills are more commonly implicated in uneven L2 competency.

Moving now to beyond the ESOL context, the term 'jagged profile' is used synonymously with 'spiky profile' to describe uneven competency. This term possibly originates from the development of IELTS. In the context of assessing L2 writing, Hamp-Lyons (2016) traces the history of multiple trait scoring, discussing the different traits or domains of composition which led to the original concept of profile scoring when designing the set of scales for assessing writing in the British Council English Language Testing Service in 1984, which was the precursor of IELTS. These were inspired by Jacobs, Zingraf, Warmuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey's (1981) *aspects* in their ESL Composition profile. This is still a popular rating scale for writing with subdivisions for content, organisation, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. Hamp-Lyons alludes to the "uneven or 'jagged' profile" (2016, p.A3) generated by discrepancies between the sub-skills of writing. She also points out that all traits of writing were equally weighted because there is no research with regards to how they should be weighted. This has parallels with typical SELT design as mentioned previously, whereby all four skills are weighted equally without an easily identifiable theoretical reason to do so. Today, IELTS implements a "jagged profile system" to verify the reliability of test scores across skills. The system identifies instances of a "level of divergence", meaning a discrepancy between component scores, productive or receptive (IELTS, 2022, para 4). A two-band difference in score initiates double-marking and targeted sample monitoring to standardise examiners' ratings. Why it is set at this level is not explained, but it suggests an underlying premise within IELTS that balanced profiles are expected to be the norm if jagged profiles are being used as a flag for poor rater-reliability. However, as was discussed earlier, ESOL practitioners and awarding bodies report that spiky

profiles occur in their L2 learners, which suggests that they are a real feature of language development rather than an artefact of a testing procedure. Admittedly, IELTS test takers represent a somewhat different demographic to ESOL learners, in the sense that most candidates sit the test for the purpose of proving their English language competency for work or entering HE (IELTS, 2023a), but it begs the question whether uneven profiles feature in all types of language learner.

There is some evidence to suggest uneven development is not unique to an L2 and may even begin with a person's L1. Blanton (2008) proposes that L2 language profiles are contingent on language competencies developed in an individual's L1. In two case studies of her own students, she noted their L1 reading and writing instruction did not extend much beyond primary education, meaning that they never fully developed literacy in their L1, which she felt severely limited the effectiveness of the literacy instruction in the L2 once at university (Blanton, 2005). Regarding L1 English, Berninger and Abbott (2010) tracked normally developing children in the four skills. They followed two cohorts for five years, one beginning in the first grade, aged six to seven years old at the start of reading and writing instruction, and the other from third grade, aged eight to nine years old. They noted that up to a third of children's profiles showed one, or more, areas of strength or weakness, as defined by being one standard deviation relative to their mean score, but that these discrepancies diminished over time, although seven percent of the children had a profile that remained unchanged (Berninger & Abbott, 2010). They found writing scores were lower than the other skills from first to seventh grade, but that speaking and listening continued to improve at school and contributed to learning to write. Their findings suggested that the oral/aural skills develop faster than the literate skills, with writing competency lagging the most. They concluded that a four-factor model of language competency, with listening, speaking, reading, and writing developing as separate systems, fit their data better than a single system; "The four language skills share variance, but also exhibit dynamically changing unique interrelationships among themselves across the grade levels" (Berninger & Abbot, 2010, p.645). Their inference was that the four

skills develop alongside each other usually in a seamless manner, but that they can become disconnected, leading to an uneven profile.

#### 2.4. Uneven profiles in EAP contexts

Uneven L2 profiles appear to be an ESOL phenomenon and a concern for test designers, as discussed above, but they could be particularly problematic in the EAP context given the language demands of tertiary level study. However, it is difficult to find literature that directly addresses the competency profiles one might expect to see in EAP learners.

Much of the literature focuses on the problem of academic literacy (Tang, 2012). This avenue of research is exemplified by Leki's (2007) longitudinal qualitative work in a US writing centre, wherein she documented the academic literacy development of four international students over the entirety of their programmes of study. Although these accounts contain references to all four skills, her analysis focused on their experiences with, and attitudes to, academic writing (Leki, 2007). Similarly, Riazantseva's (2012) case study of three Russian G1.5 students centres on their difficulties with writing, although she did highlight that these students had developed very strong verbal skills, thus providing some limited evidence of uneven profiles. L2 academic writing has been scrutinised, whether it be from a lexico-grammatical perspective (for example, Hinkel, 2001; Zhou, 2009; Chan, 2010), or concerned with L2 students' understanding of academic requirements or genres (for example, Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Qian & Krugly-Smolka, 2008; Shi, 2010), or through the study of skilled and unskilled writers (an example from the Japanese context would be the works of Sasaki 2000, 2004). This focus continues until more recent times, as exemplified by Yung and Fong's (2019) study of high achieving first years in an EMI university in Hong Kong. They further confirmed that writing is a challenge even for very capable students when transitioning from secondary to tertiary study due to the requirements of the academic genre, for which students felt unprepared.

However, Evans and Morrison (2011) argue that the focus on writing can preclude taking a holistic view of students' language competency. Their survey of 3009 first years' perceptions in

an EMI university, again in Hong Kong, found that speaking accurately was reported as being the most difficult, followed by understanding and using specialist vocabulary, then processing and producing subject-specific texts. Participants reported greatest ease with listening comprehension (Evans & Morrison, 2011). This study did not triangulate these impressions with proficiency scores in these skills, but it is clear the participants had the perception of having differing competencies, not limited to academic writing.

Research reports from examination boards appear to corroborate that uneven competency is experienced by EAP students, and that there are specific patterns of discrepancy. Humphreys, Haugh, Fenton-Smith, Lobo, Michael, and Walkinshaw (2012) investigated the predictive validity of IELTS scores for 51 mixed-nationality students' GPA at an Australian university, finding that the skills of reading and listening were strongly correlated with students' GPA in the first semester, in contrast with speaking and writing. However, this correlation was not seen by the third semester, a finding that hints towards a changing relationship between language skills and achievement, and that the productive skills were, in fact, the prevailing factor influencing GPA scores. They found that speaking competency significantly improved over shorter timescales, while writing scores did not improve, and listening and reading scores improved only marginally. In this study top, middle, and bottom scorers' data were analysed separately, leading to the finding that the weak students made the most progress, but that scores did not significantly improve for the middle to top scorers over the same duration (Humphreys et al., 2012). In another mixed nationality longitudinal cohort study in Australia, Craven (2012) found that while there were improvements in the receptive skills, there were only small, non-significant differences in the productive skills two to three years later. Similarly, Allen (2017) examined the scores of 190 Japanese undergraduates to investigate the predictive validity of, and washback from, the IELTS exam, finding that reading and listening means (IELTS 7.2 and 6.6) were substantially stronger than writing and speaking means (5.5 and 5.4), despite the IELTS moderation practices as outlined earlier. When they were tested again at the start of their second year, mean speaking scores had increased, with the weaker students making the greatest gains, while writing made the smallest gain, indicating that students had uneven

profiles to begin with, and that they were still in existence a year later. The findings from these predictive validity studies demonstrate that uneven profiles exist, and in some cases persist, throughout the course of university study. The findings also possibly suggest that it is the differing speeds at which the productive skills develop that result in uneven competency, which concurs with findings from the L1 context as mentioned above (Berninger & Abbott, 2010). The findings of predictive validity studies also demonstrate that writing has rightly been identified as a problem for the EAP context, but that speaking also plays a role in an uneven profile.

Furthermore, there is some evidence that uneven profiles are more prevalent in certain nationality groups, with ensuing impacts for achievement at university. In a study of 787 international students at a university in Philadelphia, Bridgeman et al. (2016) noted that the predictive validity of TOEFL iBT sub-scores for GPA varied greatly when subgroups according to nationality and subject area were inspected. They noted that writing was the best predictor of GPA in the business students' GPAs, until they separated the sample into Chinese and non-Chinese, at which point both speaking and writing became the strongest predictors of GPA for the Chinese students, but not the non-Chinese. However, at this point they also noted a particular subset of 21 Chinese business students that had significantly higher reading and listening scores than speaking and writing.<sup>11</sup> These individuals also had higher total TOEFL scores than the remainder of the sample, but nonetheless, gained substantially lower GPAs. This led Bridgeman et al. (2016) to conclude "students with large discrepancies do not seem to do very well academically" (p.316), with specific reference to this Chinese sub-set. Ginther and Yan (2018) also measured the predictive validity of the TOEFL iBT scores for GPA. Their study, conducted at Purdue University with a much larger sample than the studies mentioned above, also uncovered a negative impact of uneven profiles. From almost two thousand Chinese first year undergraduates between 2011 and 2014, they identified four different types of profiles of scores. The first two of these were "balanced", with even sets of scores that were either high or low, then a third profile type featured high scores in reading and listening, middling scores

---

<sup>11</sup> The gap was sixteen points, equivalent to 27%, as the total of points available in the summed receptive or productive skills was sixty.

for writing, coupled with weak speaking competency. The fourth profile, which they labelled “discrepant”, had large differences between skills. These students had high listening and reading scores, combined with low speaking and writing scores (p.286), replicating Bridgeman et al.’s (2016) finding. Ginther and Yan (2018) also noted that students with this type of profile went on to be the least successful in their studies, concluding that the productive skills in English, as measured by the TOEFL iBT test, had greater predictive validity for GPA than the receptive skills, and that as a consequence, universities’ admission policies should pay close attention to the “discrepant”, or in other words, *uneven*, profiles. Both the above studies focused primarily on discrepancies observed in Chinese students as measured by the TOEFL iBT, and Allen’s (2017) study focused on Japanese students undertaking IELTS, so it remains to be seen whether these findings were artefacts of the test batteries employed, and whether uneven profiles can be observed in nationality groups beyond East Asia.

## 2.5. The four skills

As previously mentioned, language competency is measured through the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Berninger and Abbott (2010) highlight the neurological basis for this, whereby the brain connects to four parts of the body: ears, mouth, eyes, and hands. The mouth and hands of an individual generate language ‘outputs’ in response to ‘inputs’ from the environment coming through the eyes and ears. Therefore, the four skills develop through “the sensory systems that receive incoming information” and “the motor systems that operate upon the physical and social environment” (Berninger & Abbott, 2010, p.635). Listening and reading are thus commonly referred to as ‘receptive’ skills, while speaking and writing are ‘productive’. As shall be seen shortly, this dichotomy obscures the complexity of brain processes in each skill, as well as overlooking interactions and shared processes between them involving short- and long-term memory resources, knowledge bases and the influence of metacognition.

The following sections describe the processes and development of each skill, using the L1 as a starting point as it is assumed that a first language will always underlie and influence the development of a second to a greater or lesser degree (Tarone, 2005; Rost, 2005; Larsen-



Freeman, Schmid & Lowie, 2011). Interactions and shared processes will be highlighted, as will similarities and differences between L1 and SLA contexts. From this, the likely shape of L2 competency profiles and the extent to which uneven competency might occur is postulated.

### 2.5.1. Listening

Aural listening, and oral speaking competencies, are innate to humans and constitute a biological trait that has developed through evolution (Locke, 2010). All normally developing children learn to listen and speak without the need for instruction (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001). There appears to be an order of acquisition in which listening is arguably a first step, given that in the womb the foetus attends to the sounds of voices as its brain develops the ability to hear sound. The newborn infant recognises its mother's voice and shows a preference for her language (Moon, Panneton-Cooper, & Fifer, 1993), and so, from birth children are already highly attuned to the intonation and phonological patterns of their home language/s (Locke, 2010).

Listening is a dynamic and interactive combination of bottom-up and top-down processing of sound, comprising parallel stages of decoding, understanding, interpreting, as well as listener response (Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2002; Rost, 2005; Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). A great many models have described the intricacies of speech perception and subsequent word identification, such as the Marslen-Wilson and Welsh (1978) Cohort Model, in which initial phonemes are decoded by the brain and all words within an individual's lexicon beginning with the same sound are activated, but then the appropriate word from the lexicon is selected as subsequent sounds are processed. The sophisticated connectionist TRACE model proposed by McClelland and Elman (1986) and Cutler and Clifton's (1999) model, distil this complexity into four stages from speech perception to comprehension: *decode*, *segment*, *recognise* and *integrate*. The *decode* aspect refers to the human capacity to distinguish between individual phonemes, called categorical perception, which is thought to start developing at a very early stage and to continue in early infancy. This processing must be lightning fast as continuous speech contains ten phonemes a second (Eysenck & Keane, 2015). Humans then learn to *segment* the flow of

sounds into syllables from which words can be identified, before *recognising* them within a syntactic or paratactic structure, referred to as parsing, aided by intonation and stress patterns (Rost, 2011). The final stage of receptive processing, *integrate*, is where the listener fits the utterance within the larger framework of preceding speech. Listening therefore draws upon working memory to hold previous and past utterances together, but it also draws upon long-term memory to retrieve lexical items from an individual's lexicon. Furthermore, top-down processing, the human ability to draw from the context and schemata <sup>12</sup> to make predictions, further supports the segmentation and comprehension of speech flow (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). So, despite language teachers' tendency to refer to listening as a receptive skill, in the sense of processing audio input, the process is not passive in any sense, but involves interaction with various sources of knowledge, especially when processing from top-down, but also from bottom-up as suggested by Connectionist models. Both types of processing are necessary but may be called upon to greater or lesser degree according to a listener's purpose for listening, or the context, for instance, whether the utterance is ambiguous or where there is a lot of background noise (Eysenck & Keane, 2015). In addition, the listener response, in the form of verbal or non-verbal uptake, back-channelling or follow-up acts (Rost, 2005), is a necessary productive outcome from the other processes when interacting with others.

Listening in an L2 also involves the skilled processing of language input that simultaneously brings together an individual's knowledge of the language being listened to, the immediate context, and their world knowledge, to form a mental representation of what is being heard (Hulstijn, 2003; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). There are crucial differences with first language listening, however. Firstly, depending on the individual's current level of interlanguage, <sup>13</sup> comprehension implies a different balance of top-down and bottom-up processing which in turn has impacts on working and long-term memory. In contrast to an L1, L2 processing will not necessarily be fully automatic and will require conscious attention (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). Beginner L2 learners rely heavily on conscious, bottom-up processing which

---

<sup>12</sup> Prior knowledge such as discourse scripts and/or background knowledge.

<sup>13</sup> Selinker's (1972) original construct, described by Ellis (1997, p.140) as, "systematic knowledge of an L2 that is independent of both the target language and the learner's L1".

makes listening extremely effortful, adversely affecting their working memory as it struggles with competing processing and memory demands (Lynch, 1998). The experience can be anxiety-inducing, especially when the thread is lost due to the sheer speed of speech flow and/or the limits of working memory being reached (Vandergrift, 2007). Secondly, L2 listeners have ingrained L1 processing habits, making the perception of phonemes, and syllable and word boundaries, difficult in connected speech (Goh, 2000). They may not yet have developed, or may be too mature to develop, categorical perception of phonemes if they have not previously encountered them in their L1 (Rost, 2005). They may also struggle if their L1 is syllable-timed as opposed to stress-timed (Hasan, 2000). This has negative consequences for the efficacy of word identification, and this in turn hampers parsing. In addition, the developing L2 listener will possess a smaller lexicon and find syntactic processing effortful because it requires conscious attention (Vandergrift, 2007). However, as familiarity with the sounds, the lexicon, and the structures of the L2 grows,<sup>14</sup> categorical perception, lexical retrieval and syntactic processing become increasingly automatic, leaving the L2 listener with more working memory capacity to attend to the message (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). This is encapsulated in the Threshold Hypothesis, whereby a certain level of declarative knowledge of the L2 needs to be attained before one can comprehend connected speech easily (Lynch, 1998).

In addition to the linguistic knowledge needed for successful listening comprehension, other knowledge sources can be called upon to help interpret an in-coming message. Macaro, Vanderplank and Graham (2005) emphasise that prior world knowledge is important in making inferences for comprehension, as does knowing a range of discourse types, because these allow the listener to make predictions about aural information (Jung, 2003). Listeners can draw upon their pragmatic knowledge of the context in which the message is heard, attending to the participants involved, their purposes, the power relations and social norms that could be expected between them, although in cross-cultural communication this can lead to misunderstandings (Rost, 2005). Using knowledge sources is a top-down processing approach

---

<sup>14</sup> A vocabulary of 3000 word-families has been established as necessary to follow an informal conversation (Rost, 2005).

that will have already developed in a person's L1, and can be used in a strategic way to compensate for gaps in intake, as proposed by the Interdependence Model whereby L1 processes are used in L2 comprehension (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995). Moreover, this use of knowledge sources is mediated by metacognitive control which also has an important role to play. Between 13% and 22% of the variance in listening competence has been explained via this route (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, & Tafaghodtari, 2006; Goh & Hu, 2014), with better listeners being able to self-regulate and use more top-down strategies, while weaker listeners over-rely on bottom-up decoding processes (Goh, 2002; Vandergrift, 2003; Chamot, 2005).

Learner beliefs and motivation also wield an important influence on L2 listening success due to the conscious attention, self-regulation and effort that is required (Graham, 2006). Specifically, it has been established that situation-specific listening anxiety is negatively correlated with L2 listening comprehension in several different contexts, for instance, Korean EFL students (Kim, 2000), students studying L2 Arabic (Elkhafaifi, 2005) and Chinese EAP (Zhang, 2013), lending support to Krashen's (1985) original contention that listening comprehension is highly anxiety-provoking. This can be occasioned by the listener's perception of social standing in relation to their interlocutor, and, to interpret an incoming message, affective engagement with the interlocutor is required, with better connection leading to better understanding (Rost, 2005).

To sum up the listening process in an L2, while mechanically identical to the L1 in terms of innate brain processes, is hampered by perceptual habits and continued interference from a person's L1. It is less automatic therefore language is processed more slowly, and the L2 listener will have a less complete acquisition of lexis and grammar, making word identification and parsing less efficient, which may lead to feelings of situation-specific anxiety. That said, the L2 listening process is scaffolded by a person's knowledge sources and metacognitive strategies derived from their prior language learning experiences.

### 2.5.2. Speaking

Speaking is intimately connected with listening in the development of a first language (Rost, 2005). As a first step towards speaking, *vocalising* starts as soon as a baby is born and is

breathing independently. Babies cry and care-givers respond, likewise babies respond to care-giver speech directed at them. This fundamental aspect of vocal signaling is a product of evolution and has both an important attachment function as well as a language development function (Locke, 2010). Very soon after birth, the baby will start imitating caregivers' speech, so the skills of listening and speaking develop simultaneously in this context. Nelson, Carskaddon and Bonvillian (1973) studied the interaction between listening to caregiver language, imitation, and subsequent development of vocabulary knowledge. They found that the more babies vocalised at twenty months old, the sooner they acquired an initial working vocabulary, and at a later stage, the sooner they developed syntactical knowledge, further vocabulary, and were producing longer utterances than those who were vocalising less. All of which demonstrates the importance of interaction in language development.

So, what does speaking involve? Accepted models generally describe speaking as a downstream process of several interactive stages. It begins with an initial *conceptualisation* of a message in a speaker's mind, followed by *formulation* stages, where the message is firstly encoded according to grammatical, lexical, and morphological rules, then planned phonologically (Levelt, 1989; Tatham & Morton, 2011). Then *articulation* refers to the phonetic execution of the utterance plan which results in the production of speech sounds. The processing of all these stages is executed extremely rapidly as speech flows at two to three words per second (Eysenck & Keane, 2015). *Self-monitoring* is the process whereby the speaker then checks the correctness and appropriateness of the produced output in the light of the planned output (see Levelt's WEAVER++ model, 1989 & 1999). This understanding of the speech production process has been arrived at through speech error studies and tip-of-the-tongue research that started in the 1970s, which resulted in Dell's Lexical Model for speech production and his Spreading Activation Model (Dell, 1986). In his models, the concepts, sounds and words that are required for speech are stored at nodes in the brain, which activate related nodes according to categorical rules and a person's lexicon. Insertion rules then ensure that the most activated node fits the right category of item needed. According to the spreading activation theory, errors occur when the wrong nodes are activated, so the model accounts well

for anticipation and exchange errors (Dell, Nozari, & Oppenheim, 2014), the relevance of which becomes clear when thinking about interference from an L1 when speaking in an L2, as will be seen shortly.

However, the models of speech production outlined above, although backed by evidence from event-related potential studies (see Indefrey's 2011 overview), are based on experimental tasks such as picture naming, which is a very limited context of speech production. Speakers most typically are speaking to someone and engaging in dialogue, so rather than a transmission view of speech, where information is serially exchanged from speaker to listener and vice versa, speech production is, in fact, shaped by both interlocutors and is a joint activity, albeit at a far more advanced level than the interaction between babies and their caregivers. Clark (1996) referred to this as establishing *common ground*, or as Zwaan and Radvansky (1998) put it, interlocutors work to establish alignment in their linguistic representations to build a common *situation model* of the conversation in progress. Pickering and Garrod (2004) argue that this results in interlocutors producing language that mirrors language most recently heard in terms of lexis and grammatical structure, as well as effects such as repair, where speakers will reformulate their utterances to align to the shared situation model, as well as ask for explicit clarification when repair fails. So, in this sense, listener response is implicit in speech production as dialogues are made of a rapid cycle of interlocutor contributions and feedback. Furthermore, Pickering and Garrod (2004) demonstrated how the language production processes of listeners are used when predicting what speakers will say next, as interlocutors co-construct a situation model. From this it can be concluded that receptive and productive processes very much overlap in interaction, and therefore, in an L1 it would be extremely unlikely for an individual to be able to do one and not the other under normal circumstances.

Speaking a second language is evidently a form of multilingualism involving an interlanguage, given that it is rare for individuals to be fully balanced bilinguals (de Bot, 1992). This has important implications for L2 production models, complicating them immensely compared to those described above. de Bot (1992, 2000) ventured one of the first models of L2 speaking, largely based on Levelt's (1989) model, with five processing modules: *conceptualiser*,

*formulator, articulator*, an audition and speech comprehension system, as well as knowledge bases, including the lexicon. de Bot suggested that there would be separate L1 and L2 conceptualisers and formulators depending on an individual's level of competency in the L2, with the two becoming more separate with increasing proficiency in the L2. He also proposed that knowledge sources drawn upon at the conceptualisation stage would be non-language specific. There would be a sole lexicon consisting of language-specific sub-lexica, which, in the light of Dell's spreading activation theory, means that words from both languages would be activated during formulation, making it much more likely for selection errors to occur. In addition, de Bot noted that there would be only one articulator, with clear implications for accent (de Bot, 1992).

Since de Bot, further studies in multilingualism have concentrated on the degree to which an individual's linguistic systems are interconnected and the dependency relationships between them, as well as the implications of differing levels of competency on the other cognitive resources such as working memory (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2011). To simplify this huge complexity, it suffices to say that when speaking an L1, only conceptualising the message requires attention as the formulation and articulation processes have become automatic through practice from birth, which means these processing mechanisms can work in parallel, making speech generally smooth and fast (Eysenck & Keane, 2015). In contrast, for non-balanced bilinguals all stages from conceptualisation to articulation require attention, as well as suppression of the L1 (Kroll & Hermans, 2011). Moreover, forming and articulating the message requires far more attention and is not always sufficiently automatic, hampering parallel processing, and resulting in hesitant, dysfluent speech. L2 speakers draw upon their L1 during encoding, so L1 phonological and intonational transfer leads to accented articulation, where the phonological features, allophonic rules, and the stress pattern of a person's L1 do not match the L2 (Tarone, 2005). Transfer will also occur according to the speaker's current level of interlanguage, with greater or lesser dependency on translating conceptually between the L1 and L2 as L2 competency develops (Kroll & Hermans, 2011). Transfer is a very important factor in L2 speech production, but it is not the only influence during the development of L2 speaking competence; there is also the aspect of *markedness*. The Markedness Differential

Hypothesis (Eckman, 1977) posits that sounds in various languages occur with varying frequency, meaning that commonly deployed individual sounds or consonant/vowel clusters will be acquired more easily, and before, the rarer sounds. This shows that, just like in L1 contexts, exposure to aural input contributes greatly to developing oral competence.

Nonetheless, despite the barriers to L1-like speech production described above, the L2 speaker can employ strategies to compensate for processing difficulties, especially during dialogue with an interlocutor. These strategies will have varying degrees of usefulness, but could include finding alternative or approximate wording, code-switching, using formulaic chunks, as well as body language to support the meaning they wish to convey (Tarone, 2005). L2 speakers can also profit from a supportive interlocutor in maintaining the situation model. The interlocutor can choose to simplify their own contributions to the conversation or recast the L2 speaker's contributions and they could also provide missing lexis. Furthermore, it is only necessary for the L2 speaker to be intelligible to their interlocutor, meaning that neither pronunciation, nor lexical or structural accuracy need be perfect (Jenkins, 2000).

In sum, in a home language listening and speaking are innate, universal and develop symbiotically and equally through interaction with others from birth. Aural and oral language competencies therefore comprise automatic and largely unconscious parallel processes that draw upon short and long-term memory resources, allowing interlocutors to focus their attention on meaning alone while maintaining their situation model during interaction. Processing takes place in real time and is very rapid due to the speed of speech flow (Rost, 2011; Eysenck & Keane, 2015), as listening and speaking are most naturally employed in dialogue. In contrast, in a non-balanced bilingual adult learning a language via instruction, these skills will necessarily have very different starting points and developmental trajectories. Firstly, they develop after the acquisition of the first language/s and at an older age, therefore interference can have impacts on perception with subsequent effects on articulatory, lexical, and structural accuracy. Moreover, non-fully automatic, hence conscious, processing demands put intense pressure on working and long-term memory, impacting on the ability to follow rapid connected speech and/or achieve fluency when speaking. That said, the more mature L2



speaker can draw upon their knowledge bases and metacognitive strategies to compensate. Secondly, L2 listening and speaking are not guaranteed to develop symbiotically. Instead, these will develop depending on type of language exposure and practice opportunities provided by the instructional context. Aural input may be limited, as might opportunities to interact with fluent speakers of the L2, meaning that competency in these skills may diverge within a person's interlanguage. However, given that listening generally precedes speaking (Rost, 2005), as it does in L1 contexts, listening competency is more likely to be better developed than speaking rather than vice versa. In other words, it would be surprising if an L2 user's speaking competence were greater than their listening competence.

### 2.5.3. Reading

In the previous section it was highlighted that listening and speaking in a home language develop first and that they develop through interaction with caregivers without the need for formal instruction, as established by research conducted on infants and pre-school children. Research into the development of literacy naturally focuses instead on young learners as they begin school given that explicit instruction as well as extensive practice are required to develop this (Rastle, 2018).

It has been established that reading in English is built upon a foundation of aural competencies, in particular phonemic discrimination (Snowling, Hulme & Hulme, 2005). It is an extension of pre-existing categorical perception, and indeed, Melby Lervåg, Lyster and Hulme (2012) and Caravolas, Lervåg, Defior, Seidlová Málková and Hulme (2013) found that letter-sound knowledge and phoneme awareness were strong predictors of the speed of reading development. Early reading involves decoding a text from the bottom-up; it is a conscious and very laborious process. The beginner reader must learn to focus their eyes on written symbols and retrieve the graphemes from long-term memory. These must be read in the right direction and held in working memory long enough to be matched with their associated phonemes. When young learners decode graphemes, they sound them out loud, and by listening to themselves, they recognise them. They slowly assemble syllables into words as they are spoken, whereupon they are identified and can be understood, making a clear connection

between reading and already developed speaking and listening competencies. This is the Simple View of Reading (Hoover & Gough, 1990) whereby reading comprehension is expressed as the function of two variables, decoding ability and language comprehension, meaning that without one or the other, reading comprehension is impossible. The model predicts that L1 beginner readers are likely to vary more in the speed at which they develop their ability to decode rather than their language comprehension, but, as will be discussed shortly, L2 beginner readers may vary in both (Jeon & Yamashita, 2022).

In more experienced readers, reading comprises complex and interactive bottom-up and top-down processes that are likewise initiated by visual input from a text and pass via phonological equivalents before further processing involving stored information. These processes are helpfully summarised in Perfetti and Stafura's (2014) general framework for reading comprehension (Fig.1).

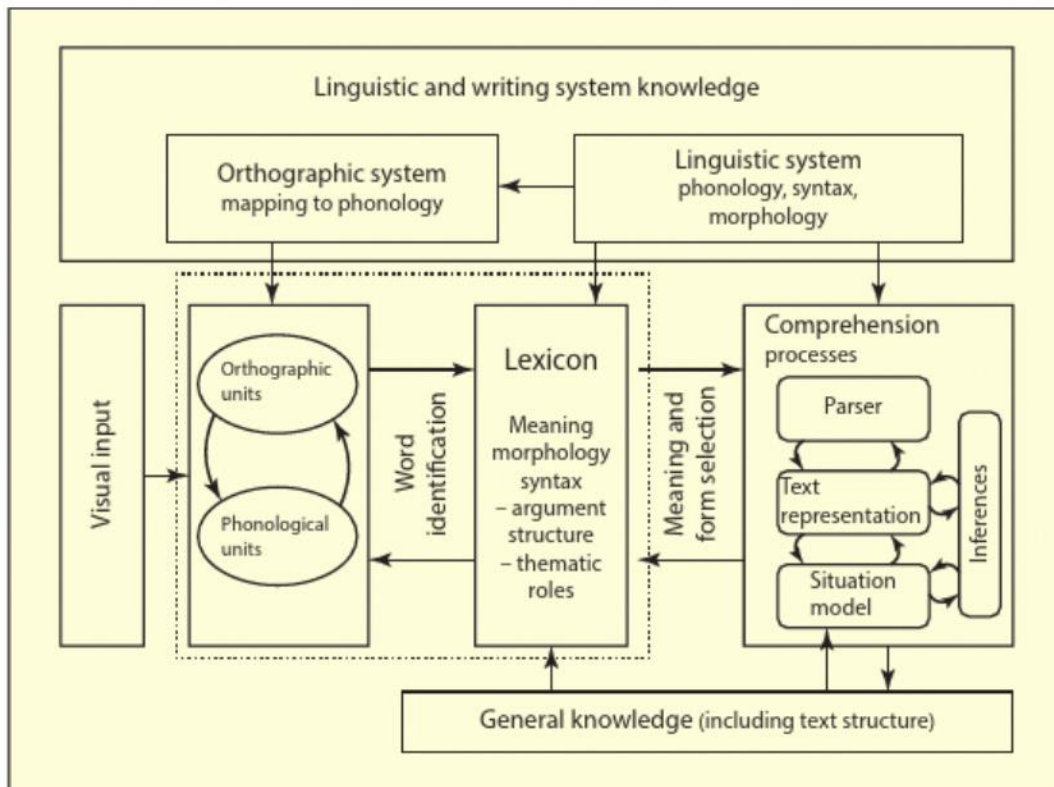


Figure 1 Framework for reading comprehension (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014, p.24)

The intricacies of bottom-up word identification processes that underpin but are not fully represented in Perfetti and Stafura's framework have been modelled. Examples include McClelland and Rumelhart's (1981) Interactive Activation Model, Coltheart, Rastle, Perry, Langdon and Ziegler's (2001) Dual-route Cascaded Model, or the Connectionist Triangle Model (Plaut, McClelland, Seidenberg, & Patterson, 1996). These models feature three elements that are crucial to word identification: orthography, phonology, and semantics, and are based on a widely agreed concept, an information store within the brain dubbed the *mental lexicon* (Rastle, 2018), in which words' written forms are stored separately to their corresponding phonological forms, and also their meanings, as well as other features such as morphology and pragmatics (Dijkstra & van Heuven, 2018).

Word identification in reading, while calling upon the same phonological processes as listening perception, has some important differences. Processing during reading can occur in a parallel way, as opposed to the incremental, serial processing of speech flow. The letters within words can be processed simultaneously, as can words within the reader's peripheral vision, allowing the practised reader to skip ahead. Moreover, the input is stable rather than transitory, meaning that readers can return to the text, if necessary, to re-process it when encountering difficulty with extracting meaning (Rayner & Clifton, 2009). Thanks to parallel processing, mature readers can process an average of 238 words a minute when reading silently (Brysbaert, 2019), which is faster than estimates for listening comprehension of between 170 to 190 words per minute (Rodero, 2016). Skilled L1 readers decode graphemes automatically and unconsciously, which takes far less toll on their working memories (Grabe & Stoller, 2019) allowing them to maintain their focus on constructing meaning as they read, using top-down strategies and knowledge bases to find the quickest route to meaning (Goodman, 1967).

Top-down reading comprehension processes share much commonality with listening comprehension (Eysenck & Keane, 2020). Comprehension begins with a text's micro-structure at the sentence level, involving the processing of syntax to parse and reach local meaning. This is thought to be aided via a mechanism called implicit prosody (Fodor, 1998), whereby the reader uses their knowledge of spoken prosody to generate an inner voice which helps resolve

ambiguous sentence structures. This would explain why the readability of written texts is greatly supported by the correct placement of commas or other punctuation devices. Other top-down parsing processes include semantic priming, where a reader will predict upcoming words, based on the words that have recently been encountered, and/or the context.

At the discourse level beyond individual sentences, the reading process relies upon making inferences to reach a text representation and to maintain a situation model, just as in listening comprehension. Inferences rely upon a range of knowledge resources, such as the mental lexicon, morpho-syntactic, discursal and world knowledge, as well as knowledge about the nature of texts (Schoonen, 2018). For instance, morpho-syntactic knowledge allows a reader to make use of the anaphoric references in the text, while prior world or pragmatic knowledge allows for predictive or elaborative inferences. Moreover, Stanovich's (1980) original interactive-compensatory model highlights that "a process at any level can compensate for deficiencies at any other level" (p.36). This means readers switch between processes, for instance, using top-down processes such as world knowledge and semantic priming while scanning a text, or, using bottom-up processes such as grapheme decoding, to deal with unfamiliar lexical items.

Turning now to reading in an L2, psycholinguistic research in recent decades on multilingual word processing has established that decoding visual input to identify words involves "a language-independent pattern recognition procedure that coactivates lexical-orthographic representations in all stored languages to the extent that they are similar to the input letter string" (Dijkstra & van Heuven, 2018, p.136). This means that *all* the words that a multilingual person knows are stored in a single integrated mental lexicon, and that during the word recognition process, *all*<sup>15</sup> related words' orthographic, morphological, phonological, and semantic information is activated via spreading activation. What is most surprising about this is that multilingual individuals only take 15 to 25 milliseconds longer than monolinguals to identify words despite the vastly greater number of activated items (Cop, Dirix, van Assche,

---

<sup>15</sup> No matter the language code.

Drieghe, & Duyck, 2016). However, this level of automaticity in word identification is far harder to accomplish in an L2 because it is contingent on having an extensive lexis in long-term memory to draw upon (Eskey, 2005) as well as having a complete knowledge of all aspects of each word.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, reaching automaticity in English is especially difficult due to its deep orthography (Seymour, Aro, & Erskine, 2003), meaning that words' spellings do not necessarily reflect their phonology making them harder to identify. One possible outcome of this is that the L2 reader relies more on inferencing and context to compensate for gaps in their lexical knowledge, but, as Jeon and Yamashita (2022) point out, using a top-down processing strategy for word identification is inefficient and impedes fluent reading.

As was mentioned earlier, automaticity in word identification frees up working memory allowing for top-down inference generation about the text to work in parallel. This is why Clarke (1980) and Cummins (1980, 2000) originally proposed that knowledge of the L2 needs to reach a certain threshold before reading strategies developed in an L1 are available for use, and why Jeon and Yamashita (2022) contend that the effective use of cognitive resources is delayed in L2 readers. When reading, an individual's prior knowledge is compared to information in the text to help establish the meaning of the whole text, so knowing how texts are structured greatly aids comprehension (Eskey, 2005), as does having access to encyclopaedic knowledge and the appropriate schemata, or 'picture of the world' (Smith, 1975) that is shared with the writer of the text. For the L2 reader, these aspects potentially represent extra hurdles on the route to comprehension. There may be cultural differences in text formats or unfamiliar genres, as well as exophoric references that are unknown to the reader. This means that individuals will potentially vary greatly in terms of the knowledge sources they can call upon during top-down processing (Jeon & Yamashita, 2022).

Returning now to the point that reading is learned rather than acquired, it is important to note that in both an L1 and L2 there will be differences between people in the quality and quantity of the reading instruction received, as well as the amount of reading practice they carry out as

---

<sup>16</sup> Orthography, phonology, morphology, semantics, pragmatics.

individuals. Extensive reading not only increases vocabulary size, but also increases one's familiarity with a range of text types and hones one's ability to draw on metacognitive strategies to aid comprehension. This highlights the importance of motivation for reading development. In a comprehensive review of empirical literature, Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, and Wigfield (2012) identified several dimensions, some relating to intrinsic motivation to read, for example, out of curiosity and for enjoyment/involvement, while others related to external factors such as competition, recognition, and grades. They noted that intrinsically motivated readers tended to read more avidly, and therefore they developed more competence in contrast to extrinsically motivated readers. However, an important point is that reading motivation is not necessarily the same in one's L1 as one's L2. For example, in a study of Korean EFL students, Kim (2010) found that motivation for reading in English was primarily extrinsic in nature, being goal-oriented towards learning. This means that, while extensive reading is necessary, particularly to reach a level of competency that is necessary for reading for learning, students might be less strongly motivated to do so (Eskey, 2005).

To sum up the L2 reading process, text comprehension is predicated on comprehensive lexical knowledge and decoding automaticity at the level of word identification, neither of which are guaranteed until L2 knowledge reaches the threshold required according to the difficulty of the text. Beyond the threshold, reading in an L2 is more effortful than in one's home language/s due to the multilingual brain needing to filter out all activated nodes in an integrated lexicon, however, L2 reading is not necessarily slower. Just like listening, L2 reading is supported by the individual's prior knowledge sources and metacognitive strategies, but in contrast with L2 listening, it requires greater motivation to develop as extensive reading is the route to competency. Nonetheless, L2 reading is less anxiety-provoking than listening, as ambiguous sentences can be reprocessed. It could be expected that L2 reading would be a good indicator of one's declarative knowledge of the language, perhaps developing faster or slower than listening and speaking depending on practice.

#### 2.5.4. Writing

Despite the wealth of writing process and development models proposed by, among others, Hayes and Flower (1980,1986), Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), Kellogg (1990, 1994,1996), Grabe and Kaplan (1996), Chenoweth and Hayes (2003), Galbraith (2009), and Galbraith and Baaijen (2018), it has not yet been possible to bring together the cognitive, motivational, and sociocultural aspects of writing, nor fully describe the writing process at various stages of development (MacArthur & Graham, 2016). This makes deciding where to start with a description of writing difficult, but a good place would be basic writing skills, before considering the complexity of the other cognitive processes involved in composition of written texts, as well as the importance of self-regulatory behaviours, knowledge bases, and motivation.

Writing in a home language features precursory stages such as the discovery of scribbling and mark-making using a writing implement. Being able to draw lines, circles, then pictures, presupposes good motor control that takes time for a child to develop. At a later stage children begin to differentiate between pictures and letters (Treiman, Hompluem, Gordon, Decker, & Markson, 2016), even attempt to copy letters that they frequently encounter in their environment. One of the first words they will learn to write and spell correctly will almost certainly be their name, as a very first step towards increasingly automatised transcription.

*Transcription*<sup>17</sup> is the term used to describe the encoding of language via written symbols; it includes letter production, spelling, and sentence construction. This fundamental, but by no means simple, process predicts the writing competency of children (Berninger, Mizokawa & Bragg, 1991), moreover, difficulties at this early stage cause children to develop negative views of their capability (Graham, Berninger, Abbott, Abbot & Whittaker, 1997), with negative impacts on their motivation to write. Transcription needs to be as automatic as possible to prevent overload on working memory, freeing up capacity to draw upon long term memory for lexical retrieval, as well as to concentrate on the text as a whole (Olive, 2012). Bourdin and Fayol's (1994) seminal research found children were less able than adults to use their working

---

<sup>17</sup> Alternatively, the "Transcriber" in the model of text production as proposed by Chenoweth and Hayes (2003).

memory to recall words when writing, in contrast with when they were speaking. Their hypothesis was that the drop in performance was caused by transcription processes taking up processing capacity, which fits with Swanson and Berninger's (1996) finding of a link between individual differences in children's working memory and the quality of their writing. Bourdin and Fayol (2002) further showed that adults also performed worse in writing compared to speaking in complex composition tasks, meaning that cognitive overload still impeded language production, even at greater levels of automaticity. Furthermore, Graham, McKeown, Kiuvara and Harris (2012) found that children who had been explicitly taught text transcription skills produced better writing than those that had not, highlighting that writing production requires instruction, in a way that speaking does not, at its most basic level. It appears that, for both children and adults, the basic skill of transcription must be automatic to allow thoughts to be captured on paper efficiently. Moreover, multicomponent working memory plays an even more crucial role in writing than in the skills previously discussed, due to the greater multiplicity of language systems employed (Olive, 2012), to which this review now turns.

Writing is variously defined as "a social technology" (Bazerman, 2016, p.11) or "a complex intentional problem-solving activity" (ibid., p.25), or as a process involving a set of cognitive activities that interact with the task environment (van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, & van Steendam, 2016). Hamp-Lyons adds that "writers do not possess 'writing ability' as a single skill" (2016, p.A3) because the nature of writing is multifaceted; it is both a process and a product, requiring recursive activity between thinking, writing, and reading, and by extension, considering the phonological and implicit prosody processes in reading, it also draws upon listening and speaking competencies. It is considered the most difficult language skill due to these multiple elements, as well as the fact that the task environment lacks an interlocutor, meaning that there is less scaffolding for the writer (Hayes, 2000), and that the expectations for writing are greater than for speaking in terms of accuracy and explicitness (Schoonen, Snellings, Stevenson, & van Gelderen, 2009). As Hayes and Flower (1980) originally formulated through their research into the processes of college students, writing thus involves the creation of ideas for the text as much as it is about writing down ideas, in other words, writers are reading and



thinking about their text, as well as composing. They outlined three components: the task environment, cognitive processes, and long-term memory resources.

In the cognitive component, the writing process has three phases: generating ideas and *planning* content and its organisation, *translating* content into words and sentences by selecting lexis, syntax and employing cohesion, and *reviewing* by reading the text back to oneself for the purpose of evaluation and editing. These phases in turn are controlled by a *monitoring* process (Hayes & Flower, 1980). The phases have parallels with Levelt's (1989) *conceptualisation*, *formulation* and *articulation*, and *self-monitoring* seen earlier in the description of the processes of speech.<sup>18</sup> Important aspects of the model included: 1. processes were recursive, happening at any point during composing; 2. all tasks were goal-directed, so *planning* comprised sub-processes that controlled the overall process itself, the content, and the formation of writer's argument; 3. the whole process was limited by working memory capacity (Galbraith & Baaijen, 2018). Hayes and Flower's (1986) further work shed light on the differences between expert and novice writers. Their research revealed that experts planned and revised more globally and demonstrated more reflective thought during composing. They held a more sophisticated conception of argument and audience and were also able to generate longer stretches of text. They suggested that during the problem-solving process of creating a coherent argument, experts also transformed their understanding of the topic (Hayes & Flower, 1986).

These ideas were complemented by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987). They found novice writers employ a much more simplified process with less attention to argumentation and audience, described as the *knowledge-telling* strategy, in which the unskilled writer writes

---

<sup>18</sup> Kellogg's model (1996) contains the processes of *formulation*, *execution*, and *monitoring*. His formulation phase includes planning of content and organisation, as well as the translation components outlined by Hayes and Flower, furthermore, Kellogg's *monitoring* aspect is akin to *reviewing* in Hayes and Flower's model. However, he separated out the physical transcription element, as did Chenoweth and Hayes (2003), which is along the lines of Levelt's (1989) separation of *formulation* and *articulation* in speech.

down, or *translates*, content retrieved from memory with little regard to readership. Bereiter and Scardamalia chose the phrase *knowledge-telling* for a good reason because children write as they speak to begin with. Indeed, Berninger, Cartwright, Yates, Swanson, and Abbott (1994) found writing quality stemmed from general verbal ability, perhaps due to a greater facility for generating and expressing ideas. With instruction, coupled with increasingly automatic translation processes,<sup>19</sup> children become able to produce more elaborate, coherent, and cohesive writing, presumably as more working memory capacity becomes available to control all the processes that are required. Cox, Shanahan and Sulzby (1990) found cohesion needs to develop in spoken language first, before it becomes evident in written production. Whether this stems from increasingly sophisticated thought processes, exposure to adults' cohesive speech, or can be gained through reading texts, or a combination of all three, it is impossible to tell and almost certainly varies from one individual to another. This developmental path coined descriptions such as *dialog to monolog* (Moffett, 1968), *utterance to text* (Olson, 1977) and *conversation to composition* (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1982), and was the basis for Kroll's (1981) Consolidation-Differentiation model. In this model's first stage, *convergence*, writing is simply speaking transcribed, but with further schooling, learners add textual features to their writing, so writing becomes increasingly differentiated from speech. The end point of this development is encapsulated in Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) *knowledge transforming* strategy, where the skilled writer has learned to plan, evaluate, and shape content towards a particular rhetoric goal (Galbraith, 2009). Kellogg and Whiteford (2012) later added a description of truly expert writers who achieve *knowledge crafting* where "the writer shapes what to say and how to say it with the potential reader fully in mind. The writer tries to anticipate different ways that the reader might interpret the text and takes these into account in revising it" (Kellogg & Whiteford, 2012, p.116). This level of expertise is a requirement of many degree programmes, but Kellogg and Whiteford suggested that it could only be attained after more than twenty years' practice.

---

<sup>19</sup> Of which transcription is an important part as mentioned earlier.

Since the 80's and 90's, research has supplied greater detail on aspects of text planning, formulation/translating, transcription and reviewing processes, as well as the role of working memory. Chenoweth and Hayes (2001, 2003) focused on formulation and text production processes in detail, coming up with a simplified model that comprised: 1. *the Proposer*, an ideas generation process, 2. *the Translator*, a phonological process where ideas are formulated into words, 3. *the Transcriber*, whose role is to produce written text, and 4. *The Evaluator/Revisor*, that monitors of output from the former three and allows for revisions to be made (Chenoweth & Hayes 2003, p.13). Depending on the activity a writer is engaged in at any moment, these elements are called upon to a greater or lesser extent. For example, when proof-reading the Evaluator would come to the fore, but should the writer decide the text requires extensive editing, then all four processes may come back into play. The physical aspect of text production is embodied in the Transcriber part of Chenoweth and Hayes' (2003) model and was later incorporated into Hayes' (2012) revised model (Fig.2).

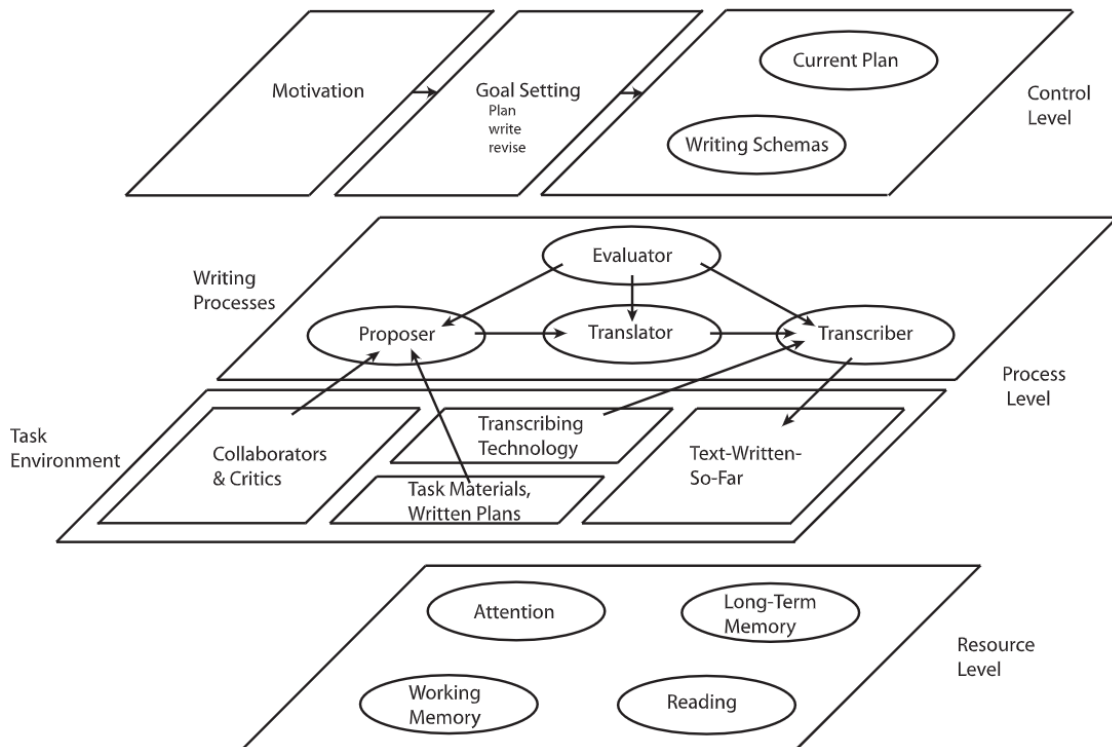


Figure 2 Hayes' (2012) revised model of the writing process, incorporating Chenoweth and Hayes (2001,2003)

Chenoweth and Hayes' (2003) research also showed that writing is produced in short fragments of sentences rather than complete sentences, consisting of grammatical units they called *P-bursts* (for production) or *R-bursts* (for revisions). They identified the factors affecting burst size were linguistic experience, verbal working memory capacity and grammatical structure. They proposed that for skilled writers, transcription is mostly unconscious and automatic thus working memory is available for concentrating on proposing, translating, and evaluating. However, where there is competition for working memory resources, for example, having to switch attention from composition to thinking about spelling or handwriting, there is potential for the writer to forget ideas or plans being held in working memory. This is the same disruptive effect that was evidenced by Bourdin and Fayol (2002), and, as will be seen shortly, it has implications for the L2 writing process.

More recently a *Dual-Process Model* has been proposed resulting from Galbraith's (2009) and Galbraith and Baaijen's (2015) research using key-stroke logging with university students. Their key finding is that there are two conflicting processes in composing text, spontaneous sentence production versus global organisation of text, and that these are affected differently depending on the type of planning employed by the writer. The first option is an implicit, or subconscious process, that they call *knowledge-constituting*, or a *process of discovery*, whereby writing content is generated by a search through long-term memory. The second option is an explicit, or consciously controlled, reflection system that they call *knowledge-transforming*, in which the knowledge generated by the former option is surveyed and modified according to rhetorical aims, and along with it arises the possibility to reconsider one's original understanding of the content produced so far (Galbraith & Baaijen, 2018). Their model differs from Chenoweth and Hayes (2003) in that there is synthesis rather than retrieval of content, and an indirect relationship between the Revisor and Proposer, as well as direct feedback from the output of the Translator to Proposer. They stress the importance of recognising the different functions of these processes as it could impact on motivation to write; "Being able, and learning how, to develop one's understanding through writing is likely to enhance motivation to write; equally, being unable, or feeling that one is not allowed, to develop one's understanding is likely to reduce motivation to write" (Galbraith & Baaijen, 2018, p.17).

In summary, the Hayes and Flower (1986), Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), Kellogg and Whiteford (2012), and Galbraith and Baaijen (2018) models all posit that the nature of writing, in its most elaborate form, is in fact a reflective thinking and learning process, and not merely language production. Roca de Larios, Nicolás-Conesa, and Coyle (2016) therefore suggest that once knowledge transforming or crafting competence has developed in a person's L1, it would transfer to that person's L2 writing, as per Cummins' (1980) *Interdependence Hypothesis*, the only difference being in the linguistic formulation of the text. However, research has uncovered several complicating factors to this as will be discussed very shortly.

At heart "the L2 writing process is a bilingual event" (Wang & Wen, 2002, p.239), therefore it is a much more complex process than the already complex monolingual problem-solving activity described thus far. Modelling the process is an overwhelming task, and for this reason current models are yet to provide a complete overview (Polio, 2011), but in the following paragraphs some of those that have been proposed are noted. Very many empirical studies have found evidence of differences in the processes outlined previously for conceptualising, planning, formulating, reviewing, as well as strategy use (for syntheses see Cumming, 2001; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008; Schoonen et al., 2009; Roca de Larios et al., 2016). Some of these differences are bound up in the contribution the L1 makes to the L2 composition process, for example, when and to what extent language-switching occurs and the extent to which L1 writing knowledge and strategies can be transferred. A key area of difference, from the point of view of a study of uneven language competency, stems from the individual's level of L2 linguistic knowledge and fluency. This has been shown to have an impact on the time spent on the different processes of composition, as well as the degree to which language-switching occurs. Both have consequent impacts on working memory capacity and the individual's ability to knowledge-transform through their writing.

Turning firstly to the contribution of the L1, L2 writers strategically switch back to their L1 during all stages of the writing process planning, formulating, revising, and monitoring (Manchón, Murphy, & Roca de Larios, 2007). Working from the Hayes and Flower model,

Zimmermann (2000) and Wang and Wen (2002) both proposed recursive models of L2 writing, in which the L1 was employed at the generating ideas and planning stages of composition, while the L2 was used for formulation, repair, and review. Zimmermann (2000) focused on the translating ideas<sup>20</sup> aspect of writing production, finding that L2 processing dominates during formulation and error correction stages, meaning that the German L1 writers in his study were not translating ready-made sentences from German to English, and that the L1 was only used during planning stages. Wang and Wen's (2002) study of Chinese students writing in English revealed L1 was being used for thirty percent of the time during the writing process, confirming the findings of multiple prior studies in other nationality groups (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Manchón, Roca de Larios & Murphy, 2000; Knutson, 2006). From this they also proposed an elaborated version of the Hayes and Flower model (Fig.3).

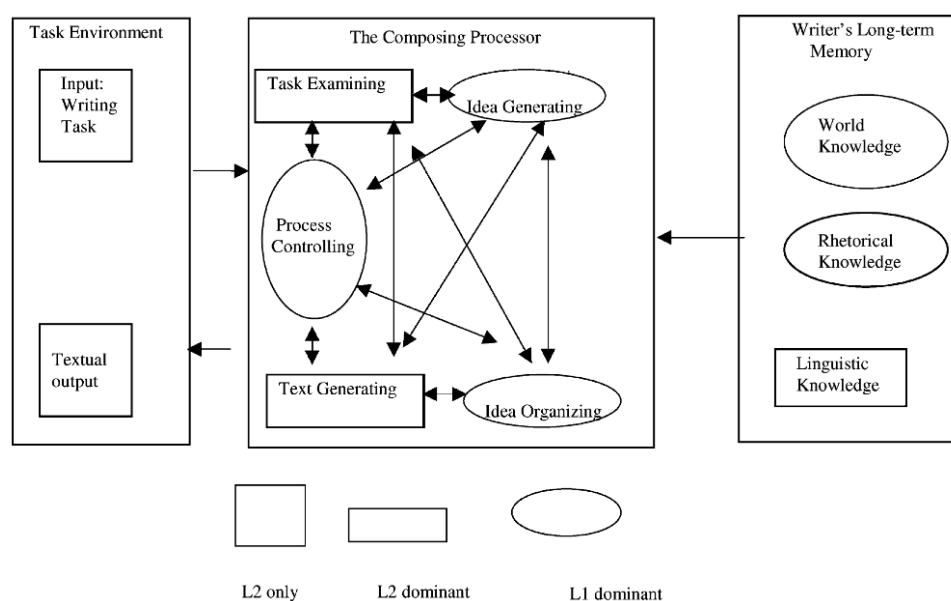


Figure 3 Descriptive model of the L2 composing process (Wang & Wen, 2002).

Recourse to the L1 was seen in the ideas-generation and organisation processes, a finding that coincides with Zimmermann's (2000) findings, as well as control processes, more than during text-generation. Importantly however, Wang and Wen (2002) noted two-thirds of the students'

<sup>20</sup> Although Zimmermann called it *formulating* to avoid confusion.

attention was devoted to this latter aspect, indicating that it was the most difficult and laborious process, while comparatively less attention was paid to organisation. They also found that with increasing L2 proficiency, reliance on the L1 during text generation decreased, noting that rather than translating sentences conceptualised in the L1 into the L2, the more proficient students appeared to write directly in English, as did Zimmermann's (2000) and Woodall's (2002) mixed-nationality students. Nonetheless, these more competent writers still relied largely on their L1 for the generation and organisation of ideas as well as overall process control. Other research (Manchón et al., 2000; Wang, 2003; Wolfersberger, 2003) revealed how back-translating is deployed as a strategy in revising and monitoring the relevance and organisation of content generated so far, something that is not fully reflected in Wang and Wen's (2002) model. More generally, recourse to the L1 is thought to support the L2 written production as task complexity increases (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Manchón, Roca de Larios & Murphy, 2009; van Weijen, van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, & Sanders, 2009), and with self-regulatory strategies such as instructions to oneself during the writing process (Woodall, 2002). van Weijen et al. (2009) further considered whether recourse to the L1 impacts on text quality in a study of Dutch students, concluding that it did not do so directly. An important insight of theirs, which will be returned to shortly, was that language-switching occurred at moments when writers found it hard to coordinate cognitive processes.

The extent to which L1 writing knowledge and strategies can be transferred appears to depend upon two main factors, whether the individual has developed compatible declarative and procedural knowledge of writing in the first place, and secondly, whether their L2 competency has reached a threshold level. Cummins (1991) speculated in his *Interdependence Hypothesis* that aspects of literacy developed in an L1 can transfer to an L2, and this idea certainly seems to be supported by early case study research into differences between skilled and unskilled L2 writers (Zamel, 1983; Raimes, 1985) which revealed that skilled L2 writers were prepared to spend more time on their work, they wrote and revised more, including at the global discourse level, and that they saved editing until the end in a similar fashion to skilled L1 writers. Arndt (1987), Matsumoto (1995), Beare (2000), and Beare and Bourdages (2007), all found that

individual composing strategies were the same across languages, however, it must be noted that Arndt's six subjects were postgraduates with considerable writing experience, while Matsumoto, Beare and Bourdages studied proficient bilingual writers. This is why other research suggests that a certain level of L2 competency must be reached for any transfer of skills to happen, which as already mentioned has been called the *Threshold Hypothesis* (Roca de Larios et al., 2016).

In a synthesis of seventy-two studies of undergraduate students writing in both their L1 and L2, Silva (1993) noted that generating content was evidently harder in the L2 and inefficient, in the sense that the students spent more time on this process but that less material was used in the final texts, concurring with Zimmermann (2000) and Wang and Wen's (2002) later findings. Moreover, students planned less in the L2 at both the local and global level, and found it harder to organise the material resulting in texts that differed in style and were more simplistically structured than in the L1. In a comparative study of expert and novice students' writing in the Japanese context, Sasaki (2000) also observed that strategy use was influenced by L2 competency, with the less proficient students employing fewer strategies, but that this resolved after instruction over the longer term. These findings led researchers to consider an *Inhibition Hypothesis* (Stevenson, Schoonen, & De Glopper, 2006), which posits that the process of formulating the L2 inhibits an individual's attentional and cognitive capacity for elaborating content and revising the text globally. In this way then, L2 linguistic knowledge plays a particularly important role in L2 writing competency.

L2 linguistic knowledge, and one's fluency in producing it, has long been identified as the most obvious variable accounting for the source of difference between L1 and L2 writing competence. As Cumming (2001) puts it "learners seem to devote much attention while they write to decisions about the form of the second language or to finding resources such as appropriate words, which may constrain their attention to formulating complex ideas, their capacity to function in situations of high knowledge demands, and the extent of their planning of their writing" (p.5). As mentioned earlier, Wang and Wen's (2002) Chinese participants devoted two-thirds of their composing time to formulation and relatively less to organisation.



In Roca de Larios, Manchón and Murphy's (2006) study, Spanish students took twice as long to formulate the text as they did in their L1. However, they noted that the double time spent formulating did not alter with increasing L2 knowledge, instead, it influenced the nature of the formulation problems the writers set themselves. For example, they would search for more appropriate vocabulary or consider alternative phrasing, meaning that the quality of the texts improved, at least at the sentence level.

Schoonen et al. (2009) also concluded that during the formulation process "linguistic skills and knowledge becomes prominent" (p.79). Through a series of studies called the NELSON project, they aimed to create a "blueprint of the L2 writer" (p.77). Dutch high-school students' L1 and L2 writing processes were compared. To begin with, Schoonen et al. (2003) and van Gelderen et al. (2004) had established that with increasing linguistic and metacognitive knowledge, as well as the speed at which grammar and lexis was retrieved, writing performance improved, and notably these variables accounted for more of the variance in the L2 than in the L1. In a follow up study, Stevenson (2005) found that students made more linguistic than conceptual revisions when writing in their L2, and that local re-reading of the text to solve language-related problems resulted in less attention to global rhetorical development, as well as simpler propositional content. This local, sentence-level focus was also noted by Roca de Larios et al. (2006), and in a similar vein, Tillema's (2012) investigation of the effect of vocabulary knowledge found that low levels of vocabulary suppressed planning and monitoring. This evidence suggests that when writing in an L2, memory resources for goal-directed content creation and for maintaining a global sense of the text are not as available as they are in the L1.

In conclusion, it will always require more effort and cognitive resource to write and revise in an L2 than in one's L1. For this reason, it might not be possible to develop knowledge through writing, as it is in one's first language according to dual-processing theory (Galbraith, 2009). Due to the extra cognitive load that formulating L2 text applies, it might prove impossible to conceive of ideas spontaneously as well as formulate them; "As one moves closer to the point of utterance, this is much harder to manage strategically. Ideas are often fleetingly generated

at the point of text production and have to be maintained in working memory until the complete sentence has been transcribed” (Galbraith, 2009, p.17). Chenoweth and Hayes (2003) established that P-bursts are shorter in an L2, and shorter still at lower levels of competency, so Galbraith contends that the time taken to complete sentences and the shortness of P-bursts must impact on L2 writers’ ability to hold onto their “idea package” (p.17), which in turn could affect textual coherence and the sophistication of the ideas contained therein. The fact that writing may not be a vehicle for extending one’s understanding when operating in an L2 is particularly worrisome when one considers the importance placed on writing in the HE context for this very purpose (Cumming, 2009). Also, on a separate note, Galbraith (2009) contends that if L2 writers find it harder to develop and express their personal understandings, their motivation to write may well be lessened.

To summarise, writing of the knowledge-transforming or knowledge-crafting kind in an L2 is extremely complex requiring not least a threshold level of lexical and grammatical knowledge sufficient for the task at hand, automatic transcription, pragmatic and world knowledge, as well as self-regulatory control. As was seen with the other skills, L2 processing demands put intense pressure on working memory, and in writing, this has impacts on managing local language issues at the same time as the global organisation of the text. Fortunately, the L1 can be used to support the L2 process during planning, monitoring and overall process control, and where compatible, knowledge and writing strategies developed in the L1 can also transfer positively. Top-level writing takes twenty or more years to develop in the L1, hence it would be safe to say that L2 writing will develop over even longer timescales depending on the motivation of the student. Given the complexity described above, one would expect that writing would be the least developed skill in an individual’s profile, be it in their L1 or L2.

## 2.6. Implications for profile shapes

Drawing together the literature on speaking, listening, reading, and writing, a holistic view of their cognitive processes and development can be glimpsed from both the L1 and L2 perspective. As Berninger and Richards (2002) underline, the skills comprise both overlapping

and separate processes. They form a shared cognition model (Berninger & Abbott, 2010; Shanahan, 2016), in which “language in general” systems of the brain interact with sensory, motor, social, emotional, cognitive, attention/executive function systems forming “action-perception loops” (James, Jao, & Berninger, 2016, p.126).

In an L1, listening and speaking are innate language behaviours whose development is intimately intertwined from birth. These develop in terms of automaticity, and in parallel, involving working and long-term memory, as each person builds up linguistic, pragmatic, and socio-cultural knowledge bases through experience and interaction with others. Although listening and speaking can be viewed microscopically in terms of discrete sub-processes, these are more a matter of direction, decoding as opposed to encoding. Further, given that these skills draw upon the shared processes of lexical retrieval and syntactic processing, there is a strong relationship between them in terms of an individual’s competency. Nonetheless, given that human communication most frequently involves interaction in the form of dialogue, mental representations of situations are co-constructed by interlocutors and do not necessarily rely on linguistic information alone, as visual clues, the context and prior knowledge can provide additional information to sustain the situation model.

Reading and writing in one’s home language/s are founded on speaking and listening at a point where one’s linguistic resources have already had several years’ development and one is developmentally ready in terms of attention and self-regulatory control to learn by instruction. While the basic bottom-up processes of decoding and segmentation in reading and listening initially involve separate brain areas such as the visual or auditory cortex, these soon converge (Eysenck & Keane, 2015). Phonological processing is an intrinsic part of reading, as well as obviously being essential for listening, and there are bi-directional influences on word decoding skills and spelling ability, which can influence reading competency (Shanahan, 2016). Once one has developed automaticity in decoding combinations of letters corresponding to spoken words, then syntactic processing can commence. Again, both listening and reading rely upon the shared resources of working and long-term memory, meaning lexical retrieval and syntactic processing will have the same constraints within an individual. The top-down processes of

comprehension and inference are also similar in listening and reading. They are characterised by the strategic use of linguistic, pragmatic <sup>21</sup> and world knowledge as well as contextual clues. This overlap between oral and written comprehension processes means that competency in both could be expected to be similar in a neurotypical, educated adult.

The developmental trajectories of the skills differ, however. Berninger and Abbott's (2010) research with children demonstrated the oral/aural skills develop faster than the literate skills, with writing competency lagging the most. Inglis and Aers (2008) also noted "most children learn to talk fairly easily. In contrast, learning to read and write is a laborious process" (p.32). Writing is ostensibly the last to develop, given that it is impossible to produce written language without orthographic knowledge. Further, it should be noted that comprehension processes are intrinsic to writing, due to the recursive activity that is required between producing a written text, revising, and monitoring. There will therefore be a time lag in its development compared to the other skills, although it can be argued that in its earliest stages, literacy develops holistically where reading and writing are taught in an integrated way with speaking and listening in primary schooling. Very early writing involves simple transcription of oral language in the form of single words and sentences, but the transition to cohesive and coherent composition of text takes decades, requiring well developed knowledge bases for content generation, audience and genre awareness, fluent reading for revision, and greater self-regulatory control, to name a few. Writing production has no dedicated brain function (Rapp, Fischer-Baum, & Miozzo, 2015) sharing as it does the same mechanism used for syntactic encoding as speaking (Cleland & Pickering, 2006). In this sense, written language is arguably the culmination of an individual's linguistic development and a true representation of overall linguistic competence. Writing can remain undeveloped, or only partially developed, depending on the quality of the instructional context and personal need for it. So, in terms of a home student's L1 profile, excepting those who may have specific learning differences, the literature points towards highly automatic speaking and listening competency by puberty, with literacy development contingent upon the level of development of the former, in addition to

---

<sup>21</sup> Knowledge of text types and their rhetorical patterns.

their vocabulary size (Milton & Treffers-Daller, 2013). Writing is the least developed by early adulthood, especially the ability to compose text at a knowledge-transforming or knowledge-crafting level, hence why many undergraduate home students struggle with academic writing.<sup>22</sup>

For international students, the timing, the sequence, and the speed of their L2 development is necessarily different, further increasing the likelihood of uneven competency. In terms of timing, the L2 is generally acquired after early childhood (Murray & Christison, 2011), meaning there will be pronunciation and perceptual interference from the L1 affecting innate speaking and listening competencies. Encoding and decoding will be less automatic, therefore speaking and listening are likely to be more effortful (Kroll & Hermans, 2011; Vandergrift, 2007), and listening to connected speech can be anxiety-inducing. In terms of sequencing, literacy developed in one's L1 can grant some access to the L2 reading and writing, in that knowledge and strategies can be transferred from the L1 to L2, but there are likely to be large differences between individuals. Moreover, the developmental trajectories of the skills will vary according to the linguistic distance between the L1 and L2, and whether a new grapheme system is involved. Where languages share aspects of phonology and orthography, contain cognate lexis, or shared cultural and rhetorical understandings, positive transfer can potentially speed up L2 acquisition. Conversely, the greater the linguistic and cultural distance, the less the L1 can contribute. As an illustration of this, in Trenkic and Warmington's (2019) comparison of English L1 and Chinese L1 first year students' language and literacy performances, they found that the Chinese students underperformed their student peers in multiple areas, including in their processing speed, the size of their vocabulary, resulting in poorer reading comprehension and difficulties in summary writing. These differences were found despite the students having

---

<sup>22</sup> This suggested profile of language competency concurs with studies of time spent on the four skills during daily communication (Burley-Allen, 1995). According to her research, forty percent of time is spent listening, thirty-five percent of time spent speaking, with a marked difference in time spent reading (16%) and writing (9%), Skill theory posits that more time spent engaged in an activity leads to greater automaticity and it being less cognitively burdensome. This would explain why reading and writing are perceived as harder than speaking and writing, in one's native language at least.

gained a mean IELTS score of almost 7, equivalent to C1. Strategy transfer will depend on the extent to which strategies have been developed in the L1 in the first place, and whether their L2 knowledge is sufficient to deploy them, according to the threshold theories (Lynch, 1998; Clarke, 1980; Roca de Larios et al., 2016). The L2 instructional emphasis or approach will also be a factor, as will the needs and motivation of the student.

The literature consistently points to writing being the hardest skill and the slowest to develop (Hayes, 2000; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2012; Schoonen et al., 2009; Silva, 1993), which logically, would result in an uneven profile of competencies. Although both speaking and writing require the formulation of a message via lexical retrieval and syntactic encoding, as well as being reliant on the same memory and knowledge resources within an individual, the difference in modality is crucial, especially so in the L2 EAP context. Most instances of spoken language are generated in interaction, with the support of interlocutors and the context. There are frequent opportunities for repair and less importance is accorded to accuracy during conversations, on the proviso that one is intelligible (Jenkins, 2000). An exception to this in the EAP context, would be a formal spoken presentation, but even in this instance, there are opportunities for self-repair and there is live feedback from the audience which helps the presenter monitor their output. In contrast, writing is produced without the immediate support from interlocutors, therefore it must be explicit in meaning and well-structured. Achieving this in an L2 is extremely cognitively complex because it involves both encoding and decoding processes which can be hampered by interference, recursive activity between languages (Manchón et al., 2007; Wen & Wang, 2002), controlling the activation and suppression of lexis in the shared mental lexicon (Dijkstra & van Heuven, 2018), and the appropriate use of knowledge bases. The cognitive demands on short and long-term memory are such that the L2 writer will find it very difficult to co-ordinate between language problems at a local level, for example lexical retrieval and sentence construction, and the global level, involving the organisation of the text (Galbraith, 2009). Further, the task environment in the EAP context is particularly arduous given that academic writing generally demands great accuracy, specific lexical choices (Ennis & Prior, 2020), and not least knowledge-transformation, which is the hallmark of skilled writing.

To conclude, in terms of an individual international student's L2 profile, again excepting those who may have specific learning differences, the literature points towards lesser automaticity in listening, speaking, and reading, and a variety of possible combinations of strengths and weaknesses contingent upon the individual's L1, the instructional and/or cultural environment, their knowledge and use of strategies, and their ability of self-regulate. From a cognitive perspective, writing is very likely to be the least competent, particularly at the knowledge-transforming level.

## 2.7. Summary

This chapter has established that empirical descriptions of spiky profiles are very sparse in the literature currently (Mclean et al., 2012; Riazantseva, 2012), despite commentary on the phenomenon and the use of specific terminology. Language profiles, per se, appear unexplored, with limited research into what happens in practice. However, anecdotal ESOL practitioner accounts of spiky profiles (Schellekens, 2007; Paton & Wilkins, 2009; Ward et al., 2012) coincide with IELTS and TOEFL testing literature (Humphreys et al., 2012; Craven, 2012; Allen, 2017; Bridgeman et al., 2016; Ginther & Yan, 2018) and point towards the existence and persistence of uneven L2 competency in different nationality groups in the EAP context. This literature suggests that the context of language learning wields an influence on an individual's competency profile. It also indicates that assessment scores in the four skills can differ greatly, and that they improve at different rates, as well as having an impact on achievement at university. For this reason, it is important to gain a clearer picture of the extent to which uneven L2 profiles occur and the shape they take in the UK HE context. The copious literature explains the shared processes and common knowledge bases of the four skills, therefore, in theory, one might not expect great discrepancies between them in an educated individual. However, given that writing is the most cognitively complex skill, one could expect L2 competency to be the least developed there.

## Chapter 3. The role of SE beliefs

### 3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature that helps explain why uneven L2 competency might occur due to the nature of cognitive processing and L1 interference effects, the order and speed of development, and how these are predicated on short and long-term memory resources. However, a full account of spiky profiles must consider further factors, because as Dörnyei (2005) notes “the outcome of the acquisition of an L2 is significantly more diverse than that of an L1, ranging from zero to native-like proficiency, and a great deal (but not all) of this outcome variance is attributable to the impact of individual differences” (p.2). This chapter now focuses on psycho-social, non-cognitive, individual factors that may also contribute to the shape of students’ individual language profiles. This is a vast topic area, so the review promptly turns to the theoretical and empirical literature relating to learner beliefs.<sup>23</sup> Investigation of these were prioritised in the study because of their potential to be influenced through teaching.

### 3.2. Learner beliefs

In contrast to factors such as age, aptitude, and personality that are non-modifiable, learners’ beliefs are thought to be influenceable through appropriate learning experiences accompanied by sensitive classroom management (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Evidence of this from a language teaching perspective comes from Alrabai (2016) who, in a quasi-experimental study of 437 EFL learners set in Saudi Arabia, studied the effectiveness of motivational strategies employed by teachers in intervention groups as opposed to controls. The strategies included establishing positive relationships, mitigating foreign language anxiety [FLA], and building self-confidence (Alrabai, 2016). The latter two strategies were arguably directly targeted towards the management of learners’ beliefs, while the first built rapport, thereby improving access to them. The intervention groups experienced significant increases in their confidence and intrinsic motivation, and more importantly, this increased motivation was correlated with

---

<sup>23</sup> MacIntyre et al. (2016) define beliefs as the assumptions learners have about learning, *including the unique belief systems that develop from individual experience*.



greater achievement, improvements that were not seen in the controls. Learner beliefs include perceptions of competence that have been shown to influence subsequent behaviour (Bandura, 1997), and in this way, beliefs have also been shown to be a causal factor in L2 phenomena such as willingness-to-communicate (Zhong, 2013), strategy use (Graham, 2006; Teng, Yuan, & Sun, 2020), self-regulation (Kim, Wang, Ahn, & Bong, 2015), FLA (Gregersen, 2006; Erkan & Saban, 2011; Torres & Turner, 2016) and motivation (Pajares, 2003; Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Hsieh & Kang, 2010), as will be reviewed shortly.

A range of well-established theories from the field of Psychology describe the interrelatedness of belief, emotion, and motivation with respect to learning in general, for example Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles, 1983), Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, and Achievement Goal Theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), however, theories for SLA are still being refined and tested. Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self-System [L2MSS] has been a dominant SLA theory that posits that motivation, or *intended effort*, is the fruit of a combination of the learner's personal vision of their ideal L2 self, their L2 ought-to self and their learning experience. The theory proposes that *the ideal self* and *the learning experience* have the greatest influence on the motivational system (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015), but, as indicated by Oga-Baldwin, Fryer and Larson-Hall (2019) this model of motivation appears not to feature competence beliefs.<sup>24</sup> These do feature, however, in the motivational theories mentioned above. Competence beliefs are of particular importance because they have long been proven to be predictive of learning outcomes in a range of different subject areas (Fryer & Oga-Baldwin, 2019). The absence of these in the L2MSS is therefore arguably a fundamental omission and could have resulted in the model's weaker predictive validity for L2 achievement, as identified by Al-Hoorie's (2018) synthesis of findings from no fewer than thirty-two studies testing the L2MSS. Competence beliefs sit alongside control, value, and goal orientation as described in Achievement Goal Theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). They are also implicit in the *expectancy beliefs* element in Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles, 1983), expectancy beliefs being the thoughts learners hold about their chances of success in carrying out certain tasks, either in

---

<sup>24</sup> Although "learner beliefs and strategies" do appear in the pre-actional stage of Dörnyei & Otto's (1985) Process Model of L2 Motivation (see Dörnyei, 2005, p.85).

the short-term or the long-term (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Moreover, competence beliefs, in the guise of self-efficacy [SE], are integral to the self-regulation factor in Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory. It is this concept of SE that has caught the imagination of SLA research in recent times, being researched either on its own or in combination with other constructs such as strategy use, attributions for success, FLA, or motivation (Raoofti et al., 2012).

### 3.3. SE for language learning

Learners' belief in their ability to complete tasks,<sup>25</sup> is a key influence on the subsequent execution of those tasks because of its effect on feelings, actions, and motivation (Bandura, 1997). SE is thought to be one of the most reliable predictors of behaviour, more so than other self-beliefs such as self-esteem or self-concept (Graham & Weiner, 1996). Human performance is a combination of knowledge, skill, and confidence, with confidence having ripple effects on whether a task is attempted, how much effort is put into it, whether individuals persist with a task once it becomes more demanding, as well as influencing thought patterns and emotions about the task (Bandura, 1997). In other words, SE has a mediating function between an individual's intentions and actions (Pajares, 2003).

A key role of SE is in promoting self-regulation. This is people's sense of whether they are in control of whatever action is being undertaken, or as Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) put it "the degree to which individuals are active participants in their own learning" (p.611). Bandura (1997) contends that strongly self-efficacious learners employ more strategies and use them more effectively than their less self-efficacious counterparts, as well as expend more effort. This is particularly important when engaged in challenging tasks such as operating in an L2, academic writing, or both. Early work in this area includes Zimmerman and Bandura's (1994) study of undergraduate composition classes in the US. They found that SE for academic writing determined the standards the students set for themselves, which in turn influenced the grades they achieved, to a greater degree than was suggested by their scores for verbal ability.

---

<sup>25</sup> Or in layman's terms, their confidence. Self-confidence first appears in L2 literature in Clément, Gardner & Smythe (1977) primarily as a socially-defined construct, meaning the confidence to integrate into a community in an L2. Here, confidence is self-perceived capacity in across a range of tasks.

In the last two decades evidence that SE beliefs play this role in self-regulated L2 learning has accumulated. Graham's (2006) qualitative study of French A-level students in the UK found that those with a poor sense of SE attributed marks they received to their ability, something they had no control over, whereas the learners with high SE attributed their marks to effort or using appropriate learning strategies. Likewise, Hsieh and Schallert (2008) studied the relationship between SE and the attributions students made for their performance in speaking and writing in L2 German, French and Spanish at a US university, also finding that students with different levels of SE make different attributions for their success or failure, again, those with higher SE attributed poor scores to a personal lack of effort. Hsieh and Kang (2010) then followed up with a study of English L2 students in Korea, finding yet again that those with higher SE attributed their scores to effort, while those with lower SE made *external attributions*, indicating that factors outside their personal control, such as the teacher or the test paper, were the reason for success or failure. Another Korean study (Kim et al., 2015) took a similar approach, identifying low, medium, and high SE for English L2 using a questionnaire. They found that students with low SE reported fewer self-regulated learning and language interpretation strategies. Finally, Teng et al. (2020) in a mixed-method study of Chinese undergraduates, revealed the dynamic between SE, which could be construed as *perceived* ability, in contrast with *actual* ability. They found that students with high writing competency, as measured by an IELTS academic writing task, reported having greater academic SE alongside motivational regulation strategies, such as mastery self-talk, in contrast with the low competency group who demonstrated limited knowledge and use of such. These studies all suggest that SE beliefs feed into a sense of self-agency, in other words, control over the learning experience, which increases the likelihood of learning strategies being employed, which is vital for successful L2 learning. It is argued that this would especially be the case in the EAP context, because of the autonomy expected of students as well as the range and difficulty of tasks they are likely to encounter.

In addition, SE plays a role in FLA, although these constructs are not easy to separate. From his research into pupils' SE for writing, Pajares (2003) concluded that anxiety was a side-effect of lower SE. He believed the relationship was important because reducing anxiety about writing

as part of classroom practice could increase confidence, and by extension success, although Denies and Janssen (2016) argue that anxiety is both an effect and a source of low SE, in that anxious students tend to underestimate their L2 competency. Related to this is the concept of perceived value, as per Value-Expectancy Theory (Eccles, 1983), which describes how learners' expectations of success combine with their beliefs about the importance, usefulness, or enjoyment of doing the task, to determine the effort put into tasks and therefore the success of the outcome. But Pajares (2003) argues success in a task is still fundamentally influenced by SE beliefs in the first place; confidence determines expectations and therefore motivation. Learners who expect success, value the activity more, and expend more effort on it (Pajares, 2003). In the same way then, learners who do not expect to succeed, may value the activity less, therefore make less effort, or alternatively, may still value the activity, make great effort but at the same time feel anxious. Indeed, Erkan and Saban's (2011) study of Turkish undergraduates highlighted a significant negative relationship between FLA and SE for L2 academic writing, and a negative impact on writing outcomes. Evidence for this negative relationship is also to be found for reading and listening (Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2006) and across all four skills (Torres & Turner, 2016).

Of particular interest to this study is Gregersen (2006), who surveyed 191 US university students studying L2 Spanish and French, investigating the value students placed on each of the four language skills, their awareness of differences in their competence in each skill and the level of FLA this incurred. She found that the highest levels of anxiety arose when students believed their levels of competency were not equal across skills, and in her sample two-thirds considered themselves to be "high disparity" between skills (p.13). This then had knock-on effects on motivation as her respondents reported that they tended to avoid using their weaker areas (Gregersen, 2006). To date there is no equivalent study of an English L2 population, but Gregersen's work suggests that self-awareness of an uneven profile is potentially a source of anxiety, that therefore impacts on SE and may lead to demotivation, ultimately leading to poorer learning outcomes in weaker skill areas.

To sum up, research has shown that SE plays a pivotal role in students' capacity to self-regulate during L2 learning, determining the extent to which they can employ strategies, as well as demonstrate effort and persistence in the face of difficult tasks. Poor SE leads to a sense of less personal control over the L2 learning experience, arousing emotions and thoughts associated with FLA, as well as occasioning external attributions for success, which have knock-on effects for motivation and potentially leads to the avoidance of specific tasks or skill areas of a language.

#### 3.4. Sources of SE beliefs

Bandura (1997) outlines that SE beliefs are derived from four main sources. The first source is "enactive mastery experiences" (p.80). In using the word 'mastery', Bandura is referring to performances of an individual in general, rather than any especially successful performances. Considerable evidence points to mastery experiences wielding the greatest influence on SE, stemming from work with school age children in subject areas such as Maths (Pajares & Graham, 1999), or Science (Andrew, 1998; Britner & Pajares, 2006), and Literacy (Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007). Schunk and Pajares (2009) believe actual performances are the most reliable source of SE because they are authentic and direct, hence Bandura's use of the word 'enactive'. Mastery concerns the way individuals interpret their experiences; if they believe they have experienced success, they grow in SE, whereas an experience deemed as unsuccessful will diminish confidence (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2009). This means that EAP students will most likely develop a unique and very specific profile of SE beliefs based on their prior language learning and assessment experiences, which will have both positive and deleterious consequences for their self-regulation, motivation, and present performance.

The second source of SE is indirect 'vicarious' experience. This is where individuals "appraise their capabilities in relation to the attainments of others" (Bandura, 1997, p.86). Pajares (2003) rephrased it as making 'social comparisons' with others, stating that vicarious experience has a strong impact on the development of SE. Doing better than one's peers builds SE, while performing less well than one's peers undermines it (Pajares, 2003). However, more constructively and less competitively, vicarious experience provides skill-specific modelling,

showing the exact requirements for a task, as well as highlighting strategies for persistence in the face of difficulty (Bandura, 1997), meaning that SE beliefs can be nurtured by seeing others succeed. Moreover, models who are similar to the learner, such as classmates or peers, are more impactful than models with whom learners identify less (Bruning & Kauffman, 2016). In an EAP teaching context, it would be logical to suppose that vicarious experience would be felt most in speaking, as it is not possible to directly observe others listening and reading. The same is true of writing unless peer-review is encouraged with writing tasks. One could also suppose that students would develop SE beliefs based on their classmates' performance, rather than comparing themselves to the teacher. Moreover, students may compare themselves more to classmates of the same nationality or L1 in a multi-lingual context. However, the strength of the influence may depend on a student's goal orientation, whether their goal is individual improvement, or whether their focus is on their performance relative to others. The latter orientation may be more strongly affected by peers (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Bandura's (1997) third source of SE is 'verbal persuasion'. He states that "it is easier to sustain a sense of efficacy, especially when struggling with difficulties, if significant others express faith in one's capabilities than if they convey doubts" (p.101). In this sense, positive feedback and encouragement support feelings of SE, while negative criticism, naturally, is discouraging. However, there are caveats to this; firstly, the verbal persuasion needs to be realistic, being most impactful in situations where it helps an individual overcome self-doubt and deploy the effort required for success (Bandura, 1997). Secondly, persuasion requires repeated demonstrations of belief in learners' self-agency (Pajares, 2003). In the EAP context, verbal persuasion would most likely be in the form of encouragement from tutors and classmates during class, as well as performative feedback on tasks, although an additional conduit might be in the form of comments on written work.

A fourth contributor to SE is the individual's somatic state. In other words, competency beliefs can be derived from monitoring one's physiological and emotional state while engaging in an activity. Familiarity with, and enjoyment of, a task, coupled with low anxiety and being in a good mood, favour unchallenged or positive SE beliefs, while bad mood, stress, even ill health

can have negative impacts (Bandura, 1997). All individuals monitor their physiological and emotional wellbeing as an indicator of ongoing efficacy during task completion, but they will vary in their propensity to focus inwardly and attend to somatic information, and the degree to which stressors activate a response in them (Bandura, 1997). They also will vary in their interpretations of that information. For instance, some people respond proactively to stressors, while others are debilitated by them, with the latter group prey to a self-affirming vicious circle; “By conjuring up aversive thoughts about their ineptitude and stress reactions, people can rouse themselves to elevated levels of distress that produce the very dysfunctions they fear” (Bandura, 1997, p.106). For international students operating in an L2, one could easily imagine a range of stress-inducing situations, not least taking language tests, but also contributing to seminars or receiving feedback. Emotions such as enjoyment and anxiety are also an important component in language learning, as the ability to express oneself is core to self-identity (Dewaele, Witney, Saito, & Dewaele, 2018).

The sources of SE beliefs as described above can form unique combinations with individuals attributing different weights to the four sources depending on their personal epistemologies, or “self-schemata” (Bandura, 1997, p.81), which will reflect their cultural and educational milieux. Regarding language learning, two qualitative studies (Graham, 2006; Wang & Pape, 2007) found that both past successful experience and verbal persuasion most meaningfully contributed to learners' SE belief development. The latter study involved young male Chinese learners of English, the former British teenagers learning French. In both studies, SE beliefs were derived from feedback from parents and teachers as well as past experiences, although it is not clear whether the maturity of the participants was a factor. In contrast, Zheng, Liang, and Tsai's (2017) quantitative study found verbal persuasion alone mostly strongly predicted speaking, listening, reading and productive vocabulary performance, but with affective states also predicting listening and reading performance. Their contention was that in a collective culture, such as the Chinese culture, “social agents” (p.336) will have more impact on SE beliefs than past experiences. However, caution is required when drawing conclusions as SE beliefs may be reported differently in different cultural contexts. For example, Matsumo (2009) commented that the Japanese value for modesty may have led to an under-reporting of confidence in

English L2 writing, while Esfandiari and Myford (2013) suspected a different set of values may have inflated SE reports in their Iranian study. Nonetheless, Denies and Janssen (2016) in a large-scale survey of European fifteen-year-olds, found generally accurate self-assessment of English L2 competence when paired with test results.

To sum up, the literature indicates that SE beliefs held by students will be drawn, to a greater or lesser extent depending on individual and cultural factors, from past language learning and assessment experiences, observing others using English in academic contexts, encouragement or criticism from teachers or their social circle, and their emotional or physiological state.

### 3.5. SE and L2 performance

Bandura (1997) contends that SE beliefs are specific to activities, task demands, and situations. This paints a complicated picture for second language use. Not only are beliefs likely to differ at an individual level about language competence across the four skills, as Gregersen (2006) found, but even within the same skill, SE beliefs may change from task to task, and from one communicative context to another (Thompson, 2018). This is because SE belongs to the forethought part of self-regulation (Wang & Bai, 2017). For example, a student may feel highly self-efficacious for voicing their opinion in class when not being assessed, but that same student might have a very different sense of SE during a speaking test conducted with unfamiliar interlocutors. Indeed, although it was not the main aim of their study, Piniel and Csizér (2013) found that writing SE fluctuated from task to task during a fourteen-week study of first year Hungarian English language and literature students. Two key issues here are, firstly, whether students are meta-cognitively aware of the specificity of SE beliefs, and secondly, the extent to which skill and task-specific beliefs have an impact on subsequent performance. There is a growing body of evidence for the latter as will be discussed shortly, but the former is still a partially answered question.

There has been considerable interest in the relationship between SE and ensuing performance. Several studies have found positive relationships with academic success in general (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Tilfarlioğlu & Ciftci, 2011; Phakiti et al., 2013) while other studies have focused



on performance in specific skills of language. Regarding reading and listening, seminal research was conducted in French L2 by Mills et al. in 2006 and 2007. They found reading SE was positively correlated with reading outcomes, but interestingly they found gender differences for listening, with only females' listening SE significantly predicting listening performance. Mills (2014) later commented that SE predicted performance over and above FLA, concluding that anxiety occurs when learners feel incapable of exercising control, which again, ties in with the importance of SE for self-regulation as discussed previously. Another study using a SE skill-specific questionnaire instrument, combined with a TOEFL Listening test, again found significant differences in performance between those with reported high SE and low SE (Rahimi & Abedini, 2009). In this study gender differences were not examined, perhaps because two thirds of their sample were female. Shehzad et al. (2019) measured a significant positive correlation between SE for reading and reading outcomes, as measured by an IELTS reading paper. Their sample was exclusively male, so again gender differences were not examined, and this appears to be a limitation in the literature generally. It is possible that males and females differ in the degree to which their competence beliefs accurately reflect their competence in different skills, which would have knock-on effects on their self-regulatory behaviours, and motivation.

Regarding speaking and writing performance outcomes, there is remarkably little research in the former, but an abundance in the latter. Zhang et al. (2020) used their previously validated SE for public speaking scale (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019) to chart the development of Chinese students' SE beliefs over the course of a module in public speaking in English. They found that although SE increased significantly over the course, it also fluctuated according to the perceived difficulty of certain tasks. They found SE did not significantly predict performance, perhaps due to these fluctuations, but nonetheless their interviewees indicated that their sense of SE had had an impact on their motivation for speech preparation, which was key to improved performance. Crucially, at the start of the course, SE was most strongly predicted by mastery and emotional states such as anxiety, but by the end of the course, verbal persuasion, mastery and vicarious experience, in that order, predicted SE, but not emotional states. This indicates that teacher encouragement and peer feedback, plus modelling through the observation of

peers can change SE beliefs, which ultimately may improve motivation and ensuing performance.

In contrast, SE has been shown to consistently predict writing outcomes. A great deal of research has been carried out in L1 primary and secondary education contexts (Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Pajares & Valiente, 1997, 1999, 2001; Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim, & Zumbrunn, 2013) as well as in undergraduate populations (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985; Shell, Murphy & Bruning, 1989; Prat-Sala & Redford, 2012; Chen & Zhang, 2019; Qiu & Lee, 2020; Sun & Wang, 2020; Wilby, 2020), and it appears the relationship holds in L2 EAP across a range of teaching contexts. Several studies have highlighted the impact of SE on effort and on mitigating anxiety when writing (in Chinese undergraduates see Woodrow, 2011; Zhang & Guo, 2012; for students in the Middle East see Erkan & Saban, 2011; Sarkhoush, 2013). Other studies have provided further evidence about the relationship between SE and strategy use, with subsequent impacts on writing performance. In a study of 319 Chinese second year undergraduates, Sun and Wang (2020) administered two questionnaires, one that measured SE for writing in English and the other for self-regulated learning writing strategies, while also recording their writing competency using College English Test Band 4 scores. They noted moderate levels of SE, infrequent use of strategies and a significant positive relationship ( $r = .47$ ) between SE and writing scores. These findings concur with the findings of Teng et al. (2020) when analysing the results of their lower proficiency group mentioned earlier. Interestingly, the authors commented that in the Chinese context participants do not receive much positive reinforcement from teachers or parents, highlighting a lack of *verbal persuasion* which could explain the modest levels of SE. Moreover, that these students had previously sat the very high-stakes and difficult CET 4 test (Fulcher, 2010) suggests that they may not have had an encouraging *mastery* experience either. Meanwhile, Wilby (2020) assessed the impact of a four-week pre-sessional EAP course on 64 students in northwest UK, with a pre- and post-test design, along with a motivation, self-regulation and SE questionnaire and an integrated writing task. He found that SE increased significantly over the course, as did writing performance, while motivation stayed the same. From this it could be concluded that SE beliefs about writing can change or be changed over relatively short amounts of time given the appropriate inputs,

and that greater SE is associated with better self-regulation and strategy use, both of which are vital when producing writing at a tertiary level.

### 3.6. SE and uneven profiles

To date, relatively few studies have measured SE across all four skills (Basaran & Cabaroglu, 2014; Torres & Turner, 2016; Saleem et al., 2018; Truong & Wang, 2019), and only one (Gregersen, 2006) has focused on the SE beliefs of those with uneven profiles. These studies indicate, although they do not explicitly say so, that SE beliefs do not have the same starting points in different groups of students, and while these beliefs have been shown to be modifiable through teaching input, they might not develop at the same pace. This means that SE beliefs across skill areas can differ in individuals, which perhaps contributes to uneven profiles given that they have been shown to impact on performance.

Basaran and Cabaroglu (2014), in their investigation of the utility of podcasts in a general English undergraduate programme in Turkey, measured SE for L2 English across all four skills using a questionnaire of their own design. They were interested to see how SE developed over a period of twelve weeks, but unfortunately stopped short of measuring changes in students' performance. They found SE was significantly different pre- and post-treatment in all skills, however, their focus was not profiling SE beliefs, so they did not discuss whether their data shows evenly developing SE. But, taking a close look at their findings, one can see that the greatest SE was recorded for speaking initially, followed by reading and writing, with listening being reported as least efficacious, hence presumably the intervention of using podcasts. Post-treatment, reading and writing SE were greatest, with speaking and listening being equal third, which is surprising as one would have thought that increased exposure to authentic listening practice would have increased students' SE in this skill by more. In fact, SE means increased by the same amount for listening, reading, and writing, but not so much for speaking. This highlights that SE is different across skill areas and suggests that SE fluctuates according to the teaching focus, but not necessarily in predictable ways. Torres and Turner (2016) also surveyed undergraduates, who were learning L2 Spanish, to elicit SE beliefs and anxiety levels for all four skills. They found that SE increased with grade level, while anxiety remained stable. Their data

consistently showed lowest SE for writing across five levels of Spanish, followed by SE for speaking and reading. Excepting the highest proficiency level sampled, SE for listening was the greatest. Again, performance was not measured so it is not known what impact these changes in SE had in this regard, nonetheless, this study appears to show that SE increases as students move up the grades, but it also suggests there are differing levels of SE according to skill area, with students reporting feeling least self-efficacious for writing.

Truong and Wang (2019) surveyed Vietnamese undergraduates using Wang and Bai's (2017) Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy [QESE], composed of thirty-two items, essentially eight 'can-do' statements for each language skill, which has been adopted and adapted by subsequent studies examining L2 English SE. They found a positive relationship between SE and competency, at least for reading and listening, as they did not measure speaking and writing. They found no significant gender differences in beliefs, and only moderate levels of SE across all four skills, with speaking being generally considered the strongest and listening rated the weakest, just like Basaran and Cabaroglu (2014). Saleem et al. (2018) used Basaran and Cabaroglu's (2014) SE scale to claim a strong positive correlation between male Saudi SE beliefs across skills and their English language competency. Unfortunately, their write up does not provide a coefficient value; they merely report descriptive statistics for mean scores from the SE questionnaire and mean scores from the testing. However, their reporting of the SE means shows moderate and different levels of SE belief, but in this instance, speaking and listening are greater than reading. SE for writing is the lowest, concurring with Torres and Turner (2016).

But the role of SE beliefs in uneven profiles remains unexplored. Only Gregersen (2006), in a study of 191 L2 French and Spanish students appears to have considered a basic form of SE profiling. Her participants were divided into high and low disparity groups using the statement: "When I consider my abilities to read, write, speak and listen in my FL, I feel that I have one (or more) skill(s) that is (are) significantly weaker than the rest" (p.12). Furthermore, she asked participants to rate the extent to which they valued all four skills being equal, which enabled her to subsequently categorise sub-groups within her sample according to these dimensions. Sixty-eight percent of her sample were classed as high disparity/high value, and twenty-six

percent as low disparity/high value, demonstrating two important findings: firstly, that almost all participants valued competency in all four skills, and secondly, that more than two thirds did not consider themselves to be evenly competent. Furthermore, the high disparity/high value group reported significantly higher scores on a FLA scale, than the low disparity/high value group. From the point of view of investigating uneven competency, this study's findings are limited because its participants were not asked to specify the skills in which they felt weak, and Gregersen did not collect any qualitative data that further explored the reasons for, nor the nuances of, students' beliefs. However, despite a limited seven-item questionnaire, she did show that there were differences between high- and low-disparity students in terms of emotions, such as increased embarrassment around L1 speakers and the level of emotional energy invested in preparing for language classes, in addition to specific behaviours, such as the avoidance of weaker skill areas.

### 3.7. Summary

In this chapter the relevance of SE for L2 competency has been explored. Bandura's (1997) SE model posits that SE beliefs fundamentally influence self-regulation, and by so doing, they determine whether tasks are attempted, and the level of self-agency individuals feel they can exert over tasks. This in turn predicts the use of strategies by people who are self-efficacious and avoidance tactics by those who lack SE (Graham, 2006; Teng et al., 2020). Where there is a lack of control, feelings of anxiety can also ensue (Pajares, 2003). Beliefs held by the individual also have an impact on the effort that is expended (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Hsieh & Kang, 2010) and can make a difference to whether an individual persists in the face of difficulty (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Moreover, SE influences thought patterns and emotions, meaning that different attributions will be made for successes or failures in tasks (Graham, 2006; Hsieh & Schallert, 2008). SE is sourced from past experiences, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional and physiological states (Bandura, 1997).

SE's role in L2 skill performance has been extensively explored, albeit in a non-holistic way. The literature reviewed indicates that SE beliefs impact on speaking (Zhang et al., 2020), listening (Abedini & Rahimi, 2009), reading (Mills et al., 2006, 2007; Shehzad et al., 2019), and writing

performance (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Woodrow, 2011; Zhang & Guo, 2012; Sarkhoush, 2013; Sun & Wang, 2020; Wilby, 2020) via the mechanisms mentioned above. Of the scant research that has measured SE levels across all four skills (Basaran & Cabaroglu, 2014; Torres & Turner, 2016; Saleem et al., 2018; Truong & Wang, 2019), it appears that SE is influenceable through teaching interventions, and is rated differentially across skill areas. There is a mixed picture here, however, as some students reported high SE for speaking and listening (Torres & Turner, 2016; Saleem et al., 2018), but others reported low SE for listening (Basaran & Cabaroglu, 2014; Truong & Wang, 2019). These studies do, however, show a tendency for less SE being reported for writing (Basaran & Cabaroglu, 2014; Torres & Turner, 2016; Saleem et al., 2018).

It must be noted that thus far, the vast majority of SE research has taken a quantitative approach that has been heavily reliant upon questionnaires which is surprising given the multifaceted nature of people's beliefs. Some questionnaires have been designed with very limited Likert scales, for example, five point scales (Gregersen, 2006; Basaran & Cabaroglu, 2014; Saleem et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020), seven point scales (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994, adopted by Bruning et al., 2013; Wang & Bai, 2017; Truong & Wang, 2019; Sun & Wang, 2020), even the seminal work of Mills et al. (2006) was limited by an eight point scale. Bandura (2006) recommends a one-hundred-point scale to be psychometrically valid, a suggestion taken up by Torres and Turner (2016) only,<sup>26</sup> so it is not clear why shorter scales have been adopted. Questionnaires elicit a very restricted range of responses, and potentially frame data collection from the researchers' point of view and respondents are unable to elaborate on their answers meaningfully (Iwaniec, 2020). Moreover, questionnaires that have attempted to elicit beliefs about all four skills have been necessarily limited to fewer items per construct to be feasible. For example, Basaran and Cabaroglu's (2014) SE questionnaire only contained sixteen items, four for each skill area. Torres and Turner's (2016) questionnaire contained twenty-four items, Wang and Bai's (2017), thirty-two. The above questionnaires contained 'can-do' statements related to general, non-academic language use, rather than EAP. Relatively few qualitative (Graham, 2006; Wang & Pape, 2007) or mixed-method (Thompson, 2018; Teng et al., 2020; Qiu

---

<sup>26</sup> Hsieh and Shallert's (2008) study featured a one-hundred-point scale, but this was because they asked participants about their confidence to get a particular score between seventy and one hundred.

& Lee, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) approaches have been taken to explore students' beliefs, and none of these have considered all four skills in the EAP context.

## Chapter 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter gives the rationale for adopting a mixed-method approach and introduces the quality criteria that helped ensure the study's trustworthiness. The overall phased design is also explained.

### 4.2. Mixed-methods approach

As mentioned in Section 1.7, in taking a pragmatic stance to the study I felt that a full and practical understanding of uneven language competency could be best reached through description and analysis of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives, so it seemed appropriate to adopt a mixed-method approach for the study. Mixed methods are defined as drawing upon "multiple forms of evidence to document and inform the research problems" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p.21), and that the approach "focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.5). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) also highlight that the beauty of "taking a non-purist or compatibilist or mixed position [is that it] allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions" (p.15). The research design benefitted from the exploratory nature of the quantitative analysis, while also tapping into the rich and explanatory power of emic explanations through its qualitative strand. Furthermore, a degree of methodological triangulation would be built in (Denzin, 1985; Dewaele, 2005; Bryman, 2006). The qualitative strand would serve to elaborate on the patterns seen in the quantitative data, adding to the dependability and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) of findings. Bryman (2006) further highlights that mixed methods allow for the exploration of a diversity of views. In this study, quantitative test data reflected the views of examiners, while qualitative interviews elicited the views of learners.

The quantitative strand of data collection and analysis operated under the premise that language behaviours could be measured to a certain extent, meaning that the existence of



uneven competency as a phenomenon could be verified by collecting and analysing a body of quantitative data. Language test scores were chosen as the best available controlled measurement of language competency, producing knowledge that would have greater breadth and dependability than practitioner intuition, albeit with the caveats mentioned in the Introduction related to the imposed nature of the topics and tasks. With a sufficiently large sample size, the quantitative strand could generate statistically significant findings and gather evidence of uneven competency from different EAP cohorts, which in turn could confirm anecdotal evidence from teachers' classroom experiences. Uneven competency as a variable could be measured for the first time through an analysis of score discrepancies between skill areas. Furthermore, taking a quantitative exploratory approach would reveal patterns in skill scores and relationships between variables. However, by themselves, these quantitative data could not contribute to a theoretical model of uneven profiles that considers affective and sociocultural factors, nor fully inform effective real-world teaching interventions which was the overarching motivation to examine the problem. A mixed-method approach, on the other hand, would make it possible to elaborate on findings from one stage of the research to the next, and a qualitative strand could add an element of explanation (Bryman, 2006).

The strength of qualitative approaches is that they "take a holistic and comprehensive approach" to help explicate phenomena "not yet thoroughly researched" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.5), which was true of uneven profiles and the role of SE beliefs in their formation. Qualitative approaches serve to develop fresh understanding of individuals' experiences within the complexity of the real world (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), by exploring social phenomena where people provide definitions of situations in which they find themselves, glimpsing reality from the actor's perspective (Schwandt, 2014). Therefore, it was a pragmatic decision to adopt a phenomenological approach via participant interviews to explore individuals' beliefs around their language competency. This was not only to gauge their awareness of their profiles, but also to uncover other aspects salient to the participants' understanding of themselves as language learners. Another reason for adopting a qualitative interview approach was to provide counterbalance to much of the previous research into the role of SE which had followed a narrow quantitative tack, eliciting pre-coded data solely related to SE constructs.

### 4.3. Quality criteria

Quantitative and qualitative research approaches have different strengths and weaknesses, as well as commonalities such as the requirement to be carefully designed and conducted. Within both approaches researchers attempt to limit nefarious influences on the collection and analysis of empirical data that might undermine its quality (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, a complication with mixed methods is that the quantitative and qualitative paradigms lead to different kinds of knowledge claims (Morrow, 2005), and therefore have traditionally invoked different quality criteria and been described with varying associated terminology. As a result, within a mixed method study of pragmatic orientation, quality criteria need to be clearly spelled out.

In the next chapter in Section 5.3.2 where quality issues related to the design, administration, and marking arrangements for the TELL test battery are discussed, terms such as reliability, validity, and generalisability are used, as these were the criteria that were originally applied during the TELL test development. However, for the study itself, in both the quantitative and qualitative strands, parallel criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) were adopted. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stress that “the conduct of fully objective and value-free research is a myth, even though the regulatory ideal of objectivity can be a useful one” (p.16), so this is why the criterion of confirmability<sup>27</sup> rather than objectivity more accurately defines quality (Morrow, 2005). This is a logical choice for the qualitative strand with its inherent inter-subjectivity, but this criterion arguably applies to the quantitative strand also. Confirmability encapsulates the belief that research can never be wholly objective, so it is necessary to provide sufficient detail for others to confirm the adequacy of the data and findings (Morrow, 2005). In adopting this criterion, full transparency is demanded; so, for each stage of the research process, the steps taken to ensure it was carried out with a degree of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) are described in detail.

---

<sup>27</sup> First proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Lincoln and Guba's (2000) other criteria for trustworthiness include concepts of credibility and transferability related to internal and external validity, and then dependability which is concerned with reliability. A key aspect of credibility was ensuring an accurate interpretation of the participants' beliefs, or "truth-value" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As a sole practitioner-researcher with extensive classroom experience, I acknowledged I brought my own ideas about the participants as international students to my interpretation of their experiences. With the interview data collection, and especially with the processing, the criterion of credibility was met through building rapport with participants as much as possible, negative case analysis and research reflexivity, further details of which are given in Section 8.4.3 on the coding procedure.

*Transferability*, as opposed to outright generalisability, was the goal when considering and reporting on the sampling approaches, including the nature and number of the participants in the final sample. This criterion requires *thick description* (Geertz, 1983) by providing not only details about the participants, but also the contexts for the data collection so that another practitioner can draw upon the findings in their own context (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

*Dependability* was achieved through being explicit about the research design and procedures, providing an audit trail of the research. It was important to demonstrate step-by-step how the analytic frameworks were applied. A final important element was *reflexivity*. I understood this to be my self-awareness and ability to control for assumptions. It is usually suggested to keep a research journal, so I used OneNote to record my reflexive thoughts throughout the study.

#### 4.4. Qualitative analysis

In the qualitative strand Thematic Analysis [TA] was adopted, allowing for detailed exploration of individual experiences, and their understanding of these, to answer the research question (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The strategy is termed 'transcendental' by Creswell and Poth (2017, p.80) because analysis is based on empirical data. TA entails looking for reoccurring patterns across a qualitative dataset, looking for common and shared meanings, and is both a descriptive and interpretive method (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). It provided a systematic, transparent, and staged approach to analysis. To improve the credibility of the

interpretation of the data, negative case analysis was also employed. This method, borrowed from the Grounded Theory [GT] tradition (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012a), involves repeated revision of any tentative hypothesis that the researcher may be developing, as and when negative or contradictory cases that do not support it are encountered during analysis. As Tenzek (2018) puts it, “the original idea is reworked to encompass the negative case” (p.1084). This helped to avoid a focus on certain themes at the expense of others, for example, cherry-picking the interview data for evidence of SE beliefs playing a role in uneven profiles, while ignoring comments that contradicted it. Using negative case analysis allowed the resulting interpretation to be trustworthy because it included all data and was supported by it.

While methods were borrowed from GT, taking a pure GT analytical approach would not have been appropriate because the interview guide, described in Section 8.3.5, was designed to elicit data related to Bandura’s (1997) model. However, because TA was employed, theory-generating opportunities were built in. As Creswell and Poth (2017) state, GT “seeks to generate or discover a theory -a general explanation- for a social process, action or interaction shaped by the views of participants” (p.83). Here, the intention was to develop a tentative theory about uneven profiles in the light of SE, so probing students’ views on their language profiles directly via interviews helped build a “theory with specific components: a central phenomenon, causal conditions, strategies, conditions and context, and consequences” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.90). Equipped with this, it would then be possible to consider new approaches to teaching, classroom management and assessment practice.

#### 4.5. Design

Mixed methods allow for a range of flexible designs, and a rigorous mixed-method design reflects deliberate choices about the level of integration of the quantitative and qualitative data, the priority of either data type, the timing of the data collection and the stage at which the data types are mixed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The study adopted an equal-status, explanatory sequential design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009, Table 1). As mentioned previously, data were firstly sourced from the TELL test (QUAN), and then through interviews

(QUAL). The *point of interface*<sup>28</sup> (Morse & Niehaus, 2009) was at the level of design and at interpretation. Regarding the design, quantitative analysis was employed to find trends or patterns in language profiles, whereas the purpose of the qualitative data collection and analysis was to achieve complementarity. I envisaged that the analysis of students' beliefs would lead to a deeper understanding of uneven profiles from individual emotional and socio-cultural perspectives. This mixed-method design reflected a theoretical understanding of language production from the point of view of product and process. The *product*, tangible records of language production in the form of sound recordings from oral exams or texts from written papers, was accessed quantitatively through the analysis of test scores. The *process*, leading to and from these products, was accessed qualitatively through the testimony of participants. The design had in-built concurrent triangulation (Creswell, Plano Clark, Garrett, & Bergman, 2008) as there were multiple points of data collection, meaning findings from one strand could validate those from the other. Mixing occurred at the interpretation and discussion stage, reported in Chapter ten.

---

<sup>28</sup> Where *mixing* or *integration* of data took place.

Table 1 *Mixed-method study design*

Rationale/purpose	triangulation, explanation, complementarity	
Priority of strands	equal	
Timing of data collection	separate & sequential	
Timing of data analysis	quantitative $\rightleftarrows$ qualitative	
Mixing	partially integrated	
	design	QUAN + QUAL data addressed linked phenomenon 2 QUAN RQs & 2 QUAL RQs
	data coll.	separate samples, same EAP sub-population
	data analysis	separate: statistical & thematic
	inferences	blended in the discussion
Value-added by taking a mixed-method approach	<p>multiple views: product vs. process, cohort vs. individual, examiners vs. students, emic vs. etic</p> <p>more thorough understanding of a complex phenomenon</p> <p>theory verifying &amp; generating</p>	

*Note. Table adapted from Creamer (2018).*

## Chapter 5. Phase 1

### 5.1. Introduction

The quantitative first phase gathered evidence for spiky profiles by measuring uneven competency in individual EAP learners' L2 profiles. It also investigated patterns of competency across the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This chapter outlines the research questions that framed this phase of the research, then gives the rationale for the choice of data source. The limitations of using language test scores are discussed before moving on to an explanation of the method followed for the collection of the TELL test data and the subsequent triangulation data. The analytical considerations and approach for each research question are then explained and justified. The findings from this phase and the subsequent triangulation exercise are presented in chapters six and seven. Discussion of Phase one's findings can be found in Chapter ten, when both the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study are brought together.

### 5.2. Phase 1 research questions

Phase one was not limited to identifying uneven L2 competency in EAP students, it also established its frequency and the extent to which individuals vary in terms of discrepancies across their language skills. I sought to describe profile shapes and consider whether uneven competency was associated with specific profile shapes. This phase also explored the relationships between competencies and identified which were most implicated in uneven competency. The following research questions were posed:

1. What is the extent and shape of uneven competency in L2 EAP profiles?
2. Are there relationships between skills areas, and with uneven competency?

My hypothesis was that most EAP students would have a relatively even profile <sup>29</sup> given that the skills draw upon shared lexico-grammatical processes, and the same memory resources and knowledge bases as explained in Chapter 2. Nonetheless, I expected that some students would have differences across skill areas akin to the ‘discrepant’ profiles reported in Ginther and Yan (2018), that would lend to support to Paton and Wilkins’ (2009) claim that the existence of the so-called *spiky profile* that is the result of L1 interference or educational and cultural contributing factors. Theoretically it is possible, for instance, if an individual’s L1 uses a non-Latin script, this may have a greater negative impact on writing competency than on speaking competency, or alternatively, if an individual comes from an educational culture that prioritises the development of literacy, this may negatively impact upon speaking and listening development. Moreover, Berninger and Abbot’s (2010) L1 study reported that the skills develop at different rates, making uneven competency common in school age children, so there was the possibility that this would also occur at some stages of the development of an L2 in adults.

### 5.3. Phase 1 data collection

#### 5.3.1. The data source: TELL

I decided that collecting data from a language test was the most feasible way to obtain a large sample of quantitative data on individuals’ performance across all four skills to initiate the study of uneven language profiles, and I acknowledged from the outset that there would be limitations to using test data, and these will be discussed in due course. I quickly decided against proceeding with data collection and analysis using a test battery of my own devising, as this would most certainly lack in credibility and dependability as well as remove the opportunity to gather a large sample. Initially I requested access to data from a well-known, established and commercially successful SELT. When this was declined, I then requested, and was granted, access to the test scores generated by the Test of English Language Level [TELL].

---

<sup>29</sup> In the data analysis for this study, reported later in this chapter, even profiles were operationalised as sets of scores within ten percentage points of each other across the four language skills in a language test.



This SELT is produced by the University of Central Lancashire's exam team and is used by UCLan and partner centres for assessing students' English at B2 and C1 level according to the CEFR. The TELL is an English test with component papers in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which made it a good fit with the research objectives. The papers carry equal weight in the overall mark which is calculated as the mean score from all four papers. The advantage of using the TELL was that standardisation and moderation measures were already in place to ensure the credibility of its test scores, as will be outlined below.

International students normally attempt the TELL at B2 as this is the minimum level of English presently required by UK HEIs and by UK Visas and Immigration (2023b). At B2, candidates are deemed 'independent' users of English. According to the global scale, this means that they are judged to be able to comprehend "complex text", "can produce clear, detailed text" and "can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity" and "explain a viewpoint" (Council of Europe, 2020, p.175). For comparison, at C1 candidates are classed as 'proficient' users, meaning that they comprehend "a wide range of demanding, longer texts", "can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text" and "can express ideas fluently and spontaneously" (ibid., p.175).

Here is a brief overview of the TELL's four papers which follow a very similar format at B2 and C1 levels. The listening, reading, and writing papers are taken in the same sitting. The test takes two hours and ten minutes with indicative timings of thirty minutes for listening, fifty-five minutes for reading and forty-five minutes for writing. The listening paper is divided into three parts, drawing on three different audio-recordings of types of interaction<sup>30</sup> to test different listening skills.<sup>31</sup> There are twenty questions, a mixture of true/false/not mentioned, or multiple choice, that carry twenty marks. The reading paper draws upon a range of semi-academic, informative, descriptive, narrative, and argumentative texts to test a variety of reading/proving skills and strategies such as topic identification, comprehension, inference, proof-reading, lexis, and critical reading. There are thirty questions which include selecting

---

<sup>30</sup> Informal conversation, formal/semi-formal conversation, and a formal monologue.

<sup>31</sup> Listening for specific information, gist, inference.

appropriate sub-headings for selected paragraphs, choosing the best paraphrases of sentences from the text, multiple choice questions on the purpose of the text, error identification, cloze multiple choice, inserting missing sentences, multiple choice of lexical items and multiple-choice critical reading questions. Thirty marks are assigned to this part. The writing paper comprises an essay writing task of 180-200 words at B2<sup>32</sup> aimed at an academic audience but not requiring specialist knowledge. Candidates are assessed on task completion, genre awareness and content.<sup>33</sup> It is scored out of twenty, across ten bands with half bands.

The B2 speaking paper consists of an eleven-minute interview.<sup>34</sup> There are two examiners present, comprising an interlocutor and an assessor, and two candidates. The test contains three parts: an introductory chat, then an interactive discussion, finishing with each candidate responding to questions. The interlocutor gives a global score, while the assessor scores candidates' performances following detailed criteria for grammar, vocabulary use, pronunciation, discourse management, and interactive ability. Thirty marks are available across five bands.

### 5.3.2. Limitations of using test data

Any testing instrument is imperfect, especially when measuring behaviour such as language. It is simply not possible to measure an individual's full language competency through a battery of tests, just as it is not possible to guarantee that the test solely measures language competencies. Schoonen (2012) cautions that although a test may be designed to measure a particular language construct in a valid and reliable manner, in practice, the results will not only be a measure of the candidate's competency, but other factors such as their familiarity with the test's design and the testing prompts used. Language can be ambiguous (Piantadosi, Tily, & Gibson, 2012), therefore reading and listening texts can be interpreted differently, complicating question design for testing comprehension. Equally, in speaking and writing tasks, what is clearly communicated for one assessor, is not necessarily clear for another. There will be

---

<sup>32</sup> 250-280 words at C1.

<sup>33</sup> Organisation, coherence, cohesion, lexico-grammatical range and accuracy, punctuation, spelling & handwriting.

<sup>34</sup> Thirteen minutes at C1.

inconsistencies in the scoring due to variability in interaction in speaking with different interviewers' eliciting different responses in test-takers (Brown, 2003), and examiners' understanding of, and adherence to, the marking criteria (Knoch, 2011; In'nami & Koizumi, 2016). Moreover, tests are administered under timed conditions for reasons of feasibility and fairness (Fulcher, 2010), therefore, it must be borne in mind that only a snapshot of an individual's competency is gained at any sitting, and that some individuals may be better able to perform under pressure than others. Performance anxiety can arise during listening tasks due to the ephemeral nature of utterances, even if recordings are heard twice (In'nami, 2006), or, more generalised anxiety might affect lexical retrieval in productive tasks (Tóth, 2017). Candidates' performance may also be influenced by their state of physical and mental health on the day. All these factors can influence and obscure the measurement of an individual's language competency.

This study gathered measurements of language competency from all four skills, so it needed to be borne in mind that there would be different quality implications according to the language construct being measured. The validity of the TELL tasks had been carefully considered for each skill area based on the cognitive framework developed by CRELLA<sup>35</sup> which considers context, cognitive, scoring, consequential and criterion-related validity (Weir, 2005; O'Sullivan & Weir, 2011). For example, the TELL listening and reading tasks had been designed to elicit authentic comprehension processes using a range of spoken and written texts. The difficulty of these texts, hence their validity as prompts at B2 level, had been determined by comparing their lexis with the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) and the British National Corpus frequency lists, and through comparison with the B2 texts used by other exam boards.

Regarding reliability, comprehension questions had been designed with binary variables, so that answers to listening and reading questions were either correct or incorrect, allowing for reliability testing using Kuder-Richardson 20 where items varied in difficulty, or the KR-21 where questions were designed to be of similar difficulty (Fulcher, 2010). The reading and listening papers were checked for test/re-test reliability, parallel forms, internal consistency

---

<sup>35</sup> Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment.

reliability using Cronbach's alpha. However, testing prompts for speaking and writing produce an unpredictable range of language that requires *rating* by an examiner for its accuracy, fluency and communicative appropriacy.

In the case of speaking, the language generated may be directly influenced by the interlocutor as well as the prompt (In'nami & Koizumi, 2016). To deal with this, Schoonen (2012) outlines two statistical approaches to ascertain reliability of the measurement. Classical test theory can be used to check whether variance in scores is due to error or unintended influences, or is, in fact, the variation one might expect from testing of an individual's language competency, what he dubs the *true score variance* (Schoonen, 2012). In extension to classical test theory, generalisability [G] theory can be used to inspect interactions involving raters, prompts, and test takers, which is particularly useful in judging the generalisability of test scores when assessing the productive skills. Schoonen (2012) cites several examples of G studies whose findings show the influence of other factors beyond those of varying proficiency in speaking tests. For example, Bolus, Hinofotis, and Bailey (1982) found that having more raters increased reliability, and similarly Bachman, Lynch, and Mason (1995) in their study of Spanish speaking tests found rater-by-person interaction variation was greatest. However, other studies of speaking tests (Lee, 2006; Van Moere, 2006) found large task effects compared to rater effects, and even larger effects when inspecting the interaction of test taker, rater and task combined. The TELL, while not applying G-theory to check the reliability of its speaking test, did nonetheless follow the same good practice as major test providers to mitigate rater effects whose presence has been made evident from the findings of studies such as the above. For example, the speaking paper is simultaneously marked by two examiners using both holistic and analytical ratings, with a proportion of these moderated by a third rater from audio recordings.

The reliability of writing assessments is likewise affected by the marking approach and by the task attempted. Schoonen (2005) found holistic ratings of writing were more generalisable than analytical ratings in his study of eighty-nine writers. He also found the scores for content and organisation were less generalisable than language use, but perhaps his key finding was the

effect of task choice. This was found to be obscuring true score variance. These effects were also noted by Gebril (2009) in a study of the generalisability of holistic TEOFL writing scores taken by a cohort of Egyptian test takers. Gebril (2009) found that although marking was generally reliable, there were larger person-by-task effects. Schoonen (2012) interprets this to mean that while raters are identifying the correct levels of writing competency elicited by tasks, the choice of tasks on offer may constrain the ability of the test taker to demonstrate their knowledge. This is an important limitation of testing writing where the choice of topic and word count is imposed. Regarding the TELL, examiners were checked for working within marking tolerance for consistency, strictness and leniency using a RASCH analysis, and the standardisation procedure allowed for only a five to ten percent score discrepancy between raters. The measure was also used to inform decisions around moderation which involved second marking of a minimum of twenty percent of all scripts, with boundary marking and spot checks on random samples also. All students were given the same writing task which were marked holistically, thus limiting the chances of task variance to a certain extent, but still possibly affecting the performance of some due to topic familiarity and cultural expectations around genre.

To sum up, there will always be task, topic, rater, and occasion effects that need to be noted when interpreting test scores, especially for speaking and writing. To help identify potential influences on the dataset that needed to be considered during the analysis, contextual information was gathered about the TELL exam sittings, papers, timing, topics, and examiners.

### 5.3.3. Sampling approach and student characteristics

A non-probability purposive approach was taken in collecting data from the TELL's four papers. The test battery was taken by successive cohorts of international students at UCLan's partner study centres on five university campuses around the UK at the end of several months of both pre- and in-session study between December 2016 and July 2017. It would have been ideal to collect data from a range of different language tests to verify the transferability of the dataset, however, access was not granted as mentioned earlier. Instead, triangulation was achieved by

collecting further TELL data at the end of pre-sessional programmes in 2018 and 2019. This is reported in Chapter seven.

These test data were ecologically credible in the sense that they were drawn from representative, mixed-nationality cohorts of test takers in the UK EAP teaching context. The students came from a wide range of countries and L1 backgrounds, but Mandarin Chinese L1 (31.4%) and Arabic L1 (30.3%) speakers predominated, which facilitated the investigation of the L1 variable. Most students were between 18 and 25 years old and were destined for undergraduate degree courses. Their L1 was not English, hence the requirement to sit the TELL to provide evidence of their English language at the B2 level. As this is the requirement for a study visa, greater numbers take the TELL at this level rather than sit the harder C1 test, so the approach resulted in a sample size that would allow for robust analysis and statistically significant results.

#### 5.3.4. Data collection procedure

Ethical approval was gained from UCLan's Ethics Committee to conduct data collection of students' test scores and to proceed with analysis once identifying information was removed. Nationality details were changed to categories of L1 Mandarin Chinese, L1 Arabic or L1 other. Sitting and test centre details were retained however, so that integrity checks remained possible during the analysis. Due to the number of students sampled there was little risk of traceability through these details, moreover, the data were stored securely on a password-protected university Microsoft OneDrive. Permission was also granted by the Director of Studies of the partner study centres to access students' test scores from the TELL, with students having previously provided signed consent for their assessment data to be used for research purposes.

Data were collected from four sittings in December 2016, then March, May, and July 2017 (Table 2). After removing incomplete sets of scores, where students had not attempted all four sections of the test, the total sample was of 1836 students' scores in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Table 2 *TELL sampling*

	<i>N</i>			
	December 2016	March 2017	May 2017	July 2017
Site 1	397	434	221	70
Site 2	55	108	90	31
Site 3	58	61	48	16
Site 4	35	60	71	4
Site 5	-	14	50	17
Total*	542	677	480	137

\*After 93 incomplete sets were removed

The total candidature of the B2 TELL in the academic year of 2016-2017 was 1929, so the sample of 1836 represented 95% of the population. With a confidence level of 95%, the confidence interval was 0.5., but it must be noted that the sample represented 1129 individuals as some students sat the test on multiple occasions. When taking into consideration the actual number of individuals represented in the sample ( $N=1129$ ) the confidence interval was 1.88. By way of comparison, In'nami and Koizumi (2015) in their synthesis of fifty datasets across thirty-six studies of speaking and writing exam performance report an average sample size of 350, however, the standard deviation was 626, showing a huge diversity of sample sizes in the field. In the dataset 54% ( $N=610$ ) of the score sets were from students who sat the test once, 30% re-sat the test on two occasions ( $N=342$ ), and a further 15% re-sat three times ( $N=166$ ) and eleven students sat every sitting. However, where re-sits occurred, different versions of the TELL were used, thereby eliminating threats to credibility such as the practice effect. Moreover, the papers were marked by different examiners, so it was decided that the data would remain aggregated by sitting, not disaggregated by student. Repeated data collection from different sittings of the test provided a strong basis for statistical analysis by evening out any outliers and smoothing out inconsistencies in the test design or marking, outweighing the disadvantage of the small proportion of score sets being repeated measurements of the same students. This glitch presented the possibility of tracking changes in the score profiles of

individuals across sittings, however, it was not pursued as it diverged from the main focus of identifying the extent and shape of uneven competency. Nonetheless, due consideration of resitters was reflected in the analysis, in that the four sittings were analysed separately.

#### 5.4. Phase 1 analytical considerations and procedure

The criterion-referenced design of the TELL means it comprises ordered domains. Band descriptors describe the knowledge expected at the B2 level for each of the four skills, for which examiners can assign numerical values. An ordered domain serves the purpose of “judging” as opposed to the “counting approach” (Bachman, 2004, p.299) associated with an unordered domain. This allows for meaningful score interpretations within-subject, for instance, comparing the competencies of an individual student across their skills according to the set criteria for B2, and between-subjects, comparing students across the cohort. However, as this research focused on uneven competency, the scores assigned to each domain mattered less than the differences between them. The score discrepancy between a particular skill area and the overall score was also more important than the scores per se, as was the case in Berninger and Abbott’s (2010) study.

Nonetheless, I recognised from the outset that the interpretation of the TELL test scores needed to proceed with caution. As Bachman (2004) points out, language test scores are measurements taken from different content domains and each paper can vary in its scale of measurement. For example, the TELL speaking test is marked in bands from one to five, whereas the writing is marked in bands from one to ten. Reassuringly though, the speaking paper has thirty marks available for discriminating a student’s placement within bands, as does the writing paper with its half marks, meaning that twenty marks are available for markers to discriminate with. This is akin to the listening test which is scored out of twenty and the reading test out of thirty. For this reason, the percentage correct scores, calculated by dividing the raw scores by the maximum possible score on each test, were selected for analysis, thereby putting all raw scores on the same interval scale.



Another difficulty noted by Bachman (2004) is the impossibility of having a zero starting point when measuring language, “it is extremely difficult to define the absence of language ability in any absolute sense” (p.297). For instance, in the TELL a score of zero indicated a failure to answer the task set, rather than a lack of language ability. The lack of genuine zero starting point means that the scores cannot be classed as a ratio scale, but as an interval scale with potentially uneven gaps (Rugg, 2007). This meant that the data distribution could be skewed due to floor and ceiling effects. It also meant that either very high or very low scores, and by extension, means, needed to be treated with caution. However, an initial exploration of the data revealed that the score means were within a percentage point of the trimmed means so it was decided that the outliers would be kept for all analyses, apart from the multiple regression. As a second precautionary step, students with zero scores were identified. When they were excluded from the data, it did not significantly impact the descriptive analysis due to the robust sample size, so they were reinserted into the database for complete transparency.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality checks, looking for p-values above .05, were run to select the most appropriate inferential tests needed for RQ2, regarding relationships between skill areas and with uneven competency. Skewness and kurtosis were examined in addition. Histograms, normal q-q plots, and box plots were visually inspected for each variable.

Analysis had two foci; the first was variable-based, between-subjects, to investigate the extent and shape of uneven profiles in the dataset, and the second was on individuals, within-subjects, looking at the range of possibilities for individual differences in language profile. Having both foci was important as this study’s unit of analysis was individuals’ language behaviour, which cannot be claimed to be ergodic.<sup>36</sup> As Lowie and Verspoor (2019) point out, “the ergodic principle states that we cannot generalise group statistics—especially when we deal with human beings—to the individual, and vice versa, unless the group is an ergodic ensemble. That is why we need two lines of research in applied linguistics: group studies and single-case studies” (p.185). This perhaps explains the rationale for Berninger and Abbot’s (2010)

---

<sup>36</sup> In the sense that the mean outcome of the group is the same as the mean outcome of the individual over time.

converging methods that examined group domain variables separately to ipsative scores in their study of L1 development, as will be discussed shortly.

The first round of analysis was variable-based, between-subjects, to investigate the extent and shape of uneven competency in the dataset. Scores were aggregated per sitting and the resulting mean scores were examined for tendency and spread in each skill area. The composite overall scores were also examined for tendency and spread for comparison. For a more detailed picture, the data for each skill area and overall scores were then further interrogated in quartiles. In addition, because it was expected that there could be important L1 and educational background effects, given the large minorities of L1 Chinese and L1 Arabic within the sample, a one-way between-groups ANOVA with Tukey post hoc test was conducted. A subset of the database was used, comprising of 1010 unique cases.

The second focus was on individuals, within-subjects, looking at the range of possibilities for individual differences in language profile. The tricky part of this analysis was to find a way to quantify an individual's skill score differences as a measure of the *extent*<sup>37</sup> of their uneven competency. One possibility was to examine the gap between an individual's highest and lowest scores, or in other words, their range. However, this approach would obscure the full picture for the four data points. This was a new area with little literature to illuminate the way. Berninger and Abbott (2010), who used the four language sub-tests that make up the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test [WIAT ii], opted in one strand of analysis to generate an ipsative language profile for each child, by comparing their scores in each skill to their mean score for all four and identifying children whose score in any skill area that was more than one standard deviation from their mean score. However, frustratingly, it was unclear from their article how the standard deviation from an overall score was calculated. Nonetheless, from their article it was helpful to think about uneven profiles from the point of view of an 'even' profile. An even profile would feature very similar scores in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Therefore, whether a student scored well or poorly in all skills, the standard deviation [*SD*] of the four

---

<sup>37</sup> Here *extent* can be taken to mean *severity*.

scores would be low, and conversely, the greater the disparity between scores, the greater the deviation value. Taking into consideration the marginally different scales across the four papers in the TELL,<sup>38</sup> it was noted that if a student was one mark off completely equal scores, their individual *SD* value would fall between 1.7 and 2.5, if they were two marks off, this would be indicated by a *SD* of between 3.3 and 5.8. A *SD* value between 4.95 and 8.7 represented discrepancy of three marks. Given that an *SD* value of 5 would equate to a 10% difference in the scores either for writing or listening, it was judged that individuals with *SD* values above 5 could no longer be considered as having an even profile. Thus, the individual *SD* value was used as a proxy measure of uneven competency for each student, then also examined for tendency and spread within the sample. They were also inspected in quartiles for a more nuanced picture.

A final step in examining individual profiles was to consider their shape. Measuring the frequency of all the possible combinations of strongest to weakest scores enabled an exploration of whether uneven competency was associated with a specific profile shape and whether it was impacting on overall scores. To accomplish this, individual score sets were very simply labelled according to the rank order of the four skills within them, from left to right, strongest to weakest. Thus, the label [SLRW], represented a score set where speaking (S) was greatest, followed by the listening (L), then reading (R) and writing (W). Likewise, a label [RWSL] would indicate a score set where the reading score was greatest, and so on. Where there were one or more skill scores that were equal, the equal scores were followed by an asterisk, so the label [SLRW\*] would signify a score set where speaking was followed by listening, but that the scores for reading and writing were the same. This labelling system accounted for all possible combinations and allowed for the most commonly occurring profile type to be identified. The skill, overall, and individual *SD* measures for this profile shape were then compared with the rest of the dataset, that contained the other less common profile shapes, by means of an independent samples *t*-test. The dataset in this analysis was smaller ( $N=1124$ ) because the repeat sitters were removed.

---

<sup>38</sup> Listening and writing in the TELL are out of 20, speaking and reading are out of 30.

The purpose of the second research question was to uncover the direction and strength of relationships between skill areas and with uneven competency. It was inspired by Berninger and Abbot's (2010) study that used multiple regression to determine which skills contributed uniquely to the development of others in L1 language development. Given that the skills draw upon shared lexico-grammatical resources, it was expected that there would be strong relationships between them in an L2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality checks were run to select the most appropriate inferential tests, then the analysis proceeded in two steps. Firstly, correlation coefficients were calculated for pairs of skills to uncover the strength of relationships. Secondly, the extent to which each of the skills contributed to uneven competency was explored by calculating correlation coefficients using the individual *SD* measure, for each skill area and overall scores, followed by a standard multiple regression. This analytical procedure was chosen due to the robust sample size,  $N=1832$ , after outliers were removed, that allowed for the inclusion of all four predictor variables: the speaking, listening, reading, and writing scores, as the 5:1 ratio was easily met (Field, 2013).

## Chapter 6. Phase 1 findings

### 6.1. RQ1: What is the extent and shape of uneven competency in L2 EAP profiles?

#### 6.1.1. Between-subjects descriptive analysis

Each sitting's scores were distributed in a strikingly similar way. Speaking means were more than one standard error above all other mean scores, and the writing means were more than one standard error below. In contrast, reading and listening means were within half a standard error (Fig.4).

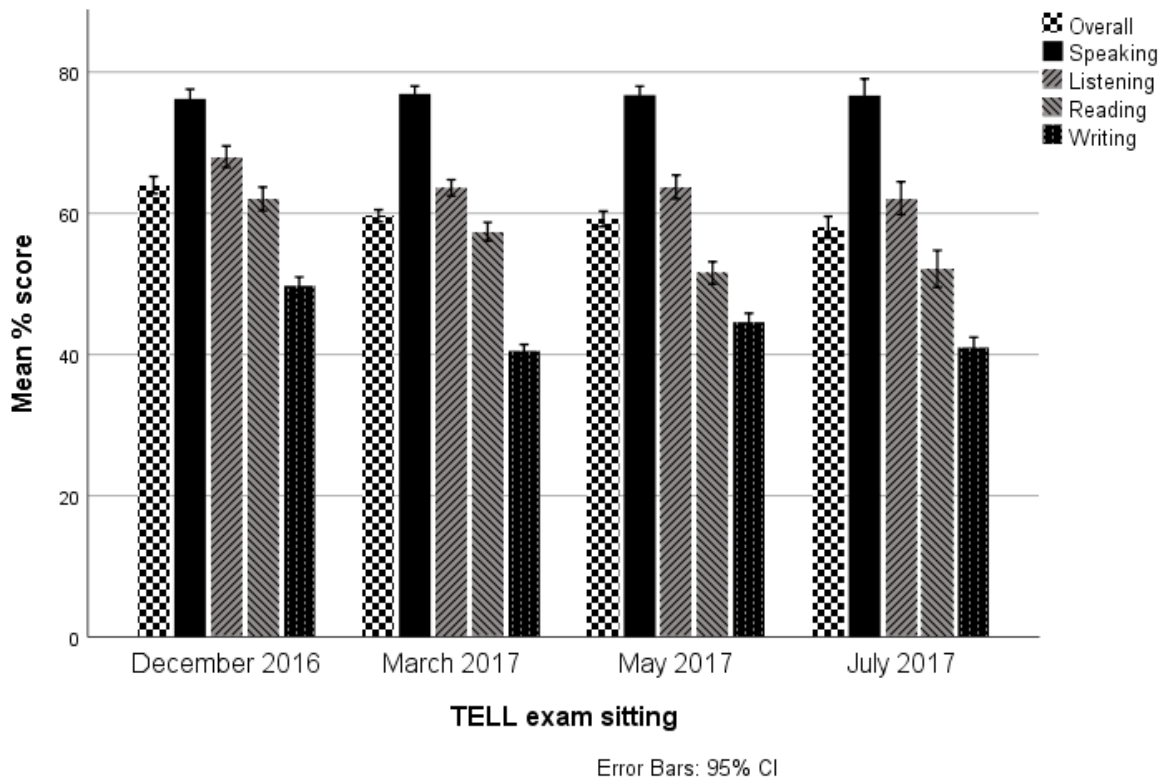


Figure 4 Mean overall, speaking, listening, reading, and writing scores by exam sitting 2016/2017

Mean scores for speaking, at almost 77% (Table 3), were consistently higher than any other skill area and were spread in a similar way from one sitting to the next, with *SDs* ranging from 14 to 16.

Table 3 Range, mean, and SD of TELL scores in 4 cohorts 2016/2017

Dec 2016 n=542, March 2017 n=677, May2017 n=480, July 2017 n=137							
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
					Statistic	Std. Error	
Speaking	542	100	0	100	76.21	.676	15.748
	677	88	12	100	76.88	.558	14.527
	480	68	32	100	76.72	.640	14.016
	137	62	38	100	76.69	1.175	13.756
	(1836)	(100)	(0)	(100)	(76.63)	(.343)	(14.710)
Listening	542	85	15	100	68.02	.760	17.684
	677	80	20	100	63.57	.571	14.867
	480	90	10	100	63.74	.840	18.394
	137	80	20	100	62.15	1.160	13.582
	(1836)	(90)	(10)	(100)	(64.84)	(.391)	(16.749)
Reading	542	86	14	100	62.04	.836	19.473
	677	80	17	97	57.37	.649	16.877
	480	80	13	93	51.57	.785	17.198
	137	70	20	90	52.13	1.305	15.278
	(1836)	(87)	(13)	(100)	(56.86)	(.423)	(18.137)
Writing	542	100	0	100	49.73	.621	14.458
	677	90	0	90	40.47	.458	11.928
	480	95	0	95	44.58	.626	13.709
	137	45	20	65	40.99	.727	8.507
	(1836)	(100)	(0)	(100)	(44.33)	(.316)	(13.552)
Overall	542	70	30	100	64.01	.605	14.080
	677	61	28	89	59.63	.417	10.845
	480	72	23	95	59.21	.547	11.985
	137	41	38	79	58.03	.769	9.005
	(1836)	(77)	(23)	(100)	(60.71)	(.286)	(12.265)

Mean scores for listening were 65%, exhibiting greater spread, with *SDs* ranging from 14 to 18.

Mean scores for reading ranged from 62% in December to 52% in the July sitting, with an overall mean of almost 57%. Reading also showed the greatest spread in all cohorts, with *SDs*

ranging from 15 to 19. Writing featured the lowest mean scores, ranging from 49% in December to 40% in March with an overall mean of 44%. Writing also varied least in all cohorts, *SDs* 9 to 14. The December sitting had the best overall mean score of 64%, but interestingly, showed a greater spread of scores, *SD* 14, than the other cohorts: *SDs* of 11, 12 and 9 respectively. The March and May sittings had means of 60% and 59%. The July sitting exhibited the least variation, but also the lowest overall mean score of 58%. The mean overall score for the whole sample was 61%. All cohorts' mean scores displayed the same ranking of speaking, listening, reading then writing, even though the December sitting's scores were higher overall than those of March, May, and July.

#### 6.1.2. Between-subjects descriptive analysis by quartile

Finer detail was sought by dividing the dataset into quartiles of 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75% and 76% plus, to see to whether the pattern would also be observed at varying levels of overall competency. The consistent pattern of ranking across the skills remained, with both stronger and weaker students being relatively more proficient in speaking, listening, and reading, than writing. Below is the data from December 2016 to illustrate (see Appendix i for all cohorts).

Table 4 *Quartiles by overall score December 2016*

Quartile	% of sample	<i>M</i> skill score				Percentage gap between skills						
		S	L	R	W	S-W	L-W	R-W	S-R	S-L	L-R	
0-25	0											
26-50	20	59	45	38	36	23	10	2	21	14	7	
51-75	56	75	69	61	48	27	21	13	14	6	8	
76-100	24	93	86	84	66	27	20	18	9	7	2	

Large mean score differentials were found between the productive skills in all quartiles, signalling further investigation to verify which one was a greater factor in score variance. Furthermore, the mean score gaps between speaking and writing were the greatest in the

higher scoring students. There was also a mean gap of 21% between speaking and reading in the lower quartile, which narrowed to 14% in the upper quartile, then 9% in the top quartile. This suggested that the students who scored less well in reading and writing still performed comparatively better in speaking, but the top performing speakers demonstrated persistent weaknesses in their writing, which were not seen to the same extent in their reading scores. In contrast, mean score gaps between receptive skills were much smaller in the lower and upper quartiles 7-8%, and the top quartile, 2%. Therefore, the origin of uneven competency was in the productive skills.

#### 6.1.3. Normality testing

The sample sizes were large so Kolmogorov-Smirnov values were inspected. Normality testing revealed that the overall scores were generally not normally distributed, all  $p < .05$  except in the July sitting which was a smaller sample (Table 5). Positive skew and negative kurtosis were features of overall scores across sittings. Some degree of negative skew might have been expected as the TELL was being used as a summative test following several months of teaching, with a pass mark set at 60%, meaning the students would be geared to the test to a certain extent and extrinsically motivated to reach a pass mark. Therefore, it is surprising that the overall scores were positively skewed, and that the July scores were normally distributed, despite most students sitting this test having experienced more instruction.



Table 5 Normality findings 2016/2017

			December 2016	March 2017	May 2017	July 2017
	<i>N</i>		542	677	480	137
Overall	<i>KS</i>	Sig.	.00	.00	.00	.07
	<i>z</i>	skew	.22	2.89	2.19	.42
		kurtosis	-3.63	-1.21	-.85	-1.46
Speaking	<i>KS</i>	Sig.	.00	.00	.00	.01
	<i>z</i>	skew	-2.93	-2.89	-2.53	-1.79
		kurtosis	-3.63	0.10	-2.81	1.59
Listening	<i>KS</i>	Sig.	.00	.00	.00	.01
	<i>z</i>	skew	-2.76	-1.38	-2.07	-.84
		kurtosis	-3.31	-1.73	-3.55	1.48
Reading	<i>KS</i>	Sig.	.00	.00	.00	.01
	<i>z</i>	skew	-1.11	0.31	2.93	0.96
		kurtosis	-3.56	-3.84	-2.35	-1.13
Writing	<i>KS</i>	Sig.	.00	.00	.00	.00
	<i>z</i>	skew	6.19	6.93	5.56	1.47
		kurtosis	4.38	7.39	8.49	-0.65

Furthermore, as was already apparent from the descriptive analysis, skill scores were also not normally distributed; again Kolmogorov-Smirnov values were all  $p < .05$ . The speaking and listening scores were negatively skewed, whilst the reading and writing scores were almost all positively skewed. That the speaking and listening scores were negatively skewed suggests that most students do well in these skills, but perhaps also that these are more strongly influenced by instruction or the learning environment, than reading and writing. Kurtosis values were generally negative for speaking, listening, and reading, suggesting several outlier values. This contrasts with the writing scores that were almost all positively kurtotic, suggesting a much narrower range of performance in this skill area.

There were some similarities and differences across sittings. In the December data the speaking, listening, and reading scores were negatively skewed, whilst the writing was positively skewed. Negative kurtosis was evident too, indicating this cohort had many extreme values. This was still the case when two students with zero scores in the writing and speaking paper were excluded from the data, so as these outliers did not significantly impact on the analysis, they were reincluded and findings from the complete database are reported here. March's speaking and listening scores were once again negatively skewed, but neither particularly positively, nor negatively kurtotic. Reading scores were only slightly skewed, but quite negatively kurtotic suggesting more outliers in this skill. Writing scores were positively skewed in a very similar way to December's, but more bunched together. The May results were again skewed negatively in the speaking and listening, while reading and writing were positively skewed. These scores were also negatively kurtotic, suggesting very varied performance across this cohort like the December cohort. In contrast, writing scores were most noticeably bunched up, a trend also seen in the March and December data. As mentioned above, this began to suggest a narrow range of performance in this skill, which then surprisingly disappeared from the July results. Across skills in fact, the July cohort did not show strong negative or positive skew or kurtosis, hence the Kolmogorov-Smirnov values indicating a normal distribution.

#### 6.1.4. Analysis of L1 groupings

To explore differences in the students' language background, a one-way between-groups ANOVA with Tukey post hoc test was conducted. A subset of the database was used, comprising 1010 unique cases where the students' L1 was known. Score sets were grouped as L1 Mandarin Chinese, L1 Arabic, and L1 other. Although the groups differed significantly at the  $p < .05$  level in most skill areas, overall scores and individual *SD* values, post hoc comparisons using the Tukey Honest Significant Difference test highlighted that mean writing scores for the Chinese L1 ( $M=42.61$ ,  $SD=10.23$ ,  $SE .54$ ) and Arabic L1 ( $M=42.18$ ,  $SD=14.92$ ,  $SE .80$ ) groups were not significantly different ( $p=.91$ ) from each other (Table 6). Nonetheless, the Arabic group demonstrated a greater spread of writing scores and a greater mean uneven competency score ( $M=18.87$ ), in contrast to the Chinese and the other L1s whose difference was minimal ( $p=0.6$ ).

Eta-squared revealed large effect sizes on overall, speaking, listening and reading scores, but only medium effect sizes for writing and unevenness. That the Mandarin Chinese and Arabic L1 groups scored significantly worse in writing is perhaps to be expected due to the extra burden of producing language in a different script. This analysis also showed Arabic L1 students as having significantly more uneven productive profiles.

Table 6 *One-way between-groups ANOVA for groups according to L1 2016/2017*

L1	N	M				Overall	SD of 4 scores
		S	L	R	W		
Chinese	357	68.17	58.66	53.35	42.61	55.71	14.26
Arabic	346	80.65	68.93	57.00	42.18	62.24	18.87
Other	307	84.64	73.19	70.66	53.53	70.55	15.28
$\eta^2$		.23 L	.15 L	.15 L	.13 M	.23 L	.11 M

#### 6.1.5. Within-subjects individual standard deviation [SD] analysis

For each student, the standard deviation [SD] of scores gained across the four skills was calculated as a measure that would help distinguish between *even* and *uneven* sets of scores. This made it possible to measure their frequency, and at a later stage, to investigate what impact, if any, uneven competency had on overall scores. These individual SD values were not normally distributed in the December 2016 and March 2017 cohorts, but positively skewed and either positively or negatively kurtotic (Table 7). However, the May and July 2017 cohorts were normally distributed.

Table 7 *Distribution of individual SD values 2016/2017*

TELL cohort	N	Individual SD value			z		KS	
		M	SD	SE	Skewness	Kurtosis	statistic	p
Dec 2016	542	14.96	5.86	.25	4.87	3.34	.04	.03
Mar 2017	677	16.58	5.69	.22	2.02	-2.27	.04	.02
May 2017	480	18.56	6.37	.29	0.36	-1.50	.03	.20
July 2017	137	19.30	6.24	.53	0.01	-1.24	.05	.20

The positive skew and the means for the *SD* values indicated an increasing degree and frequency of uneven competency in successive cohorts. Table 8 shows the proportion of profiles that could be categorised as *even* in each cohort from the December to July, which dropped from a mere 2.77% to zero.

Table 8 *Proportion of 2016/2017 cohorts considered even*

TELL cohort	N	SD value below 5	
		n	%
December 2016	542	15	2.77
March 2017	677	8	1.18
May 2017	480	4	.83
July 2017	137	0	0

The individual *SD* values ranged from .50 to 41.44, with a mean of 16.82, *SD* 6.15 across all sittings. When divided into quartiles, 83% of the sample were in the lower and upper quartiles revealing that quite starkly uneven profiles are common, with only 16% having more balanced, yet still uneven, profiles (Table 9). Only 1.47% of the total 2016/2017 dataset could be considered as having an even profile, defined by having an *SD* value of less than 5. The students with the most uneven profiles also only represented 1% of the cohort. These individuals, while having only slightly lower overall scores than the other quartiles, had very strong speaking scores with a mean of 87% compared to the mean of 77% for the whole cohort, in conjunction with very weak writing scores, with a mean of 27% compared to 44%. In contrast, the students with the least uneven profiles had the highest mean writing score, but their mean speaking score was below the mean for the sample. In contrast, but perhaps unsurprisingly, the students with even profiles had the highest mean writing score at 63%, but their mean speaking score was 69%, somewhat below the sample mean of 77%.

Table 9 Mean scores according to *SD* value of individual students 2016/2017

<i>SD</i> value (S,L,R,W)	Proportion of sample	<i>M</i>				
		Overall	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Spikiest top quartile <i>SD</i> of 41.44 to 31.20	1%	58%	87%	69%	47%	27%
Upper quartile <i>SD</i> of 31.19 to 20.95	23%	61%	85%	67%	52%	39%
Lower quartile <i>SD</i> of 20.94 to 10.70	60%	61%	76%	64%	58%	45%
Least spiky quartile <i>SD</i> of 10.69 to .50	16%	61%	68%	62%	60%	52%
( <i>Even profiles</i> <i>SD</i> of below 5)*	(1.5%)	(66%)	(69%)	(66%)	(64%)	(63%)

\*sub-set of the least spiky quartile

To summarise the 2016/2017 dataset, unevenness in individual profiles is very common and is characterised by a widening gap between speaking and writing scores, which is not necessarily reflected in their overall scores.

#### 6.1.6. Within-subjects profile labelling

The labelling of score sets<sup>39</sup> revealed that the most frequently occurring pattern, seen in 37% of the sample was from strongest to weakest: speaking, listening, reading, and writing [SLRW] (Fig.5) which concurs with the findings from looking at the dataset in aggregate. 17% of students had a profile with a higher reading than listening score, but still with speaking and writing at the extremes. In total, 61% of profiles featured speaking and listening as the strongest skills.

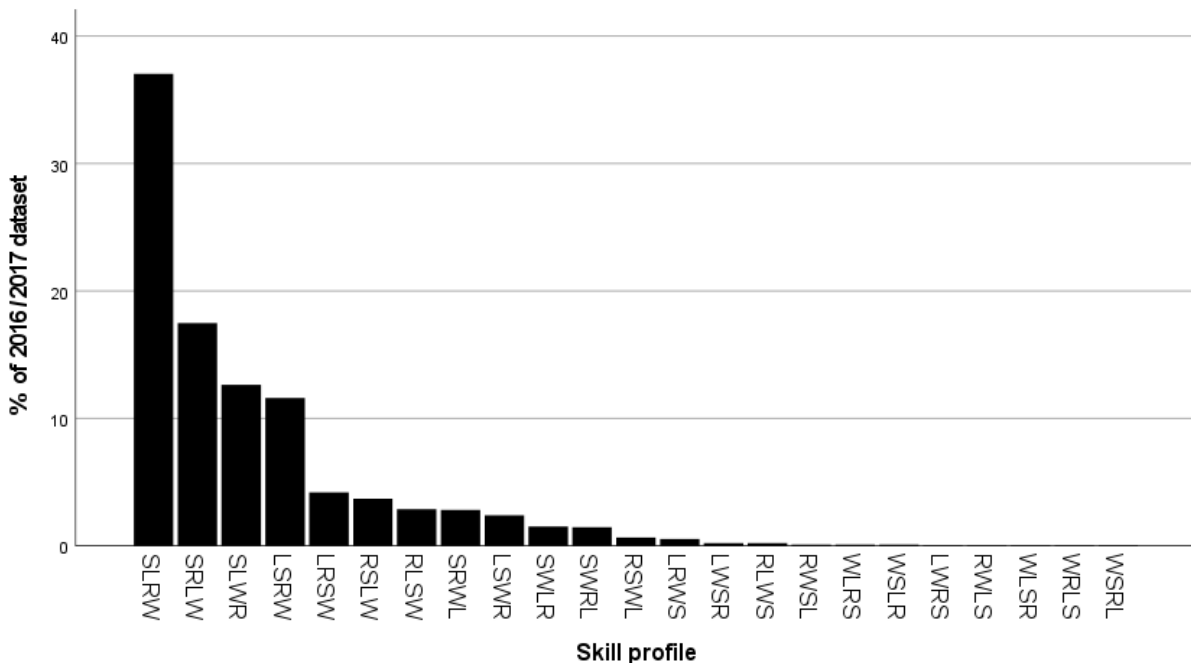


Figure 5 Frequency of profile type 2016/2017

Writing was the weakest skill and very rarely did a student score better in writing than speaking. All sittings considered together, only 2.2% of the sample achieved a writing score

<sup>39</sup> According to the rank order of the four skills within them, from strongest to weakest.

that exceeded their speaking score. Just seven students, representing 0.4% of the sample, scored best in writing. These data are counterevidence to the anecdotal examples that teachers sometimes cite of students being better at writing than speaking, and also to the documented examples, such as Weissberg's (2000) small case study of five Spanish-speaking English learners wherein the writing skill developed faster than speaking in terms of grammatical range and accuracy. Doubt is also cast on seemingly expert writing coming from poor speakers, but a wider range of learners and contexts would need to be studied to gather more evidence for this.

#### 6.1.7. Between-subjects profile differences

The labelling system allowed the most commonly occurring profile type to be identified, that of [SLRW] as mentioned above. An independent samples *t*-test was then conducted, with repeat sitters removed from the dataset (*N*=1124). It compared the students with this most commonly occurring [SLRW] profile type with those that did not fit this profile. Skill and overall scores, and *SD* values were compared (Table 10).

Table 10 *Independent samples t-test comparing profile type scores and SD values 2016/2017*

	Profile type		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	[SLRW] ( <i>N</i> =406)	Non [SLRW] ( <i>N</i> =718)					
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					
Speaking	82.71	13.43	75.29	15.39	8.44	.00	.51 (M)
Listening	68.67	15.18	66.36	17.48	2.32	.02	.14 (S)
Reading	56.95	16.14	62.28	19.85	-4.88	.00	.29 (S)
Writing	42.27	13.80	48.18	14.36	-6.72	.00	.42 (S)
Overall	62.70	12.19	63.06	13.27	-.46	.64	.03 No effect
<i>Individual SD</i>	18.22	6.30	15.09	5.58	8.33	.00	.53 (M)

Note. Cohen's (1988) effect sizes in brackets

There were significant differences in skill and *SD* values ( $p < .05$ ), but not overall scores ( $p = .64$ ). Speaking, listening and *SD* measures were higher in the [SLRW] profiles, and reading and writing were lower. However, the magnitude of the differences in the means were generally small to medium, the greatest being speaking ( $M$  difference = 7.42, 95% *CI*: 5.63 to 9.21,  $d = .51$ ) and *SD* value ( $M$  difference = 3.13, 95% *CI*: 2.39 to 3.87,  $d = .53$ ). So, the individuals with a [SLRW] profile, in this case 36% of the sample, are significantly more uneven, and this is most evident in the speaking. It is important to remember, though, that those with the [SLRW] profile were not significantly different to the others in their overall scores.

## 6.2. RQ2: Are there relationships between skill areas and with uneven competency?

### 6.2.1. Correlation analysis

Correlation coefficients were calculated using overall and skill area scores, and individual *SD* values to further explore the relationships that had started to become apparent when looking at the quartile data. Due to the normality testing results, Spearman's rho was chosen instead of a Pearson Moment correlation co-efficient (Cone & Foster, 2006). Spearman  $r_s$  does not assume a normal distribution, but as the sample size increases the value of  $r_s$  will approach  $r$  (Bachman, 2004, p.91) and indeed when both analyses were run as a double-check, the values were almost identical.

Correlation coefficients were calculated for pairs of skills to identify relationships. Cohen (1988) states that a coefficient  $r_s$  of .5 to 1 is large, .30 to .49 is medium, and .10 to .29 is small (pp.79-81). These are indicated by 'L', 'M' and 'S' in the following tables.



Table 11 *Relationships between skill areas 2016/2017*

Relationships between skills		<i>rs</i>			
		Dec 16	Mar 17	May 17	July 17
Listening & Reading	Receptive	.71 (50%) L	.49 (23%) M	.56 (31%) L	.53 (28%) L
Reading & Writing	Literate	.66 (44%) L	.55 (30%) L	.56 (32%) L	.53 (28%) L
Speaking & Listening	Innate	.59 (35%) L	.37 (14%) M	.37 (14%) M	.24 (6%) S
Speaking & Writing	Productive	.52 (27%) L	.26 (7%) S	.21 (4%) S	.17 (3%) S

*Note. Coefficient of determination in brackets*

The December sitting was markedly different to the March, May, and July cohorts, showing a stronger correlation between receptive skills than the literate skills. It was hypothesised that the receptive skills would be the most correlated, but this is only seen in the stronger cohort. In contrast, the later sittings demonstrated a similar degree of correlation across listening, reading, and writing. What is striking, though, is that speaking and writing show the smallest correlation, particularly in the later sittings. This is further confirmation of the productive gap identified earlier.

Secondly, correlation coefficients were calculated for the individual *SDs*, to uncover the direction and strength of relationships between the skill areas and the measure of uneven competency. The results are striking and confirm the descriptive analysis of the quartiles. Table 12 shows that in multiple sittings of the test, there appears to be no, or a very slight, relationship between uneven competency and overall scores, meaning that a composite score, whether good or bad, carries no diagnostic information about a student's profile.

Table 12 Relationship of overall and skill area scores, with individual SD value 2016/2017

Relationship of overall and skill scores, with SD value	<i>rs</i>				
	All sittings	Dec 16	Mar 17	May 17	July 17
Overall	.05 (0%) No correlation	.00 (0%) No correlation	.12** (1%) S	.08 (1%) No correlation	.21 (4%) S
Speaking	.42** (18%) M	.28** (8%) S	.47** (22%) M	.51** (26%) L	.61** (38%) L
Writing	-.30** (9%) M	-.34** (12%) M	-.29** (9%) S	-.27** (7%) S	-.22** (5%) S
Listening	.13** (2%) S	.13** (2%) S	.19** (4%) S	.13** (2%) S	.18 (3%) S
Reading	-.16 (3%) ** S	-.09 (1%) No correlation	-.09 (1%) No correlation	-.20** (4%) S	-.10 (1%) S

Note. Coefficient of determination in brackets

\*\*Correlation significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

This is also true of reading and listening to an extent. However, speaking scores are medium-to-strongly, positively correlated with uneven competency particularly in the later cohorts, while writing is negatively correlated with the uneven competency in all sittings. This further confirms that the productive skills are the origin of uneven competency, and that it decreases with greater writing competency. This is seen across every sitting of the test.

#### 6.2.2. Standard multiple regression analysis

A standard multiple regression was used to investigate the relationship between skill area scores and uneven competency in individuals. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, or independence of residuals. Four outliers were identified by determining the critical chi-square value at alpha level .01 as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), and they were removed from the dataset so that Mahalanobis distance did not exceed the critical value for the number of independent variables. Cook's distance maximum value was .03. The resulting sample for regression was  $N=1832$  (Table 13).

Table 13 Descriptives of standard multiple regression of individual SD value 2016/2017

Skill	M	SD	N	95% CI	
				lower	upper
Individual SD (DV)	16.80	6.13	1832	6.31	8.62
Speaking	76.71	14.51	1832	.23	.26
Listening	64.82	16.75	1832	.07	.01
Reading	56.85	18.13	1832	-.09	-.06
Writing	44.37	13.52	1832	-.26	-.22

Using the enter method it was found that all skill scores significantly explain 49% of the variance in the uneven competency measure ( $F(4, 1827) = 437, p < .05, R^2 = .49, R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .49$ ). The unstandardised beta values, in Table 14 below, show that speaking scores increase the uneven competency value, while writing scores decrease it to the same degree. Listening and reading do not contribute greatly to the variance by comparison. The  $r$  values also indicate that of the productive skills, speaking has most influence.

Table 14 Unstandardised (B) and standardised ( $\beta$ ) regression coefficients 2016/2017

	unstandardised		standardised	t	Sig.	r		
	B	S.E.	$\beta$			zero	partial	part
Speaking	.24	.01	.57	30.18	.00	.42 (17.64%)	.58 (34%)	.51 (26%)
Listening	.09	.01	.23	10.61	.00	.12 (1.44%)	.24 (5.76%)	.18 (3.24%)
Reading	-.07	.01	-.22	-9.39	.00	-.19 (3.61%)	-.22 (4.84%)	-.16 (2.56%)
Writing	-.24	.01	-.52	-24.59	.00	-.35 (12.25%)	-.50 (25%)	-.41 (16.81%)

### 6.3. Summary of Phase 1 analysis

B2 test data were analysed descriptively and inferentially in the four skill areas to gain a holistic perspective on EAP students' profiles. A clear view of the extent and shape of uneven competency within these profiles was gained, thanks to an innovative individual *SD* measure and by labelling score profiles according to their rank order of skill scores.

Most students (98.5%) exhibited an uneven profile, as defined by having an individual *SD* value over 5. Thirty-seven percent of the total sample had an identical profile of strength and weakness, in which speaking competency was greatest, followed by listening, reading, and writing. 92% of profiles featured either speaking or listening as the strongest skills, 64% featuring both. In terms of the receptive skills, only 30% did better in reading than listening. For the productive skills, a mere 2.2% of the sample scored better in writing than speaking and only 0.4% scored best in writing. Mean speaking scores were more than one *SE* above mean overall scores; writing scores were more than one *SE* below the overall. Listening and reading were within half a *SE* of the mean. Significant differences according to profile and L1 were seen. The correlational analysis indicated that greater writing competency was associated with a greater overall competency. This finding was confirmed by the multiple regression analysis, which also showed that listening and reading did not contribute greatly to individual variance in comparison. It was concluded that speaking had the most influence on the uneven competency seen in these students.

### 6.4. Limitations and implications of Phase 1

The analysis and resulting description of uneven profiles in Phase one was based on a single snapshot of L2 competency as measured by the TELL in a cohort of B2 EAP students. As mentioned earlier in Section 5.3.2, there were potentially threats to the credibility and dependability of the findings due to influences such as slight variations in difficulty of the testing prompts or in the way the test was administered across sittings. Additionally, there could have been inconsistencies in the scoring, despite standardisation and moderation measures being in place. Therefore, the findings needed to be triangulated through further

sampling and analysis of TELL scores from a different EAP context to see whether uneven profiles were present to the same extent and patterned in a similar way. The triangulation exercise is reported in Chapter seven.

Secondly, while the findings provided a fresh empirical perspective on uneven L2 competency, they held no explanatory power. The investigation needed to move on to unpick why performance in speaking and writing was so disconnected in some individuals, in comparison to listening and reading. An inspection of students' speaking and writing production sub-scores for accuracy, fluency, and task achievement could have revealed very specific areas of relative strength and weakness leading to uneven suites of sub-skills, but again this information would have been limited by inconsistencies in the testing instrument. However, asking students directly about the four skills would most likely yield greater insight. As mentioned in Chapter two, Evans and Morrison (2011) argue for taking a holistic view of students' language competence as their survey evidence showed students' self-awareness of differing strengths in English. This has been attempted previously to a certain extent by Thompson (2018) in a mixed method study of Japanese EAP students, his rationale being that few prior studies have considered "the strength and generality of learner beliefs towards different academic English tasks" (p.250). His investigation of competency beliefs was specific to Japanese students enrolled on Business Studies degrees and its qualitative strand was quite limited by its four interviewees, but he demonstrated the utility of exploring students' beliefs as he found the students' perceptions gave clues to how instructional design and classroom practice could be improved. From the findings reported in this chapter, greater focus on writing would be the most obvious approach to balancing out uneven profiles, but without exploring students' conceptions of academic English in both spoken and written modes, without knowing what students consider problematic or unproblematic, opportunities to play to students' strengths in speaking, while simultaneously scaffolding writing development, would be missed. The ensuing qualitative phase of the study will be presented in Chapters eight and nine, following the reporting of the quantitative triangulation exercise in Chapter seven.

## Chapter 7. Phase 1 triangulation

### 7.1. Introduction

Many uneven profiles were identified in the TELL data from 2016/2017 presented in the previous chapter. These were characterised by large discrepancies between strong speaking performances on the one hand, and poor writing performances on the other, with reading and listening performances being far more equal and falling between the productive extremes. The students whose writing scores were higher had the most even profiles, while the students with the most uneven profiles had slightly lower overall scores. In this triangulation stage of the research, the quantitative research questions were posed again. The rationale for collection of test data was the same as in the first round, in the sense of gathering relatively objective measurements of language competency. In this chapter the information about the triangulation sample and data collection procedure is given, along with the findings.

### 7.2. Data collection procedure

Ethical approval remained current from the first round of data collection and permission was granted to collect secondary data from two cohorts of international students attending the pre-session courses at UCLan during the summers of 2018 and 2019. The non-probability purposive approach was repeated, and after removing incomplete sets of scores, the dataset comprised 278 students' score sets, representing 99% and 100% of the total candidature of the TELL respectively.

Table 15 *TELL sampling for triangulation*

	<i>N</i>	
	August 2018	August 2019
Site 6	147	131

The samples were smaller due to the size of the study centre, but the data did not contain re-sits, making the analysis more straightforward. Nonetheless, the procedure enabled sufficient data to be collected at B2 for robust analysis. Moreover, using the TELL test once more served to maintain consistency of the measuring device across the study. Students were destined for UCLan degree courses starting in the autumn of those years and were a mix of nationalities and first language backgrounds. However, the proportion of Chinese L1 was much greater (88%) than Arabic L1 (7%) and other L1s (5%), and so for this reason ANOVA of the different language groups was not carried out for a second time, as there were too few individuals in the Arabic (n=18) and other L1s (n=14) categories for valid analysis.

### 7.3. Analytical procedure

An almost identical analytical procedure was followed, once again taking a descriptive and an inferential approach, again necessitating normality testing carried out using SPSS. Skewness and kurtosis were examined, in addition to Kolmogorov-Shirnov values, looking for p-values  $>.05$ . As before, negative skew was expected as TELL exam was again being used as achievement test at the end of several months' teaching.

Descriptive analysis was firstly variable-based and between-subjects, examining the distribution of mean scores in the four skills, alongside the overall scores. Secondly, an individual standard deviation [SD] value for each student was calculated from their four skill scores. As a reminder from Chapter five, individual SD values exceeding 5 were chosen as markers for uneven profiles, as this value would equate to 10% difference in skill scores. The SD values were examined for tendency and spread within the sample. In addition, profiles were again labelled according to the rank order of scores across the skill areas, and the most frequently occurring profile was compared against the other profiles via an independent samples *t*-test.

Correlation coefficients were calculated using overall and skill area scores, and with the individual SD values to further explore relationships between variables. Normality testing indicated Spearman's rho was the most appropriate measure. A standard multiple regression

was conducted, with the SD value as dependent variable and the skill scores as predictor variables.

#### 7.4. RQ1: What is the extent and shape of uneven competency in L2 EAP profiles?

##### 7.4.1. Between-subjects descriptive analysis

The triangulation data from the 2018 and 2019 pre-session courses were distributed in a similar way to the datasets from 2016 and 2017 (Fig.6). This suggests the test battery was reliably measuring language proficiency at B2 of the CEFR.

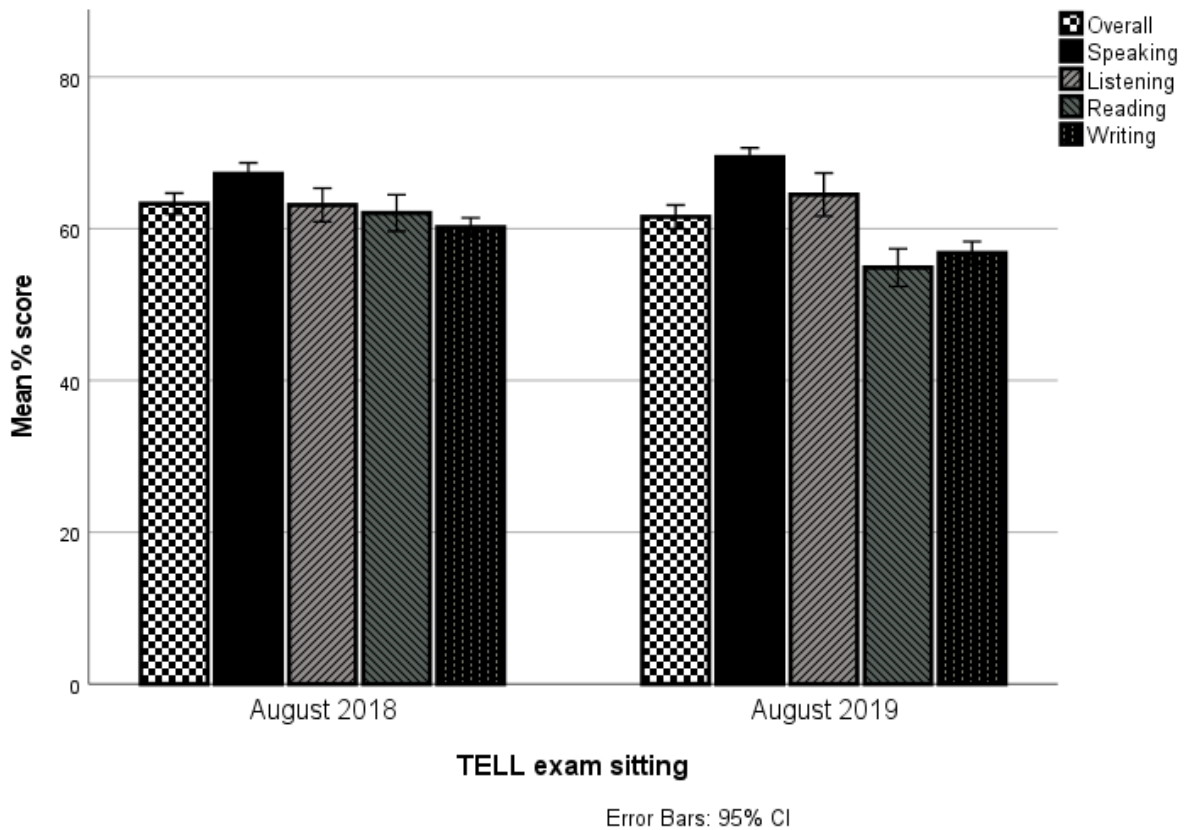


Figure 6 Mean overall, speaking, listening, reading and writing scores by exam sitting 2018/2019

Mean speaking scores were once again above the mean overall scores and the highest, 67% for the 2018 cohort and 69% for 2019 (Table 16), however, these were significantly lower than the mean speaking score in the 2016/2017 data (Table 17). The SDs were also smaller in these cohorts, ranging from between 7 and 9. Conversely, mean writing scores were significantly



better than the comparator data from 2016/2017 (Table 17), but nonetheless, writing again featured lower mean scores. Mean writing scores also varied less which could suggest that students had better teaching input in this skill area. Listening and Reading means were very similar to 2016/2017 (Table 16). Mean scores for listening were 63% in the 2018 cohort and 66% in 2019, exhibiting greater spread than the productive skills, with *SDs* ranging from 13 to 14, very much like the 2016/2017 data. Mean scores for reading were identical in the August 2018 data to December 2016 at 62%, and the 2019 data was close to the mean of all sittings in 2016/2017 at 58%. Reading showed the greatest spread of scores of all skills, with *SDs* 15 and 11, but showing less variation than the 2016/2017 data. In terms of overall scores, the 2018 cohort mean was 63% and for 2019 it was 65%, both with *SDs* of 8 (Tables 16 & 17). Therefore, they scored in a very comparable way with the December 2016 cohort with 64%, but with less variation.

Table 16 *Range, mean, and SD of TELL scores in 2 cohorts 2018/2019*

**Aug 2018 n=147, Aug 2019 n=131**

	<i>N</i>	Range	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>		<i>SD</i>
					Statistic	<i>SE</i>	
Speaking	147	58	33	91	67.22	.74	8.90
	131	53	36	89	69.43	.62	7.13
	(278)	(58)	(33)	(91)	(68.33)	(.49)	(8.23)
Listening	147	70	28	98	63.14	1.12	13.55
	131	72	26	98	66.48	1.10	12.62
	(278)	(72)	(26)	(98)	(64.81)	(.90)	(14.97)
Reading	147	70	27	97	62.07	1.22	14.76
	131	67	15	82	58.41	.95	10.82
	(278)	(70)	(15)	(97)	(60.24)	(.90)	(14.98)
Writing	147	40	40	80	60.19	.63	7.67
	131	60	25	85	63.27	.96	10.93
	(278)	(60)	(25)	(85)	(61.68)	(.50)	(8.38)
Overall	147	37	44	81	63.31	.700	8.491
	131	44	37	81	64.58	.703	8.043
	(278)	(44)	(37)	(81)	(63.95)	(.526)	(8.773)

Table 17 Mean TELL skill and overall scores, comparing 2016/2017, 2018, 2019

Sitting	2016/2017		2018		2019	
	N=1836		N=147		N=131	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Speaking	77	15	67	9	69	7
Listening	65	17	63	14	66	13
Reading	57	18	62	15	58	11
Writing	44	14	60	8	63	11
Overall	61	12	63	8	65	8

The 2018 cohort's mean scores display the same ranking of speaking, listening, reading, then writing, as the 2016/2017 data. But unusually, in 2019, the writing mean score was higher than reading, suggesting that the reading test was harder than in previous sittings.

#### 7.4.2. Normality testing

Normality testing of the overall scores in 2016/2017 indicated that they were not normally distributed as a rule, however, in the triangulation data, KS values were  $p > .05$  meaning these cohorts' overall scores were normally distributed (Table 18).

Table 18 Normality findings 2018/2019

			August 2018	August 2019	December 2016	March 2017	May 2017	July 2017
N					542	677	480	137
Overall	KS	Sig.	.20	.08	.00	.00	.00	.07
	z	skew	-.37	-.03	.22	2.89	2.19	.42
		kurtosis	-1.53	1.39	-3.63	-1.21	-.85	-1.46
Speaking	KS	Sig.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01
	z	skew	-1.28	-1.54	-2.93	-2.89	-2.53	-1.79
		kurtosis	5.00	11.12	-3.63	0.10	-2.81	1.59
Listening	KS	Sig.	.05	.01	.00	.00	.00	.01
	z	skew	.62	-.50	-2.76	-1.38	-2.07	-.84
		kurtosis	-1.01	-1.11	-3.31	-1.73	-3.55	1.48
Reading	KS	Sig.	.02	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01
	z	skew	-1.57	-.66	-1.11	0.31	2.93	0.96
		kurtosis	-.47	-2.04	-3.56	-3.84	-2.35	-1.13
Writing	KS	Sig.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	z	skew	-1.18	-1.11	6.19	6.93	5.56	1.47
		kurtosis	-.06	.11	4.38	7.39	8.49	-0.65

But, once again the skill area scores were mostly not normally distributed; KS values were all  $p < .05$ , apart from the 2018 listening. Listening was not skewed nor kurtotic, but very mild negative skew was evident in speaking and reading, but it was far less than the comparator data. There was also mild negative skew on the writing scores, in contrast to the strong positive skew seen in 2016/2017. The negative skew was expected as the TELL was again being used as a competency test at the end of a pre-sessional with a pass mark set at 60%. That both the speaking and writing scores were negatively skewed in this instance suggests that these students had been well prepared for the test. In addition, the strongly positive kurtosis values for speaking ( $z=5$  and  $11$ ) suggests that markers were using a conservative range of marks near to, or on the pass mark.

### 7.4.3. Within-subjects individual standard deviation [SD] analysis

As with the 2016/2017 data, the standard deviation of scores gained across the four skills was calculated for each student to identify even and uneven sets of scores, measure their frequency, and at a later stage, to investigate what impact, if any, uneven competency had on overall scores. These individual *SD* values were somewhat positively skewed (Table 19), just as the December 2016 and March 2017 cohorts were.

Table 19 *Distribution of individual SD values, comparing 2016/2017 and 2018/2019*

TELL cohort	N	Individual SD value			z		KS	
		M	SD	SE	Skewness	Kurtosis	statistic	p
Aug 2018	147	8.97	3.55	.29	2.83	.22	.09	.00
Aug 2019	131	10.90	4.37	.38	1.34	-.36	.06	.20
(2018/2019)	(278)	(9.88)	(4.07)	(.24)	(3.45)	(.08)	(.07)	(.00)
(2016/2017)	(1836)	(16.82)	(6.15)	(.14)	(4.36)	(-1.84)	(.03)	(.00)

But the 2018 and 2019 cohorts had much smaller means, indicating far less prevalence and severity of uneven competency. Indeed, Table 20 shows they had a greater proportion of profiles that could be categorised as *even*.

Table 20 *Proportion of cohort considered even 2018/2019*

TELL cohort	N	SD value below 5	
		n	%
September 2018	147	20	13.60
September 2019	131	14	10.69

In the 2016/2017 dataset, uneven competency in individual profiles was very common and was characterised by some very large gaps between speaking and writing scores. The individual *SD* scores ranged from .50 to 41.44. In the 2018/2019 data, individual *SD* values ranged considerably less, from 1.73 to 18.52 in 2018, and 2.52 to 25.85 in 2019. Nonetheless, 67% of the sample were in the lower and upper quartiles (Table 21) showing that uneven profiles were also common in these students, although not so starkly demonstrated as in the 2016/2017 data at 83%. By extension, there was a much greater proportion, roughly a third, with even or less spiky profiles, double that of the previous data. The most uneven profiles again only represented just under 1% of the cohort. They had lower overall scores than the other quartiles just as in 2016/2017, however, as this was a much smaller sample it is not safe to draw any conclusions from these two students' results. If this quartile is disregarded, the other quartiles follow the same trend as the 2016/2017 data in that scores in all skills improve with reduced uneven competency.

Table 21 Mean scores according to SD value of individual students 2018/2019

SD value (S,L,R,W)	Proportion of sample	M				
		Overall	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Spikiest top quartile SD of 25.85 to 19.83	1%	57%	50%	83%	31%	63%
Upper quartile SD of 19.82 to 13.80	19%	58%	69%	62%	46%	55%
Lower quartile SD of 13.79 to 7.77	48%	63%	69%	63%	60%	58%
Least spiky quartile SD of 7.76 to 1.73	32%	64%	67%	65%	64%	61%
<i>Even profiles</i> SD of below 5*	<i>(12%)</i>	<i>(65%)</i>	<i>(67%)</i>	<i>(65%)</i>	<i>(63%)</i>	<i>(63%)</i>

*\*sub-set of the least spiky quartile*

#### 7.4.4. Within-subjects profile labelling

The labelling revealed that the most frequently occurring pattern of competency in the 2018/2019 data, seen in 11% of the sample from strongest to weakest, was once again speaking, listening, reading, then writing [SLRW] (Fig.7).

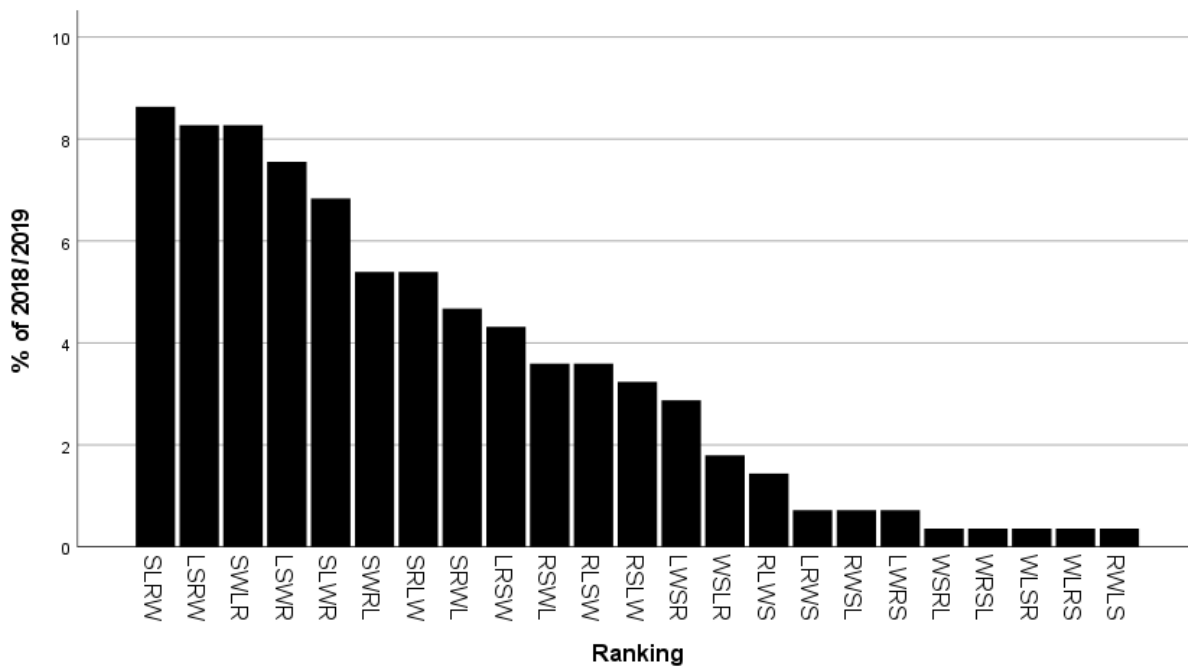


Figure 7 Frequency of profile type 2018/2019

However, there were other profiles also. In particular, [LSRW] and [SWLR] represented 8% each of these sittings, and [LSWR] represented nearly 8%. In this respect [SLRW] did not dominate as much as it did in 2016/2017. 30% of students had a profile with the reading score higher than the listening score, in contrast to 17% in the 2016/2017 data, and 41% of profiles featured speaking and listening as the strongest skills compared to 64%. 12% of students scored better in writing than speaking, which is quite different to the lower proportions seen earlier that hovered around 2%. Nine students, representing 3.2% of the sample, scored best in writing. This is eight times more than in the 2016/2017 data, but nonetheless a tiny proportion.

#### 7.4.5. Between-subjects profile differences

The labelling system allowed the most commonly occurring profile type to be identified, that of [SLRW] as mentioned above. An independent samples *t*-test was then conducted to compare the students with this profile type with the other profiles. Skill area and overall scores, and *SD* measures were compared (Table 22).

Table 22 Independent samples t-test comparing profile type scores, and SD values 2018/2019

	Profile type				<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	[SLRW] (N=30)		Non [SLRW] (N=248)				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Speaking	72.00	8.20	67.81	8.14	2.65	.01	.52 (M)
Listening	64.10	8.66	63.74	15.57	.19	.42	.02 No effect
Reading	58.30	8.89	58.73	15.57	-.23	.41	-.03 No effect
Writing	52.97	8.74	59.27	8.09	-3.76	.00	-.77 (M)
Overall	62.00	7.70	62.55	8.91	-.36	.36	-.06 No effect
<i>Individual SD</i>	8.68	3.61	10.03	4.10	-1.90	.03	-.33 (S)

Note. Cohen's (1988) effect sizes in brackets

In the SLRW profiles, speaking scores were significantly higher, (mean difference = 4.19, 95% CI: .98 to 7.40,  $d=.52$ ) and writing significantly lower, (mean difference = 6.3, 95% CI: -9.71 to -2.90,  $d=.77$ ) but there were no real differences in listening, reading or overall scores. This is more nuanced than the 2016/2017 data where all skill areas were significantly different, however, the gap between the productive skills are once again setting this group apart, although to a lesser extent with a smaller magnitude of difference, of which writing was the most prominent rather than speaking in the 2016/2017 cohorts. Again, it is worth highlighting that, just like the original dataset, students with the [SLRW] profile were not significantly different to the others in their overall scores, masking the weaknesses in writing.



## 7.5. RQ2: Are there relationships between skills areas and with uneven competency?

### 7.5.1. Correlation analysis

Correlation coefficients were again calculated using overall and skill area scores (Table 23). Due to the normality testing results and the smaller sample sizes, Spearman's rho was chosen.

Table 23 Relationships between skill areas 2018/2019

Relationships between skills		<i>rs</i>	
		August 2018	August 2019
Listening & Reading	Receptive	.49 (24%) M	.52 (27%) L
Reading & Writing	Literate	.39 (15%) M	.46 (21%) M
Speaking & Listening	Innate	.39 (15%) M	.40 (16%) M
Speaking & Writing	Productive	.35 (12%) M	.48 (23%) M

*Note. Coefficient of determination in brackets & Cohen's (1988) small, medium and large classifications*

Again, the largest correlation was seen with the receptive skills of listening and reading, of identical strength to March 2017 at .49, or very close to July 2017 at .53. However, the literate skills of reading and writing appeared to be less correlated in these cohorts than in the 2016/2017 data, which was surprising as they appeared to be stronger cohorts by dint of their overall scores which were very similar to December 2016's, leading to the suspicion that there was an unusual influence on one of these skills' scores. Speaking and writing were the least correlated in the 2018 sitting, which follows the same trend as the findings from 2016/2017, but the 2019 data does not fit this pattern. Instead, it appears that speaking and listening scores are least correlated.

Secondly, correlation coefficients were calculated using the individual *SD* values, to uncover the direction and strength of relationships between the skill areas and the measure of uneven competency (Table 24).

Table 24 Relationship of overall and skill area scores with individual *SD* value 2018/2019

Relationship of overall and skill scores, with <i>SD</i> score	<i>rs</i>		
	Both sittings combined	2018	2019
Overall	-.25** (6%) S	-.09 (1%) No correlation	-.34** (12%) M
Speaking	.08 (1%) No correlation	.17 (3%) S	-.11 (1%) S
Writing	-.29** (8%) S	-.11 (1%) S	-.39** (15%) M
Listening	-.08 (1%) No correlation	-.13 (2%) S	-.02 (0%) No correlation
Reading	-.38** (15%) M	-.11 (1%) S	-.55** (30%) L

Note. Coefficient of determination in brackets

\*\*Correlation significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

In the 2016/2017 data, a negative correlation between writing and uneven competency was found. This relationship is also evident in the data for 2019, but not so much in the previous year. The medium-to-strong positive correlations with speaking are not seen here either, because these cohorts had less of a productive gap due to lower speaking means. Overall scores for 2018 hide the nature of any uneven profiles, just like in 2016/2017, however, the large negative correlations between reading, and to a certain extent writing scores, and *SD* value in the 2019 data mean that these overall scores probably do reflect the fact that stronger literacy has reduced uneven competency, and therefore the overall scores are a better reflection of all round competency.

### 7.5.2. Standard multiple regression analysis

A standard multiple regression was used again to investigate the relationship between skill area scores and uneven competency in individuals. The assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals were checked. Five outliers were identified, by determining the critical chi-square value at alpha level .01. They were removed so that Mahalanobis distance did not exceed the critical value for the number of independent variables. Cook's distance maximum value was .08. The resulting sample for regression was  $n=273$ .

Table 25 *Descriptives of standard multiple regression of individual SD value 2018/2019*

Skill	M	SD	N	95% CI	
				lower	upper
Individual SD (DV)	9.75	3.89	273	6.02	13.75
Speaking	68.65	7.50	273	.12	.24
Listening	63.74	14.90	273	.00	.07
Reading	58.90	14.78	273	-.16	-.10
Writing	58.66	8.35	273	-.17	-.06

Using the enter method it was found that all skill scores significantly explain 32% of the variance in uneven competency ( $F(4, 268) = 31.29, p < .05, R^2 = .32, R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .31$ ). This is less than the  $R^2 = .49$  in 2016/2017, which is unsurprising as this sample featured fewer and less extreme uneven profiles. The unstandardised beta values in Table 26 below show that speaking scores increase the value slightly, while both reading and writing scores decrease it to a slightly lesser degree.

Table 26 *Unstandardised (B) and standardised (β) regression coefficients 2018/2019*

	unstandardised		standardised	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>r</i>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β			zero	partial	part
Speaking	.18	.01	.34	6.02	<.001	.12 (1.44%)	.35 (12.25%)	.30 (9%)
Listening	.03	.01	.13	2.18	.03	no correlation	.13 (1.69%)	.11 (1.21%)
Reading	-.13	.01	-.50	-8.13	<.001	-.43 (18.49%)	-.45 (20.25%)	-.41 (16.81%)
Writing	-.12	.01	-.25	-4.10	<.001	-.30 (9%)	-.24 (5.76%)	-.21 (4.41%)

*Note. Coefficient of determination in brackets*

In the 2016/2017 data reading scores did not play this role, however, listening scores again make the smallest contribution to the variance. The *r* values indicate that, of the productive skills, speaking again has more unique influence on uneven competency than writing, as was seen in the 2016/2017 data, but this time reading is making the greatest unique contribution to decreasing the value, indicating that the best readers were the least uneven. Students in 2019 must have found the reading component particularly hard as the mean for this year was lower than for 2018, which might help explain the anomaly.

## 7.6. Summary of Phase 1 triangulation

The data from 2018/2019 gave a similar, albeit generally less extreme, picture of the extent and shape of uneven competency in EAP profiles. There were more similarities than differences with the 2016/2017 data. For example, while the triangulation data had a much greater proportion of score profiles that were categorised as even, in both datasets uneven profiles predominated. The 2018 cohort had the largest proportion of even profiles at 14%, demonstrating uneven competency is more common than not, even in the best-case scenario. Also, like the 2016/2017 data, mean speaking scores were significantly above mean overall

scores, while reading scores were below. However, a small difference between datasets was that the triangulation mean writing scores were either equal to, or just below the overall scores, so they were less extremely placed, and in a similar vein, mean listening scores were either equal to or above mean overall scores, rather than distinctly above. The [SLRW] profile was again the most commonly occurring, despite other profiles such as [LSRW], [SWLR] and [LSWR] also being present. Speaking and listening featured as the most commonly occurring strongest skills, although just over a third of students did better in reading than listening, as was also seen in the original dataset. Moreover, only a tiny proportion of students scored better in writing than speaking, or best in writing overall, just as was the case with the 2016/2017 data.

One difference in the 2019 data was that the correlational analysis indicated greater reading, as well as writing, competency was associated with a greater overall competency, a finding confirmed by the multiple regression analysis. Despite this possibly anomalous difference, speaking contributes more to the variance in uneven competency than does writing, as was also seen with the 2016/2017 data. Listening does not greatly contribute to individual variance in either dataset.

## Chapter 8. Phase 2

### 8.1. Introduction

This chapter presents Phase two of the research which sought greater depth of understanding of uneven language competency by eliciting EAP students' beliefs about their profiles. The data collection-via-interview method and the subsequent thematic analysis are described. The qualitative findings are then reported separately in Chapter nine. Synthesis and discussion of Phases one and two can be found in Chapter ten.

To recap, in Chapters six and seven uneven competency was revealed to be a common feature of EAP students' L2 profiles, characterised by strong speaking and poor writing performance, with reading and listening being far more balanced and falling between the productive extremes. The findings suggest that processes and knowledge are not necessarily shared between skill areas, and that they develop at different stages and rates just as they do in an L1, meaning there might be a different timeframe for individuals to reach the required levels of competency in each skill. The main limitation of Phase one was that uneven competency was investigated from a performative cognitive perspective, concerning itself with learners' competency in the four skills as measured by testing. Non-cognitive individual differences were therefore overlooked by dint of the primarily exploratory, rather than explanatory, research approach. These are defined by Kautz, Heckman, Diris, Weel, and Borghans (2014) as the behaviours and attitudes that lead to successful learning, over and above cognitive processes and aptitude.

The literature reviewed in Chapter three suggests non-cognitive individual differences also play a role in determining the shape of a student's profile, given that attitudes are thought to shape L2 behaviour and not vice versa, (see Spolsky's General Model of Second Language Learning, 1989). For this reason, Phase two prioritised students' perspectives, homing in on their perceptions of their ability to speak, listen, read, and write English in academic contexts. The literature suggests that their SE beliefs would play a key role in self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2002; Teng et al., 2020) as well as having a strong influence on their motivation for developing

academic English (Shin & Kim, 2021), both of which might provide explanations for the uneven profiles seen in Phase one. Self-regulation involves the conscious, self-initiated behaviours that are required for learning an L2, especially producing and revising text (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2002) which the Phase one analysis revealed as being the weakest link in most students' profiles. The productive skills are crucial for university assessment, especially strong writing skills, but no research has yet directly explored how these are construed in relation to one another in the mind of the L2 learner. The emotional and self-regulatory side-effects of perceived discrepancies between skills, with downstream consequences for motivation and achievement, remain a mystery.

## 8.2. Phase 2 research questions

As a reminder, in Phase one the following questions were posed:

*RQ1. What is the extent and shape of uneven competency in L2 EAP profiles?*

*RQ2. Are there relationships between skill areas and with uneven competency?*

Phase two then explored whether, and to what extent, self-efficacy beliefs contribute to uneven skill development in academic contexts by posing the following questions:

*RQ3. What are students' SE beliefs about their L2 EAP profiles?*

*RQ4. What role do students' SE beliefs play in their performance?*

The aim was to gauge students' overall awareness of their competency profile, as well as uncover their specific beliefs about what they think they can and cannot do in each skill, following Bandura's (1997) model as the basis for elicitation and analysis of the data. The second question was designed to connect students' SE profile with their performance in academic contexts, exploring the extent to which SE beliefs mediated uneven competency via emotions, self-regulation, and motivation. It was ventured that divergent SE beliefs could result in an uneven profile, or that self-awareness of deficits could affect overall SE for EAP.

### 8.3. Phase 2 data collection

#### 8.3.1. Interview method

The main rationale for collecting qualitative data through one-to-one phenomenological semi-structured interviews was methodological triangulation and to help explain the quantitative findings as was explained in Chapter four. I hoped that each participant would be able to shed light on their own competency profile, and that the connections between reported behaviours and students' language profiles would become clear.

There were other reasons for adopting an interview method, despite some inherent limitations. Firstly, it was a theoretical choice to collect the authentic thoughts and ideas of participants (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Gathering data from participants during their programme of study has strong ecological credibility, as well as being relatively easy to access for the practitioner researcher. In interviews, participants' voices are heard directly which, in principle, leads to greater credibility of data collection. Linked to this, transcribing interview recordings helps mitigate against embellishment during analysis as the original words from participants can be quoted directly from the transcripts when presenting the findings. The interviews would elicit individuals' personal conceptions of their L2 profile and explore their experiences and the meanings they made of those (Seidman, 2006).

I considered the possibility that interviewees might not give a true representation of their thoughts or beliefs perhaps due to socially desirable responding, which can appear in the form of impression management on others (Paulhus, 2002), for example wanting to appear a *good* student when being interviewed by a university lecturer. Indeed, Rapley (2001) underlines that participants tend to engage in a particular form of "accounting work" when being interviewed, that their speech cannot be considered as neutral information exchange as it is used performatively for self-presentation in a "morally adequate" or "favourable" light (p.307). For international university students this might mean presenting themselves as harder-working or more concerned about their English than is the reality. Nonetheless, I judged that this threat to credibility would be attenuated as I was not one of the interviewees' teachers, nor, as they had



been made aware when agreeing to participate, had I any influence on their past or future assessment results, all of which made the interviews low stakes. Block (2000) contends that whatever interviewees decide to reveal is authentic and important to their understanding of the phenomena, therefore any accounting work on the part of students would give clues or prompts for follow up questions. Unfortunately, this also meant that the data was limited to the interviewees' level of self-awareness. Phenomenology requires non-directiveness on the part of the interviewer, but some participants may not have conceived of, or previously have reflected upon, their language competency in the same way as me. Dinkins (2005) suggests 'interpre-viewing', meaning that both interviewer and interviewee co-construct, share ideas and reflect together on the research themes. This idea was applied by creating an interview prompt (Fig.9) that would provide a basis for reflection on Bandura's (1997) sources of self-efficacy. Nonetheless, I needed to remain vigilant of participants' over-readily agreeing with the ideas on the prompt, as well as my posing leading questions as part of the interview technique. As Dinkins (2005) concludes, inevitably there will be a range of responses to the interviewer; some participants will have more to contribute to the dialogue, while others will be more willing to be led by the questions.

Another reason for carrying out interviews was that it would make a new contribution to understanding uneven profiles in the light of SE beliefs. As mentioned in Chapter three, pre-existing research on SE has been overly dependent on questionnaires (Raofi et al., 2012). These lack a depth of insight because their closed questions are pre-coded to the construct the researcher wants to explore which excludes the opportunity for other factors to be revealed. Moreover, the addition of open-ended, in-depth questions to a pre-existing questionnaire would not have provided an adequate solution as this would have required the study's respondents to express themselves in writing in English, which I had already identified as being their weakest skill. While it is true questionnaires can be translated into multiple languages allowing participants to respond in whichever language they feel most comfortable, there is a tangible risk of important open questions being skipped or being answered minimally, thereby

jeopardising effective data collection (Dörnyei, 2007). A one-to-one interview, in contrast, could maximise depth.

Flexibility of format was another reason for choosing interviews. The semi-structured interview is defined by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) as being a series of standardised, open questions and follow up probes. This format was appropriate as it was necessary to strike a balance between the need to gain comparable data from one participant to the next, but not at the expense of hearing each student's views on their unique combination of beliefs. Open questions allow for unexpected answers, revealing unexpected relationships and leading to new hypotheses, while probes invite participants to extend or elaborate on their answers, allowing the researcher to better understand participants' thinking (Wellington, 2015). In this study, probes reduced the likelihood of participants not understanding or fully answering questions due to the language barrier as there was flexibility for myself and respondent to check our understanding. The downside of this flexibility was maintaining consistency; interviews that were longer in duration, or where strong rapport between myself and interviewee allowed for efficient communication, could have potentially yielded more ideas, thereby skewing the overall analysis towards those individuals' views, leaving other voices less heard. However, this was mitigated through non- cross-sectional coding, so that each transcript had equal opportunity to contribute to the analysis (Mason, 2018).

### 8.3.2. Interviewee sampling approach

Due to the mixed-methods approach, a separate exercise in sampling was required for Phase two, although all data were sourced from learners in the UK EAP context as per the delimitations described in the Introduction. I had intended to purposely recruit interview participants from UCLan's in-sessional EAP classes running from September 2019 to June 2020, as these students would have been part of the triangulation dataset. However, this was disrupted by the global Covid-19 pandemic, as from mid-March 2020 onwards the campus was closed, meaning that interviewees were harder to recruit, and interviews had to be conducted remotely using video-conferencing software. Nonetheless, participants were sourced from

UCLan’s international student body in March 2020, and from the pre-sessional course in July 2020. After an interruption in the study itself, further participants were interviewed in March 2021 and from the pre-sessional in July 2021 (Table 27).

Table 27 *Interviewees*

Part.	L1(s)	English learning experience	University study
1	Mandarin	Since age 10, primary school	Pre-sessional English 2019, MA TESOL
2	Mandarin	Since age 10, primary school	Pre-sessional English 2019, LLM International Bus. Law
3	German	Since age 7, primary school	BA Linguistics & Korean
4	Italian	Since age 7, primary school	BA English Literature & Spanish
5	Mandarin	Since age 10, primary school	Pre-sessional English 2020, MA TESOL
6	Mandarin	Since age 10, primary school	Pre-sessional English 2020, MA Digital Science & AI
7	Mandarin	Since age 10, primary school	Pre-sessional English 2020, MA TESOL
8	Turkish	Since age 10, primary school	Pre-sessional English, PhD. Forensic Science
9	Arabic	Since age 7, primary school	Pre-sessional English 2020, MA TESOL
10	Czech	Since age 8, primary school	BA Asia Pacific Studies with Korean
11	Croatian, Italian	Since age 7, primary school	BA Asia Pacific Studies with Korean
12	Czech, Slovak	Since age 9, primary school	BA Chemistry
13	Kurdish, Turkish	Since age 9, lower secondary	Pre-sessional English 2021, Foundation Entry
14	Arabic	Since primary school	Pre-sessional English 2021, BEng Gas Safety Engineering
15	Arabic	Since age 18	Pre-sessional English 2021, BEng Fire Safety Engineering

The resulting convenience sample potentially suffered selection bias with compromised generalisability (Saumure & Given, 2008), but given that Phase two was qualitative and purposefully in-depth, I never intended to claim that the individual views of these students would represent international students generally. Instead, I judged that their testimony would uncover a range of traits, themes, and thought processes that practitioners could be aware of in their own classes. For this reason, the number of qualitative interviews was not pre-determined, instead, data collection and analysis commenced and continued until a variety of viewpoints were gained. I was guided by the concepts of *information power* (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016) and *adequacy* (Morse, 2015), meaning the sufficiency and quality of data determined the sample size rather than a set number of participants. This is in contrast with the perhaps more familiar concept of *saturation* that originally arose from the constant comparison analysis approach within GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1999), that today can be mis-used in attempts to quantify a qualitative sample (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Reaching saturation implies

information redundancy (Morse, 2015), in the sense that the analysis from the sample ceases to provide new information, codes or themes, and that the relationships between them are fully disclosed, meaning a theory can be generated. The problem with saturation is that it does not necessarily ensure quality, and in any case, is not compatible with the qualitative paradigm within which knowledge is considered partial as well as situated (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Furthermore, as Low (2019) rightfully points out, saturation is unobtainable as there will always be something yet to be experienced or expressed, such is the variety of human lived experience. Qualitative research aims not to comprehensively report on phenomena, instead, it presents selected patterns, in this case, a range of views on SE across language skills.

Information power, therefore, is a more feasible and logical basis for determining a qualitative sample size because it considers a range of overlapping factors such as the research aim, its theoretical underpinning, the sample's specificity, the quality of the dialogue collected, and the analytical strategy adopted (Malterud et al., 2016). The adequacy of the sample in Phase two was monitored on an on-going basis with the guiding principle of 'does this interview contribute to existing knowledge?', making a trade-off between depth versus breadth (Patton, 2015). This meant that fewer participants were interviewed to attain a depth of understanding of individual cases, but I purposely and specifically included Chinese L1, Arabic L1 and a range of other language backgrounds, reflecting the L1 backgrounds of the quantitative sample. The interviewees had differing language competency, ranging from B2 to C1, as well as differing SE beliefs about that competency, but enough commonalities emerged to detect patterns. Additionally, given that the study was applying Bandura's (1997) SE model, rather than taking a purely GT approach, the sample needed only to "make a difference" as Malterud et al. (2016, p.3) put it, shedding fresh light on an established idea as opposed to generating a new theory. The quality of dialogue aspect of information power expresses the idea that fewer participants are needed when there is effective communication between the researcher and the participant. My extensive teaching experience and ability to establish rapport was advantageous here in eliciting detailed answers from interviewees, despite the challenge for them of expressing themselves in their L2. Finally, the analytical strategy was cross-case to generate themes,

meaning that perhaps more participants would have been better than fewer (Malterud et al., 2016), but again the aim was to generate adequate information that could usefully contribute to EAP practice in the UK. It would be impossible to establish a definitive theory of SE for EAP due to the vast range of teaching contexts and learner variables.

### 8.3.3. Ethical procedure

Ethical approval for one-to-one interviews was granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee in November 2019. The approval process involved providing evidence of due consideration of the ethical aspects of approaching and recruiting most of the participants from the University's own student body. This was particularly important as there was the potential for a coercive power dynamic as Ferguson, Yonge, and Myrick (2004) warn, between myself and the participants, given that I was both researcher and a member of teaching staff. It was vital to explain to interviewees that participation in the study was entirely voluntary, that there was no influence on their marks for their degree programmes, that there were no conflicts of interest, and that they were free to withdraw from the study with no repercussions. Posters were used to recruit volunteers and interested students were emailed a detailed information sheet in advance of the interview (Appendix iii). This document made the research aims explicit, explained the risks and benefits of participation, assured anonymity and confidentiality, and explained clearly that interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed. Subsequently, at the start of each interview I double-checked that participants had read the information sheet. I also asked whether they had any questions and whether they were comfortable with being audio recorded. Consent forms were then co-signed to that effect (Appendix iv).

### 8.3.4. Piloting and reflexivity

Steps were taken to maximise the quality of the data collection via piloting and reflexivity. Two pilot interviews took place in January and February 2020 with students that met the sampling criteria for the study. I piloted the interview guide and reflected upon my interview technique. I transcribed the audio files, all the while making decisions about the best approach for future interviews. Post-pilot, some elements of the problem-centred interview approach (Witzel,

2000) was adopted to address weaknesses, for example, the initial questions on the interview guide were largely biographical. I required a more efficient process to capture these data, so a short questionnaire (Fig.8) was devised to gather basic details about each interviewee and orient them towards thinking about their language profile.

Defining Spiky Profiles & the role of self-efficacy beliefs: Pre-interview questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

First language/s \_\_\_\_\_

Academic subject/s \_\_\_\_\_

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

English learning: How long? \_\_\_\_\_

Where & what for? \_\_\_\_\_

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely / not really / no

If yes, which skills? \_\_\_\_\_

What English exams have you taken? \_\_\_\_\_

What score/s did you get? Reading\_\_\_\_\_

Writing\_\_\_\_\_

Speaking\_\_\_\_\_

Listening\_\_\_\_\_

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no

Do these scores seem too high or too low according to your belief about your English level?

\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 8 Pre-interview questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent to participants prior to interviews and the information was confirmed verbally in a conversational way at the start of each interview to build rapport. This section would be audio-recorded, but not transcribed, circumventing lengthy transcription of background information. I noted that some of the interview questions required greater precision, for example, when asking about academic writing, it was necessary to ask about different tasks, as participants may have greater SE for familiar tasks such as essays, than less familiar ones such as reflections. I also felt more systematic elicitation of participants' beliefs could be achieved via a visual prompt, explained below in further detail.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) stress the importance of adopting a friendly tone when conducting interviews, but listening back to them, I reflected that I was too animated and on occasion using a leading intonation pattern. In-depth responsive interviewing, with follow-up questions shaped according to participant responses was not consistently achieved, and some opportunities to prompt for fuller answers were being missed. Witzel and Reiter (2012) recommend the use of ad hoc questions, as well as communication strategies for checking understanding. So, later interviews included questions such as: 'so you like studying then?' (Participant 7, IN I.077, p.7); 'how does that make you feel?' (Participant 7, IN I.106, p.7). Participants' answers were also summarised and recast to check understanding: 'so you think, am I right to say, um, it's very straight-forward?' (Participant 6, IN I.045, p.6). A final aspect was taking field notes immediately after each interview, an element that Witzel (2000) calls the *post-script*. Poland (2008) explains that this is another aspect of quality; field notes can help capture the circumstances of an interview which contextualise and provide support in the subsequent analysis of the transcripts.

#### 8.3.5. Interview materials

The finalised interview guide contained three parts. The first part was the questionnaire mentioned earlier (Fig.8). Its purpose was to elicit contextual information about each participant, variables such as age, L1 background, previous university study experiences and current degree subject area. These are well-known test-taker characteristics (Lumley & O'Sullivan, 2005) that have proven influences on linguistic competence and knowing these

would support the subsequent thematic analysis. There were also questions relating to their English L2 learning background and purposes for learning English, as details about the participants' L2 background are very helpful in understanding the development of an uneven profile, before moving on to several very straight-forward closed questions to probe their current SE beliefs relating to the four skills, and to probe whether they self-identified as having uneven competency. Previous exam scores and the influence of these on their sense of confidence were also elicited.

The second part of the interview was supported by a visual prompt, containing five sections to allow interviewees to take charge of the interview and talk about the four skills according to their priorities (Fig.9).

<p><b>Listening in academic contexts</b> -listening to lectures/listening in class/for assessment</p> <p><b>Personal confidence (SE) score: ____ /100</b></p> <p>More confident/things I can do: Less confident/things I can't do: Where does your confidence come from?</p>	<p><b>Reading in academic contexts</b> -reading course books/journal articles/for assessment</p> <p><b>Personal confidence (SE) score: ____ /100</b></p> <p>More confident/things I can do: Less confident/things I can't do: Where does your confidence come from?</p>
<p>Where do you get that idea from? comparing with others, e.g. friends or classmates comments from others, e.g. feedback from teachers, classmates, friends, parents past experience, e.g. exams, marked work your emotions today, e.g. does how you feel today change the score? How does this compare with your first language?</p>	
<p><b>Speaking in academic contexts</b> -speaking English to lecturers/in front of classmates/for assessment, e.g. presentations (-speaking English outside of class?)</p> <p><b>Personal confidence (SE) score: ____ /100</b></p> <p>More confident/things I can do: Less confident/things I can't do: Where does your confidence come from?</p>	<p><b>Writing in academic contexts</b> -writing essays, reports, timed exam essays, dissertation (writing academic assignments in your language?)</p> <p><b>Personal confidence (SE) score: ____ /100</b></p> <p>More confident/things I can do: Less confident/things I can't do: Where does your confidence come from?</p>

Figure 9 Visual prompt for interviews

Interviewees were prompted for a personal confidence score for each language skill. This design reflects previous questionnaire research where Pajares (2003) explains he opted for a scale of 1-100 because the SE ratings it generated correlated well with teachers' ratings of performance. In a similar vein, interviewees were invited to give themselves a score as an



opening gambit, and as a rapid way to gauge differences between skill areas. Following on from this, interviewees' subjective understandings were elicited, with my probing what they felt were their strengths and weaknesses when operating in academic contexts. The prompts at the centre of the guide were designed to explore the origin of those beliefs, using the construct of SE as first described by Bandura (1997), regarding past experiences, comparisons with others, comments from others and affective states.

The third and final part of the interview further probed participants' perceptions of differences between their skills, and elicited whether they thought it had an impact on their performance, using questions such as, 'Does your confidence make a difference to your performance? If so, in what way?', 'Are there differences between your skills? Does that affect your confidence?' Is there anything else you want to tell me? The new interview guide worked well with the first three interviewees to elicit a range of beliefs, but it also elicited data on learning strategies participants employed to feel confident, an aspect that had been raised in the literature. For this reason, in subsequent interviews further detail about strategy use was probed when it was mentioned, and some meta-questions were added such as, 'Have you ever thought about how confident you are in your L2?' and, 'How important is it to feel confident when using a second language?' This partially scaffolded structure to the interview gave interviewees equal opportunity to respond, and provided a degree of consistency between interviews, while also allowing them the freedom to talk to their specific concerns and interpretation of their experiences.

## 8.4. Phase 2 data analysis

### 8.4.1. Thematic content analysis

An exploratory content-driven analytical approach was taken, as the analytic purpose (Guest et al., 2012a) was to uncover interviewees' SE beliefs and to explore the relationship between these beliefs and their language competency profile. As mentioned in Chapter four, thematic analysis involves the identification of themes, or "repeated patterns of meaning" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.86), that will answer the research questions. Guest et al. (2012b) further specify that analysis involves the identification of semantic themes, meaning the explicitly stated ideas,

and latent themes that are a result of interpretation by the researcher. As participants were not necessarily fully metacognitively self-aware,<sup>40</sup> nor always able to express their beliefs easily or explicitly in their L2, there needed to be a mechanism for capturing implied ideas in the data such as interviewees' assumptions and conceptualisations. Latent themes, therefore, came from an interpretation of the interviewees' responses, in part guided by my teacher instincts. Moreover, the analytical approach distinguished between themes related to Bandura's SE construct, elicited deductively by the interview guide, and themes that arose inductively that also needed to be captured. The inductive capacity of thematic content analysis helped mitigate against the bias of working to a pre-determined theoretical framework and allowed for new concepts to emerge. In this and the following chapters, all initial codes and deductive themes are identified in italics, whereas inductive themes are distinguished by using capital letters.

Thematic analysis is hard to accomplish in a rigorous manner; themes can only be identified through a highly structured process of coding (Saldaña, 2013). For this reason, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages to thematic analysis were followed (Fig.10), from transcription to presentation of the results, with the interview field notes and transcriptions being the sole basis of the analysis. The steps provided a systematic process, which not only benefitted me as a novice qualitative researcher but also was indispensable for meeting Lincoln and Guba's (1985) quality criteria of dependability and confirmability, or trustworthiness of analysis.

---

<sup>40</sup> Meaning alert to their own learning processes and strategies, or beliefs about learning.

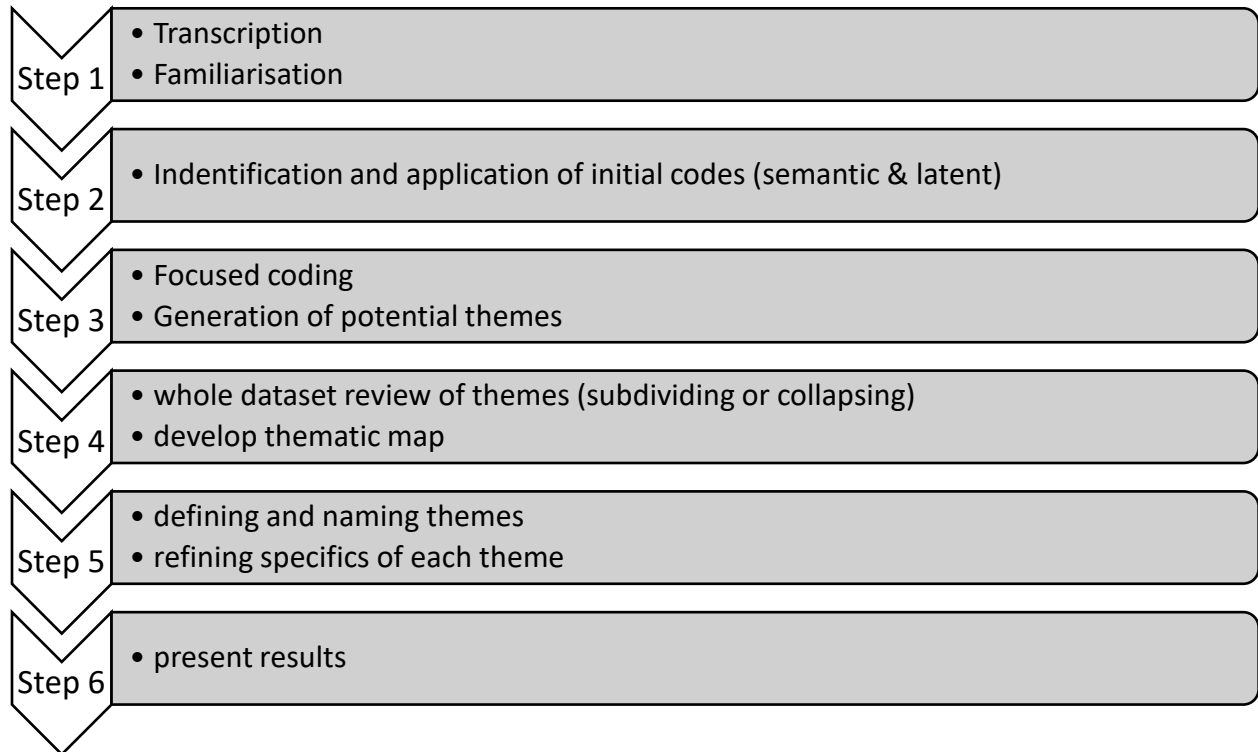


Figure 10 *Braun & Clarke's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis*

#### 8.4.2. Transcription approach

Poland (2008) stresses that transcription does not come before qualitative analysis, but is very much part of the process, requiring reflexivity and rigour on the part of the researcher.

Transcripts are the basis upon which qualitative analysis stands, therefore he rightly argues they should be of good quality. In this study the steps outlined by Poland (2008) were taken, such as conducting a pilot, using a notation system, carrying out a second-rater review of the transcription quality and taking field notes. I adopted an unfocused broad transcription approach to capture participants' meaning without a specific analytical focus on the way interviewees gave their answers, as opposed to narrow transcription (Gibson & Brown, 2009). This decision was taken to strike a balance between readability and fully faithful transcription, a concern highlighted by Jefferson (1983, cited in Hepburn & Bolden, 2017), but also to produce transcripts that were adequate, rather than exact (Flick, 2018). For exploring students' perceptions, sufficiency was the aim, so features such as overlapping speech and non-standard

pronunciation were not represented as these would make the format of the transcriptions less accessible and would distract from the participants’ core meaning. Nonetheless, turn-taking, pauses, paralinguistic behaviour, and grammar errors were included in the transcripts for authenticity. Transcripts were formatted following the guidance from Hepburn and Bolden (2017), who stipulate details such as line numbers, spacing and identifiers, and a simplified transcription key was adopted for consistency:

Table 28 *Transcription key*

IN	interviewer
P#	participant
?	rising intonation, questioning
,	continuing intonation
.	short pause
...	longer pause
[laughs] [indicates interview prompt]	behaviour and actions
[unintelligible]	unintelligible or indistinct speech
*name	anonymisation

*Based on Dressler & Kruez (2000, cited in Hepburn & Bolden, 2017).*

#### 8.4.3. Coding procedure

After I thoroughly familiarised myself with the data through the careful preparation of the transcripts as prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the analysis moved to Step 2, the application of initial or open codes, which is also referred to as “first cycle coding” (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2020, p.62). Open coding is coding data without using a prior framework (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and is an inductive approach. However, as mentioned previously, the interview prompt was based on Bandura’s SE model, which meant that during the process several initial codes, such as *past experience* and *speaking SE*, reflected the influence of the interview prompt rather than being truly inductive. Nonetheless, these codes served to locate evidence for SE beliefs playing a role in students’ profiles, while newly generated inductive codes brought other factors to the fore.

I uploaded the transcripts to NVivo and used the relevant coding tools within the software in the analysis. The initial coding was carried out line-by-line, coding direct words and phrases, as well as implied or inferred meanings. Of the many approaches to coding available, descriptive, in vivo, process, concept, and emotion codes were applied (Table 29). Descriptive coding helped to index demographic data from the participants, as well as categorise data according to the skill being described, for example *speaking SE*, which was useful for later cross-case analysis. In vivo coding captured the exact words or phrases participants used to talk about their experiences, for example “*pressure*”. Miles et al. (2020) note this is a good way to faithfully present participants’ voices. Codes generated in this way are presented in speech marks to clearly demarcate them from the other labels. Process coding was necessary to capture actions or reactions of the participants, for example *making mistakes* or *using technology*, or the context to which a belief was attached such as *speaking with L1 users of English*. Concept coding was employed to capture abstract notions, or as Miles et al. (2020) put it, “bigger picture” (p.66) meanings. For example, *ideation*, was an initial code created to capture the essence of a participant’s ability to find ways to express ideas in English. I also considered it necessary to capture emotions, as these have an influence on language behaviour. Those that were expressed directly by participants were captured through in vivo codes, such as “*afraid*”, or “*nervous*”, while others were interpretative such as *fear* and *feeling lacking*. All emotion codes were later categorised as very, or moderately, positive, or negative, sentiments.

Table 29 Step 2: Examples of initial codes

Transcription segments	Initial code/s	Coding approach
002 P1: though I have no confidence to speak with others, cos, um... <i>maybe if I prepared the sentence or the content I will be confident but, but if I don't prepare anything I'm scared to talk with others</i>	<i>speaking SE</i>	descriptive
	<i>preparing</i>	process
	<i>fear</i>	emotion
036 P2: <i>...I eager to communicate with the native speakers and probably because of this believe I have the confidence. Probably I will make so many mistakes, but I don't care</i>	<i>speaking SE</i>	descriptive
	<i>speaking w/ NS</i>	process
	<i>making mistakes</i>	process
	<i>eagerness</i>	emotion
116 P4: er, I'm sorry to say that but, <i>it's really my limit, I'm trying to have a different mindset, but I feel like I'm, I've got pressure on my shoulder because, um, basically most of courseworks in English Literature are essays</i>	<i>writing SE</i>	descriptive
	<i>writing formats</i>	descriptive
	<i>"pressure"</i>	in vivo
	<i>feeling lacking</i>	emotion
034 P6: oh yes... <i>I have the confidence to deal the idea, I think I have some, I have some problems on that, but I'm confident about that because I can speak in another way, to express the complicated idea, so speaking is not really difficult</i>	<i>speaking SE</i>	descriptive
	<i>ideation</i>	concept
082 P10: let's say timed exam essay that <i>would be a nightmare</i> so if my confidence in writing essays is like 80 to 85 because taking down the twenty, fifteen percent because of the mistakes I make, then then Grammarly like catches right, but that's not me catching it that's the Grammarly doing its job [laughs] um, um, let's say like timed exam essays <i>would be absolute nightmare, oh my God</i>	<i>writing SE</i>	descriptive
	<i>writing timed conditions</i>	process
	<i>using technology</i>	process
	<i>fear</i>	emotion

The process of initial coding involved making decisions about how to segment the transcript for the purposes of applying a code. Rapley (2001) highlights that analysis should not be based upon “decontextualised-features-of-talk” (p.304). By this he means the interviewer’s questions and responses should be included where necessary because “an awareness of the local context of the data production is central to analysing interviews, whatever analytic stance is taken” (p.306). There were instances where exchanges between myself and the participant needed to be coded as a chunk because meaning was being negotiated between us, and without the surrounding context the meaning of the participants’ words could have been interpreted differently. It was important to include my talk in the data analysis to show fully how the data had been elicited, thus fulfilling the quality criterion of confirmability.

The application of codes was inevitably open to researcher bias because it required interpretation (Mason, 2018). It took sustained reflexivity to code without being unduly influenced by my prior knowledge of concepts from the literature on self-efficacy. Not only that, but due to extensive teaching experience with certain nationality groups, I was aware that participants’ comments might conjure up pre-formed stereotypes. For example, when coding the transcripts of Chinese participants, I felt more inclined to notice and code negative comments about pronunciation that chimed with my experiences of Chinese students expressing a strong fear of making pronunciation errors; in other words, I was aware that I might be prone to confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998). A possible mitigation strategy could have been respondent validation, but in the light of the issues raised by Cohen et al. (2018) related to respondents’ changing their minds about what they said, disagreeing with the researcher’s interpretation, and being embarrassed, I judged that this might not be a useful approach. Moreover, it risked demanding too much of the participants’ level of language and time, and meetings would have needed to be conducted remotely, all of which were barriers to meaningful checks. An alternative approach would have been to ask an experienced researcher to code the transcripts separately, thus providing an external interpretation, but by the same token, this person might well have similar biases, especially a colleague from within the same department with similar teaching experience.

As an alternative, I recruited a recently graduated, qualified EFL teacher to code the transcripts of Participants 6 and 9, representing 14% of the dataset. Being of similar age to the participants and having also been an international student, I hoped she might identify closely with their language experiences. The Kappa coefficients for codes related to SE in the four skills were fair to excellent, ranging from  $k=.61$  to  $k=.95$ . At the debriefing, the second-rater stated that she found these units easy to identify, perhaps because they were so clearly elicited by the interview guide. However, I noted that I tended to code more of the transcript and to multiple codes; the second-rater coded 74% of the first transcript and 63% of the second transcript in comparison. This led to weaker agreement on the codes such as *practice* ( $k=.26$  Participant 6), *using technology* ( $k=.38$  Participant 9) and *seeing personal improvement* ( $k=.18$  Participant 9). This might be explained by the second-rater having less familiarity with the project and less confidence with the process, but it prompted me to return to the transcripts to re-consider the application of initial codes. The exercise was very useful, not only did the second-rater's holistic impression of the transcripts confirm much of my initial analysis, but she also ventured a new code which was named *unrealistic expectations*, although this code was latterly subsumed into *comparing with L1 speakers*.

Step 3 related to the second level of focused coding (Charmaz, 2014), where I decided how the codes should be categorised to allow potential themes to emerge. I took a non- cross-sectional inductive approach, in the sense that themes could arise from any of the transcripts, rather than my developing a codebook from one or two transcripts then subsequently applying them to the following transcripts. This was because after the first few interviews I noted that there was a wide range of experiences and preoccupations which might not be fully captured using this code and retrieve approach (Mason, 2018). To categorise reliably, I employed the constant comparison method (Boeije, 2002) from GT, looking for similarities and differences across the dataset, looking at it from different angles. Within each interview transcript, I was alert to reoccurring ideas and the way they were phrased by the participant, then these themes were compared between interviews that shared an L1 or degree subject, then different L1s or subject areas were also compared. The theme of *sources of SE* was directly generated by the interview



guide, from codes such as *comparison with others*, *past experience*, *comments from others*, and *emotional state*, that fitted with Bandura's (1997) model. I also grouped data in themes according to skill area. However, the most interesting part of the analysis was identifying emergent themes that did not appear to fit with Bandura's model but were nonetheless important to the experience of L2 EAP students. One of these potential themes was LEARNING STRATEGIES (Fig.11) that incorporated codes such as *going through feedback*, *preparing*, and *using technology*.

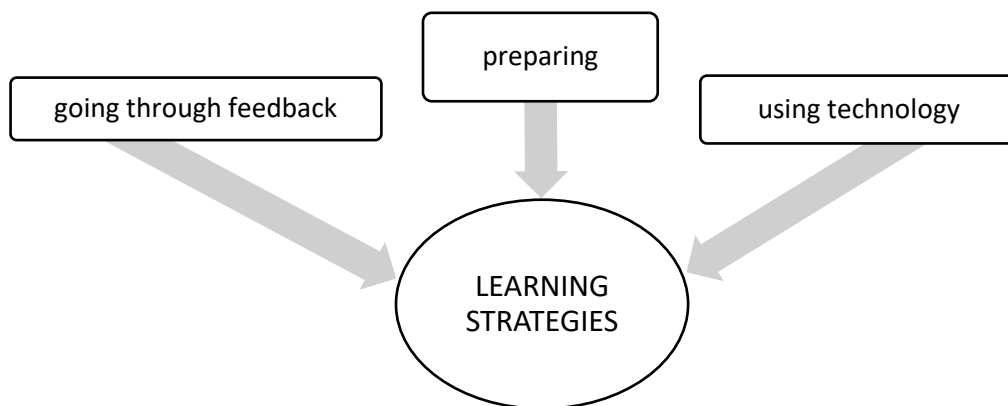


Figure 11 An example of a potential theme arising from Step 3

Step 4 involved reviewing the potential themes generated by Step 3, then organising them into several thematic maps to make better sense of the data. A theme encapsulates an important element that helps answer a research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is the outcome at the end of the coding process (Saldaña, 2013, p.14), or in other words, an abstraction of the analysis. I collapsed some overlapping themes, for example, *importance of reading* was subsumed within *SE for writing* as participants who mentioned reading did so with reference to producing written assignments. The themes TRANSLATING FROM L1 and LANGUAGE ATTRITION were set aside because, while representing interesting ideas, they were not relevant to the research aim. Richards (2003) outlines the need for analytic induction (p.277), a process through which themes are checked against the data, so where negative or deviant cases were

found, I re-defined the theme to better encapsulate them, or I created a new theme. For example, when reviewing the theme *sources of SE*, I realised that the data would be better organised by separating out events that built a positive sense of SE in the minds of participants, ‘this is something I can do’, from those that undermined it, ‘this is something I can’t do’. As a result, codes such as *not understanding*, *not being understood*, and *receiving marked work*, were categorised under the new theme of destroyers of SE.

For Step 5, I named themes in a way that made sense in relation to Bandura’s (1997) model. For example, the potential theme of LEARNING STRATEGIES (Fig.11) was re-organised as NON-BANDURA SOURCE of SE and simply named STRATEGIES (Fig.12) because it now included wider psychological aspects such as resilience and asking friends for feedback or reassurance.

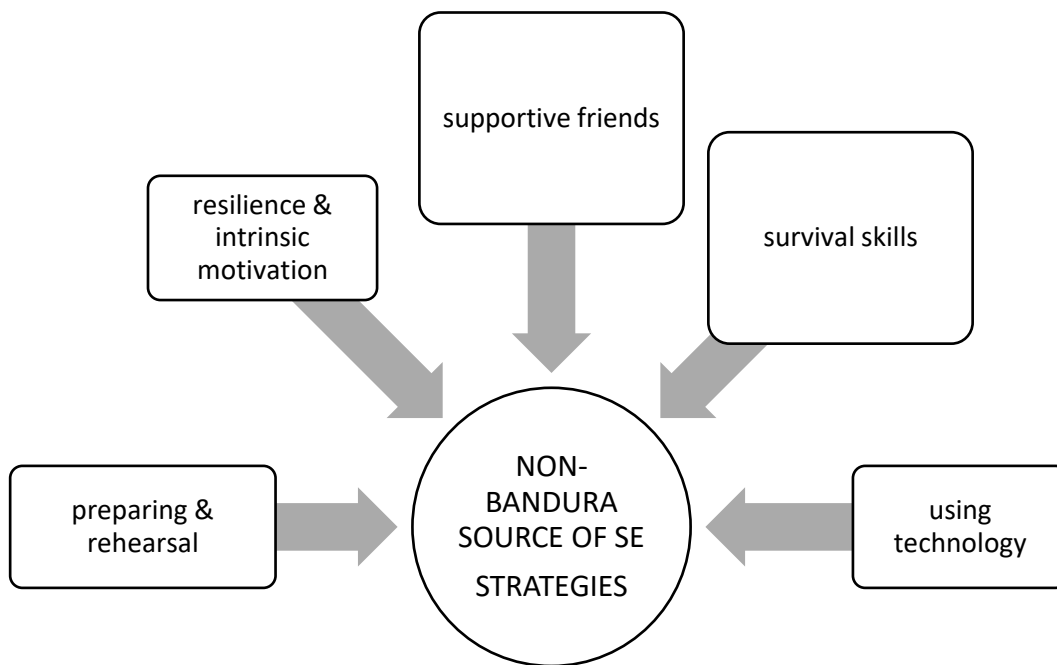


Figure 12 An example of a finalised theme

Another example of re-defining and naming themes was separating PRACTICE from the *past experience* element of *sources of SE*. This theme made a unique contribution to answering the research questions because *past experience* encapsulates Bandura’s (1997) concept of *mastery*

(Fig.13 left) in the sense of prior experiences that influence, either positively or negatively, one's sense of SE, while PRACTICE (Fig.13 right) encapsulated the forward-looking, pro-active practice that most interviewees reported engaging in to boost their sense of SE.

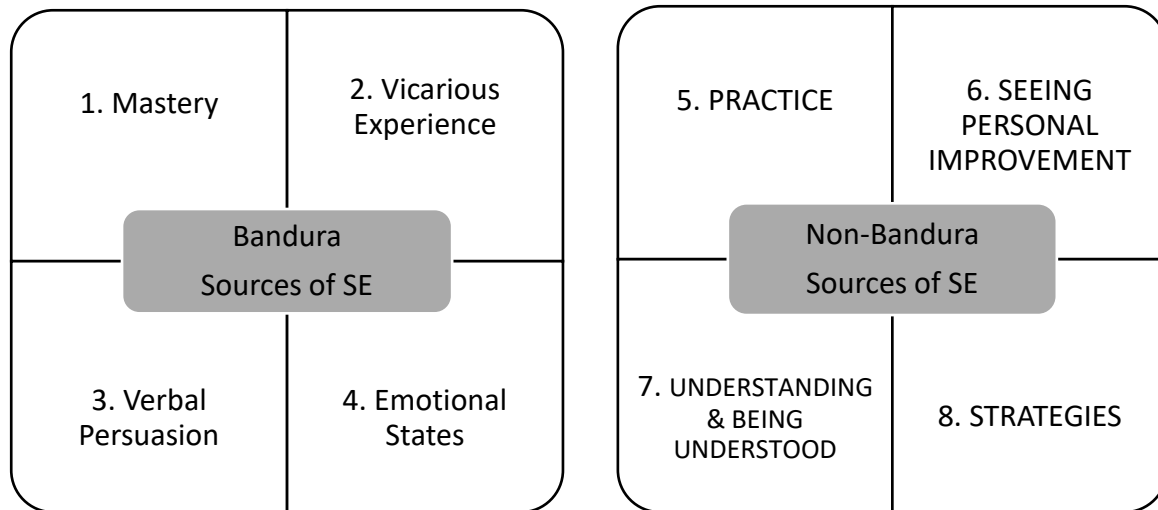


Figure 13 *Reviewing and mapping themes in relation to Bandura's (1997) SE model*

Step 6 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) analytical process relates to the third level of theoretical coding as outlined by Charmaz (2014). This is where the relationships between these themes are examined alongside their relevance to the research questions. These are reported in Chapter ten.

## Chapter 9. Phase 2 findings

### 9.1. Introduction

The interviews gauged participants' awareness of their language profile and uncovered their perceptions of what they could or could not do in the four skills, exploring their beliefs using Bandura's (1997) SE model. Participants were also asked whether having an awareness of an uneven profile affected their overall SE for EAP. The qualitative findings are presented here, firstly with students' awareness of their profile, then giving a thick description (Geertz, 1973, cited in Bryman, 2016, p.384) of students' beliefs regarding listening and reading, followed by speaking and writing. All quotations originate from the interview transcripts in Appendix v. In this chapter, themes that relate to Bandura's sources of SE are noted using italics, while emergent themes are indicated using capital letters. These will be discussed in further detail in Chapter ten.

### 9.2. RQ3: What are students' SE beliefs about their L2 EAP profiles?

#### 9.2.1. Profile awareness

Interviewees were able to describe their SE beliefs in detail and they demonstrated a good degree of self-awareness of their own profile. Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 13, and 14, stated a clear sense of having an uneven profile, while Participants 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15, believed their competency across skill areas to be balanced, albeit with specific areas of strength and weakness within each skill (Fig.14).

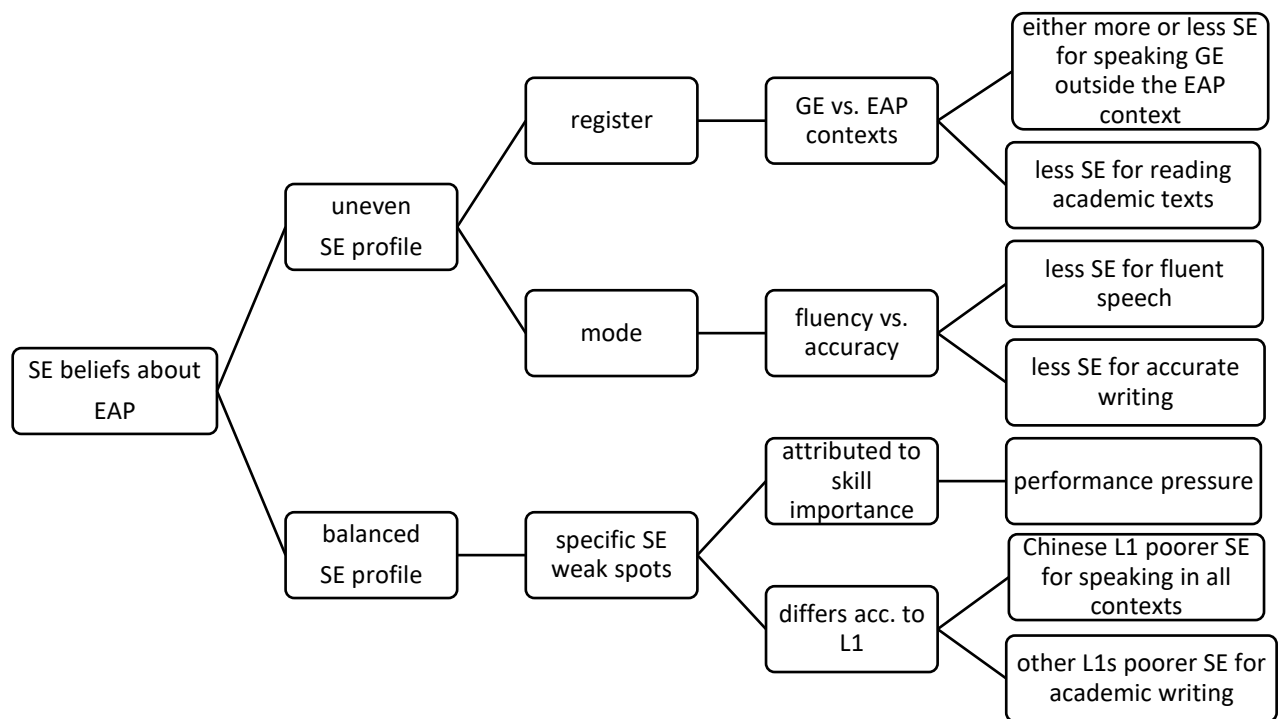


Figure 14 *Thematic map of participants' self-awareness*

Of those who identified themselves as being particularly unevenly self-efficacious, two patterns emerged. The first of these related to register; their SE for informal everyday English was quite different to that for the more formal academic registers. However, this was idiosyncratic. For instance, Participants 1 and 13 felt more SE for speaking in academic contexts than in day-to-day informal situations, while Participant 14 felt less able to read academic texts than other reading material he found online (P14:84), and for this reason he felt his English competency only became uneven when encountering more formal academic language. The other pattern related to inherent differences of mode and the expectations that participants associated with either speaking or writing, such as the spontaneity of speech versus the need for accuracy and organisation in writing. As Participant 1 explained, “when I writing something, er, I have time

to think, to think the structure of the sentence or the content, but when I speaking, like I said before, if I don't prepare some, yeah, I have no confidence" (P1:136). She felt her writing was a little clearer (P1:146) than her speaking. Participant 8 also felt more confident in her writing than speaking, saying it was less stressful due to not needing to find the correct pronunciation (P8:79). She expressed frustration in not being able to communicate ideas on the spot:

even if I know my topic even if I know my, er, background, if I, if I think, er, my speaking is not good enough, I feel less confident, confident, then, er, I couldn't show, er, performance what I want, how I want

IN: and how does that make you feel?

um... it makes me more stressful, because I, I start to think about, er, I give my idea to the others, so I need to choose correct words, for example, like, er, so different so I'm trying to catch the correct word. (P8:97-99)

Conversely, Participant 2 felt much more confident when speaking in English due to feeling less pressure to be accurate:

totally different, and er, you know probably we can talk, I can argue with you very naturally but when I write an email I need to, oh... is there some mistakes? I use a grammar check or use some translation machine to just make sure my sentence and I'm not 100% I write directly, so it's different

IN: so you think there's a big difference...

yeah, yeah, in my write I need to be careful, it's very prudent, prudently find I have to sure I have no any mistakes in my writing (P2:100-102)

Participant 4 was also very confident about speaking and listening, but was quite emotional when she stated, "I don't have very much self-esteem in my writing in academic" (P4:88). Her feelings appeared to be borne out of a severe contrast with *mastery* experiences in her first language, when she had previously scored very highly for writing, and the difficulties she had since encountered in the UK with organising her essay content. Participant 6 indicated in the pre-interview questionnaire that she felt there were definite differences in her competencies, that her productive skills were worse than her receptive skills, with writing being the worst, which she attributed to not being good at writing in L1 Chinese either (P6:44). However, during the interview she also expressed feeling less self-efficacious about understanding teachers, and

by extension, being able to take part in conversations or discussions (P6:28), so for her, listening and speaking were inextricably interlinked, making the receptive/productive distinction blurred. Participant 13 also found writing difficult, stating the formal academic registers were even harder still, in fact, “too hard” (P13:86). Like Participant 2, he was preoccupied with written accuracy, which led to a sense of insecurity and repeatedly checking his work (P13:88).

Of the participants who felt more evenly self-efficacious, they still expressed awareness of weaknesses in specific skills, as aptly expressed by Participant 5, “I think my language learning has no obvious shortcomings, only relative shortcomings” (P5: pre-interview questionnaire). He opined that Chinese students, himself included, generally felt they had weaknesses in speaking due to a lack of practice opportunities when learning English in China (P5:32). Participant 7, also Chinese, concurred, commenting that she thought it might vary according to the region of China, and/or size of city, with people from smaller northern cities being less able to speak than people from places such as Beijing and Shanghai, or bigger southern cities, due to a lack exposure to spoken English, “they can read, but, they they cannot even listen listen very, very well....and they, so they cannot speak, speak very well” (P7:92-94).

In contrast with the Chinese participants, the other participants more frequently mentioned feeling less SE for writing, sometimes due to already feeling confident about speaking. This was true of Participant 3 who described starting her UK study with strong SE for speaking, but that after a semester she felt much more SE for writing too. She thought her competencies had balanced up, although not entirely, stating that her writing would never be better than her speaking (P3:92). She attributed this to time spent practising, that she would always speak more than write, “because the speaking is what I’m working on the most I think, without realising it” (P3:94). She also attributed her profile to the manner in which she learnt English:

I feel like... the way you learn a language also influences the way it comes out, so I mostly learnt through videos and through, um, hearing things....so my speaking and my listening is, or usually is, a lot stronger than my, er, writing and reading (P3:130-132).

Nonetheless, she expressed surprise at how quickly her reading and writing were improving by studying for a degree in the UK. Similarly, Participant 10 reflected there was a difference between her speaking and writing that had persisted, even though her writing confidence used to be worse, “writing is probably still my weakest skill ... actually definitely [laughs]” (P10:98). Participant 11 did not think there was much difference between her skills, but, because she attributes greatest importance to academic writing, her SE beliefs are more impacted by performance in this area:

I think it depends on what skill, so, for example a day I can't properly hear someone that's not really gonna affect my confidence ... however, I'd say with like, um, writing, writing is the one that affects me most but that's because we're in a academic, um, environment and, I mean writing is basically all you really do at university and so if you're, if I'm even the slightest bit bad, um, it affects me the most. (P11:76)

She felt the high-stakes context was the important factor, giving the example that her SE would not be affected by making a spelling mistake in front of a friend (P11:78). The pressure of performing well in particular communicative academic contexts also was expressed by Participant 9, who despite feeling generally balanced, was concerned about being able to speak at length in a presentation context due to his degree subject being TESOL:

in academic situations, especially in TESOL, sometimes I feel less confident because all of them very good English speakers you know, most of them natives, and most of them teach for a long time, and this can give me a little bit an anxious you know. (P9:142)

There was little evidence of awareness of an uneven profile having a detrimental impact on overall SE in English. Participants 8 and 12 mentioned weaknesses in understanding people's accents on arrival in the UK had undermined their overall SE for English initially, but for both the effect was temporary. Meanwhile, Participants 10, 13, 14, and 15 expressed that SE in one skill area did not affect SE in another, with Participants 10 and 14 stating it explicitly:

the difference between the different areas does not make me feel less confident, it's me comparing myself with English speakers that ... makes me feel less confident. (P10:108)  
it affect only the skill itself ... it doesn't affect the other one that I confident with. (P14:150)



For Participant 10 feeling less SE for the productive skills was “frustrating”, but not because she was making a comparison with her reading (P10:110). Participant 15 stated he felt less self-efficacious in writing than speaking, but he also did not think it affected his SE overall (P15:116).

Participant 13 also did not appear to allow a lack of SE in one skill to affect another. In the interview he repeatedly expressed the idea that although his SE beliefs in all skill areas took frequent hits, for him it was vital to bounce back after a few days and persevere. In this respect he expressed great resilience and intrinsic motivation; whether he felt self-efficacious or not, he would continue to work on all his language skills, that he felt he did not have the option to ignore any:

one or two days after I get back myself and I try to do something because if I can't say this or I can't do then, yeah we know the result ... it's a big problem, yeah, but er, but I don't want to be this thing inside

IN: ok, so you always think to yourself 'I can do this' then?

yes, yes, it's really important. (P13:120 124)

### 9.2.2. Skill-specific beliefs

The subjective scores out of one hundred that participants gave for SE were collated and the key themes that emerged for each skill were mapped (Fig.15) to gain an overview. Each of the quadrants are illustrated by interviewees' statements in the following four sub-sections and summarised individually at the end of each.

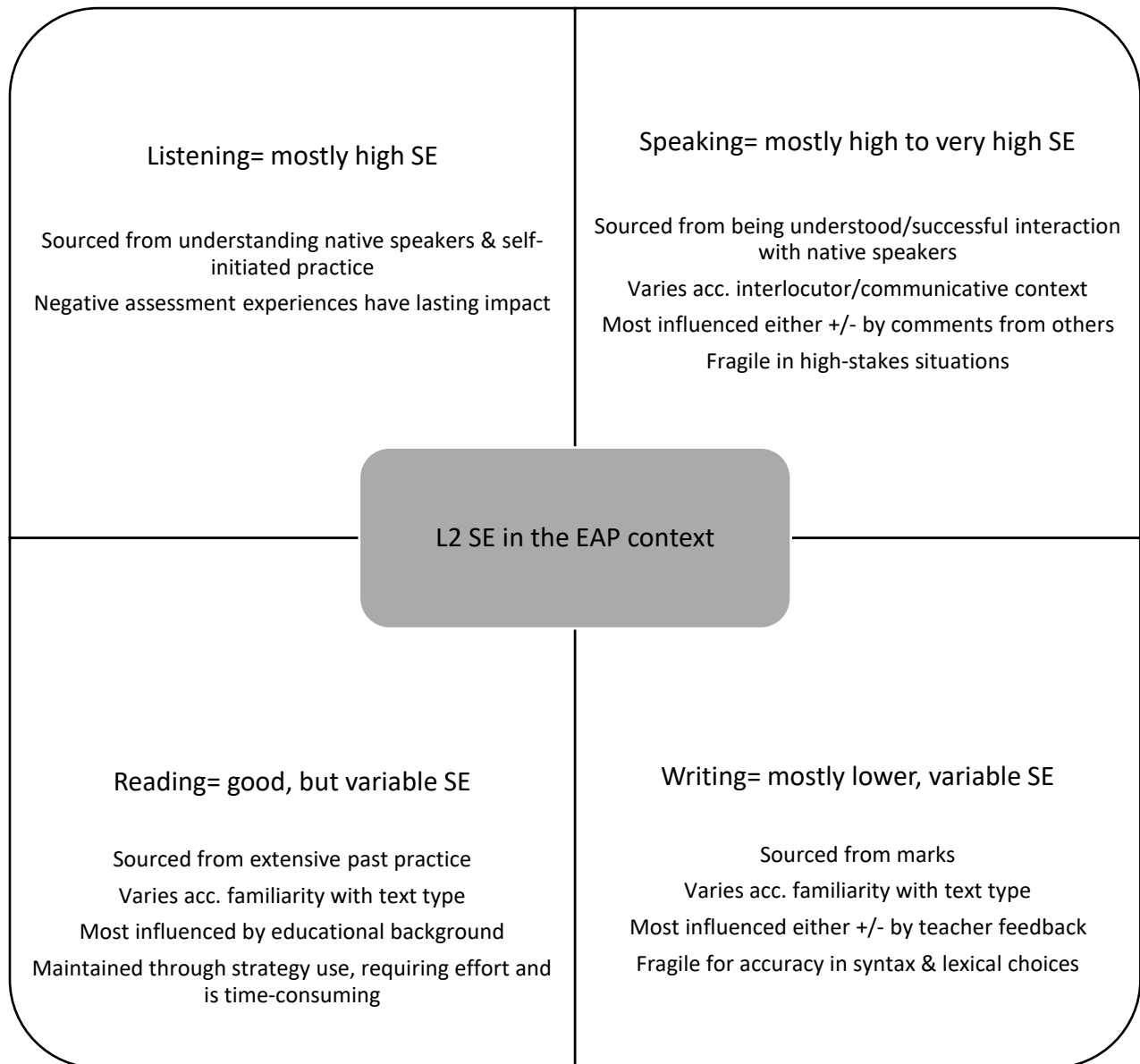


Figure 15 *Thematic map of L2 SE for listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the EAP context*

Themes related to Bandura’s (1997) model were also mapped (Fig.16). Please note that a further map (Fig.20) is presented during the discussion in Chapter ten. It synthesises the emergent themes that are alluded to in this chapter, identified using capital letters, with Bandura’s (1997) model to advance a description of L2 SE in EAP contexts.

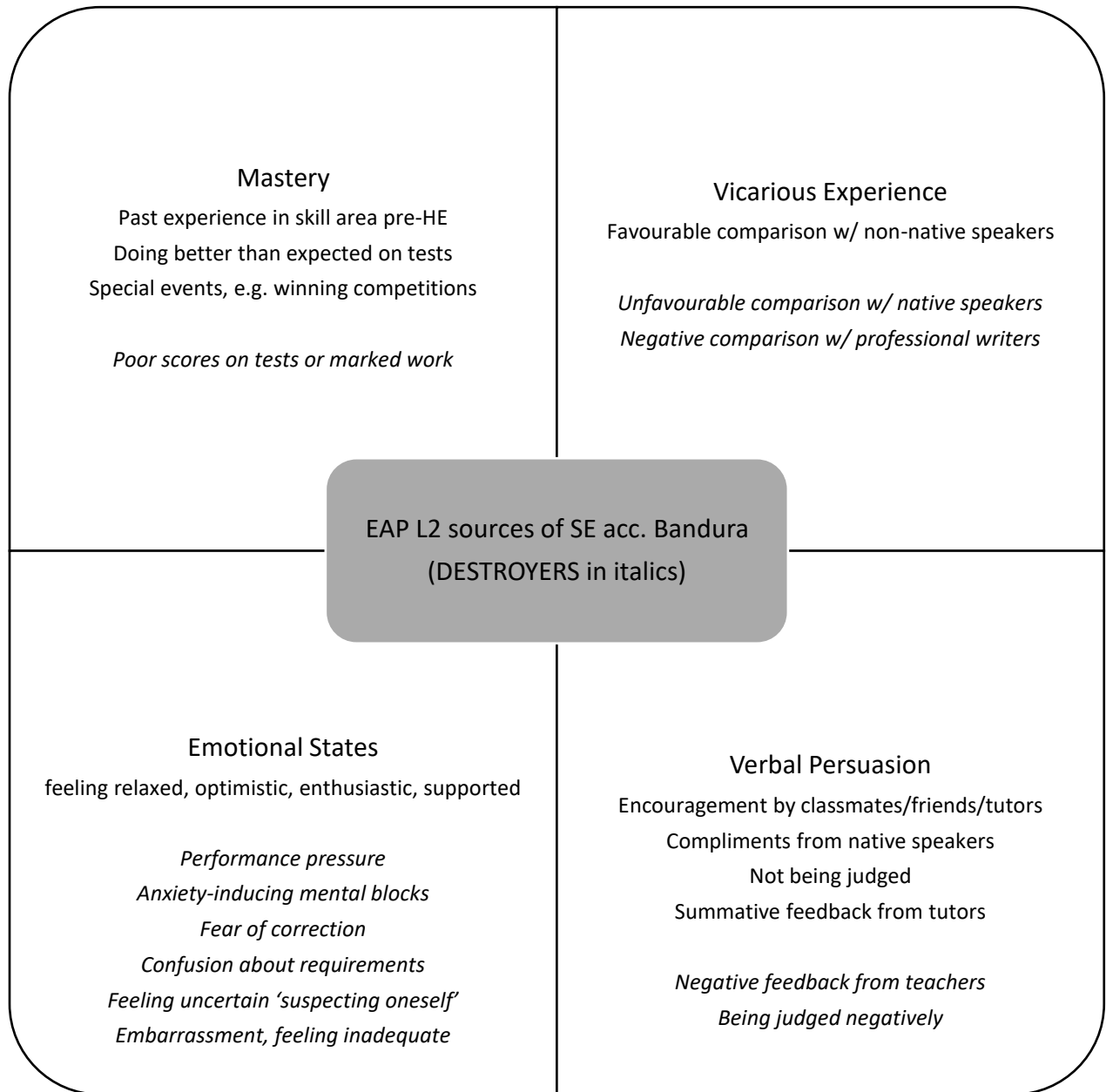


Figure 16 Thematic map of SE sources and destroyers according to Bandura’s (1997) SE model

## Listening

Self-reported, qualitative, SE scores were generally high, ranging from sixty to ninety-five to one hundred percent (Fig.15). Most interviewees did not view listening as a particularly weak area, as one aptly put it, “the problem’s not in the listening” (P10:4). Out of the fifteen participants, six identified listening as their best L2 skill, and where a lower SE score was given, it was for listening under IELTS assessment conditions. One had concluded she “can’t do tests” (P7:26) after receiving a poor score that knocked her confidence, while another reported that listening was “stressful in test” (P14:10). Participant 2 rated listening as his worst skill, also having reported a poorer score in the IELTS exam. These are specific and clear examples of negative *mastery* experiences (Fig.16) that have eroded SE for listening.

The most salient feature about listening was the difficulty of following L1 users’ speech. One element of this was understanding regional accents, raised by Participants 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15, with three mentioning Scottish accents as specifically problematic. Interviewees reported that the range of accents impacted on their confidence to understand L1 speakers on arrival to the UK, but they believed they had already adjusted or could adjust to them with time, “the main way where I sort of struggled when I moved in, ... when I moved to UK, because just all of the accents” (P12:138). However, several interviewees remarked that most lecturers did not have strong accents, and further, that EAP/PSE <sup>41</sup> lecturers were easier to understand than subject lecturers. Participant 6 commented “when I take the PSE class ... in that class I can understand ... I think I can understand most of that because the teacher speak very slowly in that class ... the PSE it’s easy ... but ... for my major I’m not confident about that” (P6:06-08). Participant 13 also appeared to be cognisant of the tutor grading instructional talk, “actually I understand all my lecturer and what they say, er, because they know how they reach to the student” (P13:16). Fortunately, Participant 12’s encounter with a lecturer with a strong Lancashire accent was mitigated in this way too, “very kind person, ... he was trying to speak slowly when he was teaching” (P12:08).

---

<sup>41</sup> Pre-Sessional English.

In terms of listening for academic purposes, interviewees reported that they could listen for gist, despite some vocabulary items being unfamiliar. However, Participants 7, 9, and 10 reported that they lacked the ability to follow a conversation between L1 speakers, "I'm not very skilled of listening to other people's English language" (P7:14). This was said in contrast with listening to film and television in English. And as Participant 10 explained:

I had three British roommates and I was the only international, like non-UK there, basically and every time they speaking, talking to each other, no idea, especially fast paced talking to each other, they kinda, that's a big difference if British person is speaking to me specifically, or if I'm in a group and they're, or if I'm kind of included in the conversation but there's two people speaking, because the accent becomes so much stronger [laughs] so much stronger, it's like they're taking me into consideration, which is very nice, but once they stop doing that I can't understand anything. (P10:112)

While the interviewee attributed this to accent, it also seems likely that they struggle with parsing fast paced, connected speech despite having reached a good level of spoken proficiency in English themselves, which might also explain why Participant 7 noted a difference between the scripted speech of films or TV programmes, and natural conversation. These could be categorised as examples of Bandura's (1997) *vicarious experience* (Fig.16) whereby participants' SE beliefs are affected by their judgement of their ability to eavesdrop on L1 speakers.

In contrast to listening to L1 users' speech, listening to English being spoken as a lingua franca was viewed as easier, "it's easy because, er, we all at, er, the same level and we speak, er, not, er, quickly, maybe so I can catch them, understand everything" (P14:22). This again suggests that different accents are less of a problem than connected L1 speaker speech. There was an interesting emotional dynamic explained by Participant 9 in that he felt more confident understanding people outside class in informal situations, even though in class he believed formal English was easier to understand. He mentioned he felt anxious in class, perhaps because it is a high-stakes situation for him. This chimes with Participant 6 who mentioned that she had a fear of misunderstanding the teacher partly because she saw listening comprehension as fundamental to her learning, "I'm really afraid that I can't understand what

the teacher ... teach us in the class, I'm afraid about that because speaking and writing is a natural influence the understanding the class, so listening is my really worry about" (P6:60).

Participants 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 15, explicitly made a connection between SE and UNDERSTANDING, which does not immediately appear to be one of Bandura's four sources. Participants 5 and 15's SE stemmed from the observation that they had reached the stage where they could follow L1 speakers' speech at normal speed, while Participant 7 judged herself better able to follow in class than her classmates.<sup>42</sup> Participant 8, however, made the very interesting observation that her SE for listening in English was much more fragile than in her L1, illustrated by her reporting feeling stressed when watching a TV series and not understanding the actors:

do I need to give it permission to make me weak about English, I said no, because when I, if I think, er, I couldn't understand the, this series, I start to think I'm weak at English ... but in Turkish, when I watch something in Turkish, sometimes is the same, they speak so fast, so, I don't understand even if it's my own language, so, I say it never mind, [laughs]. (P8:107-111)

Participants 3, 5, 10, and 14 also made a connection between SE and extensive PRACTICE; they saw it as a vehicle towards feeling greater SE. PRACTICE is also not one of Bandura's named sources, although it could be argued to overlap with the concept of *mastery*. Many interviewees avail themselves of modern technology to listen extensively, via media in English such as podcasts, YouTube videos, television and film, as Participant 10 explained:

when I was learning English, I started, one of the things I used to do, it wasn't me actual learning but I learned through it, was that I was always listening to videos and YouTube, um, and stuff like that usually they had subtitles but sometimes they didn't, so I had to listen and I would say by that, I kind of bettered my listening skills and I do not struggle with listening, mostly [laughs].

IN: ok, so in a way that's, that's, it's from experience, you've had lots of experiences with listening, am I fair to say that?

yeah definitely. (P10:12-14)

---

<sup>42</sup> This could also be analysed as *vicarious experience* in that she has drawn a conclusion about her own abilities via comparison with the performance of others.

This excerpt illustrates that multiple and regular exposures to authentic English lead to a sense of SE, rather than discrete, memorable experiences which appear to be the essence of Bandura's concept of *mastery*, as would be provided by taking a listening exam for example. Moreover, the participants not only spoke of past practice, but also the on-going necessity for extensive practice to maintain their SE beliefs.

In the main, participants felt their listening was improving; for Participants 7, 10, and 14, it was through listening to music and watching films (P7:181), YouTube (P10:12) or podcasts (P14:24), while Participants 8 and 12 attributed it to living and studying in the UK (P8:13; P12:102 &136). SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT was an emergent theme that was particularly associated with listening comprehension, as will be discussed later. In contrast, only four participants specifically noted that their speaking had improved and three, their writing. Only two participants mentioned reading; Participant 9 commented on his improved critical reading (P9:42) and Participant 10 had seen an improvement in reading journal articles (P10:24).

To summarise listening, some SE beliefs stemmed from negative *mastery* experiences from listening assessment, but most beliefs were founded on *vicarious experience* in the form of favourable comparison with other L2 speakers' comprehension, or unfavourable comparison with L1 speakers. *Emotional states*, in the form of transient anxiety, played an undermining role in high-stakes contexts. Beyond Bandura's sources of SE, it appeared that participants benchmarked themselves according to their capacity for UNDERSTANDING others with ease. Listening to other L2 speakers in academic contexts presented less difficulty than fast-paced, L1 speech in regional accents to which they were not yet accustomed. Participants believed that extensive PRACTICE led to stronger feelings of SE, sparking the motivation to practise using the multi-media affordances of modern technology.

## Reading

Five participants rated reading as their best L2 skill, only two their worst (Fig.15). Participants scored themselves generally high for SE at sixty percent or above, but unlike listening, these scores ranged between forty and ninety-nine. The lowest score related to reading academic texts and the very high score was selected by the PhD student. Several participants scored themselves differentially according to text type, with lower scores for journal articles and higher for coursebooks. Reading was considered a stronger area by Participant 12 as she felt deciphering text was easier than parsing words in a flow of speech, “reading might be like one of my, strongest ones definitely....because ... I follow words that are written better than they are said” (P12:36-38).

Reading for gist was reported to be largely unproblematic, with unfamiliar vocabulary not seeming to be a barrier, therefore not a big detractor of SE, although Participant 10’s self-evaluation score changed according to whether, or not, she had access to a translator. This comment exemplifies the emergent theme of STRATEGIES that helps sustain SE for reading, and indeed, Participants 5, 12, and 14 reported strategies such as guessing from context, in addition to Participant 6 mentioning keeping a glossary of new words. Looking new words up, however, was the most cited strategy, despite this option being deemed time-consuming by Participants 7, 11, and 12.

Reading for detail, and at length, was reported as doable, but requiring patience and great effort, “I don’t have much patience to read much but, er, every time I urge myself to read something, um, most of that I, I can, I can understand the writers, their meanings and their targets” (P7:50). Participant 12 particularly underlined the point of reading being far more effortful in English than in her L1, “I have to push my brain to focus a lot because it just doesn’t want to, stuff like that, but I can do it” (P12:42). She felt that she was “well adjusted” (P12:44) to reading for her degree, but at the same time wanted to be able to read in a sustained way. She went on to describe reading as “brain-draining” and therefore less enjoyable, this despite wanting to read “cool books” (P12:52) that her British classmates read for pleasure. Participant



13 also expressed the need for *resilience*, another coping strategy, to stay motivated to read in English:

reading, no I always competition myself because, er, I try to read something, maybe today I read one task and er, tomorrow I have to read one task too because, it's not a failure today 'oh I read it today and tomorrow I can, I am free' I don't it's not good because if you want to do something you can be really seriously do something. (P13:74)

SE for reading, stemming from an educational background that emphasised its development, was mentioned by several participants, but linked with this, were washback effects from exams. Chinese participants 1, 5, and 6 reported prior reading experiences at both primary and elementary school and the large amount of reading required to prepare for state exams such as CET6, "I do enough practice on that, so reading is my confident part" (P6:18). Participants from the Middle East also commented on extensive reading practice in their educational backgrounds, leading to a clear sense of SE when reading in English.

The IELTS test was mentioned on several occasions. It had an arguably negative influence on Participants 5 and 9. Participant 5 felt that preparation for this exam led him to focus on reading texts of a thousand to two thousand words, meaning he now lacked experience of reading at greater length. Participant 9 felt the test contained text types with which he was quite unfamiliar, impacting negatively on his SE, "unfortunately in the IELTS they give me such a ... hard test [laughs] but IELTS, you know, different when I analysed the test I cannot understand half of it, is not like a story, it's not like a novel" (P9:30). He also thought the IELTS did not prepare him to read critically, in contrast with more recent experiences at university, "now my reading is nearly, yeah, about 70 because when I did the master's degree... I been taught by my teachers how to read, how to critically read certain articles how, they teach me you know" (P9:42).

Text-type and/or genre had the biggest impact on interviewees' sense of SE when reading. Stories, Reddit, and everyday browsing were reported as easy, as were classroom materials and coursebooks to a lesser extent, but academic genres were the most challenging:

I've read so many things basically, that my understanding of context and everything that's fine, it's just the academic texts that I'm not used to that's a problem. (P10:34)

confidence score maybe, that's depending on what text ... what type of text that I read, if it was like novel or story, it's more confidence than academic essay or research, because in a novel and story you don't find advanced words and complex sentence that you may not understand. (P14:64)

Indeed, the unpleasantness of reading journal articles was frequently mentioned, "actually most of the time I'm not really enjoy reading English article" (P6:20). Participant 11 commented on the dampening effect that the complicated language in articles had on her SE beliefs, "that sometimes kind of bums my confidence a bit" (P11:14). Participant 10 described them as "just painful" (P10:42). She gave a much lower SE score for journal articles than coursebooks and was particularly vocal:

sometimes they'll hell to go through and I find myself very often, er, Googling or translating certain words just to understand the point a author is trying to make, it used to be worse in the first year obviously when I moved to England and I was like 'what?' [laughs] now it's definitely better but it's still, maybe like 65 when it comes to journal articles. (P10:24)

materials we get in class or the stuff teachers give us, they're not hard to understand but it's like academic texts, made by academics for academics, they are just so hard sometimes, with the language written, the way they're written and the words they are using since I don't know most of the, how would you say, like the academic, proper academic English words. (P10:26)

Participant 12 was also critical of the way the scientific texts are written:

when we have like a journal or anything and there's gonna be a stupid sentence, it's gonna be stupid just because how long it is, or just because there's gonna be loads of passive, er, like conjugation of the verb, and, if you read it few times, and just like take a passive voice out, maybe take some some useless words out, you're gonna get like maybe four-word sentence so that's it, that's good, that's your information. (P12:42)

The PhD student was the only interviewee who considered reading journal articles as unproblematic. This suggests quite strongly, although perhaps unsurprisingly given the EAP context, that familiarity with academic texts is an important variable for SE for reading.

In sum, SE beliefs for reading were founded on *mastery* experiences from exams and preparation for those exams. However, unlike SE for listening that continued to be sourced from interaction with others and practice through multimedia, SE for reading only developed further from extensive practice with new genres such as journal articles, which was reported to be highly effortful, time-consuming, and not always enjoyable.

### Speaking

Participants rated their SE for speaking as both their best and worst skill in equal number; there was a lack of consensus (Fig.15). Most scored themselves high at sixty percent or above, with one exception at fifty. Several participants' SE scores were very high at eighty or higher, with Participants 3 and 4 rating their speaking at one hundred percent for informal contexts outside the classroom.

SE for speaking differed according to the interlocutor, the communicative context, and how vulnerable or supported participants felt in each situation. SE also varied according to individual preoccupations with *ideation*, *being understood*, and *feeling judged*, of which pronunciation was an important element. Multiple themes were present, either relating directly to Bandura's model, especially *vicarious experience* and *verbal persuasion*, or being additional to it, such as BEING UNDERSTOOD, BEING JUDGED, PRACTICE and SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT. Some of these themes were difficult to delineate, as will shortly become clear. Regarding the interlocutor, Participants 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, and 13 said they felt most SE for speaking with friends, familiars, or other L2 speakers, especially if their English competency was judged to be lower than theirs. Participant 9 thought he compared favourably to the latter, "I met a lot of international students. All of them really were worse than me you know, they cannot speak, they cannot speak for only one minute or two minute" (P9:82). Participant 1 also mentioned feeling more SE when speaking with people whose English was less proficient (P1:30). These comparisons with other speakers could be classed as a form of *vicarious experience* underpinning SE for speaking (Fig.16). They featured frequently in interviewees' accounts, as can be seen above and below.

Participants expressed confidence in speaking to lecturers, albeit to a lesser degree than to friends and L2 speaker classmates. This was sometimes due to their graded speech, as was previously mentioned in the findings for listening. It suggests that lecturers are supportive interlocutors, and is perhaps related to the idea of BEING JUDGED, or, in this case, not being judged:

I would say speaking English to lecturers I'm not scared because I know they won't judge me and they'll try to help me to, if I fail to get my point across they'll try to understand. (P10:70)

Our lecturers are pretty much understanding, well, our lecturers are either British, or I have, or are international as me, so the international ones would never ever judge me for anything, and the British ones are absolutely ok with me saying anything down, I don't know, I think they're probably used to after being so, after being lecturers for so many years, I can't be the first one to mispronounce everything I meet. (P12:82)

However, Participants 7 and 15 felt their SE undermined when speaking to lecturers because they saw them as strangers or someone to whom they wanted to present well:

specially if it's, like, something important, like speaking to a professor about something important in my class, ... I would wanna say it the right way, but still I would say like, 'did he understand me fully or he didn't'. (P15:56)

For Participant 7, familiarity with her interlocutor was the more important factor (P7:109).

Participants 1, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 13 expressed feeling least self-efficacious with L1 interlocutors, with whom they would compare themselves negatively. These were either home student peers or from outside the academic community, as Participant 13 explained:

if your first language is not English then I can communicate easily, but if your first language is English then, er, then it's a little bit hard for me I can't speak, I can't understand, I can't communicate. (P13:48)

Master's in TESOL Participant 9 appeared to feel this keenly, stating that he felt inadequate when speaking in front of British classmates, even though he felt comfortable talking to L1 tutors, "as you notice my English is still not very clear for the listener ... especially in the

classroom context I have a peer-pressure, especially if they are native speaker” (P9:56). Even Participant 10, who had strong speaking skills, rated herself rather negatively against L1 peers:

I found how much I’m lacking compared, in speaking, compared to actual English native ...compared to like Czech people I’m really good, of course there are people better than me, but like my level is good [laughs] and, but here my level is not good, I’m not good enough for pretty much, like, especially in lessons when I have a point to prove and I loo-, and I can’t get it across, it’s so frustrating, and then some British person just, you know, comes in and like ‘oh yeah, this and this’ because obviously [laughs] it’s just so frustrating. (P10:50- 54)

when I’m in a group of English-speaking people and I’m one of the best there, my confidence is good [laughs] for a good reason, but when I’m with native speakers it’s not because I’m literally the worst one in the group obviously. (P10:66)

However, for Participants 4 and 12, SE for speaking was also mediated by their interlocutors’ attitude. As Participant 4, whose classmates are home students, explained, “they’re really cool with me and when I for example even in lecture, I make a mistake, they never laugh at me, they like ‘oh, this word, you say in that way” (P4:80). Participant 12 also alluded to the importance of not being ridiculed:

I would say like who you are speaking to also matters a lot, but not so like if it’s your friend, classmate, it’s the lecturer whatever, no, it’s about, er, if they seem like someone who’s gonna make fun of you for mistakes or not. (P12:150)

She felt that British L1 speakers were accommodating, compared with other nationalities:

it feels like everyone I met here in Britain, even though they could sense straight away that I’m not local, I’m not it’s not like I can hide it, they wouldn’t show any type of judgement against my language, which is cool, which is really nice, like, comparing to, I’ve been to Paris once and we tried ... to speak French with them and it wouldn’t go well, they would just like, give us like, loads of stinky eyes. (P12:154)

This idea of BEING JUDGED negatively for mistakes was also mentioned by Participant 2 whose SE was diminished by speaking with compatriots with better English than he, “sometimes if you talk with, for a long time, with Chinese people and the Chinese people the English level is good, better than me, so I feel less confidence” (P2:24). He added that, “it’s very forbidden to make mistakes” (P2:26), which perhaps suggests that he was more concerned about losing face in front of more capable others. SE for speaking seemed to depend on where participants see

themselves in a hierarchy from fluent L1 speakers to L2 speakers with low competency, and according to the supportiveness of their interlocutor, with friends being the most supportive and strangers the least. There was a combination of factors related to *vicarious experience* and a type of *verbal persuasion* in the form of BEING JUDGED.

In addition to the interlocutor, was the communicative context. This was frequently reported too, but there was a split in views about speaking English within and without the classroom context. Some participants were more comfortable using their English within class, for example, Participant 1 felt unable to communicate outside class at the supermarket or with flatmates, commenting that she lacked everyday vocabulary, and that she had only learned vocabulary related to her degree subject. Even so, this participant, as well as Participant 2, felt they needed to prepare and rehearse the language they would need in class to feel self-efficacious, “if I didn’t do any preparation I feel just to black out or, you know, not enough confidence to, to talk with, argue with my instructor” (P2:06). However, when Participant 6 was asked about expressing complicated ideas in university classes she commented, “I have the confidence to deal the idea ... I have some problems ... but I’m confident about that because I can speak in another way, to express the complicated idea, so speaking is not really difficult” (P6:34). Preparedness and flexibility of expression could be categorised as STRATEGIES as sources of SE for speaking. Participant 13 also found interacting in class easier than with L1 speakers in the street:

it’s completely change I think, because as I mentioned when I speak my teacher, I understand everything and ... in the street maybe if I [sowt, saw?] someone who is from English and er, ... I don’t know, I can’t understand, and I can’t speak it’s very different day, I speak, they didn’t understand me. (P13:44)

Nonetheless, Participants 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 14 felt far more comfortable speaking outside of formal academic contexts, frequently citing less performance pressure. Participant 5 found the spontaneity of classroom speech impacted on his SE:

I think maybe the less confident like, er, sometimes I don’t... because when people talk to each other they don’t have the time to use some, some translation tools, so maybe I know the something the Chinese but I don’t, er, know the English, so I not very good at

to express my own idea in the English in the few minute, few seconds, so maybe some kind will I will speaking slowly so I made the time to thinking about and constructed the sentence, er, in my brain so, I think the speed or some, er, difficult words or some grammar maybe, not very good at it. (P5:42)

For Participant 11 her SE beliefs stemmed from less pressure to be accurate; she had less fear of being corrected outside of class (P11:50), again coming back to the theme of BEING JUDGED.

Participant 14 felt some situations were more communicatively important than others, but of these, conversing with friends was the least stressful:

it's related to who you talking to because if you are talking to, er, someone important and you want to tell him that important thing, so, you will be more stressed than if you talking to your friends and tell him something about something, er, normal. (P14:40)

This is an example of where both the interlocutor and the communicative context overlap.

Participants 3 and 4 cited near or total SE for speaking in English, referring specifically to the support they received from friends or staff:

it depends on who I talk to, if it's with my friends, hundred percent, because they correct me or they help me with words I don't know, or don't understand, if there's a dialect I don't understand they help me as well, um, with lecturers like right now, it's not class, right now, also 99. (P3:36)

Communicative contexts thus appeared to have varying impact on speaking SE beliefs, by dint of the interlocutors present and the extent to which participants feared making mistakes in front of them or felt judged by them. There was a spectrum of situations from the high-stakes, face-losing and embarrassing, to those where interviewees felt supported, both within and without the classroom.

SE for speaking also varied according to individual preoccupations with *ideation* and BEING UNDERSTOOD, *accuracy* and *pronunciation*. In terms of ideation, Participants 2, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14, and 15 were confident that they could communicate ideas and express opinions to others in the EAP context, albeit not as well as an L1 speaker and with mistakes:

for speaking part, er, ah I think of all I'm not good at speaking really, er, like the, er uh, the local people, but most of the time I think you can understand what I say, er, I can impress the idea of what I mean. (P6:26)

Participant 6 had discovered she could use body language to shore up other problems, a good example of STRATEGIES:

speaking is a skill that you can, not only by your words, but for your body language, for your habits from your own mother language, both of these can help you to speak better, it's not only for your... how good your pronunciation is, but is the how the expression you express to others is, this is the most important part for speaking. (P6:36)

However, several participants believed they were inconsistent in terms of communicating ideas, which impacted on their SE. For example, Participant 10 explained that she had her "good English days" (P10:48 & 124) when people would ask if she's American, but that she had bad days too:

it's when I have to speak on the spot, for example, during a lesson, a question is asked I think I know the answer or I have an opinion to share, boom, you have to say it, I start, and it's gone. (P10:62)

Participant 11 also said she forgot words when she felt nervous (P11:28). Participants 8 and 15 were also frustrated that they could not reliably express ideas at the required level, due to trying to find appropriate vocabulary on the spot when speaking, affecting SE:

if I know my topic even if I know my, er, background, if I, if I think, er, my speaking is not good enough, I feel less confident, confident, then, er, I couldn't show, er, performance what I want, how I want

IN: and how does that make you feel?

um... it makes me more stressful, because I, I start to think about, er, I give my idea to the others, so I need to choose correct words, for example, like, er, so different so I'm trying to catch the correct word. (P8:97-99)

mostly I am confident to say whatever, but, sometimes there are better words to use to prescribe something and, some of these words don't come at mind at the time you know, I would know some of the words, that proper word to use it whatever I wanna say, but sometimes I would just go to the basic way to say it. (P15:48)



For Participant 4, lacking vocabulary at the right moment deterred her from participating:

during seminars, er, when I know the answer for example but I miss just one word in English that I can't, I can't find the right word in English, I can find that in Italian maybe I can find that in Spanish, but there is that bit in English I can't find and I just end up not talking at all. (P4:70)

when I speak like I don't want to feel embarrassed. (P4:74)

For Participant 14, his SE was undermined by the fear that he would be mis-understood due to poor accuracy:

I'm not so, er, confident about ... making mistakes, grammatical mistakes in sentence and ... misunderstanding when I said something that I mean think, but the listener it's understanding another thing. (P14:48)

Participants had a range of SE beliefs for pronunciation, and diverse responses to these, both emotional and motivational. For instance, Participant 1 felt very insecure about her pronunciation following a poor score at IELTS, in combination with feedback from a tutor and a peer. She expressed that being unclear how to improve it made her unhappy (P1:194). Likewise, Participant 11 felt "uneasy" about her accent, "my main nervousness is because of my accent, I er, I'm scared of people aren't going to understand me because of my accent" (P11:28). She related the following anecdote:

I find that people sometimes don't understand me because of my accent, so that's ... when I'm a bit uneasy ... I went to a coffee shop and I asked for a cappuchino and she thought that I asked for a cup of tuna [laughs] I guess because of my accent I'm not really sure ... I mean it was funny for me at that time, but, I was just a bit ... aware of the fact that people, that person couldn't understand me because of my accent. (P11:50)

In contrast, Participant 14 was quite optimistic and felt that pronunciation was something he could fix easily, "I have no problem with the pronunciation, I just, maybe the new words pronunciation and, but er, er only a few, a few a few times then I will, er, fix that" (P14:60).

This was echoed by Participant 3:

since I also learned most of my vocabulary from my, from reading things, my pronunciation is off sometimes, with loads of words I've never heard, or said before

obviously, um, but friends correct me a lot and that really helps, because I pick up things really quickly, oh that's the way you pronounce it, and I just stop pronouncing it wrong. (P3:134)

Participant 3 even felt spurred on by encountering pronunciation problems:

last week I had a presentation for instance, and there was a word that I wanted to use but I just didn't know how to say it properly, how to pronounce it, and that boosted my motivation to learn more... so, instead of making me feel less confident I just feel more motivated. (P3:24-26)

It appeared that some interviewees were more pre-occupied with self-presentation issues than others and their SE beliefs were more reactive to feeling they were BEING JUDGED. It is also important to note that strong *emotional states* were expressed by all participants regarding their speaking in general, from negative feelings of fear, anxiety, and frustration to positive emotions such as pride and enjoyment. Unfortunately, it appeared that negative emotions outweighed the positive, with participants using dramatic language, "when I speaking something, um, if I have no confidence... it's really really terrible" (P1:144), Participant 2 even stated he could "black out" (P2:6) due to anxiety about speaking to a tutor without being prepared for the encounter.

Many participants reported being affected by comments from others, or in other words, via *verbal persuasion* in the form of feedback comments, encouragement, or praise. Previous teachers and present-day lecturers were especially influential for Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, and 11. Unfortunately, Participant 1's experience was negative, "when they do the presentation my teacher, I can't remember his name, but he told me I need to practise my pronounce and nobody ... nobody say my speaking is ok" (P1:22-24), as was Participant 2's, "so my teacher told me actually my speaking last year was totally bad" (P2:106), but Participant 11 was bolstered by a teacher's comments, thus giving her the motivation to improve further:

she really loved to spark discussions and kind of, um, make everyone talk, and because of that I was pretty confident talking, um, during classes and I feel like, um, that really benefitted me as well, cos she was always amazed whenever I would speak English and

so I even more confident cos I was like, 'oh if she thinks that I'm a good speaker then that's good'. (P11:42)

For Participant 9, *verbal persuasion* was in the form of encouragement from a lecturer to persevere with speaking practice, rather than direct commentary on his speaking. The greatest boost for SE for speaking comes from compliments from L1 speakers (P3:100; P4:58; P13:58; P15:64). As Participant 3 explained, "I've been told by native speakers, 'oh, your English is good', and you know, it's getting better and better, so that really boosts my confidence when it comes to speaking up in class" (P3:08).<sup>43</sup>

A large proportion of commentary presented above could be categorised as *vicarious experience* and *verbal persuasion* feeding into SE for speaking. There was less evidence of *mastery* experience, however. Nonetheless, some illustrative examples were related by Participants 5, 6, 9, and 10. Positive *mastery* experiences included Participant 5 doing well in pronunciation as far back as primary school (P5:52), for Participant 6 it was winning a debating contest (P6:36), and Participant 9 cited successful working experiences in the UK (P9:90). However, Participant 10 expressed less SE in the workplace due to past experiences:

every time I go to work, no matter how good or bad of English day I have I struggle to communicate properly for some reason and it started, I guess it started when I started working there, er, but till this day I have trouble really getting, like, having good conversations because I'll forget things...it's a pattern at this point, and every time I step through the door my confidence is just like 'nah' [laughs]. (P10:102)

In contrast, PRACTICE was mentioned by more than two-thirds of the interviewees as important for SE for speaking. As previously noted in the findings for listening, this is not one of Bandura's sources. Some participants emphasised that having practice opportunities within the EAP classroom was vital:

---

<sup>43</sup> Surprisingly, Chinese participants 1 and 2 mentioned having their SE for speaking diminished through comments from compatriots, "if you understand me, probably you don't correct me, but if I speak with Chinese with English, they find my accent or some mistakes in grammar, they always correct me" (P2:18), but this was not mentioned by any other nationality group, so perhaps this is a cultural artefact.

most of the time I will speak, I will speak a lot even though I think I'm making lots of wrong, and er, and the speaking part, I'm brave enough. (P6:30)

I practise more and more ... I can let the listener understand me, I can negotiate very well ... but before that degree I don't think my English was good. (P9:58)

speaking of the pre-session course, at the beginning I was too shy to speak and, er, and er... confused to organise my speech, and to, then day by day I become, I push, I push myself to become more confidence and just speak, ... I don't really focusing on making mistakes, I will, I just say what I want to say. (P14:44)

it's come from, er, practice, ... in this course ... we have a peer study group, so we have ... about two hours discussing topics and find the answers through tasks so, er, I think ... this the ... most source I become confident. (P14:52)

Others attributed their growing SE for speaking to the wider English-speaking environment, noting the importance of PRACTICE provided through exposure to L1 speakers at work, or at their accommodation:

so many Chinese people don't want to speak the native speakers, they just have very single and small ... friends circle with Chinese people, ... I eager to communicate with the native speakers and probably because of this believe I have the confidence. Probably I will make so many mistakes, but I don't care. (P2:36)

I was aware of just how different and how well not only English speakers but of other like non-native speakers would speak, or talk to me and like, um, that's how I kinda started thinking about like my skills and how confident I am in English, and I kind of understood that ... it was like that because I didn't use it, I knew that if I used it more I would be more confident. (P11:82)

go outside of the classroom, speak with them, interact with them, know how they start a conversation, how they carry on a conversation, how to just be more confident to speak to someone you know. (P15:130)

Participant 2 even attempted to practise in the absence of anyone to talk to:

when I came here, and every day I just watched the video, I got some beautiful sentence, I repeat, I repeat, I talk with myself, I talk with the wall [laughs]. (P2:106)

Conversely, Participant 5, also Chinese but forced to follow his pre-session course remotely, mentioned feeling less SE due to a lack of access to practice opportunities:

the speaking skills is not the environment, neither the students talk each other with English ... or occasion to let students do it.... because in some English environment will push the person to improve their speaking skills because they will use it every day and life. (P5:38-48)

Participant 7 agreed that her SE would be better if she spoke to L1 speakers more and added that listening, and by extension speaking, was a frequent weakness in Chinese learners due to too much focus on reading. Interestingly, she thought this issue had a regional element, with English learners in smaller northern cities being less able to develop listening and speaking than those in the large southern cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, perhaps where there are more opportunities to be exposed to English. Participant 8 also alluded to Turkish people having a problem with speaking English fluently, perhaps due to too much attention on the other skills and not enough practice, showing that it is not a problem limited to Chinese English instruction. Finally, Participant 14 specified that his SE for speaking stems from PRACTICE, rather than comparing himself to others, that to speak fluently he needed to trust himself and think in English (P14:54).

Speaking PRACTICE was clearly recognised by the participants as a route to greater SE, partly because it forced them to overcome their fear of *making mistakes*. In contrast, SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT did not feature quite as prominently, with only Participant 3 mentioning that she struggled less with pronunciation than in the past, and Participant 11's pride in what she had achieved so far:

I guess English is the one thing that I kinda feel proud of, I mean, I'm proud of my achievement because I did start from being the worst in class and I believe that now I'm probably like, if I look into people like from my high school or secondary school, ... I feel like I was probably one of the best in English and I started being the worst, and so I'm kind of proud of how well, how well I did and how well I progressed. (P11:38)

In summary, SE for speaking varied according to the supportiveness of the interlocutor and/or the communicative context, as well as according to individual pre-occupations with ideation and pronunciation. It appeared to be fragile in high-stakes situations, but robust in supportive

situations. The participants' statements indicated a lesser relevance of *mastery* experiences, but the greater relevance of *vicarious experience* in the form of making comparisons between themselves and other speakers of English. *Verbal persuasion* in the form of positive or negative comments from others and *emotional states* were also confirmed to be important sources of SE for speaking, as per Bandura's (1997) model. Beyond the model though, SE was chiefly sourced from PRACTICE and BEING UNDERSTOOD.

## Writing

Only two participants felt writing was their strongest skill, and of these, one thought it was "bad" (P2) nonetheless. Nine participants described writing as either "not good" or "difficult" (P1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 14) or "not strong" (P12). Participant 15 bluntly stated, "I hate writing, I never liked it" (P15:68). Six participants identified this skill as their weakest, with a further two joint weakest with either speaking or reading. Subjective scores ranged widely between thirty and eighty-five, featuring the lowest score of all skills. Several participants gave themselves very different scores according to the type of text under discussion (Fig.15).

SE beliefs for writing could be categorised as either relating to macro features of text such as formats, with implications for structure and organisation of content, or micro features such as syntax, lexical and grammatical choices, highlighting a pre-occupation with accuracy. Several themes arose; participants' comparisons of their writing against that of professional writers was evidence of SE beliefs based on Bandura's *vicarious experience*, while a great sensitivity to marks and feedback from teachers was evidence of *mastery* and *verbal persuasion* (Fig.16). Emergent themes included PRACTICE, STRATEGIES and SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT.

Regarding macro features, all participants commented on writing formats, with Participants 4, 10, 13, and 14 stating that writing essays is the hardest. Only one participant thought writing essays was "ok" due to familiarity with the format, notably through PRACTICE:

I used to write a lot ... especially my undergraduate period, I wrote a lot of analysis of writing, a lot of essays...All in English yeah, so writing is all right" (P9:120-122)

before the master degree, er, my writing is not very academic because I don't use a lot of academic words but after that master degree ... I brushed up my skills and now I am fine, I can write very well. (P9:128)

Participant 2 stated that English essays were totally different to Chinese essays (P2:60) and Participants 1 and 5 mentioned that there was only one type of essay in China, however, in the UK they were being asked to produce many different types. Participant 1 expressed confusion about the range of writing formats, mentioning reflective essays and reports. She attributed poor marks to formatting problems and unfamiliarity with these genres. Participant 5 spoke about his experience of writing a proposal for the first time, but he acknowledged that going through the process helped students to feel more self-efficacious, again indicating that PRACTICE is an important source of SE. He also felt that having underpinning skills such as knowing where to find sources and paraphrasing made the task "not very difficult" (P5:68). Additionally, he thought the length of the text was a factor, it being relatively easy to write an exam answer, or short sections of writing within a larger whole, for example in reports, but not so easy to write essays of a thousand words or more. Participant 6 also had picked up on the need for paraphrasing skills and she believed that writing reports was easier due to not needing to write "really beautiful sentence" (P6:44) that she associated with essay writing.

Difficulty in navigating different text formats and not knowing how to structure essays was not limited to the Chinese participants. Participant 3 had found it hard to write reflectively for the first time, despite the teacher providing a model. She also felt less SE to write reports, again due to unfamiliarity and a lack of practice. She mentioned she had never learned essay writing in Germany, however, her SE for structuring an essay had improved after opportunities for formative feedback provided by her lecturers. Meanwhile, Participant 4 expressed a complete lack of SE for writing compared to speaking and this was a source of great upset. She was clear about her strengths and weaknesses related to genre, "I can write short stories, I can write a story, a fairy tale even if you want, but, you said to me write a report and I'll cry" (P4:106). Unfortunately, the same was true of writing academic essays, as the following sequence powerfully illustrates:

IN: what if anything, makes you feel confident about writing an assignment in English, or is there nothing?

I'm sorry to say that but, it's really my limit, I'm trying to have a different mindset, but I feel like I'm, I've got pressure on my shoulder because, um, basically most of courseworks in English Literature are essays ... I'm always 'I'm gonna fail this, I'm gonna fail this, I'm gonna fail this' so yeah, I'm living in fear

IN: oh no!

no good yeah

IN: um, ok, so so basically, is it fair to say then you're not, you don't feel confident at all about the writing of the essays, no aspect of it at all?

no

IN: oh, not even knowing about the subject area, or the accuracy of your writing?

the fact is that I even if I feel inspired in my ideas are good, the end, it's always being me all over the place, and writing too much. (P4: 116-124)

Further probing revealed her poor SE stemmed from confusion over the concept of essay organisation. She appeared to be conflating concepts, as well as missing others. In the interview she elaborated on the time-management and planning aspects of essay writing which, for her, was what planning and organisation meant. After the interview she allowed me to briefly view a recent essay that had received feedback from the tutor about lack of organisation. Although her essay had the requisite elements of an introduction and paragraphing, the organisation of ideas within paragraphs was weak, making her argument difficult to follow.

Participants 2, 10, 11, 14, and 15 compared writing essays in the UK HE environment with their previous writing experiences. Their SE beliefs seemed to be sourced from a combination of *mastery* and *vicarious experience*. Participant 2 compared his ability to write essays in Chinese with how he now writes in English, stating he feels like he writes like a child (P2:60). Participant 10 held the belief that her L1 peers could structure and write essays more quickly than she could, and this negative vicarious comparison affected her confidence:

we don't have this certain structure English essays have. (P10:90)



I was quite confident that I would be ok, and then I realised that writing essays is quite hard ... it takes me a long time to put it together which is something that's happening til this day. (P10:114)

Participant 11 expressed that being uncertain about how to structure essays impacted on her confidence, adding that writing essays was the area in which she was least confident (P11:64).

Furthermore, she stated it impacted negatively on her performance:

if I'm not confident ... if I feel like I don't understand what I'm supposed to do on an essay, if I don't know what kind of structure I have to use ... I think I write way worse than I usually would, but that's mainly because I don't understand what I'm supposed to even write. (P11:72)

Like Participant 5, she mentioned essay lengths of more than a thousand words as being a big jump from the short, formulaic, for-and-against essays she had been used to at school, as well as her difficulty in selecting appropriate language to achieve a formal academic style (P11:56).

For Participants 14 and 15, both from Arabic-speaking countries, being clear on the writing requirements for each format was important, but they related instances of having received inadequate guidance:

before this, er, this course, I used to, I take a, one course that a preparation for the ILETS [IELTS] and, I learned nothing about, er, about writing, he just, he just, er, hand the last, the topic about the ILETS and he want to, we, we write about it, and er, we don't know how, how we write and, what the requirements of writing essay, so I think that's important to know before you start writing essay or research or anything in academic. (P14:92)

back in Saudi, like in our schools, so we didn't have the proper skills, we got classes but, I mean, it wasn't that important of a subject, you know, it was like an extra class that we just have to pass, you know, but once I started going in college in here and in the US, I started getting skills but I still don't think I'm really that good of a writer, you know, I would like sometimes have difficulty structuring in my writing, and, where to start, 'should I put that here or here', you know, a lot of a lot of things that I would not get good. (P15:74)

Regarding local-level text features, participants reported lowered SE due to language production dilemmas that impeded ideation and composition. Most mentioned missing words,

and even spelling (Participants 11 and 13), but with writing the difficulty of selecting appropriate vocabulary was reported more often. This included both content and function words. Participant 1 found expressing her argument through concise sentences and choosing “the most suitable words” difficult (P1:72) as did Participant 2 who struggled with the precision of the legal words in his subject area. In common with Participant 8, Participant 2 also felt less able to use a range of conjunctions:

when I read the academic journal article I find the words is beautiful, and so many different adverb and use beautiful conjunction word, just for me ‘because’.. ‘even though’ ... ‘and’ ... ‘so’ ... ‘then’ ... ‘hence’ ‘thus’ and no any other. (P2:60)

Participant 9 appeared to have difficulty with lexical choices and sentence structure:

comparing two things with numbers, er, still I’m confusing how to write it, how to do, how to compare, and sometimes I’m confused because I received a lot of feedbacks I cannot use the proper academic words in these sentences you know, I’m talking about that sentences structure. (P9:130)

Others, notably the Chinese and Turkish, commented on sentence structure being wildly different to their L1 leading to problems with word order (P5:58; P13:102) as well as leaving Participant 7 feeling uncertain:

I’m very good at the structure, the main ideas, but I always, um, not very sure about my other grammar expression. (P7:141)

As was touched upon previously, among participants there was a perception of needing to write “fancy” (P3:144), “beautiful” (P6:44), or “complex” sentences (P14:100) or even use “beautiful conjunction word” (P2:60) when composing essays. It was not fully clear where this perception originated, but it was interesting to note that Participants 8 and 12 who were studying science appeared to be aware of the comparative simplicity of writing in their subject areas, both contrasting against features of essay style:

I would have to learn how to make these like, fancy sentences, like I don’t know, [name of flatmate] always like writing it, I’m like, that is so much force for so much not information. (P12:78)

IN: What types of writing do you think is easy for you?

um... scientific and reflective, because you use I, my [laughs]. (P8:85)

Participants expressed that they were aware of the conventions of academic style, but they continued to struggle with knowing how to phrase things in an academic way, expressed in comments such as:

loads of times it happens to me that I want to write something but I just don't know how to phrase it properly, I have an idea in my head but it just doesn't want to come out properly, so I always ask my friend from London, 'hey, can you help me to say this and this, how do you phrase that? In a fancy way or in an academic way that sounds good in my essay?' (P3:144)

I don't use proper academic language. (P4:92)

the hardest things for foreigner when he is writing up in another language is grammar, because, no matter what the word-, what vocabulary you know, how to say it, the other person would understand it, but is it the right way, especially for academic writing ... I would say no, because there are better ways to say things, specially when I, I read an article it's way different than the way I, when I read something I wrote. (P15:86-88)

Participant 15 seemingly arrived at the conclusion that his academic style was not good by comparing his writing to the published articles he read as part of his studies. Chinese Participants 2 and 6 also expressed unrealistic expectations for their writing, even benchmarking their writing ability against literary giants such as Shakespeare! These comparisons, just like the comments about using "beautiful" or "fancy" language, could be seen as forms of *vicarious experience* gained from reading academic texts, with negative consequences for SE. However, it appeared that both extrinsic and intrinsic sources of information were feeding into participants' SE beliefs for writing as Participants 2, 4, and 8 also compared their writing ability in English with their ability in their L1, finding themselves lacking, as Participant 2 explained:

Chinese is my first language, I want to express something clearly, it's very easy, probably I use 100 words, ... but the top-level people they can use 20 or 30. (P2:76)

Beyond academic style, however, participants did not report issues on the other major aspect that differentiates academic writing from other types of text, referencing. In fact, it was considered not difficult by Participants 5 and 7, two thought it was easy (P9:134; P15:92), another that it was “going good” (P13:104), Participant 14 was confident that he would get used to it (P14:106) and Participant 15 called it “basic stuff” (P15:92). Only Participant 2 mentioned referencing as problematic, but then his studies required the use of OSCOLA.<sup>44</sup>

As was seen in the findings for speaking, concerns about accuracy eroded SE. Perhaps unsurprisingly for Participant 7, seeing corrective feedback on the accuracy of her writing was demotivating:

I’m not very fluent, um, in writing because I am very, er, cautious about the grammar correction [laughs], yeah, if, er... If I, I, I, I see the many red, red ink of my grammar errors, maybe I don’t want to write, write more. (P7:129)<sup>45</sup>

For Participant 10, attention to accuracy resulted in a slower composition rate, as was mentioned earlier (P10:114). She further described the laboriousness of editing her writing. These aspects made the thought of timed essays in exam conditions rather daunting:

I don’t trust myself that I will be able to produce academic language in timed frame, I take very long, my essays take long time to write, to research and everything, longer than my friends from what I can compare I don’t know if it’s like, we’re all non-native speakers here, like non-native speakers of English, here, so um it’s definitely not cos they’re British and I’m not, I take longer overall, but I like to take my time to write it down, make mistakes, check it and everything so timed exam would take all that away from me I would have to on the spot create this perfect English essay and I know I wouldn’t be able to, there would be so many mistakes. (P10:84)

However, she outlined her STRATEGIES for accurate and faster composition, typically in the form of using search engines to track down precise meanings and an online translating tool for generating vocabulary items:

---

<sup>44</sup> The Oxford University Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities.

<sup>45</sup> Although flagged errors impacted negatively on her SE, she mentioned that teachers provided positive feedback on ideas and structure which she recognised was more important.

I have to go through several words to get to the word that I actually need like I know the general meaning so I try Googling something else and how by that I get the specific word that I need ... if I didn't have a translator open, that would be very time-consuming and I'm not very sure how that would go in case I got stuck. (P10:76)

writing is the one skill that I used... the most sources for ... writing is probably still my weakest skill ... actually definitely [laughs]. (P10:98)

Using e-dictionaries and online grammar resources were also mentioned by Participants 2, 5, 7, and 10. Participant 2 uses the Academic Phrasebank website hosted by the University of Manchester as well as online grammar resources, however, he was aware of their limitations for his subject area, "I need to use a grammar, I need to check it but sometimes the grammar only check the grammar is right but the precise words and correct words, the accurate words they can't help me" (P2:70). To better cope with uncertainty when editing Participants 5 and 10 used websites such as Grammarly (P5:82) although this reliance on technology was the reason why Participant 10 gave herself a lower SE score:

my confidence in writing essays is like 80 to 85 because taking down the twenty, fifteen percent because of the mistakes I make, then then Grammarly like catches right, but that's not me catching it that's the Grammarly doing its job. (P10:82)

Participant 11 was the only interviewee who admitted enlisting the support of another international student for checking the accuracy of her essays.

SE for writing also appeared to be sourced from, and very sensitive to, *mastery* experiences, both good and bad. These stemmed from timed exams in the past, as well as more recent judgements of participants' writing in the form of marks for summative assessment.

Participants 6 and 14 both reported a definite negative influence of prior IELTS exams on writing confidence, and for Participant 10, it was a poor performance in an FCE writing exam that gave her a life-long aversion to writing under timed conditions.<sup>46</sup> Since arrival in the UK, Participant 1 was negatively affected by a mark on report she wrote, and Participant 11

---

<sup>46</sup> In contrast, Participant 9 thought that the practice involved in preparing for IELTS had had a positive influence on his writing confidence.

reported that receiving a poor mark that “absolutely destroyed my confidence” (P11:56). She expressed being acutely sensitive to marks:

I tend to, um, internalise criticism a lot which I shouldn't do, and so whenever I get a grade that um is not what I wanted or what I expected that gets my confidence down a lot ... I got an essay back and I got a 68 which is a really good grade however the lecturer told me previously that I could go up to an eighty ... he marked me like a seventy-five for the context which was really great, however ... he gave me a sixty-five for academic writing and a sixty for structure, and so that kinda of like, um, boosted my confidence down, um, because I could've gotten a better grade if it wasn't for, er, my language and for the structure kind of thing, you know? (P11:58)

She explained the reason for her sensitivity:

writing is the one that affects me most but that's because we're in a academic, um, environment and, I mean writing is basically all you really do at university and so if you're, if I'm even the slightest bit bad, um, it affects me the most. (P11:76)

The high-stakes UK HE context, where a mark of 68 has a very different weight to a 74,<sup>47</sup> appeared to amplify the impact on SE beliefs. However, it worked both ways. Participant 10 felt her confidence for writing was boosted by the marks she received, especially when she knew her work was marked anonymously, because she believed the lecturer would not be making allowances for her English:

so, that where my confidence comes from, because, the lecturers even when it's, um, anonymously marked, so they cannot, like be like 'oh, she's not she's not English, so let's take that into account,' I don't know if teachers do that but they might right? So, even like in anonymously marked essays, I get good marks so that's where my confidence in writing essays comes from. (P10:94)

Participant 15 also expressed his SE was boosted by marks, “sometimes if I get a good grade then I would say I'm up confident, that I'm doing good or doing better at least” (P15:108).

While marks for summative writing assessments provide *mastery* experiences that either build or destroy SE for writing in academic contexts, feedback comments from tutors could be

---

<sup>47</sup> It represents the difference between falling into the first-class or second-class degree band.

considered as a form of *verbal persuasion* when applied to the EAP context. Participants could easily recount instances of feedback on their writing. They emphasised that this had an important influence. Participant 2 now felt less confident about grammatical accuracy and his vocabulary choices (P2:64) and Participant 4's repeated feedback on organisation had had an extremely negative impact in that she now feared writing essays, as was illustrated above. However, for Participants 1, 7, 13, and 14 corrective feedback was of a different nature and a valuable aspect of writing instruction. While having errors highlighted was not good for some, for instance making Participant 1 her "suspect herself" (P1:156), undermining motivation for Participant 7, and causing shame for Participant 13, all of them recognised that this was a temporary effect, and they stated that knowing their weaknesses now would benefit their SE in future (P1:160; P7:129; P13:92). Participant 14 was very clear that feedback was his route to greater SE:

I think the most effective, er, method in every course especially in learning English is that you get the feedback, and so you know, er, your weaknesses point and you work on it, and you will be better

IN: ok, so it doesn't make you feel like giving up?

no, no ... it's more give you, er, power to do better in this time. (P14:117-122)

In the same vein, Participant 9 highlighted that a lack of feedback was one of the failings of the writing instruction in his own country:

we get very bad feedbacks in Syria, we don't we don't know our faults our mistakes in English, we only receive ... the score without feedback from the tutor don't know anything, so yeah ... it is big problem. (P9:112-114)

Beyond the value of corrective feedback, the importance of basic writing instruction was also raised by Participant 3:

in all those thirteen years what I learn English, we learned about grammar ... so I remember all those things now, it makes sense to me now, and that just... makes me feel more confident as well writing because I now know all the rules. (P3:78)

This indicates that SE for writing is mediated not only by the quantity and quality of feedback, but also from clear instruction at both the sentence and text levels.

Similar to the findings for speaking, the theme of SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT as a source of SE for writing was relatively minor, only expressed by Participants 3, 9, and 13. For Participant 3, the improvement was in the closing of the gap between her speaking and writing as her degree programme progressed, and her surprise at the speed of the improvement, although she maintained that her SE for writing would never exceed that of speaking, “I don’t think it will ever get more, it even still be slightly less than speaking ... but I think it might become equal” (P3:76-92). Participant 13 expressed that SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT was more important for his SE for writing than feedback (P13:94).

To summarise the findings for writing, participants felt less SE for writing than the other skills. SE beliefs clearly varied according to familiarity and practice with different academic genres and were sourced from *mastery* experiences judged on the basis of marks, as well as influenced negatively by tutor feedback comments, a negative form of *verbal persuasion*. SE was further undermined through *vicarious* comparison with professional writers or themselves as writers in their L1. SE appeared to be fragile in relation to syntactic and lexical accuracy, however, participants employed STRATEGIES such as using technological resources. Corrective feedback, despite having a momentarily depressive effect on SE, was seen as contributing to improved SE in the future.

### 9.3. RQ4: What role do students’ SE beliefs play in their performance?

This question connected SE beliefs, and their associated emotions, with uneven competency by asking whether there is a relationship between participants’ SE profile and performance. I hypothesised that divergent SE beliefs would result in an uneven profile via impacts on self-regulation and motivation. This section summarises the extent to which, and the manner in which, interviewees reported SE beliefs influencing self-regulation, motivation and subsequent behaviours, especially for speaking and writing.



When asked whether their confidence made a difference to their performance, participants gave a range of examples that linked their SE beliefs to their subsequent behaviour. They are modelled here as either negative (Fig.17), resilient (Fig.18), or positive (Fig.19) feedback loops. Participant 12 answered the question in a general sense, stating, “yeah definitely, because if you’re not confident in the foreign language you not gonna use it” (P12:148), highlighting that poor SE in any given skill can lead to avoidance, which, given the importance ascribed to practice by participants as seen in the previous section, suggests would lead to poorer performance. Participant 5 also felt that a lack of SE led to avoidance, whereas confidence led to greater effort and strategy use, with positive outcomes for test scores (P5:92-94).

Other participants commented on impacts to specific skills. Regarding speaking, Participant 1 attributed her “terrible” speaking to a lack of confidence stemming from comments about her pronunciation, making her hesitant to express her opinions and thoughts (P1:144-6).

Moreover, she felt confused about how to improve her pronunciation. Participant 11 also expressed feeling “uneasy” (P11:28) about her accent, making her reticent in the company of L1 speakers, and Participant 9 felt acutely aware of his accent when he commenced his Master’s in TESOL course with British students, leaving him on the verge of wanting to change to a different course (P9:58). Participants 8 and 10 mentioned avoidant behaviour as the result of lacking SE for speaking, which was very specific to previous experiences of failing to communicate effectively in the workplace (P8:57; P10:102). The latter also explained how her speaking performance faltered when her SE underwent temporary dips due to communication breakdown:

when I fail to explain something ... my confidence goes down, and when that happens I just, my English just gets so much worse [laughs] um, because I think it’s a mental block, once I feel like I’m failing my brain’s like ‘we’re failing!’ [laughs] and I start to forget words, I start to get stuck in the middle of sentence and I’m not able to really explain myself. (P10:100)

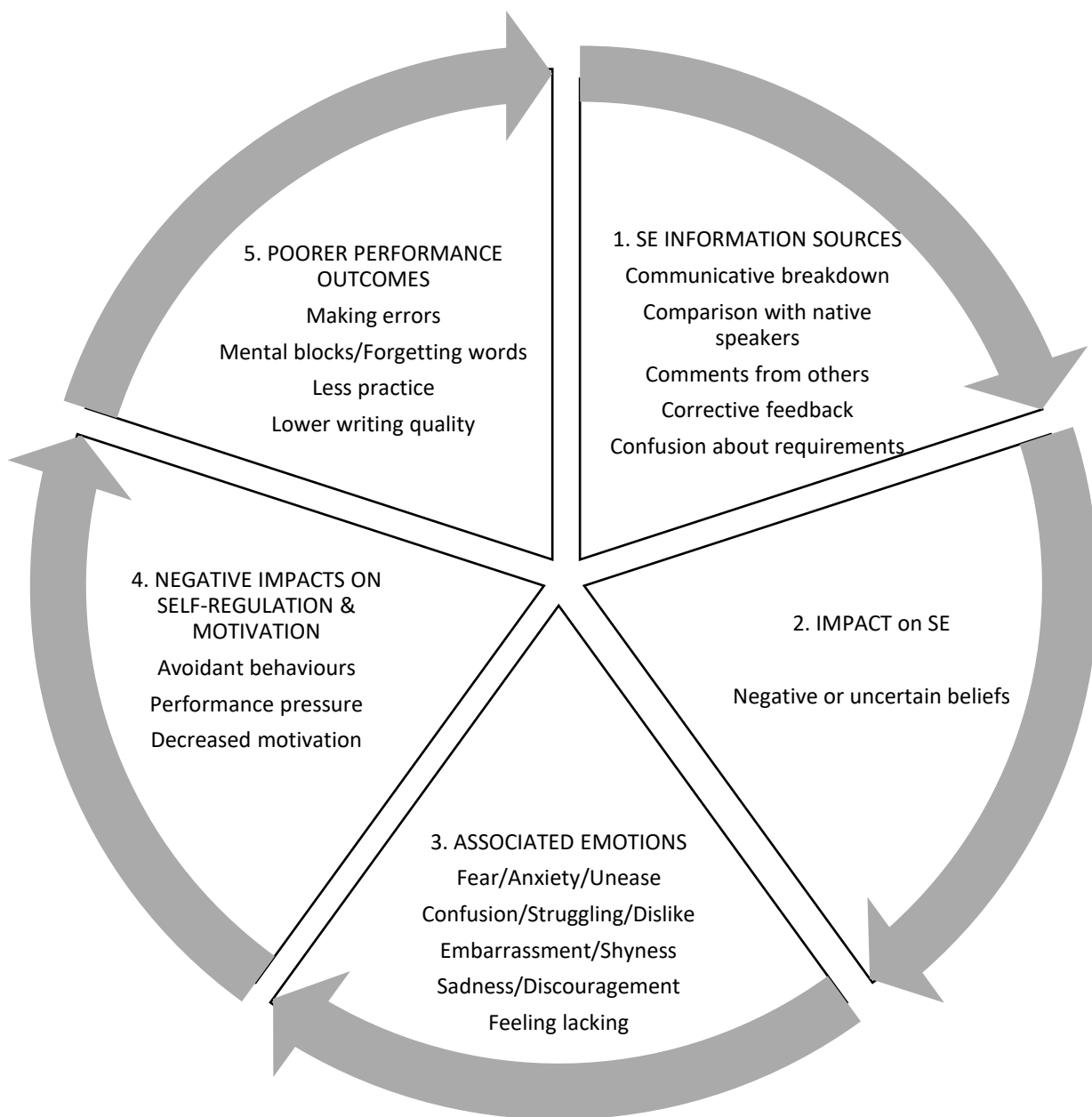


Figure 17 *Negative SE feedback loop*

It appears that the performance pressure of speaking on the spot goes hand in hand with feelings of unease, shyness, nervousness, or acute anxiety, and it was frequently associated with a negative impact on performance:

when I feel that peer-pressure, even when I think about my sentences I can make a lot of mistakes. (P9:144)

whenever I feel more pressured and less confident I think I tend to do a bit worse. (P11:72)

basically when I get nervous, er, my sentence starts to [shatter/shudder], I'll have to more think of what I'm gonna say, what words I'm gonna say, I more start to use words like, 'like,' 'um,' those like filling words, uh, I think that's how they call ... because I need like more time to somehow... [laughs] stitch myself back together and ... figure out what I'm gonna say, how I'm gonna say it, so, when I'm nervous I just speak very broken ... so when I'm confident I'm not that afraid that anyone's gonna judge me or anything, I speak more fluently. (P12: 124-128)

Performance pressure was also reported to cause mental blocks when trying to retrieve vocabulary, as Participant 8 put it, she felt "stressful" trying to "catch a word" (P8:99) that it impacted on her ability to communicate at the level she wanted (P8:97). Not being able to find the right word at the right time also caused Participant 4 to stop participating in seminars (P4:70).

Regarding writing, Participant 7 described the hit to her SE from corrective feedback, which subsequently impacted on her motivation to write (P7:129), while Participant 11 mentioned not knowing what structure to use undermined her SE beliefs for writing with subsequent impact on the quality of her writing as well as motivation to write (P11:72). Participant 1 had more confidence for writing than speaking, but feedback from her tutor had led her to "suspect" herself (P1:156), thereby eroding her SE for writing and she felt her performance was not good as a result.

Emotions such as the confusion described above, lack of enjoyment (P7: 161; P15:68), the feeling it's "too hard" (P13:86), feeling lacking (P2:60), even fear (P4:118), were frequently mentioned as having a demotivating effect with subsequent negative impacts particularly for writing performance (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15).

Reading was also reported to be negatively affected by SE beliefs and the emotions associated with these. For example, the effort or struggle required for reading in English, and at times the unpleasantness of the experience, especially reading journal articles (P10:24), had negative influences on motivation as expressed by Participants 2, 6, 7, and 10. In contrast, listening comprehension appeared to be the least affected by SE beliefs. Dips in performance were only reported in relation to the fear or anxiousness of missing something in listening test conditions (P7:26; P14:10).

Interestingly, negative SE beliefs did not always appear to lead to avoidant behaviours, indicating that participants were at times resilient to negative experiences, non-constructive feedback from others or their awareness of shortcomings (Fig.18). For example, Participant 1 sought further feedback (P1:152) on her written work, and Participant 2 took it as a cue to try even harder, "if I have no confidence in some field, then repeat, repeat, writing practice" (P2:104). Participant 3 outlined how lack of SE for specific aspects of pronunciation provided the motivational impulse to study it further, as did Participant 10, who also appeared able to channel her frustration in a positive way:

last week I had a presentation for instance, and there was a word that I wanted to use but I just didn't know how to say it properly, how to pronounce it, and that boosted my motivation to learn more. (P3:24)

when I don't feel confident and I get frustrated in myself, it makes me want to come back to the stuff that I struggle with ... it makes me want to come back to it, and kinda learn it, I know that I got get around to do it yet after two years, but it makes me want to do it. (P10:118)

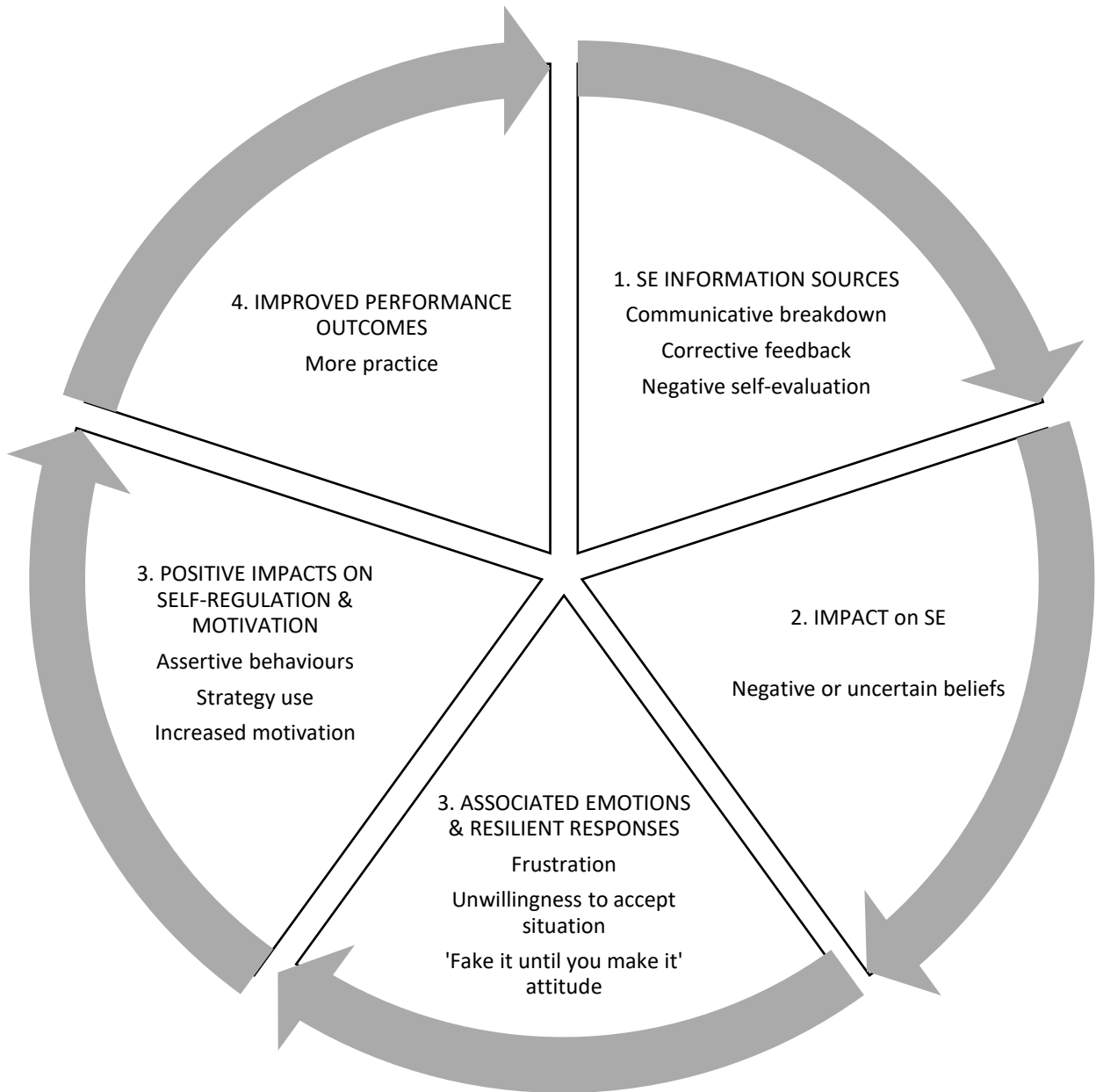


Figure 18 Resilient SE feedback loop

Participant 15 stated that he refused to allow uncertain SE beliefs affect his speaking performance, holding the belief that the very act of speaking would have future benefits:

IN: do you think it makes a difference to your performance?

um, no, in my opinion no, but still, like, you just feel it inside but you still perform the same based on whatever you know, ... you gonna do it, you're gonna speak it, you gonna say it whatever, ... it doesn't matter, you would feel unconfident inside, but, it will help you in the future, maybe to do better. (P15:112)

While Participant 11's resilient response was expressed in a slightly alternative way; her overall self-belief would be sufficient to motivate her to speak until her performance improved:

I feel like with me confidence plays a really big role when it comes to my language because I think I even scored myself that high just because I'm very confident in English in general, I mean I might be really bad at it, God knows, but at least I'm confident, if anything I can fake it until I make it. (P11:84)

Positive feedback loops for SE were described also (Fig.19), although not all participants could explain the mechanics of them, for example, Participant 14 simply stated, "if I become more confidence with writing so I will do better" (P14:136). Participant 7, while recognising that SE has an impact on everyday life, had not previously considered it regarding her English study until the interview. Other participants were better able to describe the consequences of their beliefs, especially in relation to speaking.

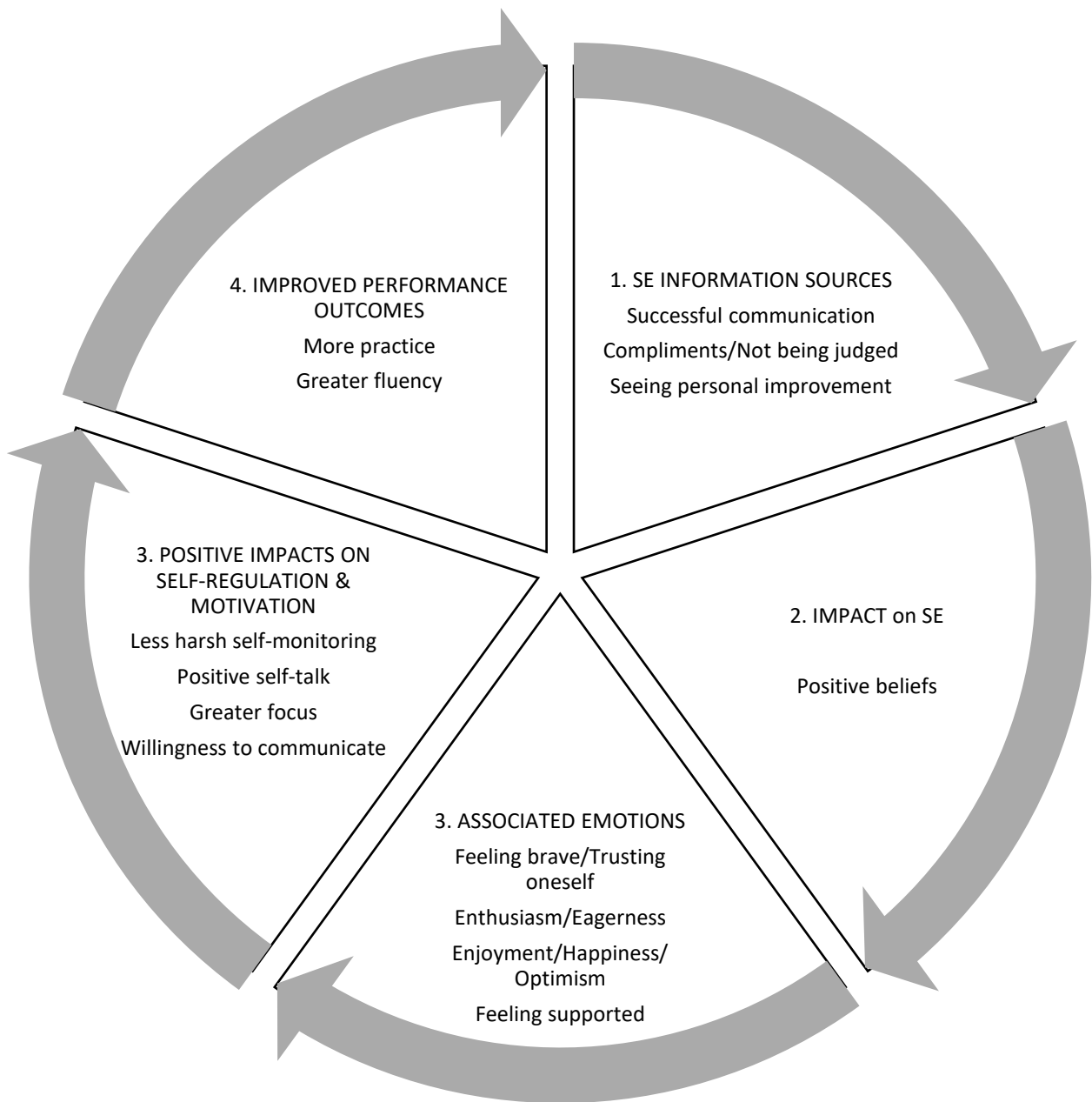


Figure 19 Positive SE feedback loop

For example, Participants 6 and 8 expressed the idea that positive SE leads to feeling brave, even “like a warrior” (P8:95), and along with Participant 9, described positive effects on self-regulation such as less harsh self-monitoring of their language output:

most of the time I will speak, I will speak a lot even though I think I’m making lots of wrong, and er, and the speaking part, I’m brave enough. (P6:30)

confidence is important, when you feel confident, er, you feel yourself, er, like a warrior and then just speaking, just writing, don’t think about anything else, just speaking, just do it like that [laughs]. (P8:95)

in formal situations sometimes, ... I check my speaking or listening or writing or my skills twice, and this confuse me, make me an anxious, especially in academic situations, but in normal situations I’m very confidence I can very well picture them others sometimes better than native speaker. (P9:140)

Participant 3’s sense of SE also meant that she was better able to self-regulate, this being her route to better performance. She employed a positive self-talk strategy that was based on her previous experiences of overcoming the communicative obstacle of missing vocabulary:

last week I had my presentation, two presentations on the same day [laughs] for both I was like, ‘you’re gonna do well, it’s fine because even if you struggle with a word, it’s fine you can still speaking’, so that did really boost my confidence, and actually make my performance better than I thought it would be (P3:100)

Participant 14 opined that positive SE involved trusting oneself when speaking, that allowing oneself to think in English would lead to greater fluency (P14:56). For Participants 8 and 13, positive SE beliefs were important for their ability to focus, which in turn was the way they believed they could succeed:

it’s so important, if you don’t feel confident, er, you are like a tennis ball, huh-huh-huh-huh, what’s going on here? huh-huh-huh-huh [moves head to and fro] If you feel confident you can catch the words, you can understand, cos you are focusing on the topic ... important I think, feeling confident

IN: yeah, so you’re saying then, that confidence helps you focus, is that the idea?

yes, helps me focus on something, yes. (P8:101-105)



yes, confidence is very important because er, you can't focus to your subject, your issue and, er, if you can't, er, focus something I think you can't success. (P13:112)

Feelings of optimism and enjoyment were also associated with positive SE beliefs. For example, Participant 14 felt confident he could overcome difficulties with the pronunciation of new words, "I will fix that" (P14:60) and Participant 4 expressed that her enjoyment of speaking in English led to better performance, "I just love talking and explaining myself better, you know, with my voice... I feel like I'm doing that better" (P4:6-8). Aside from speaking, Participant 12 felt that she would "get there eventually" (P12:44) regarding her ability maintain focus when reading English coursework texts, and Participant 7 explained that she enjoyed studying and that helped her confidence for reading (P7:74-78).

Positive SE beliefs were also intertwined with the interrelated ideas of not being judged negatively, thus feeling supported, which led to reduced performance pressure and greater willingness to communicate. Participants 3 and 4 both felt that they would not be ridiculed for not knowing something or making mistakes which maintained their sense of SE (P3:31; P4:80). Participant 10 also explained that she was not scared to speak because she felt confident she would not be judged negatively (P10:70). She spoke of people's acceptance of her as an L2 speaker, therefore she cared less about making mistakes (P10:72), sentiments echoed by Participant 12 (P12:82 & 100).

#### 9.4. Summary of Phase 2 analysis

The interviewees demonstrated good self-knowledge in that they were able to talk about their varying skill SE beliefs in detail. While some reported feeling highly unevenly self-efficacious, others expressed feeling generally confident, although even these students expressed less SE in the productive skills in specific instances. Moreover, several interviewees refuted that poor SE in one skill affected their SE in another. Their beliefs, and the emotions associated with these, were constituent parts of feedback loops that were either negative, resilient, or positive, that determined their subsequent language behaviours.

## Chapter 10. Discussion

### 10.1. Introduction

The findings from the quantitative Phase one and the qualitative Phase two are brought together in this chapter. The discussion refocuses on the research questions and considers the main findings that most EAP students vary in their competency across skill areas, with the greatest discrepancies being between speaking and writing, and that these discrepancies have varying impacts upon students' self-efficacy [SE], self-regulatory behaviours, and motivation. This chapter also discusses the relevance of Bandura's (1997) model in relation to uneven second language profiles and extends it, via a discussion of the emergent themes, for a specific description of the role of SE in EAP language learning contexts. The limitations of both phases of the study are then outlined.

### 10.2. RQ1: What is the extent and shape of unevenness in L2 EAP profiles?

In both 2016/2017 and 2018/2019 datasets, uneven competency profiles were the norm rather than the exception. In addition, the unevenness was patterned; mean speaking scores were consistently significantly above mean overall scores in all the data collected, and mean listening scores were at, or above, the overall mean. Conversely, mean reading and writing scores were sometimes equal to, but more frequently significantly below, overall scores. Only a tiny proportion of students scored better in writing than speaking<sup>48</sup> or best in writing overall.<sup>49</sup> Unsurprisingly therefore, 34% of profiles had a [SLRW] shape, although other shapes such as [SRLW] 16%, [SLWR] 13%, and [LSRW] 11%, were also seen. These combinations accounted for 79% of the 2016/2017 profiles and 40% of the 2018/2019 profiles. *T*-testing revealed that the [SLRW] profiles were significantly more uneven than the other profiles, but they did not have significantly lower overall scores. In addition, uneven competency was noted to be significantly more severe within the Arabic L1 sub-set.

---

<sup>48</sup> 2.2% in 2016/2017, 12% in 2018/2019.

<sup>49</sup> 0.4% in 2016/2017, 3.2% in 2018/2019.

That some students would have an uneven profile was expected, as this phenomenon was evident in the score sets of multilingual students generated by predictive validity studies of IELTS (Craven, 2012; Humphreys et al., 2012; Allen, 2017) and TOEFL iBT (Bridgeman et al., 2016; Ginther & Yan, 2018), showing that it is not confined to the ESOL context as reported by Schellekens (2007), Paton and Wilkins (2009) and Ward et al. (2012). As mentioned in Chapter two, the four skills develop at different rates in children learning their L1, leading to uneven profiles (Berninger & Abbot, 2010). This mechanism was also identified in L2 EAP students by Craven (2012), Humphreys et al. (2012) and Allen (2017), with the latter two studies finding that speaking competency increased at a significantly greater rate than writing, while Craven (2012) found that no significant improvements occurred in either productive skill, while listening and reading competencies improved. It is not possible to state definitively whether different rates of improvement in the TELL students' skills led to the uneven profiles seen in this dataset as no pre-teaching input measurements were taken, but the findings chime with Humphreys et al. (2012) and Allen (2017) in that students' speaking competencies were demonstrably greater than their writing competency after three to six months' study in the UK.

However, that *such a large majority had an uneven profile* in the TELL data was an unexpected finding,<sup>50</sup> given that Bridgeman et al. (2016) only deemed three percent<sup>51</sup> of their mixed nationality sample to have an uneven profile, and of the 1990 Chinese students in Ginther and Yan's (2018) study, only a quarter in each of the first two cohorts<sup>52</sup> were identified as "highly discrepant" (p.286). The differences between these proportions could be explained by the different approach taken in each study for judging whether a score set is uneven. Bridgeman et al. (2016) summed receptive scores separately to productive scores, then noted cases where the difference between the sums were greater than sixteen points, while Ginther and Yan (2018) conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis that isolated a group with receptive scores of 28 and above, and productive scores of 18 or below. The gap between receptive and

---

<sup>50</sup> An uneven profile was defined as an individual's SD value exceeding 5, equating to a 10% difference in scores across speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In 2016/2017, 98.5% of the cohort exceeded this SD value, and 88% did so in 2018/2019.

<sup>51</sup> 21 out of a sample of 787.

<sup>52</sup> 187 out of 740 in 2011, 149 out of 554 in 2012.

productive skills in this instance is ten points, hence the greater proportion of students deemed uneven in the dataset. The TOEFL iBT scoring is based on a one-hundred-and-twenty-point scale with thirty points available for each skill, so, if these points were converted to percentages, Bridgeman et al.'s (2016) criterion was a 27% receptive/productive gap, while Ginther and Yan's (2018) was 17%. In comparison, the criterion adopted in the present study was a 10% difference between scores in any of the four skills, rather than discriminating between receptive and productive skills. In 2016/2017, 98.5% of the cohort exceeded this, and 88% did so in 2018/2019. While 10% represented a significant difference in scores, on reflection, it perhaps served to over-diagnose uneven competency.

A further surprise was the degree to which some profiles were uneven. Table 30 presents the most uneven profiles uncovered in this study, of which 69% pertained to L1 Arabic students and 25% to L1 Chinese students. Two-thirds of these profiles took the [SLRW] shape. The Arabic students in the table consistently demonstrated very strong B2 speaking and listening competencies, some even potentially could have been categorised as C1 speakers, while scoring consistently badly in the writing test, in a way that suggests their level in this skill was at best B1, meaning that they lack the required competencies to produce cohesive and coherent texts. The Chinese spiky profiles were less predictable, as can be seen with Student 7, whose speaking was potentially C1 while their literacy skills were B1, just like the Arabic L1 students. This contrasts greatly with Student 16, whose profile was the quite the opposite, securely B2 for writing, but likely B1 in speaking, which could suggest weaknesses in pronunciation and fluency.

Table 30 *Top quartile individual SD values from 2016/2017 and 2018/2019*

	Sitting	L1	S	L	R	W	O	Ind. SD	Ranking
1	Mar 2017	Arabic	100	65	53	0	55	41.44	SLRW
2	May 2017	Arabic	98	65	20	20	51	37.98	SLRW*
3	May 2017	Arabic	90	90	27	30	59	35.53	SL*WR
4	July 2017	Arabic	92	20	23	20	39	35.53	SRLW*
5	May 2017	Arabic	92	75	30	20	54	34.72	SLRW
6	Mar 2017	Other	97	60	33	20	53	34.02	SLRW
7	Dec 2016	Chinese	98	55	28	25	51	33.81	SLRW
8	Mar 2017	Arabic	98	85	47	25	64	33.70	SLRW
9	May 2017	Arabic	85	70	30	15	50	32.91	SLRW
10	Dec 2016	Arabic	93	70	37	20	55	32.75	SLRW
11	Mar 2017	Arabic	92	80	77	20	67	32.16	SLRW
12	May 2017	Arabic	88	75	37	20	55	31.82	SLRW
13	Mar 2017	Arabic	92	35	63	20	53	31.80	SRLW
14	Dec 2016	Chinese	50	95	97	35	69	31.50	RLSW
15	Aug 2019	Chinese	64	90	27	60	60	25.85	LSWR
16	Aug 2019	Chinese	36	75	34	65	53	20.63	LWSR

Bridgeman et al. (2016) and Ginther and Yan's (2018) samples also contained Chinese L1 students with highly uneven profiles, however, their samples did not contain Arabic L1 students, so this study has brought to light a further sub-group that exhibits significantly more uneven [SLRW] profiles than the other L1s in the sample. Moreover, with the afore-mentioned studies' focus on predictive reliability, both noted that students with uneven profiles suffered poorer academic outcomes a year later than those without, meaning that the Arabic L1 students identified in the present study could also potentially be at risk of similar outcomes. While there is some evidence from the EMI university context that writing scores are the greatest predictor of at-risk students in terms of GPA (Harrington & Roche, 2014), it would be useful to verify whether Arabic L1 students with uneven profiles also suffer from impaired

academic achievement in the UK HE context, given that Riazantseva’s (2012) case study found that students with exceptionally strong speaking skills still managed to be successful as a result of their assessment diet being more geared to spoken assessments.

Regarding the shape of students’ profiles, there is a commonly held view that they tend to be more competent in the receptive, rather than productive skills (Schellekens, 2007; Paton & Wilkins, 2009). This has been corroborated by findings from other contexts (Bridgeman et al., 2016; Allen, 2017; Ginther & Yan, 2018) and is reflected in the IELTS results for the 2022 academic module (IELTS, 2023b). To illustrate, Table 31 below shows mean scores from all IELTS test centres globally, showing a [LRSW] ranking. A score between 5.5 to 6.5 is roughly equivalent to B2, so are comparable to the results from the TELL test at B2.<sup>53</sup>

Table 31 *IELTS scores 2022*. Source: <https://www.ielts.org/for-researchers/test-statistics>

	All centres		Chinese L1	Arabic L1
	Females	Males		
Speaking	5.97	5.90	5.7	6.1
Listening	6.30	6.28	6.2	6.0
Reading	6.19	6.09	6.5	5.6
Writing	5.71	5.62	5.8	5.5
Overall	6.10	6.04	6.1	5.9
Ranking	[LRSW]	[LRSW]	[RLWS]	[SLRW]

In the TELL data, however, the skills ranked somewhat differently to those shown above, excepting the Arabic L1 sub-group, as will be discussed shortly. *Only writing scores* were lower than receptive skill scores in almost all the students in the sample. The relative strengths in

<sup>53</sup> The table only presents IELTS scores because the system uses bands 0-9 with half bands, making it impossible to make a direct comparison with TELL scores. The raw scores for listening and reading are converted to a band score which is an interval, not ratio, scale and are applied adaptively from one paper to the next. It is not possible, for example, to say that Band 5 is equivalent to 55.6% (100% divided by 18 half bands= 5.56, x 10).

speaking seen in the TELL data could be an indication of the teaching and testing context from which the data was gathered, in other words, as a natural outcome of an EAP programme being delivered in the UK. Students sitting the TELL had been living in the UK for up to four months before the December 2016 test, and even longer for those re-sitting in March or May 2017, therefore they would have had lots of opportunities to speak English as part of their everyday lives. Likewise, the students on the summer pre-session programmes in 2018 and 2019 had spent at least two months in England prior to testing. Their slightly lower mean speaking scores perhaps reflect the shorter duration, but nonetheless, this time potentially offered more speaking opportunities than would be available to students sitting IELTS tests in non-English-speaking countries. The ranking of language skills mirrors the findings of Berninger and Abbott's (2010) research into L1 young learners, which further suggests that this pattern is perhaps to be expected in English-speaking immersive environments. They too revealed a pattern of development whereby reading then writing competency develops later and at a slower pace than speaking and listening.

Transfer effects appear to be present and can be seen most clearly in the ANOVA analysis with significant differences between groups according to their first language. As already mentioned, Arabic L1 students emerged as the most uneven group, due to strengths in speaking contrasted with weak writing scores. Interestingly, the IELTS statistics (Table 30) concur that Arabic L1 candidates follow the [SLRW] pattern, so this appears to be a consistent pattern, although why this should be so is less clear. The Chinese L1 group demonstrated a [SLRW] ranking also, which, by contrasting with the IELTS data as well as previous large-scale survey data (Wei & Su, 2015), again hints at the English-speaking context helping greatly with this skill. Even so, their speaking scores were still significantly lower than the L1 Arabic and other L1 speakers.<sup>54</sup> This difference might be explained by the large typological distance between English and Mandarin, or Cantonese Chinese, in terms of language family, phonology, morphology and syntax, or lack of cognates (Swan & Smith, 2001) meaning that this group develop their speaking at a slower rate than the others. However, English and Modern Standard Arabic also feature differences in

---

<sup>54</sup> Mandarin Chinese L1 speaking scores were more consistent with their written production, however.

these respects (Swan & Smith, 2001), which is why both Arabic and Chinese are in the longest-to-acquire category of the Foreign Service Institute's (US Department of State, 2023) ranking of languages. Therefore, it is likely that the Chinese speakers have a different starting point, given that they were also less strong across the other skills than the other two sub-groups. An alternative explanation is that, rather than the difference being of a purely linguistic origin, these students have a different psychology around speaking English, being more fearful of negative evaluation, therefore being less willing to communicate and exhibiting more communicative anxiety (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021) which would consequently impact on their performance. Exploratory analysis of TELL test scores in Phase one could not provide an explanation for the relative strengths for speaking in Arabic L1 students, nor the weaknesses in the Chinese L1 students, but as will be returned to shortly, interviewees in Phase two offered several reasons for their strengths and weaknesses in speaking competency.

What was abundantly clear from the TELL data, also concurring with IELTS results (IELTS, 2023b), was that writing was the weakest link irrespective of a student's first language background. Regarding the TELL writing scores, the L1 Chinese and L1 Arabic groups were not significantly different from one another, but they scored significantly worse in this skill than the other L1 students. The students were required to produce texts by hand under timed conditions, so this finding could possibly be attributed to writing in a different script which constitutes a very specific added burden for Arabic and Chinese students. As seen in Chapter two, the very act of transcription takes up processing capacity, making it slower and more laborious to write (Bourdin & Fayol, 2002; Wang & Wen, 2002), as well as more difficult to recall vocabulary and keep writing plans in mind (Olive, 2012), therefore, it is possible that the exam conditions made transcription effects more salient. That said, the lower performance could also be due to typological differences that specifically affect the writing mode, given that the speaking performances were not affected in the same way, at least in the Arabic L1 students. In this sense, English's lack of orthographic transparency and very different punctuation conventions are the most likely culprits that undermine accuracy in writing. Several studies have previously highlighted the difficulties that Arabic L1 students encounter



with spelling (Sawalmeh, 2013; Hamad & Abdallah, 2015; Qasem, 2020) and Kazazoğlu (2020) found that Arabic L1 students generally made twice as many errors in spelling and punctuation, as well as tenses and the use of articles than Turkish L1 counterparts. A further possibility is that students' educational backgrounds play a large role in their writing performances, a discussion point that will be returned to in due course because, unfortunately, again, the quantitative analysis could not answer this question.

### 10.3. RQ2: Are there relationships between skill areas and with unevenness?

All skill areas of language competency were correlated with one another as one might expect, given they draw upon the same declarative knowledge of grammar and lexis. The strongest relationships were seen between listening and reading (mean  $r_s = .55$ ) and reading and writing (mean  $r_s = .53$ ). On the other hand, the weakest relationship was between speaking and writing in most sittings of the TELL (mean  $r_s = .33$ ).<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it can be said that, generally, speaking and writing performances played the greatest role in uneven competency, with speaking being the greatest positive contributor to the uneven profile measure ( $r = .51$  in 2016/2017;  $r = .30$  in 2018/2019), while writing scores were seen to decrease the measure ( $r = -.41$  in 2016/2017;  $r = -.21$  in 2018/2019). However, it must be noted that due to some anomalies in the 2019 reading scores, reading ( $r = -.41$ ) had a stronger reductive effect on the uneven competency measure than writing in the 2018/2019 dataset.

Importantly however, in all sittings of the test, there appeared to be almost no relationship between the measure of uneven competency and overall scores (mean  $r_s = .12$ ).<sup>56</sup> This means that an individual's overall score, by dint of being a composite score of four equally weighted skill areas, carries no diagnostic information about that student's profile which, as was previously established, is very likely to be uneven. It is therefore vital that, irrespective of a student's overall score being low or high, their competency profile is inspected as part of

---

<sup>55</sup> The August 2019 cohort was unusual because the speaking and listening correlation coefficient ( $r_s = .40$ ) was slightly less than the coefficient of speaking and writing ( $r_s = .48$ ).

<sup>56</sup> Except in the most uneven quartile, representing only 1% of the cohort, where the overall scores were a couple of percentage points lower (Table 8).

decision-making about their suitability for a programme of tertiary study that will be conducted entirely in English. If discrepancies go undetected, there could be subsequent serious impacts for students' success.

Moreover, the TELL analysis showed that listening (mean  $r_s = .08$ ) and reading (mean  $r_s = -.19$ ) scores were also not strongly correlated with uneven competency. These findings were further confirmed by the regression analysis that indicated that listening (mean  $r = .15$ ) and reading (mean  $r = -.29$ ) contributed little to the variance in students' unevenness measures. Listening had a consistently very small positive contribution, while reading had a very small contribution to reducing uneven profiles in the 2016/2017 data ( $r = .16$ ) and a slightly greater contribution in the 2018/2019 data ( $r = .29$ ). Related to this, Bridgeman et al. (2016) and Ginther and Yan (2018) identified what they dubbed as *discrepant* Chinese students, who had obtained high reading and listening TOEFL scores, coupled with low speaking and writing scores. When these students were removed from their analyses, TOEFL scores became much better predictors of GPA, leading Ginther and Yan (2018) to conclude that speaking and writing had greater predictive validity than the receptive skills, and for Bridgeman et al. (2016) to state, "The message for admissions officers then changes from 'ignore reading and listening scores for Chinese students' to 'pay especially close attention to Chinese students with a large discrepancy between their receptive and productive test scores' " (p.316). The present study, while not primarily concerned with predictive validity, concurs with Ginther and Yan (2018) that the productive skills are the key factor in unevenness, and, even though a different shape of competency profile was seen in this dataset to Bridgeman et al.'s (2016), it agrees that discrepancies in a student's profile should serve as a red flag, helping tutors to identify, and thereby hopefully mitigate, downstream effects on academic success.

As mentioned in Section 5.3.2, after differences in raters' judgements are controlled for, one important influence on productive outcomes is the task demands (Schoonen, 2012). The discrepancy between strong speaking and weak writing performance in the TELL data must partly be explained by differences in what students are expected to produce under the artificial

conditions of a timed test. There are several reasons why it might be easier to fulfil TELL speaking task demands than to produce an essay under the same conditions, despite that the former puts the L2 speaker under arguably more pressure given that language production is on-the-spot with little time to consider accuracy. Firstly, speaking tasks are carried out with the prompting and support of at least one interlocutor, if not more in the case of group interviews, and students have the possibility of double-checking the task requirements directly or indirectly through their interlocutors, in fact, this forms part of the interactive ability component that is being assessed (Galaczi & Taylor, 2018). There will be paralinguistic clues during the task that could be drawn upon to help perform the task (Luoma, 2004; Young, 2008). Moreover, the TELL speaking task contains an introductory chat. This is a universally familiar, and almost certainly extremely well-rehearsed, language function for most students especially if they have been living in the UK prior to the test. In contrast, writing under test conditions is a process completed entirely alone. There is no opportunity for clarification, so tasks can be easily misinterpreted, or purposely ignored, and there is no recourse to language support other than from the task prompt itself.<sup>57</sup> It is unsurprising then, that some students are tempted to rely too heavily on the prompt or reproduce a set script which is not tailored to the task, but one that attempts to impress an examiner (Xu & Wu, 2012).

There are also important differences in speaking and writing task demands with regards to register, syntax and argumentation, all of which could either singly or jointly contribute to writing performance being a weak spot. One explanation is that because speaking and writing registers in academic contexts are quite different (Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Bryd, & Helt, 2002), students feel more confident about, and feel more able to produce spoken language. There is less requirement to find precise or varied terminology or employ sophisticated grammatical structures in speaking, than there is to produce the more formal register required for academic writing. However, it is a mixed picture as Lee, Bychkovska and Maxwell's (2019) corpus study of

---

<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, Luoma (2004) notes that research into speaking tests involving speaking to a tape-recorder, as opposed to taking part in a live interview with interlocutors, found that candidates produced language that had a more literate tenor. In addition, they reported feeling more anxious due to not having recourse to gestures or facial expressions.

levels of formality in L1 and L2 writing scripts revealed that L2 writers followed the prescriptive rules for academic writing more closely than the L1 writers. However, under timed conditions and with no recourse to support, it will be much harder for these L2 writers to produce the requisite impersonal structures with register-appropriate vocabulary.

Moreover, spontaneous and interactional speech tends to adopt a paratactic structure, with the speakers' propositions arranged side by side, shorter utterances, fewer connectives and subordinate clauses (Leech, 2000). Academic writing, on the other hand, is a specialist genre that adopts a hypotactic structure, with longer and subordinated sentences, and greater use of connecting words (Biber, 2006), all to create a clear line of argument. The lower scores for writing suggest that students were not producing texts of sufficient syntactical complexity or argumentative sophistication. The CEFR criteria for the B2 essay writing specify that the writer, "develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail" (Council of Europe, 2020, p.68), and further, the TELL test marking criteria differentiates between *pass* and *high pass* candidates through their ability to construct a clear argument, as this marks the difference between Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) *knowledge-telling* and *knowledge transforming* writing strategies, with knowledge transformation being the hallmark of skilled writing. Arguably, this criterion is unfair in the context of a timed exam, as effective argumentation is very hard to construct under time pressure and in the absence of a reviewer, and even harder still in an L2. As was described in Chapter two, L2 writing involves bi-lingual problem-solving (Wang & Wen, 2002), in which writers are potentially juggling between ideation and argument creation in their L1, followed by text generation and revision in their L2 (Zimmermann, 2000; Wang & Wen, 2002), a recursive process that can easily be interrupted and impeded by a lack of vocabulary (Tillema, 2012).

Beyond the task demands of academic writing under timed conditions, as discussed above, the role of previous experiences and practice are also contributory factors in writing being the weakest link in the TELL profiles. To begin with, previous educational input tends to be General English as opposed to EAP (Campion, 2016), and even though the TELL students had completed a pre-sessional and in-sessional EAP programme, they still may have lacked familiarity with, or

not had sufficient time to develop, the essay genre. Evans and Morrison (2011) found unfamiliar technical vocabulary and writing conventions, such as referencing and academic style, as specific areas of difficulty reported by students at the end of their first year in an EMI university in Hong Kong.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, in a study of high achieving students from the same context, Yung and Fong (2019) discovered that students found it difficult to move away from using the set expressions they had learned in secondary school, demonstrating how ingrained some essay writing habits become and how misconceptions of good writing style can be culturally transmitted. Secondly, the acquisition of the EAP writing via practice tasks can be impeded by low L2 competency, as the focus of instruction tends to remain on grammar and vocabulary (Evans & Green, 2007). These are sentence-level features, meaning that students may not have sufficient practice opportunities in composing whole texts, further explaining why they struggle to produce cohesive and coherent texts with clear argumentation. Paran and Wallace (2016) understand this as “writing to learn” English, as opposed to “learning to write” (p.449), whereby the purpose of writing practice is not aligned with students’ developmental needs. Admittedly, composition practice can be difficult to provide within an EAP programme of short duration and limited class hours, and students need to be highly motivated to engage in extended writing set as homework. Furthermore, even if practice is carried out by the student, within or outside of class, writing development is still contingent on tutors being able to find efficient and effective processes for providing constructive feedback.

Having explored some of the possible reasons why speaking and writing were the least related skills in students’ profiles, the discussion will now turn to the multiple regression analysis that clearly demonstrated speaking and writing having distinctly different roles in the formation of an uneven L2 profile. Speaking contributed the most to the variance, while writing scores were negatively correlated with the unevenness measure. This suggests that writing can give a truer indication of an individual’s overall competency, in a way that speaking cannot, because in the TELL data high writing scores were associated with high scores in listening, reading, and speaking. This is perhaps unsurprising because the writing process draws upon aspects of

---

<sup>58</sup> Although the TELL candidates were not required to use citation in their test scripts.

speaking such as lexical retrieval, and lexico-grammatical encoding during planning and drafting, as well as aspects of listening and reading when revising text (Schoonen, 2018). In Bridgeman et al.'s (2016) study, the adjusted  $r$  value for writing was the greatest of the four skills in their analysis of the full sample (p.311), meaning that TOEFL writing scores were most strongly correlated with subsequent GPAs. This suggests that good writers go on to do well in their programmes of study, and that GPAs most probably are calculated from a preponderance of written assessments given the correlation was even stronger in subject areas such as Business where writing predominates in assessment (Bridgeman et al., 2016).

Given that the TELL dataset showed that good writers are very unlikely to be poor speakers, but that the students with the most commonly occurring profile type, [SLRW], were widely discrepant, with strengths in speaking coupled with weaknesses in writing, closing that gap becomes a priority. Targeting writing during in sessional and pre-sessional provision is unlikely to be detrimental to the development of the other skills, especially in an immersive UK EAP context where there are opportunities to interact in English both in and outside of the classroom, and especially so if writing is done collaboratively and supportively in the classroom, rather than individually in private. Berninger and Abbott (2010) noted that speaking competency continues to develop and contributes to the development of reading and writing in L1 settings, and indeed, literacy approaches in primary and secondary education sectors in the UK explicitly draw upon elements of oral rehearsal of texts to scaffold written composition. Schemes such as Talk4Writing (2022) involving a sequence of lesson stages: imitation, innovation, and independent application, are reportedly very successful.<sup>59</sup> An equivalent to this, that is arguably more suited to tertiary level, would be the Process-Genre Approach for L2 writing instruction as proposed by Badger and White (2000). The approach takes elements of the traditional *product* approach to writing instruction and combines them with the *process* and *genre* approaches to achieve the best writing outcomes. Originally described by Pincas in 1982, the product approach to teaching L2 writing has four stages of familiarisation, controlled

---

<sup>59</sup> In a study of primary pupils in Lewisham, Corbett (2012) reported that the children progressed 2 years in their non-fiction writing development over a single school year.

writing, guided writing, followed by free writing. Model texts are used to initiate learning and are the final goal of instruction (Badger & White, 2000), and through these students can become familiar with the writing genres that they will encounter in UK HE. Silva (1993) explains that a focus on academic writing genres or tasks, "is part of becoming socialised to the academic community" (p.17). The product approach prioritises reading and writing practice, but, when combined with the process approach, the strengths demonstrated by students in speaking can come to the fore. The process approach, as its name suggests, guides learner writers through the writing processes of conceptualisation, planning, formulating, and reviewing. As White and Arndt (1991) put it, the aim is, "to nurture the skills with which writers work out their own solutions to the problems they set themselves" (p.5). This nurturing could be done within the classroom, playing to the speaking strengths of EAP students.

Weissberg (1994, 2000) explored the speaking-writing connection that comes about through taking a process approach to writing instruction, as well as the utility of the speaking and writing modes for language acquisition. He proposes that speaking can be drawn upon for developing writing, via social interaction in the classroom; "Social interaction provides an ideal context for mastering complex cognitive skills like writing" (Weissberg, 2006a, p.3). He advocates processes such as group brainstorming, text planning discussions, composing, and revising texts with the support of peer and teacher live feedback. It remains to be seen whether this approach would work in a busy multi-lingual EAP classroom, as Weissberg's (1994, 2000) research was limited to case studies of very small classes in which Spanish L1 students predominated. A highly interactive classroom may not be easy to manage with the larger group sizes that can occur in the EAP context, nor will it be guaranteed to suit all students' learning preferences or expectations. Furthermore, as was seen in Chapter two, students have recourse to their L1 at different stages during the writing process (Manchón et al., 2000, 2007; Zimmermann, 2000; Wang & Wen, 2002) meaning that it may not be possible to scaffold all stages in a multilingual setting, unless students were able to work in groups according to their L1.

Weissberg (2006b) also studied the dynamics of one-to-one writing tutorials, highlighting the importance of *conversational scaffolding* that can be provided by the tutor for the less expert writer. In his study he noted that writing tutorials were in essence, “a purposeful kind of instructional conversation resulting in a unique form of feedback otherwise unavailable to L2 writers” (p.261), in which the L1 tutor acts as an effective soundboard for the L2 writer. Through dialogue with the student, the tutor can address the needs of the individual by identifying and pursuing a teaching aim that is specific to that student’s present concerns, while the student can receive instant and tailored practical advice on a current written assignment. Weissberg (2006b) noted from his conversation analysis of writing tutorials that scaffolding took several forms, such as repetition or recasting of language, questions, summarising or paraphrasing. This provides oversight of the difficult L2 formulation processes, as well as expert writer guidance during the planning and reviewing stages, and in this way, there is potential for conversational scaffolding to channel a student’s speaking competency towards better writing. However, as Weissberg (2006b) points out, it is yet to be ascertained to what extent this type of scaffolding benefits L2 writers’ final drafts, so further research is required.

To summarise the discussion of the quantitative findings, uneven L2 English profiles were seen to be a common occurrence in this UK EAP context, moreover, they took a different shape to the English competency profiles reported in the testing literature. Students with an uneven profile tended to have strong speaking competency but much weaker writing competency, with their receptive skills falling in-between. Given the ubiquity and degree of unevenness seen in the TELL data, it has been argued that university admissions tutors cannot ignore this phenomenon when considering the linguistic competencies of students, even when applicants’ overall scores meet the B2 threshold required for a student visa. Furthermore, it is particularly important that teaching staff are not blinded by apparently great speaking competency in their international students, especially if their L1 is Arabic. Students will require careful and regular diagnostic testing where their intended programme of study involves writing of the knowledge-transforming kind. Given that writing competency is negatively correlated with unevenness, it has also been argued that focusing on this skill will not come at the expense of continued



development of the other skills due to the immersive language learning context of UK HE. Moreover, speaking competencies can potentially contribute to writing instruction via the Process-Genre Approach, although further research is required in this area.

#### 10.4. RQ3: What are students' SE beliefs about their L2 EAP profiles?

To recap the qualitative findings from Chapter nine, SE beliefs about listening and speaking were generally more positive than those for reading and writing (see Fig.15, Section 9.1.2), although SE for speaking varied according to the perceived supportiveness of interlocutors and communicative contexts, and individuals had varied preoccupations with ideation and pronunciation that affected their SE. In terms of Bandura's (1997) model (see Fig.16, Section 9.1.2), it was found that negative *mastery* experiences from assessments, as well as *emotional states* such as transient anxiety in high-stakes contexts, were important detractors of SE. *Vicarious experience* in the form of favourable comparisons with L2 speakers largely supported SE for both listening and speaking, while negative comparisons with L1 speakers tended to diminish it. However, SE for speaking appeared to be most influenced by *verbal persuasion* in the form of positive or negative comments from others. Complementing and extending Bandura's model (Fig.20 to follow), it emerged that interviewees' SE for listening and speaking were also sourced from self-initiated PRACTICE, SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT, and through UNDERSTANDING and BEING UNDERSTOOD. Interviewees also reported a range of STRATEGIES that helped maintain their sense of SE.

Reading SE beliefs were also mostly positive, and of the four skills, the most clearly founded on mastery experiences, stemming from exams and on past practice in preparation for them. However, unlike SE for listening that continued to be sourced from interaction with others and practice through multimedia, SE for reading was only seen to develop further in the interviewees that had gained extensive experience in reading academic texts such as journal articles, therefore SE was variable according to interviewees' familiarity with these. Reading academic texts was reported to be highly effortful, time-consuming, and not always enjoyable.

Interviewees reported the least positive SE for writing in comparison to the other skills. It was influenced both positively and negatively by *mastery* experiences in the form of marks for written assignments, with the negative experiences outweighing the positive. SE was sometimes further undermined through students' *vicarious comparison* with professional writers or with themselves as writers in their L1, as well as influenced negatively by tutor feedback comments, which were categorised as a negative form of *verbal persuasion*. As with speaking, SE for writing appeared to be fragile, again with interviewees reporting preoccupations with accuracy and structure, and it varied according to students' familiarity with different text types, as was seen with SE for reading. However, participants reported using a wide range of STRATEGIES for this skill area that mitigated against negative SE, such as recourse to technological resources during the writing process. Corrective feedback on writing, despite its fleeting depressive effect, was seen as an important contributor to improved SE in future.

This [SLRW] pattern of SE beliefs mirrors the TELL performance data, but it is different to other SE patterns in the literature. Listening and speaking are not always considered as strong areas in other contexts, for example Basaran and Cabaroglu's (2014) Turkish students consistently ranked these as their least self-efficacious even after a 12-week intervention using podcasts. Truong and Wang's (2019) Vietnamese students also rated listening as their weakest skill. However, this is contradicted by Torres and Turner (2016) who found SE for Spanish L2 was lowest for speaking and writing across five grade levels, but SE for listening was the greatest. Only Saleem et al.'s (2018) study of Saudi Arabian students found the [SLRW] pattern, which corresponds to the current study as well as the IELTS performance ranking for L1 Arabic candidates. It means that L2 SE patterns are not generalisable; they vary according to the L2 being taught, students' purposes for using that language, the teaching focus, and the wider context. The [SLRW] SE pattern seen in the current study is likely a product of highly motivated international students in an immersive English-speaking environment, who are currently confronted with the demands of academic reading and writing in the UK HE context.

All fifteen interviewees evidenced a good level of awareness of their competency profiles. Roughly half of the sample believed themselves to be unevenly efficacious, with register and

mode being important dimensions of their beliefs. However, it was not always the case that less SE was felt for formal academic registers, in fact, some students felt less SE for colloquial English. More importantly, speaking and writing SE beliefs reflected the specific demands of each mode as deployed in the academic context (Fig.14, Section 9.1.1). Students' SE for speaking was mediated through fluency self-judgements such as the ability to ideate and speak on the spot, while preoccupations with accuracy and structure affected SE beliefs for writing. These specific modality differences were also reported in Thompson's (2018) mixed method study of Japanese second year Business students, meaning they could be generalisable across EAP contexts. Thompson (2018) also found SE was weakest for spontaneous language use, specifically the question-and-answer sessions at the end of presentations. His four follow up interviewees attributed this to a lack of practice and the inability to prepare, as well as anxiety about negative evaluation by the tutor in front of peers. These findings link with themes that emerged in this study also, to be discussed in due course.

The other half of the sample deemed themselves as evenly self-efficacious, in the sense that they felt equally confident about all four skills of English. Nonetheless, their SE still dipped during specific instances of language use, again related to speaking and writing. These dips were caused by the importance they attributed to the specific instance, which led to feelings of pressure or performance anxiety. This chimes with Gregersen's (2006) study in that her L2 students also placed high value on being competent in each skill, subsequently reporting anxiety about operating in the skills in which they felt less capable and embarrassment around speaking to L1 users. In this study there appeared to be differences according to interviewees' L1, with a tendency for Chinese participants to hold strong beliefs that speaking was their Achilles' heel, while the other students more commonly mentioned essay writing, partly due to their feeling already self-efficacious in speaking. Thompson (2018) also noted least SE for writing in his students, more specifically structuring writing, while better SE beliefs were held for referencing, findings that were also replicated in this study.

This shows that SE beliefs are specific, making them easy to target. Knowing that students have a range of SE beliefs pertaining to the four skills, subject and EAP tutors can attempt to address

commonly held negative beliefs, while helping students to maintain constructive ones. Given negative SE beliefs appear to arise from specific preoccupations with speaking and writing, tutors need to be sensitive to the situations in which international students tend to feel particularly vulnerable, such as contributing to classes where there are L1 speakers present. Careful classroom management, for example allowing sufficient time for responses, could relieve some of the performance pressure of spontaneous speech. Likewise, writing task requirements need to be made explicit for international students, especially regarding structure, the effectiveness of which has already been established by Zhang (2018) for improving Chinese students' SE for writing. Corrective feedback, as opposed to summative comments, would also provide students with a better sense of agency over their lexical and grammatical accuracy by pinpointing errors. Furthermore, by being cognisant of the sources of students' SE beliefs, whether related to Bandura's (1997) model or to the emergent findings from this study, EAP tutors can adjust their teaching and assessment practices in favour of developing strong SE in all skills. The discussion will therefore now consider the role of these sources in the formation of competency beliefs, with a view to providing recommendations for practice in the next chapter.

#### 10.4.1. Bandura's sources of SE

Bandura (1997) proposed that the greatest source of SE is from *enactive mastery experiences*, which encapsulates the idea that being successful in a particular task builds an individual's belief that they can be successful again, while failures will detract from that sense, particularly when SE is still developing. This last aspect is important to note considering that international students are, in essence, still learning English as their L2 whilst using it at an advanced level, meaning that negative experiences are likely to be more impactful than positive ones. The qualitative data indicated that *mastery* experiences in using English to speak, listen, read, and write, had indeed led to idiosyncratic beliefs sets about L2 competency.

Mastery beliefs were sourced mainly from educational experiences prior to entry into UK HE and had differing levels of impact on individuals' SE. Doing better than expected in high-stakes

exams, such as IELTS or FCE, and special events such as winning competitions were seen to contribute positively to the interviewees' sense of SE. These were reported by Participants 2, 3, 4, 7, 10 and 13, with Participants 2, 3 and 10 mentioning successes in speaking exams specifically. Unsurprisingly, poor scores or the perception of having performed badly had negative impacts. Participants 1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14 all recounted instances in which their SE for speaking, listening, reading, or writing in English had been negatively affected by exams. For Participants 6, 7 and 14, the negative impacts stemmed specifically from IELTS listening tests. For Participant 7, the experience caused only a relatively short-lived dip in her SE, which she later remedied by extensive listening to music and movies in English. However, Participant 14's memory remained fresh, and his experience appeared to have created anxiety around being assessed in this skill area:

when you are being tested on your listening skill, so, ... it's ... stressful when you are at the test, ... you may ... miss a sentence or er answer, so you get confused ... that's happen with me in IELTS listening exam so I missed the first answer then I missed four answer, er, after the first one, because I panic and I don't know how to, to get words I, er, I listen to er, I hear it, but I I can't write it down. (P14:10)

Participant 9 described the negative impact a difficult IELTS reading test had had on him, with texts quite unlike those he was used to (P9:30). Furthermore, Participants 7, 10 and 14 felt that their experiences of writing under assessment conditions had negatively impacted on their SE, both generally for writing, and specifically for writing a timed essay. Participant 10 explained her fear was rooted in an FCE exam taken seven years ago where she had struggled with a story-writing task that left her convinced that she would be unable to write an academic text under timed conditions:

I would struggle write a nice, timed story, even if it was like a fantasy story or something, it would be even worse, if it was actually something about an, like knowledge kind of, writing down my opinion or anything. (P10:90)

Finally, Participant 11 described a negative experience in an IELTS speaking exam which contrasted sharply with her prior positive experiences of doing extremely well in English exams in her own country, which had affected her SE for speaking greatly.

Surprisingly, the most recent reviews of research on test impact (Cheng, Sun & Ma, 2015; Sultana, 2018; Ha, 2019) appear not to contain any research that has considered the long-term impact of undergoing high-stakes exams such as IELTS or FCE on SE, even though these exams arguably represent discrete and memorable mastery experiences for L2 students. From this study it appears that even preparation for IELTS has an on-going impact on SE, for instance, Participant 5 alluded to practising his reading with short exam-style texts, which had led to his lower sense of SE for reading in a sustained way (P5:22) as now required for his course, while Participant 9 mentioned that the writing test was the obvious thing to train for (P9:136), meaning his language practice had solely focused on producing a model IELTS writing text, rather than developing a wider sense of SE for writing a range of texts.

Interviewees also commented that reading, with listening and writing to a lesser extent, were prioritised in the instruction they had received in their countries, while speaking had been relatively overlooked. In some cases, this was due to washback from highly competitive national exams, the example mentioned by interviewees being the Chinese College English Test [CET]. Instructional priorities such as preparing students for national exams create an imbalance in the number of *mastery* experiences students receive in each skill area, and the importance attributed to them, tilting the balance towards students having greater SE for reading at the expense of the other skills, a finding that concurs with Yung and Fong's (2019) mixed-method study from the Hong Kong EMI context. Shellekens (2007) originally noted that a possible cause of a spiky profile is examination culture, and these findings related to SE indicate a mechanism for this via uneven SE. Li, Zhong and Suen's (2012) survey of 150 Chinese CET candidates also demonstrated that SE was impacted differently across skill areas because of taking or preparing for this exam, with half the sample reporting that their reading and listening SE had improved, but only 36-37% felt the same way about speaking and writing. The CET exam is not equally weighted across the four skills, with speaking being optional and writing having a 15% weighting, so Li et al. (2012) conjectured that washback effects of the CET on teaching were influencing their results. Furthermore, and worryingly, 84% of those surveyed felt under more pressure because of the exam, 59% more anxious about learning

English, 38% expressed the view that the exam had left them with the impression of having been unsuccessful in their English learning efforts, 33% expressed frustration and 31% more afraid of learning English (Li et al., 2012). These are quite negative outcomes of the CET on students' sense of SE, and they coincide with the findings from the Chinese interviewees in this study. Given that IELTS is also very widely administered exam, further research on its test impact on SE would be useful.

*Mastery* experiences also appeared to strongly influence students' beliefs about academic writing. Bandura (1997) noted that competency beliefs are more sensitive to negative experiences when a secure sense of SE has not yet been established. Participants 4, 10, and 11 illustrated this well in describing the significant SE impacts of receiving what they considered to be good or bad marks for their written work. This is perhaps unsurprising given that in the HE context marks are the ultimate measure of students' success.<sup>60</sup> *Mastery* experiences played an important role in essay writing specifically. Here, SE beliefs developed prior to entering UK HE had been challenged by various factors, not least the range of different written formats they were now being required to produce, but also how to structure them. Participants 2, 5, 11, 14, and 15 felt that they were self-efficacious in writing the set type of essays they were familiar with from their prior education, but that they now felt very uncertain of how to structure academic essays in the UK. Bandura (1997) explains that one of the aspects of perceived task difficulty, is bound up in how similar a new task is to one that is already known, therefore the uncertainty felt by students about the task demands of UK essay writing was guaranteed to erode their SE. In these situations, people take recourse to the "success rates of others who have performed the activities" (Bandura, 1997, p.83) to reach their personal judgement of SE. In other words, they draw upon the second source outlined in Bandura's (1997) model, vicarious experience, to which the discussion will now turn.

---

<sup>60</sup> Summative feedback comments also impacted on students' SE for writing. This aspect will be discussed shortly, as feedback comments were categorised in the study as pertaining to Bandura's *verbal persuasion* rather than *mastery*.

As Bandura (1997) points out, in many areas of performance, “there are no absolute measures of adequacy” (p.86), so people make social comparisons to gather information about their own levels of competency. The interviewees illustrated what drawing upon vicarious experience looked like in L2 EAP contexts, and surprisingly, this strategy was being employed across all four skills, not just speaking as was assumed in Chapter three. For instance, Participants 7, 9 and 10 judged their listening competency negatively in relation to L1 speakers, by their inability to eavesdrop a fast-paced conversation. However, by the same token, Participant 7 increased her SE for listening by noting how little her classmates understood of EAP lessons in comparison to her. Bruning and Kauffman (2016) highlighted that peers are more impactful models than others with whom the individual identifies less when a social comparison is being made, and evidence of this is apparent here. It also featured with Participant 12, whose SE for reading was undermined by her comparisons with British classmates’ ability to read for pleasure, and in Participant 10, whose SE for essay writing was eroded by the belief that classmates were able to write assignments more quickly and easily. Unusually, however, some interviewees’ SE judgments on their writing were fed via comparisons far from their peer group, for instance, Participants 2, 6, and 15, benchmarked themselves against professional writers, with clear detrimental impacts for their SE.

The role of vicarious experience was seen most in SE for speaking, nonetheless. It took the form of interviewees’ favourable comparisons against other L2 speakers, coupled with their less-favourable comparisons of themselves with L1 speakers. This was best illustrated by Participant 9 who felt inadequate speaking in front of British peers, but perfectly self-efficacious when speaking English as a lingua franca among international students and in his wider social circle. It appeared that the interviewees saw themselves in a form of a hierarchy of speaker statuses, and these status rankings also seemed to extend as far as speakers of the same L1, with the Chinese students seemingly very aware of each other’s speaking competencies. This reinforces the point made earlier that tutors need to be sensitive to, and attempt to manage, learning contexts where there are both L1 and L2 speakers.



Bandura's third source of SE, *verbal persuasion*, was exemplified in the qualitative data in several ways, mostly affecting speaking, and writing to a lesser extent. The most obvious of these was through encouragement from classmates or tutors, with Participants 4 and 12 mentioning supportive classmates, while Participants 9, 10, 11, also 12, gave examples of tutors who had encouraged them in a memorable, beneficial manner. On the flip side, there were instances of criticism voiced by both teachers and classmates that had had negative impacts on SE for speaking. The power of performative comments was also felt through the absence or presence of feelings of being judged, as Participant 4 put it, "they never laugh at me" (P4:80), whereas Participant 2 explained, "if I speak with Chinese with English, they find my accent or some mistakes in grammar, they always correct me" (P2:18). Verbal persuasion was particularly strongly felt through compliments from L1 speakers. These were highlighted by Participants 3, 4, 13, and 15, with Participant 3 quoting her British classmates as saying she was, "getting better and better" (P3:08). Bandura (1997) emphasises that, "the more believable the source of information about one's capabilities, the more likely are judgements of personal efficacy to change and to be held strongly" (p.105), therefore comments from L1 speakers may be particularly powerful as international students view them as credible experts in speaking English, higher up than themselves on the hierarchy of speakers as mentioned just above, therefore their word is trusted above that of supportive friends and tutors.

Previous research found verbal persuasion was a significant influence on children's SE (Graham, 2006; Wang & Pape, 2007), but it appears the effect is felt with EAP students too. Zheng et al. (2017) found verbal persuasion was the strongest predictor of SE across several skills, which led them to suggest that the collective cultural background of their Chinese participants made them more attentive to comments from others. This research contends that verbal persuasion is a source, as well as a detractor of SE, that operates across a range of cultures. However, it is notable that the study's Chinese participants had attended to predominantly negative comments about their speaking competencies, so extra care should be taken by tutors when commenting on Chinese students' performances. On a more positive note, however, Zhang et al. (2020) found that at the end of their intervention in English public speaking skills, *verbal*

*persuasion* was the more important contributor to SE than *mastery* because it improved motivation for preparation among the participants, which, in turn, led to better performances.

In all the examples above, verbal persuasion supported or diminished SE for speaking, however, it could be argued that in the EAP context it operates through tutors' written feedback comments on assignments too. Given its power, verbal persuasion needs to be carefully executed, and Participant 4 illustrates this well. She expressed a severe challenge to her SE for writing due to both verbal and written feedback, "my tutor say 'this essay is confusing', er, because he wrote I don't know which aspect do you want to talk about, time, money, class, just stick to one thing" (P4:126). Bandura (1997) stipulated that for verbal persuasion to work most effectively, people need encouragement that conveys the idea that they can control their behaviour. In other words, they need to be persuaded they can exercise better control by applying rules and strategies effectively, rather than being praised or criticised for the outcome of their behaviour. In Participant 4's case, the feedback conveyed to her that she had no control over the organisation of her essay. Had her feedback focused instead on what she had achieved so far, rather than what she had failed to achieve, then perhaps her SE for writing could have been less badly affected. As Bandura (1997) states, "social evaluations that focus on achieved progress underscore personal capabilities, whereas evaluations that focus on shortfalls from the distant goal highlight existing deficiencies in capabilities" (p.103). This could also explain why Participant 3's classmates' comments had boosted her SE greatly, because they had noted her improvement, showing her that she had agency over developing her speaking competency. Students need to be encouraged that they have the personal power to produce results.

The final source from which people draw judgements of SE are physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1997). This means that students are likely to use information from their emotions, mood, and bodily feelings to judge their SE in English from moment to moment. Indeed, both positive and negative influences of these on students' SE were evidenced. They related to students' emotions much more often than physiological processes, which is not

surprising given that using a language requires very little physical exertion, but considerable cognitive effort and is wrapped up with self-identity (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009).

A large proportion of interviewees agreed that they felt relaxed conversing with friends, in contrast with speaking with other interlocutors, mostly because they felt their friends were supportive and non-judgmental. Other positive emotions included optimism and enjoyment. Participants 3 and 14 expressed optimism about improving their pronunciation which bolstered their SE, while Participant 7 felt buoyed up by her enjoyment of, and optimism about, studying English in general (P7:76-78). However, negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, sadness, regret, confusion, embarrassment, frustration, also featured in interviewees' accounts, outweighing the positive emotions. These were triggered by the different situations in which the interviewees found themselves. As examples, Participant 2 went as far as saying he could black out if he found himself having to speak to his lecturer without preparation, Participant 7 felt regret that she could not fully express herself, and Participant 11 mentioned that feeling nervous causes her to forget vocabulary. Regarding pronunciation, Participant 1 expressed unhappiness, and Participant 11 uneasiness. These instances highlight how the performance pressure of spontaneous spoken production impacts on SE. Transient anxiety was also a feature of listening exams and classroom experiences, with Participant 6 highlighting the importance of listening comprehension for learning, which rendered listening in class a high-stakes situation in which she felt fear. Reading, meanwhile, was reported as effortful and frustrating, therefore less enjoyable, by Participant 12. Several participants also reported emotions ranging from confusion about, to outright fear of, academic writing. Feedback on writing led Participant 1 to feel confused and "suspect" herself (P1: 156), and Participant 4 demonstrated the most extreme vicious circle of negative emotions impacting on her SE for writing that led her to lament "I'm always 'I'm gonna fail this, I'm gonna fail this' so yeah, I'm living in fear" (P14:118).

The significance of these emotions for subsequent performance will be discussed shortly as part of the commentary on the fourth research question, but it suffices to say here that, in accordance with Bandura's (1997) model, emotions were found to be intrinsic to the SE beliefs

held by the students. That negative emotions were reported more frequently than positive ones, indicates an element of negativity bias wherein adults are prone to attend more to negative information in learning situations (Vaish, Grossmann, & Woodward, 2008). Arguably, this bias also differentially weighted the impact of the sources of SE already discussed, especially verbal persuasion. This means that any effort to alter students' SE beliefs needs to address negative emotional habits and reduce reactions such as anxiety and despondency.

#### 10.4.2. Emergent themes

The thematic analysis uncovered several themes that did not immediately appear to fit with Bandura's (1997) SE model. These are set out in Figure 20, namely: PRACTICE, SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT, UNDERSTANDING & BEING UNDERSTOOD and STRATEGIES.

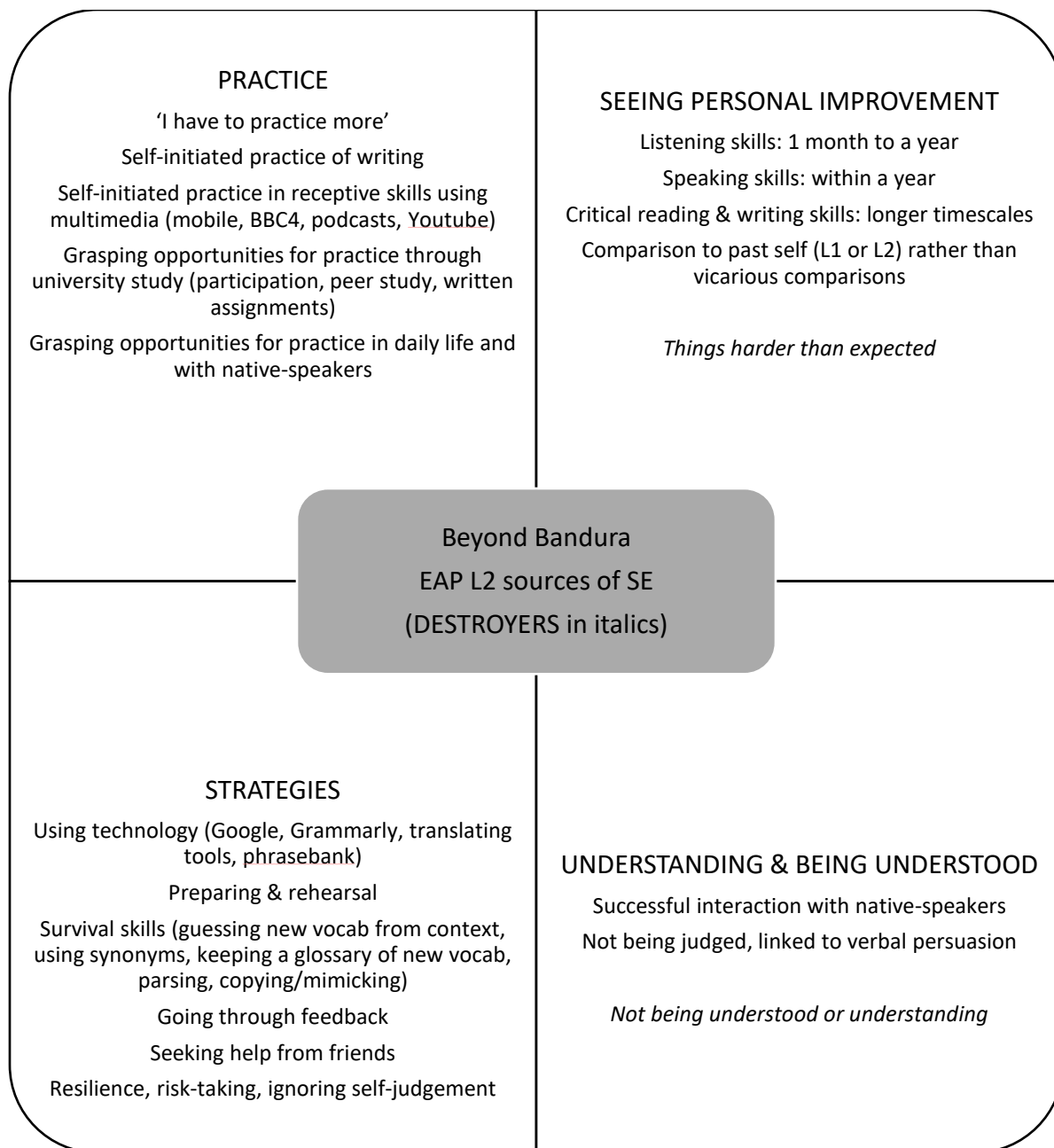


Figure 20 Map of emergent themes related to SE

PRACTICE emerged as a theme in students’ SE beliefs in all four skill areas, but it was most salient for listening and speaking. Participants 3, 5, 10, and 14 believed that extensive practice led to stronger feelings of SE for listening, and this belief motivated them to carry out self-initiated practice using multimedia that could be accessed through their mobile devices, with

YouTube and the BBC being sources that were the most frequently mentioned. The emphasis on practice was true for speaking SE also, with two thirds of participants stressing the importance of grasping practice opportunities in their daily lives, whether through university study in the form of participation in EAP classes or peer study, or through seeking interaction with L1 speakers in and outside of class. Moreover, Participant 5 mentioned technological innovations such as Zoom and Skype as aiding him to develop his SE for speaking at a time when the global pandemic had thwarted his opportunity for immersion in an English-speaking country. Practice in these skills was always expressed in forward-looking terms, such as “I knew that if I used it [English] more I would be more confident” (P11: 82), which was why I distinguished between it and *past practice* in the analysis. Although PRACTICE could be deemed to pertain to Bandura’s (1997) *enactive mastery*, I argue that distinguishing it as a separate source of SE is useful in understanding language learning specifically, given that the concept of the need to practise is very familiar to anyone either learning or teaching a foreign language, functioning as it does to proceduralise one’s declarative knowledge of a language on the journey to automaticity (Collins & Marsden, 2016). Interviewees recognised and valued PRACTICE for the on-going maintenance and improvement of their SE beliefs, as did the interviewees in Zhang et al.’s (2020) study of English public speaking performance.

Conversely, where they had experienced inappropriate or varying quantities of practice opportunities, it resulted in uneven SE beliefs. This was seen to operate with academic reading and writing. Regarding reading, participants scored their SE differently according to the text type, demonstrating that less familiarity, or in other words, less practice, with journal articles lowered Participants 6, 10, 11, 12, and 14’s sense of SE for reading this type of text specifically. As mentioned earlier, interviewees’ SE beliefs for reading had been shaped by past emphasis on practicing for high-stakes exams, and so it is not surprising to see students’ generally strong SE for reading being eroded when faced with reading journal articles with which they have little or no prior experience. Importantly, none of the interviewees mentioned a desire, nor a need to read more, which contrasted greatly with their views on listening and speaking.

PRACTICE was barely mentioned regarding SE for writing also. Only Participant 9 reported that extensive practice during his undergraduate course had led to his present-day SE for essay writing, and Participant 3 commented that her SE for writing would always be less than for speaking, as a factor of the time she spent engaged in each activity. Lower SE for writing can also be explained by *past practice* that was not fully relevant to the difficult tasks students now face, coupled with the undermining *mastery* experiences of timed exams, receiving poor marks and summative feedback that demotivated rather than bolstered their sense of self-agency over their writing development. Furthermore, the scarcity of interviewee comments relating to reading and writing practice suggests that students have little idea of how to seek self-initiated practice opportunities in these skills, in contrast to listening and speaking. The onus is therefore on subject and EAP tutors to provide this practice, perhaps through guided reading of journal articles or through adopting the Process-Genre Approach as was mentioned in Section 10.3. Indeed, Zhang (2018) has already trialled this approach, finding his Chinese students' SE for writing increased significantly over the course of a semester. Moreover, Wilby (2020) demonstrated that students' SE for academic writing can increase over just one month in the UK HE context with appropriate input and feedback. Along with Sun and Wang (2020), Wilby's findings also showed that improved SE led to greater writing performance (Wilby, 2020).

SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT also emerged as a theme, given that two thirds of interviewees recounted instances of their SE beliefs being bolstered by seeing their English improve. This theme is arguably more related to Bandura's concept of *mastery*, in the sense that participants were drawing SE information from a comparison of their past selves with their present selves, rather than drawing a vicarious comparison with others. Participant 13 very much benchmarked his progress against himself, mentioning this several times during the interview; "if I learn some new things in English ... it makes me happy, ... then I compare to myself in the past ... the only competition is myself" (P13:2). SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT also relates directly to the theme of PRACTICE, in that one is usually the result of the other. Furthermore, the theme is compatible with L2MMS theory, in which movement towards the *ideal L2 self* is what motivates students (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Here though, it is

argued that an awareness of personal improvement in the form of interviewees' sense of progression towards L1-like competency is a source of SE, which in turn is motivating.

The extent to which SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT was a source of SE varied across skill areas, and unsurprisingly, in a similar fashion to that seen with PRACTICE, improvements in listening were mentioned the most, with Participants 7, 8, 10, 12, and 14 noting this skill had improved over relatively short periods of time from a month to a year. Some attributed their rapid progress to extensive practice through watching films, YouTube and listening to podcasts and/or music (P7:181; P10:12; P14:24). Participant 7 believed her listening skills improved over the course of just a month, from a low point following a bad IELTS score to a good sense of SE now, "I didn't realise it very, er, obviously, but it, it, it improves ... it's not visible ... I have more confidence now" (P7:183-187). Participants 8 and 12 (P12:24 & 136) saw improvements in being able to understand lecturers and British classmates which greatly benefitted their SE for listening:

when I came to the UK for the first time it was terrible, I couldn't understand anything ... accents, and then just look at people, just people, oh, they, they're moving their mouths what they were saying [mimes moving mouth and shrugs shoulders] [laughs] it's good ok past experience I can compare with my last year. (P8:15-17)

Improvements to speaking were mentioned only slightly less often than listening. For Participants 2, 8, 11, and 12, SE for speaking grew through noticing greater conversational ease with lecturers and classmates over the course of their first year in the UK:

just one year ago I couldn't say good morning, it was so hard, good morning but now, morning! [said in a chirpy manner]. (P8:53)

Participant 11 (P11:82) described her journey from being the worst in her English class at school to being the best and the feeling of pride this had given her, then she charted the continued and fast development of her speaking skills on arrival in the UK.

In contrast to these rapid improvements being reported for listening and speaking, only Participant 9 noted his critical reading skills had improved over the course of his master's



degree (P9:42) and Participant 10 had seen improvement in reading journal articles from her first to second year (P10:24). Four participants felt their writing skills had improved, but with widely varying timescales from two months to a year. Participant 3 experienced a closing of the gap between her SE for speaking and writing over the course of one semester which was a surprise to her, but she also explained that during this time she had received not only copious input across her modules on how to structure essays, but also multiple opportunities for formative feedback on drafts (P3:160). Participant 14 (P14:98) also opined that his writing was improving through practice and better instruction than he had received in the past. This only underlines the points made earlier about importance of providing appropriate scaffolding of academic writing tasks, coupled with practice that allows for formative feedback.

The flip side of this theme is, of course, NOT SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT, as was illustrated by Participant 4 in the earlier discussion of the impact of negative verbal and written feedback on her writing. She had undergone what appeared to her as continued deterioration in her writing skills, with destructive consequences for her SE for writing:

I'm trying to improve going to [University writing support services], but I know that I can't wake up one day and say 'oh, I'm good, I can have like an eighty' because that's never gonna happen. (P4:92)

Bandura (1997) highlighted that complex competencies develop over longer timescales, and that the rate of improvement will vary, typically slowing in the later stages of development, and these factors will inevitably impact on SE judgements. This means that SE for L2 academic writing will always be weaker than the other skills given its highly complex nature, but also that students will experience spurts and recessions in their growing SE. Therefore, tutors should be mindful of the impact this will have on students' motivation and should manage their expectations about the rate of improvement they are likely to see. At the same time, they could employ *verbal persuasion*, either in the form of encouragement or through formative feedback, to highlight the progress that is being made, demonstrating to students that they have agency over their developing competency, which in turn will maintain their SE beliefs.

The themes of UNDERSTANDING and BEING UNDERSTOOD arguably represent the clearest examples of how *enactive mastery experiences* inform SE beliefs when operating in an L2, through successful or unsuccessful interaction with others. Unsurprisingly, participants drew far more information from listening and speaking experiences, than from reading and writing, due to those skills being called upon more ubiquitously both in and outside of the classroom. In terms of comprehension, more than half of the interviewees made SE judgements based on their ability to follow fast-paced, L1 speaker speech, and nearly half mentioned the difficulty of understanding regional accents. The latter had had a momentarily depressive effect on their SE, but several participants felt that they had already made, and others felt that they could make, the adjustment. Participants 6, 12, and 13, noted that EAP and subject tutors helped with this transition through grading their instructional talk, which highlights its importance for L2 students who are still building their sense of SE. In contrast, the only area in which reading comprehension was problematic for participants' SE was understanding journal articles which, as was mentioned previously, are a less familiar text type, hence the need for EAP tutors to provide more *mastery experiences* with these.

Successful interaction with L1 speakers, or BEING UNDERSTOOD, was also used to benchmark SE. Most participants felt self-efficacious as was evidenced by the high scores they gave themselves for speaking, indeed, Participant 4 relished the opportunity to explain herself through talking (P4:06), in a way that she did not in her writing. Only Participants 1 and 13 described negative impacts of not being understood outside the EAP classroom in contrast to coping well in class, while Participant 11 voiced a preoccupation about not always being understood due to her accent (P11:28). However, BEING UNDERSTOOD did not arise as a theme in interviewees' comments on writing, which indicates that it does not operate as a source of SE in the same way. Instead, SE information was only being drawn about accuracy and style at the local level, and structure. Composing is done in the absence of interlocutors, and therefore feedback on achieving meaning in writing is asynchronous (Hughes, 2005). There are no immediate visual clues, after all, students cannot usually watch the reader's face, and tutors cannot feasibly provide a complete commentary on their comprehension of students'

texts in written feedback comments. This means that an important channel of SE information is missing for writing, so it would be useful to find ways of providing live feedback, perhaps through in-class peer review, or Weissberg's (2006b) *conversational scaffolding*.

The final emergent theme was STRATEGIES. This theme encompassed an assortment of cognitive or meta-cognitive strategies that appeared to be being deployed across all four skill areas, either to maintain or boost interviewees' sense of SE. Recourse to technology was a key element in this. For example, Participant 7 knew her SE for listening could be boosted via extensive listening practice using multimedia. Likewise, using translators supported SE for reading for many participants, although Participants 5, 12, and 14 reported the alternative strategy of guessing meanings from context. Participant 13 had a motivational strategy of being in competition with himself (P13:74) to ensure he read in English daily. SE for speaking was upheld through a range of survival tactics such as preparation, flexibility of expression, body language, rehearsal, seeking interaction with L1 speakers, risk-taking and ignoring self-judgement.

Most strategies were reported for the formulation process in writing, however. Interviewees again mentioned how they maintained their sense of SE via technologies such as e-dictionaries, online translating tools, or Google to find precise vocabulary. Manchester University's Academic Phrasebank, as well as the cloud-based, typing assistant Grammarly, also helped shore up participants' doubts about academic expression and sentence structure. Bandura (1997) originally highlighted the importance of SE for self-regulated behaviour, and in this sense participants' use of strategies for writing demonstrated that the participants were exercising a level of control. However, in relation to language use, Griffiths (2018) usefully distinguishes between communication/compensatory strategies and learning strategies. The former set of strategies are deployed when the goal is communication or comprehension at the point of need, as demonstrated by participants in their willingness to rephrase or use body language to compensate when speaking, or by looking up words when reading and writing. Learning strategies, on the other hand, are deliberate actions that will contribute to future language use, as illustrated by Participant 6 keeping a glossary of the new words she encountered and

Participant 7's use of multimedia for extensive listening practice. These pro-active learning strategies were mentioned far less than the reactive coping strategies, and none were mentioned for writing, so this indicates that students may benefit from strategy instruction in this skill for which self-regulation is paramount. This idea will be considered further in the next chapter.

#### 10.5. RQ4: What role do students' SE beliefs play in their performance?

The literature reviewed in Chapter 3 provided ample evidence that SE beliefs play a role in L2 EAP performance in each language skill (Rahimi & Abedini, 2009; Shehzad et al., 2019; Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020; Sun & Wang, 2020; Wilby, 2020), and Bandura (1997) posited the mechanism by which SE beliefs shape thought patterns, provoke emotions, and influence attributions for success or failure, with downstream consequences for self-regulation and motivation, that ultimately would impact upon an individual's performance. The qualitative findings presented in Chapter nine indicated three different mechanisms of interviewees' SE beliefs, categorised as either negative, resilient, or positive, feedback loops. In the negative loop, bad experiences or failures led to negative or uncertain SE beliefs which provoked a range of negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, confusion, and displeasure. This combination of belief and emotion then led to outcomes such as avoidant behaviours, feeling performance pressure and decreased motivation, which resulted in less language practice in reading and writing, speech errors, and poorer writing quality. Conversely, in the positive loop, successes led to positive SE beliefs coupled with positive emotions such as enthusiasm, enjoyment, and bravery, which in turn reduced performance pressure, increased students' willingness to communicate, and generated greater focus during comprehension. This led to more practice, while reduced pressure resulted in greater spoken fluency. In the third mechanism, students responded to negative inputs and outcomes for SE in a resilient manner, voicing frustration with themselves as L2 users and showing an unwillingness to accept their situation. Participants 11 and 15 adopted similar fake-it-until-you-make-it attitudes.

The interconnected nature of SE, emotions, self-regulation, motivation, and performance seen in the interviewee's accounts is accounted for in Self-Regulated Learning theory [SRL] as first set out by Zimmerman in 1989. SRL describes the cyclical process through which learners exercise control over their learning by monitoring their SE beliefs and emotions, and by goal setting in the forethought phase, then by deploying strategies and meta-cognitively monitoring their behaviours in the performance phase (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009). The remaining phase in SRL theory is a reflection phase in which self-judgment on performance takes place, and attributions for success or failure are made, coupled with an emotional self-reaction which can be adaptive or defensive (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009). Interviewees clearly demonstrated an awareness of their SE beliefs and emotions, and in most cases, these were largely positive, or if not, their reported self-reaction in the reflection stage was resilient.

Bandura (1997) explains that resilient SE develops from overcoming obstacles through effort and perseverance, so it suggests that most interviewees had already successfully dealt with challenging language experiences, the memory of which now contributed to their capacity to self-regulate. They appeared to be setting personal goals, for example, in deciding to seek practice opportunities, illustrating the happy outcome of positive or resilient SE beliefs for motivation. Furthermore, as was mentioned in Section 10.4.2, some of the strategies they employed to reach these goals emerged from the interviews, all of which corroborates the generally good levels of SE they reported across the skills, even for writing.<sup>61</sup> Teng et al. (2020) found their interviewees with high writing competency also used self-regulation strategies for motivation such as "interest enhancement" and "mastery and performance self-talk" (p.6). They also exhibited greater persistence and flexibility, due to their ability to regulate negative emotions. In contrast, Teng et al.'s (2020) low competency writers did not understand the utility of these strategies, leading them to conclude that the use of strategies is what demarcates the well self-regulated from the less well self-regulated students in the EAP context (Teng et al., 2020), just as Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) had shown with L1 university students. However, as mentioned previously, the strategies mentioned by the interviewees in

---

<sup>61</sup> Apart from Participant 4, all the interviewees gave themselves a SE score of 50% or above for writing.

this study appeared to be being deployed for compensatory purposes more often than as proactive learning strategies, especially for writing, so the suggestion for learning strategy instruction remains, even where SE beliefs are robust.

Poor SE beliefs, however, indicate that resilience has not yet developed. Students feel less in control, potentially provoking anxiety. Anxiety is both the effect and the source of poor SE (Denies & Janssen, 2016); in many cases they are two sides of the same coin. Moreover, poor SE increases students' risk of descending into a negative feedback loop, in which firmly held poor beliefs lead to poor performances that further detract from their sense of SE. This vicious circle was best illustrated by Participant 4's beliefs about essay writing. She declared "I'm the worst of my class, I'm left behind, everybody's better than me, I'm the only one that fails, yeah, I don't have much self-esteem on writing" (P4:94). In Italy, she had obtained full marks for essay writing, leading to very positive beliefs, but these appeared to have been subsequently severely undermined by being the worst in her class and failing written assignments at university. She was also particularly affected by comments and written feedback from her tutor that had compounded her low SE and raised her anxiety around writing, to the extent that she was now fearful of essay writing.

Bandura (1997) notes that the negative effects of verbal persuasion are stronger than the positive effects, so when people who lack resilience receive comments that undermine their SE beliefs, they are more likely to avoid challenging activities and give up quickly. Nonetheless, he explains it is possible to persuade someone to exit a negative feedback loop; "Social persuasion serves as a useful adjunct to more powerful efficacy-promoting influences. Skilled self-efficacy builders, therefore, do more than simply convey positive appraisals or inspirational homilies. In addition to cultivating people's beliefs in their capabilities, they structure activities for them in ways that bring success and avoid placing them prematurely in situations where they are likely to experience repeated failure" (Bandura, 1997, p.106). It is important, therefore, to identify EAP students who react defensively to assessment, and/or hold poor SE beliefs. Tutors must intervene by providing practice opportunities over which students can exercise control and experience success, in combination with multiple verbal assurances that they have the capacity

to improve. At the end of Participant 4's interview, I felt it was appropriate to provide an ad hoc writing tutorial in which I outlined several actionable writing strategies to the participant, as well as expressing my sincere belief in her capacity to resolve her problem in future.

To summarise, the fact that divergent SE beliefs were seen to impact differentially on self-regulation and motivation across the skills, which in turn impacted on performance in these thereby contributing to an uneven profile, was confirmed in participants' accounts, especially that of Participant 4. This also helps explain the wide discrepancies seen in the TELL data. It means that tutors should endeavour to raise students' awareness of the knock-on effects of their SE beliefs to mitigate the detrimental impact of negative beliefs, while sustaining and encouraging positive and resilient belief/behaviour cycles. A range of recommendations for managing students' beliefs are provided in Section 11.4 in the next chapter.

## 10.6. Limitations of the study

All research studies are limited by aspects of their design, instrumentation, execution, and subsequent analysis and interpretation. This mixed-methods study was no exception. In the following subsection, two important limitations relating to the quantitative phase are identified: the choice of data collection instrument and the analytical approach taken. Two further limitations relating to the qualitative phase are also addressed: the nature of qualitative sample and the potential effects of socially desirable responding.

### 10.6.1. Using the TELL

In Phase one, all the quantitative analysis was based on a sole data collection instrument, the TELL test, that measured individual students' performances on single occasions, giving mere snapshots of their language competency under arguably unnatural timed conditions. While relying on a single data collection instrument administered in this manner helped to limit variables, the credibility and dependability of these data may have been influenced by any of the factors acknowledged in Section 5.3.2, such as differences in the difficulty of the tasks within the test battery or inconsistencies between raters. That said, all students attempted the

same tasks at each sitting as there were no optional tasks. Robust standardisation and moderation procedures were in place for the marking. Moreover, the dependability of the data was increased through multiple samplings from six separate sittings using different versions of the test. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that a different test, or the TELL administered under different conditions, such as within the classroom or online, could potentially generate a different pattern of competency profiles, so future research should consider these options.

A further factor that may have influenced the test data lay in the administration of the TELL listening, reading, and writing test components. These skills were assessed in a single sitting, with the writing task appearing last on the paper. This could have contributed to generally lower scores for this skill due to candidate fatigue or poor exam technique, despite test invigilators' advice to allocate their time carefully and choose their own order in which tasks were attempted. The speaking tests were held on a separate occasion, potentially giving students better conditions in which to perform. To overcome this limitation in future, analysis of competency profiles should be based on scores generated under equal conditions, perhaps with the productive components administered in the same part of the day with a generous break between them.

#### 10.6.2. Quantitative analytical approach

As mentioned in Section 10.2, more uneven profiles were identified in this study than in other studies. This could have occurred due to this study's unique approach in calculating a SD measure that encompassed all four skills in each score set, and the criterion of ten percent difference between any of the skill areas that was adopted for discriminating between even and uneven profiles. Previous predictive validity studies had only considered the gap between receptive and productive scores in students' profiles (Bridgeman et al., 2016; Ginther & Yan, 2018), or, in the case of Berninger and Abbott's (2010) study of L1 children's profiles, the distance of skill scores from the mean. Nonetheless, the SD measure served its purpose as a useful shorthand for the severity of individuals' uneven competency. That said, the profiling of candidates could have been more nuanced. Future study of uneven competency would benefit



from taking inspiration from Ginther and Yan's (2018) hierarchical cluster analysis approach, which they combined with K-means analysis of sub-section scores to overcome the shortcomings of taking a single approach. Staples and Biber (2015) note that cluster analysis is "useful in studies where there is extensive variation among the individual cases within predefined categories" (p.243), so it is well suited to a study of uneven competency. Ginther and Yan (2018) were able to identify specific sub-groupings of students that shared similar profiles, which, on reflection, would be very useful information for EAP managers or tutors in deciding class allocations. Pang and Skehan (2021) further highlight the utility of cluster analysis for identifying patterns in individual score sets. In their study of individual profiles generated by measurements in complexity-accuracy-lexis-fluency [CALF] dimensions of speaking competency, they note that cluster analysis using Ward's method of minimum within-group variance can have an element of subjectivity in deciding where the boundaries of each cluster of individuals lie, hence how many clusters best represent the data (Pang & Skehan, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to define the most appropriate number of clusters using K-Means analysis, that not only identifies the number of individuals in each cluster, but also calculates mean subsection scores of each cluster.

#### 10.6.3. The qualitative sample

The number of interviewees in the qualitative strand was limited to fifteen, therefore claiming generalisability of their views is not appropriate. However, as was explained in Section 8.3.2, this strand operated under the principles of information power (Malterud et al., 2016) and adequacy (Morse, 2015), meaning that the small sample was nonetheless sufficient for gathering a range of SE beliefs, emotions, and reports of self-regulatory behaviour, that illustrated the views and preoccupations of international students in the UK HE context. This study's emergent themes have thus generated new avenues for SE research that could be explored with a larger sample using a combination of questionnaires and follow-up interviews. The fact that I had to gather a convenience sample of self-selecting participants unfortunately meant that fewer interviewees than originally envisaged, seven out of the fifteen, were represented in the TELL data, and just over a quarter were MA TESOL students, whose SE beliefs and views about language competency may have differed subtly from international

students whose subject area is not related to the English language itself. Future research carried out over a shorter timescale could implement a stratified purposive sampling approach, wherein participants are promptly surveyed and selected for follow-up interviews according to their degree of uneven competency as measured through a test battery. This would establish a definitive view of the relationship between different competency profiles and the associated SE belief profiles in individuals.

#### 10.6.4. Socially desirable responding

The qualitative strand of the study was designed to elicit students' self-efficacy beliefs by means of semi-structured interviews, which I had always recognised could be open to the influence of socially desirable responding, more specifically, impression management (Paulhus, 2002) on the part of interviewees, given my position as lecturer and theirs as students. I had been prepared for their wanting to appear as 'good students' in front of me (see Section 8.3.1), so I was at pains to emphasise at the start of each interview that I had no connection to or bearing upon their studies, therefore there was no need to impress me.

However, I did not foresee that impression management could also take the form of modesty. The first hint of this occurred with a Chinese participant when he said "aw, if I give high score... er, 80... I'm afraid of [being] arrogant" (P2:38-42). Later, Participant 6 also appeared to engage in impression management when she stated "I think I'm not modest" (P6:42), when assigning herself a score of 70 for her SE for writing. In addition, Participant 15 stated "I'm gonna be modest and say 85" (P15: 04) for his SE for listening, a score that he subsequently revised upwards when I assured him that I wanted to hear what he really felt. Other participants laughed when giving themselves generous SE scores, which again hints that although their responses were honest, they felt somewhat uncomfortable, even slightly embarrassed, in expressing these, perhaps due to their desire to be socially appropriate in the context of being interviewed by L1 speaker lecturer. At the time I mitigated this as best I could by accepting their responses without hesitation, but on reflection, that they were asked to self-score using a scale of one hundred was particularly vulnerable to bias as it would have been conceptually linked in their minds to past and present achievement in assessments which was potentially a

sensitive area, given that enactive experience is the most influential source of SE (Bandura, 1997). In the light of this, further qualitative research into SE should more carefully consider this form of self-reporting bias and avoid muddying the waters by asking for a score. A Likert-scale may be more appropriate. Not only that but, Lalwani, Shavitt and Johnson (2006) found that impression management was the more prevalent form of socially desirable responding in individuals from collectivist cultures,<sup>62</sup> which is reflected in the fact that the above-mentioned participants were from China and Saudi Arabia. The influence I wielded as the interviewer was inescapable here as “talk is locally produced by both the interviewee and interviewer” (Rapley, 2001, p.309), so had the questions been conducted in a different context then other answers may have been forthcoming. Conducting the interviews in the participants’ L1, or with an L2 speaker peer, could mitigate impression management in these instances, in conjunction with a more careful introduction to the interview, stressing the importance of not under- or over-stating SE to please the interviewer.

## 10.7. Summary

In Phase 1, uneven competency, defined as a ten percent difference between TELL test scores from any of the four skills, was very commonly occurring in the 2114 sets of scores analysed. In 2016/2017, 98.5% of the TELL cohort exceeded this difference, and 88% did so in the 2018/2019 cohort. The greatest discrepancies were identified between speaking and writing, which is a feature that is arguably specific to the UK HE context as it is not seen in international data from IELTS (Craven, 2012; Humphreys et al., 2012; Allen, 2017; IELTS, 2023b) or TOEFL iBT (Bridgeman et al., 2016; Ginther & Yan, 2018). The most frequently occurring pattern of competency was [SLRW], with these profiles being significantly more uneven than other profile shapes. Alongside this, Arabic L1 students predominated in the most severely uneven [SLRW] profiles, therefore this group has been highlighted as at most risk of poor outcomes in their academic studies, given that their writing is so much weaker than their speaking competency. Furthermore, in all sittings of the test, there appeared to be almost no relationship between the measure of uneven competency and students’ overall scores, meaning that they carry no

---

<sup>62</sup> In contrast to self-deceptive enhancement, wherein an individual views themselves in an overly positive light.

diagnostic information about students' competency, which is very likely to be uneven. This has clear implications for admissions tutors and will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Given extent and shape of uneven competency uncovered, combined with the Phase 1 regression findings which indicated that speaking contributed the most to variance while writing scores were negatively correlated with uneven competency, writing development appears to be the priority and would not be at the expense of the other skills. In the light of the study's findings regarding strongly developing speaking skills in this EAP context, the Process-Genre Approach (Badger & White, 2000) and *conversational scaffolding* (Weissberg, 2006b) are suggested avenues for EAP practice and further research that play to both students' linguistic strengths and weaknesses.

The Phase 2 findings highlighted that students are aware of their differing SE beliefs about their competencies, and this awareness has varying impacts upon their emotions, self-regulatory behaviours, and motivation. The relevance of Bandura's (1997) SE model for understanding the sources of students' beliefs about their L2 profiles was clearly established. In sum, *enactive mastery* in the form of discrete experiences involving language exams and their preparation, bolstered more often than diminished SE for speaking. However, SE for reading, writing, and listening were specifically eroded by exam experiences. Beliefs about writing competency were further challenged by differences in the requirements between education systems, causing students confusion, particularly around structuring their academic texts. This highlights the need for explicit guidance in writing formats and genres.

*Vicarious experience* was used as a SE information source across all skill areas, surprisingly including listening and reading which would not immediately appear to be directly observable. However, it was most impactful on SE for speaking as interviewees appeared to benchmark themselves against a hierarchy of speaker statuses, from fluent, fully developed L1 users of English to a range of L2 speaking competencies. This means that where international students are being taught alongside home students, subject tutors need to be aware of this dynamic and

consider ways in which students' SE can be supported, either through careful classroom management or their use of verbal persuasion.

*Verbal persuasion* fed into the speaking and writing SE beliefs among all interviewees, irrespective of their L1 or cultural background, although the Chinese participants appeared to be more sensitive to comments from others about their speaking competency which concurs with Zheng et al.'s (2017) findings. In this way, *verbal persuasion* was related to the presence or absence of feeling judged by interlocutors. Compliments from L1 speakers appeared to be a strong positive source of SE, while feedback on writing was reported as having a negative impact. It was noted that *verbal persuasion* works best when it is used to convince people of their capacity to self-regulate and/or make incremental improvements, rather than simply as praise or criticism of present language performance.

Emotions, rather than physiological states, also informed SE beliefs in all four skill areas. Unfortunately, the reporting of negative emotions outweighed the positive, meaning that participants appeared to attend to their negative emotions more, with consequently detrimental impacts on their SE beliefs. These were felt as a type of temporary anxiety or performance pressure when listening and speaking, frustration or a lack of enjoyment when reading journal articles, and a quite often a dislike, or even fear, of writing. This indicates the need for EAP and subject tutors to address students' negative emotional habits, particularly those that are associated with academic writing, and find ways to reduce anxiety and build resilience.

The emergent findings extended Bandura's (1997) model for a fuller description of SE in EAP language learning contexts. Emergent themes included forward-looking PRACTICE, which was intuitively adopted by participants for maintaining or boosting their SE for listening and speaking, but not so much for academic reading and writing, indicating the need for tutors to provide guidance and/or appropriate practice opportunities in these areas. SEEING PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT as a theme highlighted the need to manage students' expectations around how quickly they are likely to develop their competencies. UNDERSTANDING and BEING

UNDERSTOOD as sources of SE were seen to feed speaking, but not writing beliefs, further underlining the need for highly interactive writing instruction and copious formative feedback. The final emergent theme of STRATEGIES showed that while students do employ a range of tactics to maintain their SE while engaging in difficult tasks, these are mostly compensatory rather than forward-looking, hence the suggestion for strategy instruction in writing especially.

This chapter also discussed the role SE plays in self-regulated language learning via negative, resilient, and positive feedback loops. It is important that students with poor SE beliefs experiencing negative loops are identified, then resilience can be built through tasks in which they can start to experience success by setting realistic goals and exercising control. Coupled with this, students can be verbally encouraged to persist, either by peers or the tutor.

## Chapter 11. Recommendations for teaching

### 11.1. Introduction

In this chapter I consider the pedagogical implications of the study's findings, and I venture several recommendations for EAP practice. These include raising awareness of the extent and severity of uneven competency and, therefore, the importance of diagnostic testing. Another recommendation is for tutors to be alert to the emotions and competency belief sets that students bring to the classroom, and the need for careful classroom practices that manage their expectations, as well as sustain and build their SE beliefs via the sources outlined in the previous chapter. Scaffolding writing development through the Process-Genre Approach (Badger & White, 2000) and Language Learner Strategy Instruction [LLSI] (Chamot & Harris, 2019) for improved self-regulation are further recommendations.

### 11.2. Raised awareness

Based on this study's findings, *EAP tutors should expect uneven competency*, but consider that it may take a different shape in different teaching contexts. In the UK, one could expect [SLRW] profiles at the end of pre-session programmes, as opposed to [LRSW] which is a common profile generated by IELTS (IELTS, 2023b). The [SLRW] profile is more likely because students' SE for speaking and listening is sustained by the English-speaking environment, and competency can develop quickly due to extensive practice opportunities in and outside the classroom. Academic reading and writing, on the other hand, develop more slowly in comparison due to their unfamiliarity, fewer practice opportunities, and less feedback, much of which is not instantaneous rendering it less memorable and actionable. Students' SE beliefs are undermined by unfamiliar texts and tasks, as well as by negative comments in feedback, meaning that they may struggle to self-regulate or be motivated to engage in the practice necessary for improvement. Another finding from the study was that competent speakers can be poor writers, but that competent writers tend to be competent speakers, therefore *tutors should be suspicious of written work that exceeds the student's capacity to express themselves*

*orally*, as it was vanishingly rare for writing competency to be better developed than speaking competency in this study.

### 11.3. Diagnosing uneven competency

It is wise not rely on overall scores from an English language test battery. *EAP tutors should employ a diagnostic framework that seeks out and quantifies the degree of uneven competency in each student.* Diagnostic testing should specifically seek to identify the students with the greatest gaps between speaking and writing competency as these students are at risk of poor academic outcomes. A finding from this study indicated that uneven competency can be at its most severe among Arabic L1 students, so EAP tutors should be alert to those whose great speaking skills may mask poor writing. Furthermore, summative assessments at the end of pre- or in-session programmes should consider the profiles produced, as this can indicate the effectiveness of the provision.

*EAP tutors should be mindful that students are consciously aware of discrepancies between their SE skill beliefs* as evidenced by this study and by Gregersen (2006). These differences in SE will affect their emotions and their ability to self-regulate, as well as differentially impact upon their motivation to practise. Therefore, diagnosing uneven competency beliefs and uncovering students' thinking processes around these is also important. This could be achieved through individual tutorials and/or using a questionnaire, along the lines of Thompson (2018), to elicit students' beliefs around EAP tasks.

### 11.4. Managing students' expectations and beliefs

Fortunately, competency beliefs do not constitute a learner trait, meaning they can change, or be carried towards change by others. Students' SE beliefs undergo dips as well as increases, as was evidenced in Basaran and Cabaroglu's (2014) semester-long study, and in other areas of learning (Johnson, Edwards, & Dai, 2014), so two approaches are suggested in the light of Bandura's (1997) sources of SE and the emergent themes. These are *managing students' expectations* and *intervening in ways that support and build SE*.



Firstly, EAP tutors can play a role in managing students' expectations about the malleable nature of their SE beliefs, which in turn should support them to better manage their affective states and to self-regulate during the learning process. Although the study's findings indicate that speaking and listening performance is generally strong, as is SE for speaking and listening, tutors should discourage students from making vicarious comparisons between themselves and L1 users of English, as this may only undermine their SE and result in performance anxiety. Students' expectations for speaking can be managed by underlining the importance of intelligibility in an international community such as a university, with assurances that their pronunciation is only one of very many accents being spoken in a multicultural country such as the UK. Likewise, expectations for understanding a range of regional accents can be rendered more realistic by explaining that within a few months they will be better attuned to whichever variations they encounter. Tutors can emphasise the increased speed at which innate skills can develop in an immersive environment and encourage students to seize upon the social opportunities of campus life.

At the same time, *tutors should expect students' SE for reading and writing to be taking a hit*, so for these skills, it is worth emphasising that they will need to be resilient to begin with and not lose heart, and that improvements may not be as rapid as those they experience for speaking and listening. Pre-sessional programmes are designed to induct students into UK academic culture, for instance, by introducing concepts such as critical reading and supporting written work through citation, so EAP tutors should consider managing their expectations about the intrinsically effortful and time-consuming nature of these tasks, not just for L2 speakers but *all* students, so that they do not begin to doubt their abilities and become less motivated. Regarding writing specifically, managing students' expectations should involve making it clear that the rules they may have learned about essay structure and academic style in their home countries may not be transferable to this new discourse context, and that it will take some time to adjust. Finally, if appropriate, tutors could decide to guide students towards realistic learner beliefs by administering a Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory [BALLI] (Horwitz, 1988) and by facilitating discussion and reflection on the results.

In conjunction with managing students' expectations, tutors can also intervene to help students develop their sense of SE where it has been undermined or is lacking. If Bandura's (1997) model is applied to EAP teaching of reading and writing, then tutors should evidently provide ample *enactive mastery experiences* in the form of practice tasks (Schunk & Pajares, 2009; Thompson, 2018). Bandura (1997) notes that mastery experiences build stronger SE beliefs than less direct sources of information, so hands-on practice must be prioritised, over and above recourse to vicarious experience or verbal instruction. Importantly, tutors should give students tasks that they can perform successfully (Raofi et al., 2012). Bandura (1986) suggests that complex skills can be broken down into subskills that are easier to master, and the evidence from this study suggests that both top-down and bottom-up issues undermine students' SE. Enactive mastery experiences that build SE for the top-down aspects of essay writing might include focused rehearsal of interpreting an assignment brief, coupled with conceptualising an assignment structure that would meet the brief, while SE for reading journal articles could be encouraged through students' familiarisation with their formulaic structure and manageable tasks such as scanning abstracts for information. With a view to supporting SE in bottom-up processes, formulating topic sentences or paraphrasing tracts of text would help proceduralise students' declarative knowledge of language forms so that they can be produced more easily and accurately (Newton, 2016). Enactive mastery experiences can be easily embedded within the Process-Genre Approach, recommended in the next section, given that it gives due consideration of the multiple sub-processes of writing.

Regarding *vicarious experience*, students can build SE from observing others complete tasks, in other words, through modelling. The use of model texts and modelling was found to be widespread practice in the EAP tutors in Wette's (2014) New Zealand small-scale study, with tutors explicitly modelling composing processes, but this could be extended to modelling strategies, such as ideas generation for writing (Bruning & Kauffman, 2016), or using a range of search terms to locate relevant reading, or skim-reading, in addition to providing students with practice opportunities in these. This would help ensure that students become more aware of the importance of goal setting in the writing process (Bruning & Kauffman, 2016).

Tutors could also consider the utility of what Bandura calls “coping modelling” (1997, p.99). This is where students can benefit from observing classmates or peers that are learning, or have learned to cope, rather than by observing masterly performances in the skill they wish to develop. Within the EAP classroom, tutors can make use of small groupwork and peer-checking to help build resilient SE. This is particularly important because once students leave EAP provision they will no longer have access to such scaffolding. Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2002) studied the impact of L1 students observing models and receiving feedback on their revisions, focusing on how students moved from relying on modeling and feedback to being more independent, or in other words, being better self-regulated and adaptable. They compared three conditions: firstly, observing a ‘coping model’ making errors but then correcting them; secondly, a ‘mastery model’ performing flawlessly in revising; lastly, the control group did not watch anyone revising. They found that students observing the coping model, coupled with feedback, was the best at developing writing revision skills and their sense of SE. Zimmerman and Kitsantas’ (2002) concluded it was the most effective because the experience provided students with modelled strategies, which they could then try in their own writing processes. Wette (2014) noted that most of the EAP tutors in her study engaged in what she called “collaborative modelling”, whereby tutors and students worked together to compose or revise texts. This not only supplied students with “immediate, constructive feedback and scaffolding assistance” (p.66) but it was deemed to support confidence too. Theoretically, this is a sound approach as it provides access to both relatable coping models and a scaffolded mastery experience.

Moreover, EAP tutors can support and further develop students’ SE beliefs via *verbal persuasion*, a type of social validation (Bandura, 1997). Tutors can verbally empower students to improve their academic literacy through the consistent use of encouragement to persevere and be strategic. Praise for performance, as suggested by Ferris and Hedgecock (2005), is less helpful in the longer term because people need to be persuaded that they have the power to exercise control by using strategies that produce successful performances (Bandura, 1997), which is particularly relevant to academic writing.

Another suggested conduit of *verbal persuasion* is sensitively delivered, constructive, formative feedback. In the study, Participant 3 attributed her rapid progression in her writing development to amount of formative feedback she received which fed into her SE, while Participant 9 bemoaned the lack of it in his prior educational experiences, leaving him very uncertain about his capabilities. Ruegg (2018) investigated tutor-versus-peer written feedback for building SE in academic writing in Japanese students, finding that the tutor written feedback improved SE by more than the peer feedback, although that is not to say that peer feedback was not effective at all, just that the tutors in the study provided more constructive comments and less praise, than the peer reviewers.

Finally, tutors can create a supportive, emotional atmosphere to help mitigate and circumvent negative feedback loops that may develop during reading or writing tasks. This means that tutors need to be alert to students' emotional reactions to tasks, and actively encourage an atmosphere in which students feel able to express their feelings towards tasks, so that it might be possible to critically examine them, identifying negative habits and fixed mindsets for what they are, and offering immediate suggestions for coping strategies. These might include strategies for emotional regulation, such as the mastery self-talk that was noted in the high competency writers in Teng et al.'s (2020) study, or realistic goal-setting strategies that render tasks less daunting.

### 11.5. Scaffolding literacy development

Scaffolding is vital in any teaching context, but EAP students with uneven profiles will most benefit from *scaffolding that supports their transition from writing habits developed in prior schooling, and/or in preparation for high-stakes exams, to integrated academic reading and writing*. Two recommendations are detailed here, although there must certainly be other approaches that can be equally effective and complementary such as Weissberg's (2006b) *conversational scaffolding* as was outlined in Section 10.3. Firstly, considering this study's findings, EAP tutors should adopt approaches that draw upon strengths in spoken competency to explicate and support the writing process. There is plenty of research that supports the contention that talking about writing can improve the quality of writing (Weissberg 1994, 2000,

2006b; Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005), and so the Process-Genre Approach (Badger & White, 2000) is recommended because it encompasses teaching/learning stages that can be introduced in a highly social, therefore, verbal and interactive way (Fig.21).

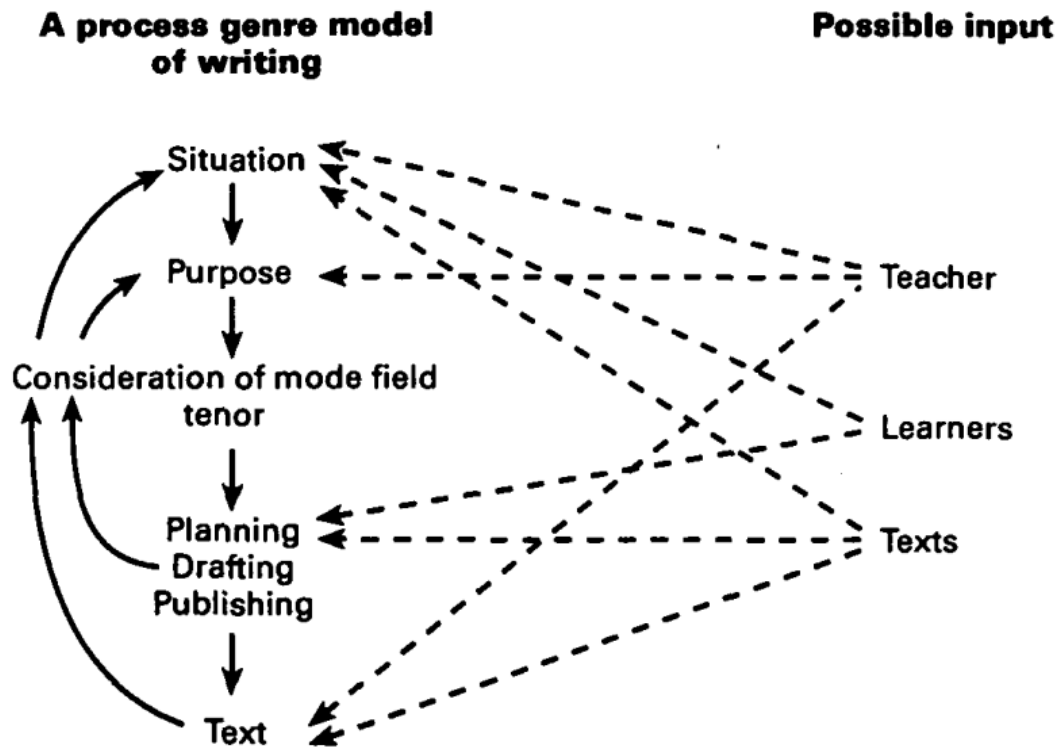


Figure 21 A genre process model of teaching writing (Badger & White, 2000, p.159)

Deng, Chen, and Zhang (2014) highlight that by taking this eclectic approach that combines the strengths of the process and product/genre approaches, students can undergo the process of planning, formulating, and revising a text, whilst also being provided the opportunity to associate the language forms of a specific academic genre with its purpose and audience via input provided by model texts, the EAP tutor, and the students themselves. For instance, in the pre-writing stages where aspects of genre are focussed upon, collaborative meta-talk can allow for the development of understanding of specific academic model texts in context, by discussing their purposes and intended audiences under the tutor's guidance. The tutor can

also draw attention to, and provide controlled practice in, the linguistic features that accomplish these purposes. Subsequently, the while-writing stages can be scaffolded through tutor and peer modelling and review as described by Wette (2014). The beauty of the approach is that it provides a full *mastery* experience of composition with plenty of social support as was outlined in the previous section. Deng et al. (2014) found that Chinese students responded positively to the approach and improved their writing, as did Huang and Zhang (2020) in their intervention study with B2 level Chinese students learning argumentative writing conducted over seventeen weeks.

Secondly, Language Learning Strategy Instruction [LLSI] is recommended so that students can be pro-active and independent once they leave the security of pre- or in-session support. However, this is a huge field, so EAP tutors have many places to start according to their students' needs, but reassuringly, Plonsky's (2011, 2019) meta-analyses of decades of research indicate that between two-thirds and three-quarters of L2 language learners at intermediate and advanced levels benefit from such interventions, with a mean effect size of  $d=.59$  for writing strategy instruction. Gu (2019) defines developing strategic competency as "a dynamic and iterative process for solving a learning problem, boosting the learning speed or making the learning process more efficient, effective and probably more enjoyable" (p.23). Students' declarative knowledge of writing strategies can be increased through explicit input, while procedural knowledge or 'know-how' in using them can be developed through practice, making their incorporation into the Process-Genre Approach feasible. In the light of the findings from this study, my recommendation would be to prioritise strategy instruction that focusses on the development of Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) *knowledge transforming* writing competencies. This might include cognitive strategies related to the writing process itself, such as planning, structuring, and revising texts, and metacognitive strategies such as evaluating the appropriateness of content for the intended reader, or how to make best use of corrective and summative feedback. Affective strategies that students could be made aware of are emotional regulation and staying motivated (Teng & Zhang, 2018). Recent research that demonstrates how strategy instruction in academic writing might work is Teng and Zhang's (2020) quasi-

experimental study that implemented several elements of strategy instruction in an intervention group over five months. For example, one of the explicit strategies taught was 'TREE' (p.5), which stands for Topic sentence, Reasons, Examine Reasons, End, inspired by Harris, Graham, MacArthur, Reid, and Mason (2011). Teng and Zhang (2020) reported that following their intervention, students achieved better in post- and delayed writing tests than the control group, they employed the range of strategies they had been introduced to, and had increased levels of SE.

### 11.6. Summary

In this chapter I have provided some actionable recommendations for practice. Following my conversations with interviewees, I conclude that it is vital to manage students' expectations as they approach academic tasks as they feed into their SE beliefs and emotions. Increased self-awareness will improve their ability to self-regulate, and strategy instruction can help them gain a sense of agency over the development of their writing skills, hopefully with beneficial outcomes for their performance. Moreover, successful learning arises from having the right type and quantity of direct practice opportunities, observing models of successful performance in peers, receiving timely, constructive, and actionable feedback, as well as being taught in an emotionally supportive context, all of which relate to the sources of SE beliefs originally outlined by Bandura (1997). Some of the above recommendations are yet to be tested in the classroom context, therefore, they are areas for future research that shall be addressed in the final part of this thesis.

## Chapter 12. Conclusion

### 12.1. Introduction

This mixed method study contributes to the field of EAP, and second language learning more generally, in terms of theory, methodology, and pedagogy. In each of the sections below, the study's contributions will be highlighted, followed by suggestions for future research that are pertinent to each area.

### 12.2. Theoretical contribution

Its unique theoretical contribution is empirical confirmation of the phenomenon of spiky profiles, thus filling a gap in the literature to date while also going some way to explain how and why uneven language competency develops in the HE EAP context by gathering international students' qualitative accounts of their self-efficacy beliefs. In Phase one, all four language skills were the object of study in 2114 score sets generated by the TELL test battery taken by successive cohorts of EAP students. From this data, uneven language competency was found to be commonly occurring and patterned. Beyond the few individuals with severely spiky profiles, many students had a notable discrepancy between strong performance in speaking, and weak performance in writing. This raises questions around how these skills develop under the influence of their L1s and educational backgrounds, as well as what students' conceptions and expectations are for these skills as they develop.

Further study using a longitudinal design would enable EAP students' profiles to be measured at intervals over the course of their studies to observe the manner, and the extent to which, their profiles change, hopefully with them becoming less uneven with effective in-session support. Allen's (2017) study of Japanese first years' language development indicated that writing made the smallest gains over one year, meaning that uneven profiles persist in the EMI context, so it would be useful to compare that against progress made by a mixed cohort in the UK. In conjunction, their SE beliefs in each skill area could be tracked, along the lines of Torres and Turner's (2016) study, for the fullest picture. Also, as mentioned in the limitations, further



research could explore whether an alternative administration of the TELL or in-class assessment generates fewer and less severely spiky profiles.

The study's second phase contributes uniquely to the growing body of understanding about the role of SE beliefs in second language acquisition, thanks to its qualitative, holistic approach that considered all four skills due to the focus on uneven competency. This phase confirms the validity of Bandura's (1997) four sources of SE, namely enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and affective states, in relation to learning an L2. Importantly, the study has shown that SE beliefs are built, sustained, or eroded differentially across skill areas, with differential outcomes for self-regulation, motivation, and performance in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In addition, the emergent themes arising from the thematic analysis have made it possible to elaborate on Bandura's (1997) model to provide a specific description of the role of SE in EAP contexts. It has emerged that prospective practice, seeing personal improvement, understanding and being understood, as well as having recourse to specific coping strategies, are the sources of SE that are unique to the language learning of the international students interviewed. These also play different roles across skill areas with clear implications for the development of uneven competency in that the speaking and listening SE beliefs of the students appeared to be more positively fuelled from these sources in the UK HE context, than were reading and writing.

These sources of SE require further validation, perhaps via a questionnaire distributed to a large sample of EAP students to verify their generalisability. Future research should also dig deeper into the impact of IELTS on students' SE beliefs, given that at the time of writing, there does not appear to be any research that has explored the consequential validity of this high-stake testing battery on the SE beliefs of students at the start of their UK HE programmes. This study has revealed that IELTS constitutes a significant *mastery experience* in the language learning journeys of these students, changing their beliefs about their competencies, sometimes for the better, but more often for the worse, and in a lasting way.

### 12.3. Methodological contribution

The study's methodological contribution is an original approach for quantifying uneven competency as well as for describing its frequency and shape. The individual SD measure, combined with the labelling of score sets, provides a diagnostic framework for identifying uneven profiles that may be useful to EAP programme leads or tutors working with entry scores. In this study, the individual SD measure was used as a cut score to differentiate between even and uneven profiles that worked equally well to identify uneven competency in strongly performing students as in the weaker ones, leading to the discovery that most of the EAP cohort could be considered to have a spiky profile. The labelling made it possible to describe the most frequently occurring shapes of uneven competency, leading to the finding that a large minority had the same ranking of relative strengths and weaknesses. Speaking was most commonly the strongest skill, followed by listening and reading. Writing was shown to be the weakest skill in almost all students, irrespective of their overall scores. Only 2.4% of the cohort scored better in writing than speaking, demonstrating how rare this feature is in EAP students.

Nonetheless, further research should investigate the predictive validity of this standard deviation benchmark for academic success. It would also be useful to ascertain the frequency of the [SLRW] profile across a range of UK HE contexts, to ensure that the recommendations for EAP practice provided here are pertinent. In addition, alternative approaches to investigating uneven competency should be considered, for example, Ginther and Yan (2018) conducted a cluster analysis on TOEFL iBT scores using a hierarchical algorithm to identify the number of potential clusters within their dataset, then a *k*-means algorithm to define the clusters' characteristics. This approach could work well to identify specific sub-sets of students with similar developmental needs, without the need for ANOVA.

#### 12.4. Contribution to EAP practice

The study's first phase underscores the importance of closely inspecting students' productive skills when assessing language competency, rather than relying on a composite measure. Uneven profiles should be a red flag for all stakeholders due to their association with poor academic outcomes (Bridgeman et al., 2016; Ginther & Yan, 2018). Students with such profiles require targeted instruction and extra support. The ubiquity of uneven competency uncovered in this study, plus the fact that it was in the form of wide gaps between speaking and writing performances, confirms that UK-based EAP teaching should maintain its focus on developing writing skills. Meanwhile, the second phase has uniquely highlighted the need for all teaching staff to recognise the psychological and socio-affective aspects of L2 learning in academic contexts. Recommendations for practice related to this aspect have included raising awareness in tutors and students alike, and the need to identify the thought patterns that lead to negative feedback loops with their ensuing avoidant behaviours, that this study revealed to be associated with tasks such as engaging with academic literature and practicing writing. In addition, managing expectations and scaffolding students' beliefs as much as possible have been recommended, via practice tasks that constitute positive mastery experiences that build resilience, teacher and peer-modelling, social validation in the form of encouragement and constructive feedback, and creating an emotionally supportive classroom environment.

In terms of future avenues of classroom research, the utility of *conversational scaffolding* (Weissberg, 2006b) could be further investigated as a means to provide individualised support, not only from the point of view of writing outcomes but also its effect on SE. Moreover, although the Process-Genre Approach has been recommended for teaching groups, quasi-experimental research along the lines of Zhang's (2018) study, but with a mixed nationality group, or alternatively an Arabic L1 group, would help confirm whether the approach works to reduce uneven competency while building SE. The design could include pre- and post-testing of speaking and writing, alongside pre- and post-measurements of their SE beliefs. A final suggestion for further study would be action research exploring approaches that best elicit and manage negative emotions and beliefs related to academic literacy development.

## 12.5. Concluding remarks

Completing this study has gone some way to answering the burning questions I had to begin with about the nature of international students' language profiles. What is more, the participants' accounts have provided me with an insight into their emotions, competency beliefs and language behaviours in all four skills, something that normally would not be possible to explore during the day job. I finish this study more convinced than ever that as an EAP tutor and subject lecturer, I owe these students every effort to make the transition into UK HE a positive experience. I should provide not only the necessary knowledge and strategies for their achievement in tertiary study, but also inculcate positive and resilient SE beliefs through the practice tasks I provide, as well as through my individual interactions with them, building them up via encouragement and copious formative feedback. I need to test my recommendations then share my insights with the wider practice community.

In terms of personal development, the research has required me to re-engage with the theoretical literature on language processing, an opportunity that not everyone has mid-career. I was also able to delve into the growing literature on SE for language learning which I feel has the potential to significantly widen practitioners' views of classroom dynamics. Without a doubt, pursuing PhD study has hugely developed my researcher skills, so I look forward to putting these into practice through supervising other projects at this level, and in fact I am already sharing my learning in my undergraduate research methods module, in addition to exploring ways to improve my students' SE beliefs for reading journal articles! Finally, I believe that this experience, coupled with the social validation from my supervisors and colleagues, has built my self-efficacy for research to the point that I feel ready to embark on my next project.

## References

- Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2018). The L2 motivational self-system: A meta-analysis. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 8(4), 721-754.
- Allen, D. (2017). Investigating Japanese undergraduates' English language proficiency with IELTS: Predicting factors and washback. *IELTS Partnership Research Papers*, 2. IELTS Partners: British Council, Cambridge English Language Assessment and IDP: IELTS Australia. Retrieved from: <https://www.ielts.org/for-researchers/research-reports/ielts-partnership-research-paper-2>
- Arabai, F. (2016). The effects of teachers' in-class motivational intervention on learners' EFL achievement. *Applied Linguistics*, 37(3), 307-333.
- American Psychological Association [APA]. (2023). *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, self-efficacy. Retrieved from: <https://dictionary.apa.org/self-efficacy>
- Amoah, S., & Yeboah, J. (2021). The speaking difficulties of Chinese EFL learners and their motivation towards speaking the English language. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 56-69.
- Andrew, S. (1998). Self-efficacy as a predictor of academic performance in Science. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 27(3), 596-603. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1998.00550.x>
- Arndt, V. (1987). Six writers in search of texts: A protocol-based study of L1 and L2 writing. *ELT Journal*, 41(4), 257-267.
- Bachman, L.F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman, L.F. (2004). *Statistical analyses for language assessment*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Bachman, L.F., Lynch, B.K., & Mason, M. (1995). Investigating variability in tasks and rater judgments in a performance test of foreign language speaking. *Language Testing*, 12(2), 238-57.
- Bachman, L.F., & Palmer, A.S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

- Badger, R., & White, G. (2000). A process-genre approach to teaching writing. *ELT Journal*, 54(2), 153-160.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy. The exercise of control*. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman & Co.
- Bandura, A. (2006). Adolescent development from an agentic perspective. In F. Pajares, & T. Urdan (Eds.), *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents* (pp.1-43). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Basaran, S., & Cabaroglu, N. (2014). The effect of language learning podcasts on English self-efficacy. *International Journal of Language Academy*, 2(2), 48-69.
- Bassey, M. (1981). Pedagogic research: On the relative merits of search for generalisation and study of single events. *Oxford Review of Education*, 7(1), 73-94.
- Bazerman, C. (2016). What do sociocultural studies of writing tell us about learning to write. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp.11–23). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Beare, S. (2000). *Differences in content generating and planning processes of adult L1 and L2 proficient writers*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ottawa, Canada.
- Beare, S., & Bourdages, J. S. (2007). Skilled writers' generating strategies in L1 and L2: An exploratory study. In M. Torrance, L. Van Waes, & D. Galbraith (Eds.), *Writing and Cognition* (pp.151-161). Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald Group.
- Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987). *The psychology of written composition*. London, United Kingdom: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bernhardt, E. B., & Kamil, M. L. (1995). Interpreting relationships between L1 and L2 reading: Consolidating the linguistic threshold and the linguistic interdependence hypotheses. *Applied Linguistics*, 16(1), 16-34.
- Berninger, V., & Abbott, R.D. (2010). Listening comprehension, oral expression, reading comprehension, and written expression: Related yet unique language systems in grades 1, 3, 5, and 7. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(3), 635-651.

- Berninger, V., Cartwright, A., Yates, C., Swanson, H., & Abbott, R. (1994). Developmental skills related to writing and reading acquisition in the intermediate grades. *Reading and Writing, 6*(2), 161-196.
- Berninger, V., Mizokawa, D., & Bragg, R. (1991). Scientific practitioner: Theory-based diagnosis and remediation of writing disabilities. *Journal of School Psychology, 29*(1), 57-79.
- Berninger, V., & Richards, T. (2002). *Brain literacy for educators and psychologists*. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Biber, D. (2006). *University language* (Vol. 10). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Biber, D., Conrad, S., Reppen, R., Bryd, P., & Helt, M. (2002). Speaking and writing in the university: A multidimensional comparison. *TESOL Quarterly, 36*(1), 9-48.
- Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2006). Perceptions of the difficulties of postgraduate L2 thesis students writing the discussion section. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 5*(1), 4-18.
- Blanton, L. (2005). Student, interrupted: A tale of two would-be writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 14*(2), 105-121.
- Blanton, L. (2008). Speaking of absence: When the connection is not there. In D. Belcher & A. Hirvela (Eds.), *The oral-literate connection* (pp.134-138). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Block, D. (2000). Interview research in TESOL: Problematizing interview data: Voices in the mind's machine? *TESOL Quarterly, 34*(4), 757-763.
- Boeije, H. (2002). A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method in the analysis of qualitative interviews. *Quality and Quantity, 36*(4), 391-409.
- Bolus, R.E., Hinofotis, F.B., & Bailey, K.M. (1982). An introduction to generalizability theory in second language research 1. *Language Learning, 32*(2), 245-258.
- Bourdin, B., & Fayol, M. (1994). Is written language production more difficult than oral language production? A working memory approach. *International Journal of Psychology, 29*(5), 591-620.
- Bourdin, B., & Fayol, M. (2002). Even in adults, written production is still more costly than oral production. *International Journal of Psychology, 37*(4), 219-227.

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2.* (pp.57-71). American Psychological Association.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 13*(2), 201-216.
- Bridgeman, B., Cho, Y., & DiPietro, S. (2016). Predicting grades from an English language assessment: The importance of peeling the onion. *Language Testing, 33*(3), 307-318.
- British Council. (2023a). *How IELTS is assessed*. Retrieved from: <https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/teach-ielts/test-information/assessment>
- British Council. (2023b). *Understand and explain the IELTS scores*. Retrieved from: <https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/teach-ielts/test-information/ielts-scores-explained>
- British Council (2023c). *ESOL*. Retrieved from: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/esol>
- British Council (2024). *Academic writing sample candidate responses and examiner comments*. [PDF]. Retrieved from: [https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/academic-writing-sample-candidate-responses-and-examiner-comments\\_0.pdf](https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/academic-writing-sample-candidate-responses-and-examiner-comments_0.pdf)
- British Dyslexia Association. (2023). Signs of dyslexia. Retrieved from: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/educators/is-my-student-dyslexic/signs-of-dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia-primary-age>
- Britner, S.L., & Pajares, F. (2006). Sources of science self-efficacy beliefs of middle school students. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 43*(5), 485-499.
- Brown, A. (2003). Interviewer variation and the co-construction of speaking proficiency. *Language Testing, 20*(1), 1-25.
- Brumfit, C. (1997). How Applied Linguistics is the same as any other science, *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 7*(1), 86-94.



- Bruning, R.H, Dempsey, M., Kauffman, D.F., McKim, C., & Zumbrunn, S. (2013). Examining dimensions of self-efficacy for writing. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 105*(1), 25-38.
- Bruning, R.H., & Kauffman, D.F. (2016). Self-efficacy beliefs and motivation in writing development. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp.160-173). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Bryman, A. (2006). Integrating quantitative and qualitative research: How is it done? *Qualitative Research, 6*(1), 97-113.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Brybaert, M. (2019). How many words do we read per minute? A review and meta-analysis of reading rate, *Journal of Memory and Language, 109*, 104047.
- Burley-Allen, M. (1995). *Listening the forgotten skill: A self-teaching guide* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence: Revisited.* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Cambridge Assessment English. (2019). *The Cambridge English Scale explained.* Retrieved from: <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/210434-converting-practice-test-scores-to-cambridge-english-scale-scores.pdf>
- Campion, G. C. (2016). "The learning never ends": exploring teachers' views on the transition from General English to EAP. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 23*(3), 59-70.
- Canale, M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In J.C. Richards & R.W. Schmidt (Eds.). *Language and communication* (pp.2-27). London, United Kingdom: Longman.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1*(1), 1-47.
- Caravolas, M., Lervåg, A., Defior, S., Seidlová Málková, G., & Hulme, C. (2013). Different patterns, but equivalent predictors, of growth in reading in consistent and inconsistent orthographies. *Psychological Science, 24*(8), 1398-1407.

- Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 5-35.
- Chamot, A. U. (2005). Language learning strategy instruction: Current issues and research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 25(July), 112-130.
- Chamot, A. U., & Harris, V. (Eds.). (2019). *Learning strategy instruction in the language classroom: Issues and implementation* (Vol. 132). Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Chan, A. Y. W. (2010). Towards a taxonomy of written errors: Investigation into the written errors of Hong Kong Cantonese ESL learners. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44(2), 295-319.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- Chen, J., & Zhang, L. J. (2019). Assessing student-writers' self-efficacy beliefs about text revision in EFL writing. *Assessing Writing*, 40(2), 27-41.
- Cheng, L., Sun, Y., & Ma, J. (2015). Review of washback research literature within Kane's argument-based validation framework. *Language Teaching*, 48(4), 436-470.
- Chenoweth, N. A., & Hayes, J. R. (2001). Fluency in writing. *Written Communication*, 18(1), 80-98.
- Chenoweth, N. A., & Hayes, J. R. (2003). The inner voice in writing. *Written Communication*, 20(1), 99-118.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.
- Clark, H. (1996). *Using language*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Clarke, M. (1980). The short circuit hypothesis of ESL reading: When language competence interferes with reading performance. *The Modern Language Journal*, 64(2), 114-124.
- Cleland, A. A., & Pickering, M. J. (2006). Do writing and speaking employ the same syntactic representations? *Journal of Memory and Language*, 54(2), 185-198.
- Clément, R., Gardner, R.C., & Smythe, P.C. (1977). Motivational variables in second language acquisition: A study of francophones learning English. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue Canadienne des sciences du comportement*, 9(2), 123-133. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0081614>

- Coffin, C., & Donohue, J. P. (2012). Academic literacies and systemic functional linguistics: How do they relate? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11(1), 64-75.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cohen, A., & Brooks-Carson, A. (2001). Research on direct vs. translated writing: Students' strategies and their results. *Modern Language Journal*, 85(2), 169-188.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Collins, L., & Marsden, E. (2016). Cognitive perspectives on classroom language learning. In G. Hall (Ed.). *The Routledge handbook of English language teaching* (pp.281-294). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Coltheart, M., Rastle, K., Perry, C., Langdon, R., & Ziegler, J. (2001). DRC: a dual route cascaded model of visual word recognition and reading aloud. *Psychological Review*, 108(1), 204-256.
- Cone, J.D., & Foster, S.L. (2006). *Dissertation and theses from start to finish: Psychology and related fields* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). American Psychological Association.
- Cop, U., Dirix, N., van Assche, E., Drieghe, D., & Duyck, W. (2016). Reading a book in one or two languages? An eye movement study of cognate facilitation in L1 and L2 reading. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 20(4), 1-23.
- Corbett, P. (2012). *Stories to tell, stories to write*. London, United Kingdom: Lewisham Professional Development Centre.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Corder, S. P. (1973). *Introducing Applied Linguistics*. Harmondsworth, United Kingdom: Penguin.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

- Council of Europe. (2018). *Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment companion volume with new descriptors*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>
- Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>
- Cox, B. E., Shanahan, T., & Sulzby, E. (1990). Good and poor elementary readers' use of cohesion in writing. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 25(1), 47-65.
- Coxhead, A. (2000). A new academic word list. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 213-238.
- Craven, E. (2012). The quest for IELTS band 7.0: Investigating English language proficiency development of international students at an Australian university. *IELTS Research Report Series*, 13, IDP: IELTS Australia and British Council.
- Creamer, E. (2018). *An introduction to fully integrated mixed methods research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W., Plano Clark, V.L., Garrett, A.L., & Bergman, M.M. (2008). Methodological issues in conducting mixed methods research designs. In M. Bergman (Ed.), *Advances in mixed methods research* (pp. 66-83). London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cumming, A. (2001). Learning to write in a second language: Two decades of research. *International Journal of English Studies*, 1(2), 1-23.
- Cumming, A. (2009). The contribution of studies of foreign language writing to research, theories and policies. In R.M. Manchón (Ed.), *Writing in foreign language contexts. Learning, teaching, and research* (pp.77-101). Bristol/Buffalo/Toronto: Multilingual Matters.

- Cumming, A., Kantor, R., Baba, K., Erdosy, U., Eouanzoui, K., & James, M. (2005). Differences in written discourse in independent and integrated prototype tasks for next generation TOEFL. *Assessing Writing*, 10(1), 5-43.
- Cummins, J. (1980). The cross-lingual dimensions of language proficiency: Implications for bilingual education and the optimal age Issue. *TESOL Quarterly*, 14(2), 175-187.
- Cummins, J. (1991). Interdependence of first-and second-language proficiency in bilingual children. In E. Bialystok (Ed.), *Language processing in bilingual children*, (pp.70-89). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire* (vol. 23). Clevedon, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Cutler, A., & Clifton, C. (1999). Blueprint of the listener. In P. Hagoort & C. Brown (Eds.), *The neurocognition of language* (pp.123-166). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- de Bot, K. (1992). A bilingual production model: Levelt's 'speaking' model adapted. *Applied Linguistics*, 13(1), 1-24.
- de Bot, K. (2000). Simultaneous interpreting as language production. *Benjamins Translation Library*, 40(Nov), 65-88.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behaviour*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Dell, G. (1986). A spreading-activation theory of retrieval in sentence production. *Psychological Review*, 93(3), 283-321.
- Dell, G., Nozari, N. & Oppenheim, G.M. (2014). Word production: Behavioural and computational considerations. In M. Goldrick, V. Ferreira, & M. Miozzo (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of language production* (pp.88-104). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Deng, L., Chen, Q., & Zhang, Y. (2014). Developing EFL learners' generic competence in reading and writing: A Process-Genre Approach. In L. Deng, Q. Chen, & Y. Zhang (Eds.), *Developing Chinese EFL Learners' Generic Competence* (pp.31-50). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.
- Denies, K. & Janssen, R. (2016). Country and gender differences in the functioning of CEFR-based can-do statements as a tool for self-assessing English proficiency. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 13(3), 251-276.

- Denzin, N. (1985). Emotion as lived experience. *Symbolic Interaction*, 8(2), 223-240.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2005). Investigating the psychological and emotional dimensions in instructed language learning: Obstacles and possibilities. *Modern Language Journal*, 89(3), 367-380.
- Dewaele, J.-M., Witney, J., Saito, K., & Dewaele, L. (2018). Foreign language enjoyment and anxiety: The effect of teacher and learner variables. *Language Teaching Research*, 22(6), 676-697.
- Dijkstra, T., & van Heuven, W.J.B. (2018). Visual word recognition in multilinguals. In S-A. Rueschemeyer & M. G. Gaskell (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, (2nd ed.) (pp.118-143). Oxford Library of Psychology, Oxford Academic, Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198786825.013.6>.
- Dinkins, C. (2005). Shared inquiry: Socratic-hermeneutic interpretive-viewing. In P.M. Ironside (Ed.), *Beyond method: Philosophical conversations in healthcare research and scholarship* (pp. 111-147). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2009). *The psychology of second language acquisition*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ottó, I. (1998). Motivation in action: A process model of motivation. *Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 4, 43-69.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the language learner revisited*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Skehan, P. (2003). Individual differences in second language learning. In C.J. Doughty & M.H. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of second language acquisition* (pp.589-630). Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell.
- Dweck, C.S., & Leggett, E.L. (1988). A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. *Psychological Review*, 95(2), 256-273.
- Eccles, J. (1983). Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. In J. T. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motives: Psychological and sociological approaches* (pp. 75-146). San Francisco, CA: W. H. Freeman.

- Eccles, J.S., & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational beliefs, values, and goals. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53(1), 109-132.
- Eckman, F. (1977). Markedness and the contrastive analysis hypothesis. *Language Learning*, 27(2), pp. 315-330.
- Educational Testing Service [ETS]. (2023a). *Performance descriptors for the TOEFL iBT® Test*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ets.org/content/dam/ets-org/pdfs/toefl/toefl-ibt-performance-descriptors.pdf>
- Educational Testing Service [ETS]. (2023b). *About the TOEFL iBT® Test*. Retrieved from: <https://toefltest.in/about/>
- Elkhafaifi, H. (2005). Listening comprehension and anxiety in the Arabic language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(2), 206-220.
- Ellis, R. (1997). *SLA research and language teaching*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Ennis, J. M., & Prior, J. (2020). *Approaches to English for Specific and Academic Purposes: Perspectives on Teaching and Assessing in Tertiary and Adult Education*. Bolzano, Italy: Bozen-Bolzano University Press.
- Erkan, Y.D., & Saban, A.I. (2011). Writing performance relative to writing apprehension, self-efficacy in writing and attitudes towards writing: A correlational study in Turkish tertiary-level EFL. *The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly*, 13(1), 163-191.
- Esfandiari, R., & Myford, C.M. (2013). Severity differences among self-assessors, peer-assessors, and teacher assessors rating EFL essays. *Assessing Writing*, 18(2), 111-131.
- Eskey, D.E. (2005). Reading in a second language. In E. Hinkel (Ed.). *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*, (pp.563-579). Taylor & Francis Group.
- ESOL Scotland. (2010). *ESOL initial assessment pack*. Retrieved from: <https://education.gov.scot/nih/Documents/cdl24-ESOL-Initial-Assessment-main-pack.pdf>
- Evans, S., & Green, C. (2007). Why EAP is necessary: A survey of Hong Kong tertiary students. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 6(1), 3-17.
- Evans, S., & Morrison, B. (2011). The first term at university: Implications for EAP. *ELT Journal*, 65(4), 387-397.
- Eysenck, M.W., & Keane, M. T. (2015). *Cognitive psychology: A student's handbook* (7th ed.). Taylor & Francis Group.

- Eysenck, M. W., & Keane, M. T. (2020). *Cognitive psychology: A student's handbook* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Ferguson, L.M., Yonge, O., & Myrick, F. (2004). Students' involvement in faculty research: Ethical and methodological issues. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(4), 56-68.
- Ferris, D., & Hedgcock, J. (2005). *Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using SPSS*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34(10), 906-911.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Flowerdew, J., & Peacock, M. (2001). *Research perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Fodor, J.D. (1998). Learning To Parse? *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 27(2), 285-319.
- Fryer, L. K., & Oga-Baldwin, W. L. Q. (2019). Succeeding at junior high school: Students' reasons, their reach, and the teaching that h(inders)elps their grasp. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 59, 101778.
- Fulcher, G. (2010). *Practical language testing*. London, United Kingdom: Hodder Education.
- Galaczi, E., & Taylor, L. (2018). Interactional competence: Conceptualisations, operationalisations, and outstanding questions, *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 15(3), 219-236.
- Galbraith, D. (2009). Cognitive models of writing. *German as a Foreign Language*, 2(3), 7-22.
- Galbraith, D., & Baaijen, V. M. (2015). Conflict in writing. In G. Cislaru (Ed.), *Writing (s) at the Crossroads: The process-product interface*, (pp.255-276). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Galbraith, D., & Baaijen, V.M. (2018). The work of writing: Raiding the inarticulate. *Educational Psychologist*, 53(4), 238-257.
- Gebriel, A. (2009). Score generalizability of academic writing tasks: Does one test method fit it all? *Language Testing*, 26(4), 507-531.



- Gebril, A. (2010). Bringing reading-to-write and writing-only assessment tasks together: A generalizability analysis. *Assessing writing*, 15(2), 100-117.
- Geertz, C. (1983). *Local knowledge: further essays in interpretive anthropology*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gibson, W.J., & Brown, A. (2009). *Working with qualitative data*. London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- Ginther, A., & Yan, X. (2018). Interpreting the relationships between TOEFL iBT scores and GPA: Language proficiency, policy, and profiles. *Language Testing*, 35(2), 271-295.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1999). *The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Goh, C. (2000). A cognitive perspective on language learners' listening comprehension problems. *System*, 28(1), 55-75.
- Goh, C. (2002). Exploring listening comprehension tactics and their interaction patterns. *System*, 30(2), 185-206.
- Goh, C., & Hu, G. (2014). Exploring the relationship between metacognitive awareness and listening performance with questionnaire data. *Language Awareness*, 23(3), 255-274.
- Goh, C., & Vandergrift, L. (2021). *Teaching and learning second language listening: metacognition in action*. (2nd ed.). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Goodman, K.S. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist*, 6, 126-135.
- Grabe, W., & Kaplan, R. B. (1996). *Theory and practice of writing: An applied linguistics perspective*. Harlow, United Kingdom: Longman.
- Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. (2019). *Teaching and researching reading* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Graham, S. (2006). A study of students' metacognitive beliefs about foreign language study and their impact on learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 39(2), 296-309.
- Graham, S., Berninger, V. W., Abbott, R. D., Abbott, S. P., & Whitaker, D. (1997). Role of mechanics in composing of elementary school students: A new methodological approach. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89(1), 170-182.

- Graham, S., McKeown, D., Kiuahara, S., & Harris, K. (2012). A meta-analysis of writing instruction for students in the elementary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(4), 879-896.
- Graham, S., & Weiner, B. (1996). Theories and principles of motivation. In D. C. Berliner, & R. C. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of Educational Psychology* (pp.63784). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.
- Gregersen, T. (2006). The despair of disparity: The connection between foreign language anxiety and the recognition of proficiency differences in L2 skills. *Lenguas Modernas (Santiago), 31*, 7-20.
- Griffiths, C. (2018). *The strategy factor in successful language learning: The tornado effect*. (2nd ed.) (SLA 121) Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Multilingual Matters.
- Gu, P. Y. (2019) Approaches to learning strategy instruction. In A.U. Chamot, & V. Harris (Eds.), *Learning strategy instruction in the language classroom: Issues and implementation* (pp.22-37). Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M., & Namey, E.E. (2012a). Introduction to applied thematic analysis. In G. Guest, K.M., MacQueen, & E.E. Namey (Eds.), *Applied thematic analysis* (pp. 3-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M. & Namey, E.E. (2012b). Supplemental analytic techniques. In G. Guest, K.M., MacQueen, & E.E. Namey (Eds.), *Applied thematic analysis* (pp. 107-128). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ha, N. T. T. (2019). A literature review of washback effects of assessment on language learning. *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science-Social Sciences, 9*(2), 3-16.
- Halliday, M., & Matthiessen, C. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Hamad, M.S., & Abdallah, Y.A. (2015). Investigating lexical errors and their effect on university students' written performance in Sudan. *Journal of Human Science, 16*(1), 1-18. Sudan University of Science and Technology Repository.
- Hamp-Lyons, L. (2016). Farewell to holistic scoring. Part two: Why build a house with only one brick? *Assessing Writing, 29*(July), A1-A5.
- Harrington, M., & Roche, T. (2014). Identifying academically at-risk students in an English-as-a-Lingua-Franca university setting. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 15*(Sept), 37-47.

- Harris, K. R., Graham, S., MacArthur, C., Reid, R., & Mason, L. H. (2011). Self-regulated learning processes and children's writing. In B. J. Zimmerman, & D.H. Schunk (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance*, (pp.187-202). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hasan, A. S. (2000). Learners' perceptions of listening comprehension problems. *Language Culture and Curriculum*, 13(2), 137-153.
- Hayes, J. R. (2000). Understanding cognition and affect in writing. In R. Idrisano, & J. R. Squire (Eds.), *Perspectives on writing: Research, theory, and practice*, (pp.6-44). Newark, DW: International Reading Association.
- Hayes, J. R. (2012). Modeling and remodeling writing. *Written communication*, 29(3), 369-388.
- Hayes, J. R., & Flower, L. S. (1980). Identifying the organization of writing processes. In L. W. Gregg & E. R. Steinberg (Eds.), *Cognitive processes in writing: An interdisciplinary approach*, (pp.3-30). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hayes, J. R., & Flower, L. S. (1986). Writing research and the writer. *American Psychologist*, 41(10), 1106-1113.
- Hepburn, A., & Bolden, G. (2017). Getting started with transcription. In A. Hepburn, & G. Bolden (Eds.), *Transcribing for social research*, (pp. 13-20). London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- Hinkel, E. (2001). Matters of cohesion in L2 academic texts. *Applied Language Learning*, 12(2), 111-132.
- Hoover, W. A., & Gough, P. B. (1990). The simple view of reading. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2(June), 127-160.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.
- Hsieh, P.P., & Kang, H.-S. (2010). Attribution and self-efficacy and their interrelationship in the Korean EFL Context. *Language Learning*, 60(3), 606-627.
- Hsieh, P.P., & Schallert, D.L. (2008). Implications from self-efficacy and attribution theories for an understanding of undergraduates' motivation in a foreign language course. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 33(4), 513-532.
- Huang, Y., & Zhang, L. (2020) Does a Process-Genre Approach help improve students' argumentative writing in English as a Foreign Language? Findings from an intervention study, *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 36(4), 339-364.

- Hughes, R. (2005). *English in speech and writing: Investigating language and literature*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Hulstijn, J. H. (2003). Connectionist models of language processing and the training of listening skills with the aid of multimedia software. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 16*(5), 413-425.
- Hulstijn, J. H., Schoonen, R., de Jong, N. H., Steinel, M. P., & Florijn, A. (2012). Linguistic competences of learners of Dutch as a second language at the B1 and B2 levels of speaking proficiency of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). *Language Testing, 29*(2), 203-221.
- Humphreys, P., Haugh, M., Fenton-Smith, M., Lobo, A., Michael, R., & Walkinshaw, I. (2012). Tracking international students' English proficiency over the first semester of undergraduate study. *IELTS Research Reports Online Series, 1*. IDP: IELTS Australia and British Council. Retrieved from: <https://www.ielts.org/for-researchers/research-reports/online-series-2012-1>
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings* (pp. 269-293). Harmondsworth, United Kingdom: Penguin Books.
- Indefrey, P. (2011). The spatial and temporal signatures of word production components: A critical update. *Frontiers in Psychology, 2* (Article 255).
- Inglis, F., & Aers, L. (2008). *Key concepts in education*. London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- In'nami, Y. (2006). The effects of test anxiety on listening test performance. *System, 34*(3), 317-340.
- In'nami, Y., & Koizumi, R. (2016). Task and rater effects in L2 speaking and writing: A synthesis of generalizability studies. *Language Testing, 33*(3), 341-366.
- International English Language Testing System [IELTS]. (2022). *Test performance 2021*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ielts.org/for-researchers/test-statistics/test-performance>
- International English Language Testing System [IELTS]. (2023a). *Demographic data 2022*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ielts.org/for-researchers/test-statistics/demographic-data>
- International English Language Testing System [IELTS]. (2023b). *Test performance 2022*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ielts.org/for-researchers/test-statistics/test-taker-performance>

- Iwanic, J. (2020). Questionnaires: Implications for effective implementation. In J. McKinley, & H. Rose (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of research methods in Applied Linguistics* (pp.324-335). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Jacobs, H., Zingraf, A., Warmuth, D., Hartfiel, V., & Hughey, J. (1981). *Testing ESL composition: A practical approach*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- James, K. H., Jao, R. J., & Berninger, V. (2016). The development of multi-leveled writing brain systems: Brain lessons for writing instruction. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp.116-129). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Jeon, E.H., & Yamashita, J. (2022). Individual difference factors for second language reading. In S. Li, P. Hiver, & M. Papi (Eds.). *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and individual differences* (pp.364-380). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Johnson, M.L., Edwards, O.V., & Dai, T. (2014). Growth trajectories of task value and self-efficacy across an academic semester. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 2(1), 10–18.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14–26.
- Jung, E. H. (2003). The role of discourse signaling cues in second language listening comprehension. *Modern Language Journal*, 87(4), 562-577.
- Kachru, B.B. (1990). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions, and models of non-native Englishes*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Kautz, T., Heckman, J.J., Diris, R., Weel, B., & Borghans, L. (2014). *Fostering and measuring skills: Improving cognitive and non-cognitive skills to promote lifetime success*. OECD Education Working Papers, 82, Paris, OECD Publishing.
- Kazazoğlu, S. (2020). The impact of L1 Interference on foreign language writing: A contrastive analysis. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 16(3), 1177-1188.
- Kellogg, R. T. (1990). Effectiveness of prewriting strategies as a function of task demands. *American Journal of Psychology*, 103, 327-342.
- Kellogg, R. T. (1994). *The psychology of writing*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Kellogg, R. T. (1996). A model of working memory in writing. In C. M. Levy, & S. Ransdell (Eds.), *The science of writing: Theories, methods, individual differences, and applications* (pp. 57-71). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kellogg, R.T., & Whiteford, A.P. (2012). The development of writing expertise. In E.L. Grigorenko, E. Mambrino, & D.D. Preiss (Eds.), *Writing: A mosaic of new perspectives* (pp.109-124). Hove, United Kingdom: Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Kern, R., & Schultz, J.M. (2005). Beyond orality: Investigating literacy and the literary in second and foreign language instruction. *Modern Language Journal, 89*(3), 381-392.
- Kiger, M.E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131, *Medical Teacher, 42*(8), 846-854.
- Kim, J.-H. (2000). Foreign language listening anxiety: A study of Korean students learning English. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Texas, Austin.
- Kim, K. J. (2010). Reading motivation in two languages: an examination of EFL college students in Korea. *Reading & Writing, 24*(8), 861-881.
- Kim, D-H., Wang, C., Ahn, H. S., & Bong, M. (2015). English language learners' self-efficacy profiles and relationship with self-regulated learning strategies. *Learning and Individual Differences, 38*(Feb), 136-142.
- Kings, P., & Casey, H. (2013). *ESOL qualifications and funding in 2014: issues for consideration*. Association of Colleges/NRDC. Retrieved from: <http://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/ESOL.Qualifications%20Report%20%28Jan%202014%29.pdf> AoC ESOL\_ Qualifications\_ Report.pdf (learningunlimited.co)
- Knoch, U. (2011). Investigating the effectiveness of individualized feedback to rating behavior: a longitudinal study. *Language Testing, 28*(2), 179-200.
- Knutson, E. M. (2006). Thinking in English, writing in French. *The French Review, 80*(1), 88-109.
- Kobayashi, H., & Rinnert, C. (1992). Effects of first language on second language writing: Translation versus direct composition. *Language Learning, 42*(2), pp. 183-215.
- Koizumi, R., Agawa, T., Asano, K., & In'nami, Y. (2022). Skill profiles of Japanese English learners and reasons for uneven patterns. *Language Testing in Asia, 12* (53) <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-022-00203-3>

- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing, *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124.
- Krashen, S.D. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and implications*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Kroll, B. M. (1981). Developmental relationships between speaking and writing. In B.M. Kroll & R.J. Vann (Eds.), *Exploring speaking-writing relationships: Connections and contrasts*, (pp.32-54). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Kroll, J.F., & Hermans, D. (2011). Psycholinguistic perspectives on language processing in bilinguals. In M. S. Schmid & W. Lowie (Eds.) *Modeling bilingualism: From structure to chaos. In honor of Kees de Bot*, (pp.15-36) John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Kutz, E., Groden, S., & Zamel, V. (1993). *The discovery of competence: Teaching and learning with diverse student writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Lalwani, A. K., Shavitt, S., & Johnson, T. (2006). What is the relation between cultural orientation and socially desirable responding? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(1), 165-178.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2011). A complexity theory approach to second language development/acquisition. In D. Atkinson (ed.), *Alternative approaches to second language acquisition* (pp.48-72). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., Schmid, M., & Lowie, W. (2011). From structure to chaos: Twenty years of modeling bilingualism. In M. S. Schmid & W. Lowie (Eds.) *Modeling bilingualism: From structure to chaos. In honor of Kees de Bot* (pp.1-11), John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Lee, Y.-W. (2006). Dependability of scores for a new ESL speaking assessment consisting of integrated and independent tasks. *Language Testing*, 23(2), 131-166.
- Lee, J., Bychkovska, T., & Maxwell, J. (2019). Breaking the rules? Comparison of informality L1 and L2 UG writing. *System*, 80(Feb), 143-153.
- Leech, G. (2000), Grammars of spoken English: New outcomes of corpus-oriented research. *Language Learning*, 50(4), 675-724.
- Leech, N.L., & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2009). A typology of mixed methods research designs. *Quality & Quantity*, 43(Mar), 265-275.
- Leki, I. (2007). *Undergraduates in a second language: Challenges and complexities of academic literacy development*. New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Leki, I., Cumming, A., & Silva, T. (2008). *A synthesis of research on second language writing in English*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Levelt, W. (1989). *Speaking: From intention to articulation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Levelt, W. (1999). Models of word production. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 3(6), 223-232.
- Li, H., Zhong, Q. & Suen, H.K. (2012). Students' perceptions of the impact of the College English Test. *Language Testing in Asia*, 2(3), 77-94.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E.G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp.163-188). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Liu, J.-Y., Chang, Y.-J., Yang, F.-Y., & Sun, Y.-C. (2011). Is what I need what I want? Reconceptualising college students' needs in English courses for general and specific/academic purposes. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 10(4), 271-280.
- Locke, J. (2010). The development of linguistic systems: Insights from evolution. In J. Guendouzi, F. Loncke, & M.J. Williams (Eds.), *The handbook of psycholinguistic and cognitive processes: Perspectives in communication disorders* (pp.3-30). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Low, J. (2019). A pragmatic definition of the concept of theoretical saturation. *Sociological Focus*, 52(2), 131-139.
- Lowie W.M., & Verspoor, M.H. (2019). Individual differences and the ergodicity problem: Individual differences and ergodicity. *Language Learning*, 69(1), 184-206.
- Lumley, T., & O'Sullivan, B. (2005). The impact of test taker characteristics on speaking test task performance. *Language Testing*, 22(4), 415-437.
- Luoma, S. (2004). *Assessing speaking* (Cambridge Language Assessment). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Lynch, T. (1998). Theoretical perspectives on listening. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 18, 3-19.
- Lynch, T., & Mendelsohn, D. (2002). Listening. In N. Schmitt (Ed.), *An introduction to Applied Linguistics* (pp. 193-210). London, United Kingdom: Arnold.



- Macaro, E., Vanderplank, R., & Graham, S. (2005). A systematic review of the role of prior knowledge in unidirectional listening comprehension. London, United Kingdom: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.
- MacArthur, C. A., & Graham, S. (2016). Writing research from a cognitive perspective. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 24–40). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- MacIntyre, P.D., Gregersen, T., & Clément, R. (2016). Individual differences. In G. Hall (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of English language teaching* (pp.310- 323). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Malterud, K., Siersma, D., & Guassora, A. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1753-1760.
- Manchón, R. M., Murphy, L., & Roca de Larios, J. (2007). Lexical retrieval processes and strategies in second language writing: A synthesis of empirical research. *International Journal of English Studies, 7*(2), 149-174.
- Manchón, R.M., Roca de Larios, J., & Murphy, L. (2000). An approximation to the study of backtracking in L2 writing. *Learning and Instruction, 10*(1), 13-35.
- Manchón, R. M., Roca de Larios, J., & Murphy, L. (2009). The temporal dimension and problem-solving nature of foreign language composing processes: Implications for theory. In R. M. Manchón (Ed.), *Writing in foreign language contexts: Learning, teaching, and research*, (pp.102-129). Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Marslen-Wilson, W.D., & Welsh, A. (1978). Processing interactions and lexical access during word recognition in continuous speech. *Cognitive Psychology, 10*(1), 29-63.
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. (2005). Engagement and graduation: Alignment, solidarity and the construed reader. In J.R. Martin & P.R. White (Eds.), *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*, (pp.92-160). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mason, J. (2018). *Qualitative researching* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Matsumo, S. (2009). Self-, peer- and teacher-assessments in Japanese University EFL writing classrooms. *Language Testing, 26*(1), 75-100.
- Matsumoto, K. (1995). Research paper writing strategies of professional Japanese EFL Writers. *TESL Canada Journal, 13*(1), 17-27.

- McCarthy, P., Meier, S., & Rinderer, R. (1985). Self-efficacy and writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 36(4), 465-471.
- McClelland, J. L., & Elman, J. L. (1986). The TRACE model of speech perception. *Cognitive Psychology*, 18(1), 1-86.
- McClelland, J. L., & Rumelhart, D. E. (1981). An interactive activation model of context effects in letter perception: I. An account of basic findings. *Psychological Review*, 88(5), 375-407.
- McEntire, J., & Williams, J. (2017). *Making connections: Skills and strategies for academic reading* (2<sup>nd</sup>.ed.). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- McLean, P., Perkins, K., Tout, D., Brewer, K., & Wyse, L. (2012). *Australian Core Skills Framework: 5 core skills, 5 levels of performance, 3 domains of communication*. Retrieved from:[http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=transitions\\_misc](http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=transitions_misc)
- McLelland, N. (2017). *Teaching and learning foreign languages: a history of language education, assessment and policy in Britain*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Mehmedbegovic, D. (2017). Engaging with linguistic diversity in global cities: Arguing for 'language hierarchy free' policy and practice in Education. *Open Linguistics*, 3(1), 540-553.
- Melby-Lervåg, A., Lyster, S.-A.H. & Hulme, C. (2012). Phonological skills and their role in learning to read: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(2), 322-352.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Mills, N. (2014). Self-efficacy in SLA. In S. Mercer & M. Williams (Eds.), *Multiple perspectives on the self in SLA* (pp.6-22). Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Mills, N., Pajares, F., & Herron, C. (2006). A re-evaluation of the role of anxiety: Self-efficacy, anxiety, and their relation to reading and listening proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals*, 39(2), 276-295.
- Mills, N., Pajares, F., & Herron, C. (2007). Self-efficacy of college intermediate French students: Relation to achievement and motivation. *Language Learning*, 57(3), 417-442.
- Milton, J., & Treffers-Daller, J. (2013). Vocabulary size revisited: the link between vocabulary size and academic achievement. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 4(1), 151-172.

- Mirhosseini, S.-A. (2018). Mixed methods research in TESOL: Procedures combined or epistemology confused? *TESOL Quarterly*, 52(2), 468-478.
- Moffett, J. (1968). *Teaching the universe of discourse*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Moon, C., Panneton-Cooper, R., & Fifer, W. P. (1993). Two-day-olds prefer their native language. *Infant Behavior & Development*, 16(4), 495-500.
- Morrow, S.L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology: Knowledge in context: qualitative methods in counseling psychology research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250-260.
- Morse, J.M. (2015). Data were saturated. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(5), 587-588.
- Morse, J.M., & Niehaus, L. (2009). *Mixed method design: Principles and procedures*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Murray, N. (2016). *Standards of English in Higher Education: Issues, challenges and strategies*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Murray, D. E., & Christison, M. (2011). *What English language teachers need to know: Volume 1*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Murray, N., & Muller, A. (2019). Some key terms in ELT and why we need to disambiguate them. *ELT Journal*, 73(3), 257-264.
- Nelson, K. E., Carskaddon, G., & Bonvillian, J. D. (1973). Syntax acquisition: Impact of experimental variation in adult verbal interaction with the child. *Child Development*, 44, 497-504.
- Nickerson, R.S. (1998). Confirmation bias: A ubiquitous phenomenon in many guises. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(2), 175-220.
- Oga-Baldwin, W.L.Q., Fryer, L.K. & Larson-Hall, J. (2019). The critical role of the individual in language education: New directions from the learning sciences, *System*, 86(Nov), 102118.
- Olive, T. (2012). Working memory in writing. In V. Berninger (Ed.), *Past, present, and future contributions of cognitive writing research to cognitive psychology* (pp.485-503). London, United Kingdom: Psychology Press.
- Olson, D. (1977). From utterance to text: The bias of language in speech and writing. *Harvard Educational Review*, 47(3), 257-281.

- O'Reilly, M., & Parker, N. (2013). "Unsatisfactory saturation": A critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 13*(2), 190-197.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]. (2022). *International student mobility*. Retrieved from: <https://data.oecd.org/students/international-student-mobility.htm>
- O'Sullivan, B., & Weir, C.J. (2011). Test development and validation. In B. O'Sullivan (Ed.), *Language Testing: Theories and Practices* (pp.13–32). Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pajares, F. (2003). Self-efficacy beliefs, motivation and achievement in writing: A review of the literature. *Reading and Writing Quarterly, 19*(2), 139-158.
- Pajares, F., Britner, S. L., & Valiante, G. (2000). Relation between achievement goals and self-beliefs of middle school students in writing and science. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*(4), 406-422.
- Pajares, F., & Graham, L. (1999). Self-efficacy, motivation constructs, and mathematics performance of entering middle school students. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 24*(2), 124-139.
- Pajares, F., & Johnson, M. J. (1996). Self-efficacy beliefs in the writing of high school students: A path analysis. *Psychology in the Schools, 33*(2), 163-175.
- Pajares, F., Johnson, M. J., & Usher, E. L. (2007). Sources of writing self-efficacy beliefs of elementary, middle, and high school students. *Research in the Teaching of English, 42*(1), 104-120.
- Pajares, F., & Valiante, G. (1997). Influence of writing self-efficacy beliefs on the writing performance of upper elementary students. *Journal of Educational Research, 90*(6), 353-360.
- Pajares, F., & Valiante, G. (1999). Grade level and gender differences in the writing self-beliefs of middle school students. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 24*(4), 390-405.
- Pajares, F., & Valiante, G. (2001). Gender differences in writing motivation and achievement of middle school students: A function of gender orientation? *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 26*(3), 366-381.
- Pang, F., & Skehan, P. (2021). Performance profiles on second language speaking tasks. *The Modern Language Journal (Boulder, Colo.)*, 105(1), 371-390.

- Paran, A., & Wallace, C. (2016). Teaching literacy. In G. Hall (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of English language teaching* (pp.441-455). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Paton, A. & Wilkins, M. (2009). *Teaching adult ESOL: Principles and practice*. E book. McGraw–Hill Education.
- Patton, M.Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Paulhus, D. L. (2002). Socially desirable responding: The evolution of a construct. In H. I. Braun, D. N. Jackson, & D. E. Wiley (Eds.), *The role of constructs in psychological and educational measurement* (pp.49-69). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Pearson. (2022a). *PTE Academic test format*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pearsonpte.com/pte-academic/test-format>
- Pearson. (2022b). *PTE Academic score guide for institutions - June 2022*. Retrieved from: [https://assets.ctfassets.net/yqwtwibiobs4/4GzZV6iHiWMfLX1y2CK29I/ef5f0aa73267f157fde173aa499c23d9/PTE\\_Academic\\_Score\\_Guide\\_for\\_Institutions\\_-\\_June\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/yqwtwibiobs4/4GzZV6iHiWMfLX1y2CK29I/ef5f0aa73267f157fde173aa499c23d9/PTE_Academic_Score_Guide_for_Institutions_-_June_2022.pdf)
- Pearson. (2024). *PTE Academic format: Speaking & Writing*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pearsonpte.com/pte-academic/test-format/speaking-writing>
- Perfetti, C., & Stafura, J. (2014). Word knowledge in a theory of reading comprehension, *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 18(1), 22-37.
- Phakiti, A., Hirsh, D., & Woodrow, L. (2013). It's not only English: Effects of other individual factors on English language learning and academic learning of ESL international students in Australia. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 12(3), 239-258.
- Piantadosi, S., Tily, H., & Gibson, E. (2012). The communicative function of ambiguity in language. *Cognition*, 122(3), 280-291.
- Pickering, M.J, & Garrod, S. (2004). Alignment as the basis for successful communication. *Research on Language and Computation*, 4(Oct), 203-228.
- Pincas, A. (1982). *Teaching English Writing*. London, United Kingdom: Macmillan.
- Piniel, K., & Csizer, K. (2013). L2 motivation, anxiety and self-efficacy: The interrelationship of individual variables in the secondary school context. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 3(4), 523-550.

- Plaut, D. C., McClelland, J. L., Seidenberg, M. S., & Patterson, K. (1996). Understanding normal and impaired word reading: Computational principles in quasi-regular domains. *Psychological Review*, 103(1), 56-115.
- Plonsky, L. (2011). The effectiveness of second language strategy instruction: A meta-analysis. *Language Learning*, 61(4), 993-1038.
- Plonsky, L. (2019). Language learning strategy instruction: Recent research and future directions. In A.U. Chamot, & V. Harris (Eds.), *Learning strategy instruction in the language classroom: Issues and implementation* (pp.3-21). Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Poland, B. (2008). Transcription. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vols. 1-0). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Polio, C. (2011). The acquisition of second language writing. In S.M. Gass, & A.M. Mackey (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (pp.319-334). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Prat-Sala, M., & Redford, P. (2012). Writing essays: does self-efficacy matter? The relationship between self-efficacy in reading and in writing and undergraduate students' performance in essay writing. *Educational Psychology (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, 32(1), 9-20.
- Qasem, F.A.A. (2020). Crosslinguistic influence of the first language: Interlingual errors in the writing of ESL Saudi learners. *Macrolinguistics*, 8(13), 105-120.
- Qian, J., & Krugly-Smolka, E. (2008). Chinese graduate students' experiences with writing a literature review. *TESL Canada Journal*, 26(1), 68-86.
- Qiu, X., & Lee, M.-K. (2020). Regulated learning and self-efficacy beliefs in peer collaborative writing: An exploratory study of L2 learners' written products, task discussions, and self-reports. *System*, 93(Oct), 102312.
- Rahimi, A., & Abedini, A. (2009). The interface between EFL Learners' self-efficacy concerning listening comprehension and listening proficiency. *Novitas-ROYAL*, 3(1), 14-28.
- Raimes, A. (1985). What unskilled ESL students do as they write: A classroom study of composing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19(2), 229-258.
- Raimes, A. (1987). Language proficiency, writing ability and composing strategies: A study of ESL college student writers. *Language Learning*, 37(3), 439-468.

- Raofi, S., Tan, B.H., & Chan, S.H. (2012). Self-efficacy in second/foreign language learning contexts. *English Language Teaching (Toronto)*, 5(11), 60-73.
- Rapley, T. (2001). The art(fulness) of open-ended interviewing: some considerations on analysing interviews. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 303-323.
- Rapp, B., Fischer-Baum, S., & Miozzo, M. (2015). Modality and morphology: What we write may not be what we say. *Psychological Science*, 26(6), 892-902.
- Rastle, K. (2018). Visual word recognition. In S-A. Rueschemeyer, & M. G. Gaskell (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, (2nd ed.), Oxford Library of Psychology. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198786825.013.3>
- Rayner, K., & Clifton, C. (2009). Language processing in reading and speech perception is fast and incremental: Implications for event-related potential research. *Biological Psychology*, 80(1), 4-9.
- Rayner, K., Foorman, B.R., Perfetti, C.A., Pesetsky, D., Seidenberg, M.S. (2001). How psychological science informs the teaching of reading. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 2(2), 31-74.
- Riazantseva, A. (2012). "I ain't changing anything": A case-study of successful generation 1.5 immigrant college students' writing. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11(3), 184-193.
- Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL*, Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Roca de Larios, J., Manchón, R.M. & Murphy, L. (2006). Generating text in native and foreign language writing: A temporal analysis of problem-solving formulation processes. *The Modern Language Journal*, 90(1), 100-114.
- Roca de Larios, J., Nicolás-Conesa, F., & Coyle, Y. (2016). Focus on writers: Processes and strategies. In R. M. Manchón & P.K. Matsuda (Eds.), *Handbook of Second and Foreign Language Writing*, (pp.267-286). Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Rodero, E. (2016). Influence of speech rate and information density on recognition: The moderate dynamic mechanism, *Media Psychology*, 19(2), 224-242.
- Rost, M. (2005). L2 listening. In E. Hinkel (Ed.). *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*, (pp.503-528). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Rost, M. (2011). *Teaching and researching listening*. (2nd ed.). Harlow: Longman.

- Roulston, K., & Choi, M. (2018). Qualitative interviews. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative data collection*, (pp. 233-249). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I.S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- Ruegg, R. (2018). The effect of peer and teacher feedback on changes in EFL students' writing self-efficacy, *The Language Learning Journal*, 46(2), 87-102.
- Rugg, G. (2007). *Using statistics: A gentle introduction*. Maidenhead, United Kingdom: Open University Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- Saleem, M., Ali, M., & Ab Rashid, R. (2018). Saudi students' perceived self-efficacy and its relationship to their achievement in English language proficiency. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, 9(2), 397-413.
- Sarkhoush, H. (2013). Relationship among Iranian EFL learners' self-efficacy in writing, attitude towards writing, writing apprehension and writing performance. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(5), 1126-1132.
- Sasaki, M. (2000). Toward an empirical model of EFL writing processes: An exploratory study. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 9(3), 259-291.
- Sasaki, M. (2004). A multiple-data analysis of the 3.5-year development of EFL student writers. *Language Learning*, 54(3), 525-582.
- Saumure, K., & Given, L. (2008). Nonprobability sampling. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (p.563). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Savignon, S. (1972). Communicative competence: An experiment in foreign language teaching. *Language and the Teacher: A Series in Applied Linguistics*, 12. Philadelphia, PA: Center for Curriculum Development
- Savignon, S. (2012). Communicative language teaching. In M. Byram, & A. Hu (Eds.), *Routledge encyclopedia of language teaching and learning* (pp.134-140). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Saville-Troike, M. (2003). *The ethnography of communication: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell.



- Sawalmeh, M. H. M. (2013). Error analysis of written English essays: The case of students of the preparatory year program in Saudi Arabia. *English for Specific Purposes World, 14*(40), 1-17.
- Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (1982). Assimilative processes in composition planning. *Educational Psychologist, 17*(3), 165-171.
- Schellekens, P. (2007). *The Oxford ESOL handbook*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Schiefele, U., Schaffner, E., Möller, J., & Wigfield, A. (2012). Dimensions of reading motivation and their relation to reading behavior and competence. *Reading Research Quarterly, 47*(4), 427-463.
- Schoonen, R. (2005). Generalizability of writing scores: An application of structural equation modeling. *Language Testing, 22*(1), 1-30.
- Schoonen, R. (2012). The validity and generalizability of writing scores: The effect of rater, task and language. In E. van Steendam, M. Tillema, G. Rijlaarsdam, & H. van den Bergh (Eds.), *Measuring writing: Recent insights into theory, methodology and practices* (pp. 1-22). Series in Writing (Vol. 27). Leiden-Boston, Netherlands: Brill.
- Schoonen, R. (2018). Are reading and writing building on the same skills? The relationship between reading and writing in L1 and EFL. *Reading and Writing, 32*(3), 511-535.
- Schoonen, R., Snellings, P., Stevenson, M., & van Gelderen, A. (2009). Towards a blueprint of the foreign language writer: The linguistic and cognitive demands of foreign language writing. In R.M. Manchón (Ed.), *Writing in foreign language contexts. Learning, teaching, and research* (pp.77-101). Bristol/Buffalo/Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Schoonen, R., van Gelderen, A., De Glopper, K., Hulstijn, J., Simis, A., Snellings, P., & Stevenson, M. (2003). First language and second language writing: the role of linguistic fluency, linguistic knowledge and metacognitive knowledge. *Language Learning, 53*(1), 165-202.
- Schunk, D. H., & Pajares, F. (2009). Self-efficacy theory. In K. R. Wentzel, & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Handbook of Motivation at School* (pp. 35-53). Routledge.
- Schwandt, T.A. (2014). *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Seal, B. (2014). *Academic encounters: Reading and writing*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College.
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *IRAL: International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 10(1-4), 209-232.
- Seymour, P.H.K., Aro, M., Erskine, J.M. (2003). Foundation literacy acquisition in European orthographies. *British Journal of Psychology*, 94(2), 143-174.
- Shanahan, T. (2016). Relationships between reading and writing development. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp.194-207). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Shaw, S.D., & Weir, C.J. (2007). *Examining writing: Research and practice in assessing second language writing*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Shehzad, M.W., Lashari, S.A., Alghorbany, A., & Lashari, T.A. (2019). Self-efficacy sources and reading comprehension: The mediating role of reading self-efficacy beliefs. *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 25(3), 90-105.
- Shell, D. F., Murphy, C. C., & Bruning, R. H. (1989). Self-efficacy and outcome expectancy mechanisms in reading and writing achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81, 917-100.
- Shi, L. (2010). Textual appropriation and citing behaviors of university undergraduates. *Applied Linguistics*, 31(1), 1-24.
- Shin, H., & Kim, S.H. (2021). Second language learners' self-efficacy and English achievement: The mediating role of integrative motivation. *English Teaching & Learning*, 45(3), 325-338.
- Silva, T. (1993). Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(4), 657-677.
- Smith, F. (1975). *Comprehension and learning*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research*. SAGE.
- Snowling, M. J., Hulme, C., & Hulme, C. J. (Eds.). (2005). *The science of reading: A handbook*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.
- Spolsky, B. (1989). *Conditions for second language learning*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

- Stanovich, K. E. (1980). Toward an interactive-compensatory model of individual differences in the development of reading theory. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 16(1), 32-71.
- Staples, S., & Biber, D. (2015). Cluster analysis. In L. Plonsky (Ed.), *Advancing quantitative methods in second language research*, (pp.243-274). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Stevenson, M. (2005). Reading and writing in a foreign language: A comparison of conceptual and linguistic processes in Dutch and English. Dissertation, SCO-Kohnstamm Instituut, Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- Stevenson, M., Schoonen, R., & De Glopper, K. (2006). Revising in two languages: A multi-dimensional comparison of online writing revisions in L1 and FL. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 15(3), 201-233.
- Sultana, N. (2018). A brief review of washback studies in the south Asian countries. *The Educational Review, USA*, 2(9), 468-474.
- Sun, T., & Wang, C. (2020). College students' writing self-efficacy and writing self-regulated learning strategies in learning English as a foreign language, *System*, 90(June), 102221.
- Swan, M., & Smith, B. (2001). *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Swanson, H., & Berninger, V. (1996). Individual differences in children's working memory and writing skill. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 63(2), 358-385.
- Tabachnick, B.J., & Fidell, L.S. (2013). *Using multivariate statistics* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). London, United Kingdom: Pearson.
- Talk4Writing. (2022). *The method*. Retrieved from: <http://www.talk4writing.co.uk/about/>
- Tang, R. (2012). The issues and challenges facing academic writers from ESL/EFL contexts. In R. Tang (Ed.), *Academic writing in a second or foreign language: Issues and challenges facing ESL/EFL academic writers in higher education contexts*, (pp.11-24). London, United Kingdom: Continuum.
- Tarone, E. (2005). Speaking in a second language. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*, (pp.485-502). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Tatham, M., & Morton, K. (2011). *A guide to speech production and perception*. Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press.

- Teng, L.S., Yuan, R.E., & Sun, P.P. (2020). A mixed methods approach to investigating motivational regulation strategies and writing proficiency in English as a Foreign Language contexts. *System*, 88(Feb), 102182.
- Teng, L. S., & Zhang, L. J. (2018). Effects of motivational regulation strategies on writing performance: A mediation model of self-regulated learning of writing in English as a Second/Foreign language. *Metacognition and Learning*, 13(Aug), 213-240.
- Teng, L. S., & Zhang, L. J. (2020). Empowering learners in the second/foreign language classroom: Can self-regulated learning strategies-based writing instruction make a difference? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 48(June), 100701.
- Tenzek, K. (2018). Negative case analysis. In M. Allen (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of communication research methods* (pp.1085-1087). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Thompson, G. (2018). Insights for efficacy development from an exploration of Japanese business management students' EAP self-efficacy beliefs. *The Asian ESP Journal*, 14(7.1), 244-284.
- Tilfarlioğlu, F.T., & Ciftci, F.S. (2011). Supporting self-efficacy and learner autonomy in relation to academic success in EFL classrooms: A case study. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(10), 1284-1294.
- Tillema, M. (2012). *Writing in a first and second language: Empirical studies on text quality and writing processes*. Dissertation Utrecht University.
- Torres, K., & Turner, J.E. (2016). Students' foreign language anxiety and self-efficacy beliefs across different levels of university foreign language coursework, *Journal of Spanish Language Teaching*, 3(1), 57-73.
- Tóth, S. (2017). Exploring the relationship between anxiety and advanced Hungarian EFL learners' communication experiences in the target language: a study of high- vs low-anxious learners. In C. Gkonou, M. Daubney, & J. Dewaele (Eds.), *New insights into language anxiety: Theory, research and educational implications* (pp.156-174). Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Treiman, R., Hompluem, L., Gordon, J., Decker, K., & Markson, L. (2016). Young children's knowledge of the symbolic nature of writing. *Child Development*, 87(2), 583-592.
- Trenkic, D., & Warmington, M. (2019). Language and literacy skills of home and international university students: How different are they, and does it matter? *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 22(2), 349-365.

- Trinity College London. (2022). *ISE - Integrated Skills in English exams*. Retrieved from: <https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/english-language/ISE>
- Truong, T., & Wang, C. (2019). Understanding Vietnamese college students' self-efficacy beliefs in learning English as a foreign language. *System*, 84(Aug), 123-132.
- UK Visas & Immigration. (2023a). *Prove your English language abilities with a secure English language test (SELT)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-english-language-abilities-with-a-secure-english-language-test-selt>
- UK Visas & Immigration. (2023b). *Student visa*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/knowledge-of-english>
- US Department of State. (2023). *Foreign language training*. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-language-training/>
- Ushioda, E., & Dörnyei, Z. (2009). Motivation, language identities and the L2 self: A theoretical overview. In Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*. Multilingual Matters.
- Vaish, A., Grossmann, T., & Woodward, A. (2008). Not all emotions are created equal: The negativity bias in social-emotional development. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(3), 383-403.
- van den Bergh, H., Rijlaarsdam, G., & van Steendam, E. (2016). Writing process theory: A functional dynamic approach. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 57-71). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Vandergrift, L. (2003). Orchestrating strategy use: Toward a model of the skilled second language listener. *Language Learning*, 53(3), 463-496.
- Vandergrift, L. (2007). Recent developments in second and foreign language listening comprehension research. *Language Teaching*, 40(3), 191-210.
- Vandergrift, L., Goh, C., Mareschal, C., & Tafaghodtari, M. H. (2006). The metacognitive awareness listening questionnaire (MALQ): Development and validation. *Language Learning*, 56(3), 431-462.
- Vandergrift, L., & Tafaghodtari, M. H. (2010). Teaching L2 learners how to listen does make a difference: An empirical study. *Language Learning*, 60(2), 470-497.
- van Ek, J.A. (1986). *Objectives of foreign language learning*. Volume I: Scope. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Publications Section.

- van Gelderen, A., Schoonen, R., De Glopper, K., Hulstijn, J., Simis, A., Snellings, P., & Stevenson, M. (2004). Linguistic knowledge, processing speed and metacognitive knowledge in first and second language reading comprehension; A componential analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *96*(1), 19-30.
- Van Moere, A. (2006). Validity evidence in a university group oral test. *Language Testing*, *23*(4), 411-440.
- Wang, L. (2003). Switching to first language among writers with differing second-language proficiency. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *12*(4), 347-375.
- Wang, C., & Bai, B. (2017). Validating the instruments to measure ESL/EFL learners' self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulated learning strategies. *TESOL Quarterly*, *51*(4), 931-947.
- Wang, C., & Pape, S. J. (2007). A probe into three Chinese boys' self-efficacy beliefs learning English as a second language. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *21*(4), 364-377.
- Wang, W., & Wen, Q. (2002). L1 use in the L2 composing process: An exploratory study of 16 Chinese EFL writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *11*(3), 225-246.
- Ward, J., Bushell, P., & Hepworth, M. (2012). *ESOL: The context for the UK today*. National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.
- Wei, R., & Su, J. (2015). Surveying the English language across China. *World Englishes*, *34*(2), 175-189.
- van Weijen, D., van den Bergh, H., Rijlaarsdam, G., Sanders, T. (2009). L1 use during L2 writing: An empirical study of a complex phenomenon. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *18*(4), 235-250.
- Weir, C.J. (2005). *Language testing and validation: An evidence-based approach*. Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Weissberg, R. (1994). Speaking of writing: Some functions of talk in the ESL composition class. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *3*(2), 121-139.
- Weissberg, R. (2000). Developmental relationships in the acquisition of English syntax: Writing vs. speech. *Learning and Instruction*, *10*(1), 37-53.
- Weissberg, R. (2006a). *Connecting speaking and writing in second language writing instruction*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- Weissberg, R. (2006b). Scaffolded feedback: Tutorial conversations with advanced L2 writers. In K. Hyland, & F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues* (pp. 246-265). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Wellington, J. (2015). *Educational research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Wette, R. (2014). Teachers' practices in EAP writing instruction: Use of models and modeling. *System*, 42(Feb), 60-69.
- White, R. & Arndt, V. (1991). *Process Writing*. Harlow, United Kingdom: Longman.
- Wilby, J. (2020). Motivation, self-regulation, and writing achievement on a university foundation programme: A programme evaluation study, *Language Teaching Research*, 26(5), 1010-1033.
- Wills, J., & Lake, R. (2020). Introduction: The power of pragmatism. In J.Wills, & R. Lake (Eds.), *Power of pragmatism: Knowledge production and social inquiry* (1<sup>st</sup>ed.) (pp.3-52). Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press.
- Witzel, A. (2000). The problem-centered interview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(1). Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.1.1132>
- Witzel, A., & Reiter, H. (2012). *The problem-centred interview: Principles and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wolfersberger, M. (2003). L1 to L2 writing process and strategy transfer: A look at lower proficiency writers. *TESL-EJ: Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, 7(2), 1-15.
- Woodall, B. R. (2002). Language-switching: Using the first language while writing in a second language. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 11(1), 7-28.
- Woodrow, L. (2011). College English writing affect: Self-efficacy and anxiety. *System*, 39(4), 510-522.
- Xu, Y., & Wu, Z. (2012). Test-taking strategies for a high-stakes writing test: An exploratory study of 12 Chinese EFL learners. *Assessing Writing*, 17(3), 174-190.
- Yasuda, S. (2015). Exploring changes in FL writers' meaning-making choices in summary writing: A systemic functional approach. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 27, 105-121.

- Young, R. (2008). *Language and interaction*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Yung, K., & Fong, N. (2019). Learning EAP at university: perceptions of high-achieving first-year ESL undergraduates. *ELT Journal*, 73(3), 306-315.
- Zamel, V. (1983). The composing process of advanced ESL students: Six case studies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(2), 165-187.
- Zhang, L., & Zhang, L. J. (2023). Improving EFL students' stance-taking in academic writing with SFL-based instruction: A qualitative inquiry. *Language Teaching Research*, 0(0), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688231164758>
- Zhang, X. (2013). Foreign language listening anxiety and listening performance: Conceptualizations and causal relationships, *System*, 41(1), 164-177.
- Zhang, X., & Ardasheva, Y. (2019). Sources of college EFL learners' self-efficacy in the English public speaking domain. *English for Specific Purposes*, 53(Jan), 47-59.
- Zhang, X., Ardasheva, Y., & Austin, B. (2020). Self-efficacy and English public speaking performance: A mixed method approach. *English for Specific Purposes*, 59(July), 1-16.
- Zhang, Y. (2018). Exploring EFL learners' self-efficacy in academic writing based on the process-genre approach. *English Language Teaching*, 11(6), 115-124.
- Zhang, Y., & Guo, H. (2012). A study of English writing and domain-specific motivation and self-efficacy of Chinese EFL learners. *Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 16(2), 101-121.
- Zheng, C., Liang, J.C., & Tsai, C.C. (2017). Validating an instrument for EFL learners' sources of self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy and the relation to English proficiency. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 26(6), 329-340.
- Zhong, Q. (2013). Understanding Chinese learners' willingness to communicate in a New Zealand ESL classroom: A multiple case study drawing on the theory of planned behavior. *System*, 41(3), 740-751.
- Zhou, A. (2009). What adult ESL learners say about improving grammar and vocabulary in their writing for academic purposes. *Language Awareness*, 18(1), 31-46.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (1989). A social cognitive view of self-regulated academic learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(3), 329-339.



- Zimmerman, B.J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory into Practice, 41*(2), 64-70.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2011). Motivational sources and outcomes of self-regulated learning and performance. In B. J. Zimmerman, & D. H. Schunk (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance* (pp.49-64). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Zimmerman, B.J., & Bandura, A. (1994). Impact of self-regulatory influences on writing course attainment. *American Educational Research Journal, 31*(4), 845-862.
- Zimmerman, B.J., & Kitsantas, A. (2002). Acquiring writing revision and self-regulatory skill through observation and emulation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94*(4), 660-668.
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Moylan, A. R. (2009). Self-regulation: Where metacognition and motivation intersect. In D. J. Hacker, J. Dunlosky, & A. C. Graesser (Eds.), *Handbook of Metacognition in Education* (pp.299-315). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Zimmerman B.J., & Risemberg, R. (1997). Becoming a self-regulated writer: A social cognitive perspective. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 22*(1), 73-101.
- Zimmermann, R. (2000). L2 writing subprocesses. A model of formulating and empirical findings. *Learning and Instruction, 10*(1), 73-99.
- Zwaan, R.A., & Radvansky, G. (1998). Situation models in language comprehension and memory. *Psychological Bulletin, 123*(2), 162-185.

# Appendices

## Appendix i. Descriptive statistics of quartiles by overall score 2016/2017

Quartile	N	% of sample	Mean percentage skill score				Percentage gap between skills						
			S	L	R	W	S-W	L-W	R-W	S-R	S-L	L-R	
0-25	Dec 542	0											
	Mar 677	0											
	May 480	0.2%	38	35	20	0	38	35	20	18	3	15	
	Jul 137	0											
26-50	Dec 542	20.3%	59.32 <i>SD</i> 10.44	45.41 <i>SD</i> 10.78	37.55 <i>SD</i> 10.79	35.77 <i>SD</i> 7.64	23.55 <i>SD</i> 12.36	9.64 <i>SD</i> 13.97	1.78 <i>SD</i> 12.22	21.81 <i>SD</i> 16.32	13.91 <i>SD</i> 15.88	7.85 <i>SD</i> 15.95	
	Mar 677	20.5%	64.62 <i>SD</i> 13.00	47.27 <i>SD</i> 10.74	39.06 <i>SD</i> 10.18	31.33 <i>SD</i> 7.79	34.05 <i>SD</i> 14.75	17.59 <i>SD</i> 11.94	11.15 <i>SD</i> 7.61	27.22 <i>SD</i> 16	20.45 <i>SD</i> 12.86	14.90 <i>SD</i> 10.79	
	May 480	24%	64.58 <i>SD</i> 11.00	43.00 <i>SD</i> 11.69	36.41 <i>SD</i> 10.09	34.65 <i>SD</i> 9.82	29.98 <i>SD</i> 15.93	13.83 <i>SD</i> 12.29	10.30 <i>SD</i> 9.20	28.11 <i>SD</i> 15.82	22.70 <i>SD</i> 13.01	14.31 <i>SD</i> 11.72	
	Jul 137	24%	64.64 <i>SD</i> 13.73	48.79 <i>SD</i> 10.68	37.45 <i>SD</i> 9.62	35.15 <i>SD</i> 5.23	29.61 <i>SD</i> 15.50	14.85 <i>SD</i> 10.86	7.82 <i>SD</i> 6.18	27.91 <i>SD</i> 20.28	18.82 <i>SD</i> 16.22	13.94 <i>SD</i> 10.51	
51-75	Dec 542	55.5%	75.12 <i>SD</i> 12.57	68.55 <i>SD</i> 13.06	61.24 <i>SD</i> 12.94	47.76 <i>SD</i> 9.53	27.36 <i>SD</i> 15.93	20.80 <i>SD</i> 15.84	13.49 <i>SD</i> 14.17	13.88 <i>SD</i> 18.15	6.56 <i>SD</i> 16.60	7.31 <i>SD</i> 15.06	
	Mar 677	70.6%	78.06 <i>SD</i> 12.45	66.10 <i>SD</i> 12.08	59.37 <i>SD</i> 13.35	40.54 <i>SD</i> 9.59	37.56 <i>SD</i> 15.73	26.14 <i>SD</i> 14.42	19.97 <i>SD</i> 12.37	21.58 <i>SD</i> 14.76	16.56 <i>SD</i> 11.88	14.17 <i>SD</i> 10.53	
	May 480	65.2%	79.38 <i>SD</i> 12.48	67.73 <i>SD</i> 14.14	52.50 <i>SD</i> 13.44	44.49 <i>SD</i> 9.68	35.23 <i>SD</i> 15.94	24.17 <i>SD</i> 14.26	12.87 <i>SD</i> 9.46	28.75 <i>SD</i> 17.67	18.01 <i>SD</i> 13.25	18.60 <i>SD</i> 12.82	
	Jul 137	74.5%	80.18 <i>SD</i> 11.25	66.03 <i>SD</i> 11.33	56.40 <i>SD</i> 13.55	42.60 <i>SD</i> 8.41	37.58 <i>SD</i> 14.37	24.02 <i>SD</i> 11.30	15.20 <i>SD</i> 10.80	25.98 <i>SD</i> 16.22	17.19 <i>SD</i> 12.82	13.71 <i>SD</i> 10.12	
76-100	Dec 542	24.2%	92.92 <i>SD</i> 7.10	85.76 <i>SD</i> 7.73	84.44 <i>SD</i> 8.93	65.99 <i>SD</i> 13.07	26.93 <i>SD</i> 14.08	19.77 <i>SD</i> 15.29	18.45 <i>SD</i> 13.81	8.52 <i>SD</i> 11.42	7.16 <i>SD</i> 10.99	1.32 <i>SD</i> 10.68	
	Mar 677	8.9%	95.87 <i>SD</i> 6.12	81.17 <i>SD</i> 9.45	83.87 <i>SD</i> 6.63	61.00 <i>SD</i> 10.92	35.11 <i>SD</i> 11.84	21.23 <i>SD</i> 14.71	23.33 <i>SD</i> 13.10	13.64 <i>SD</i> 7.21	16.67 <i>SD</i> 9.39	9.25 <i>SD</i> 6.85	
	May 480	10.6%	88.55 <i>SD</i> 8.88	86.57 <i>SD</i> 6.75	80.69 <i>SD</i> 7.49	68.43 <i>SD</i> 12.47	22.20 <i>SD</i> 11.83	19.51 <i>SD</i> 11.67	15.98 <i>SD</i> 11.23	11.80 <i>SD</i> 8.51	10.33 <i>SD</i> 7.15	10.04 <i>SD</i> 6.55	
	Jul 137	1.5%	97.50 <i>SD</i> 3.54	85.00 <i>SD</i> 0.00	76.50 <i>SD</i> 9.20	55.00 <i>SD</i> 7.07	42.50 <i>SD</i> 3.54	30.00 <i>SD</i> 7.07	21.50 <i>SD</i> 16.26	21 <i>SD</i> 12.73	12.50 <i>SD</i> 3.54	8.50 <i>SD</i> 9.19	

## Appendix ii. Example writing scripts

Sourced from: British Council (2024) Take IELTS. Retrieved: [academic-writing-sample-candidate-responses-and-examiner-comments\\_0.pdf \(britishcouncil.org\)](#)

### Sample Academic Writing Part 2

#### Candidate Response 1

##### WRITING TASK 2

I completely disagree with the written statement. I believe that most of the people in the world have more information about their health and also about how they can improve their healthy conditions.

Nowadays, information about how harmful is to smoke for our bodies can be seen in many packets of cigars. This is a clear example how things can change from our recent past. There is a clear trend in the diminishing of smokers and if this continues it will have a positive impact in our health.

On the other hand, the alimentation habits are changing all over the world and this can affect people's health. However every one can choose what to eat every day. Mostly everybody, from developed societies, know the importance of having a healthy diet.

Advances such as the information showed in the menus of fast food restaurants will help people to have a clever choice before they choose what to eat.

Another important issue that I would like to mention is how medicine is changing. There are new discovers and treatments almost every week and that is an inequivoque sintom of how things are changing in order to improve the world's health.

### Sample Academic Writing Part 2

#### Candidate Response 2

Recently, there have been a lot of discussions about health and whether it is going to improve or not. In my opinion, I think that people will become unhealthier in the future than they are now.

There are many reasons that support the idea of people becoming unhealthy in the future. Firstly, one reason is that of food. People tend to eat more fast food nowadays. They tend to treat themselves with sweets and chocolate whenever they want. This appears to be because people are busier now than they used to be. So, people don't have a chance to cook or even learn the art of cookery. Also, having a lot of unhealthy food can lead to obesity and it could be a serious issue in the future. Another reason is that technology is developing everyday. Young people enjoy buying new gadgets and the latest devices. This has a negative impact on their health, especially when they enjoy video games. Spending long hours looking at a screen can lead to bad eyesight and obesity as well. Yet another reason is that laziness is a big issue. Different forms of exercise might disappear in the future because people don't like sports. Also, people prefer spending most of their time on the internet and the internet is growing every single day.

Other people might disagree and say that health will improve in the future. They believe that new sports and new ways to exercise will appear in the future. However, I don't think it can happen since the majority of people spend less time outdoors. Moreover, other people believe that technology will try and help people improve their health. For example, there have been some games released on the Wii console that makes people exercise but technology is developing more in a negative way. For instance, many phone industries are developing new applications everyday and today's generation likes to follow every trend. This prevents people to go outside to exercise. They like to spend more time on the internet downloading new programmes or reading gossips about celebrities. This affects people's health badly.

In conclusion, I believe that people's health is affected negatively by fast food, technology and sports and it will be a problem in the future.

## Appendix iii. Participant information sheet

### Uneven second language competency in the English for Academic Purposes context:

#### 'spiky profiles' and the role of self-efficacy beliefs

#### Introduction

*You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether, or not, to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.*

**Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher. Once you are familiar with the information on this sheet and have asked any questions you may have, you can decide whether to participate or not. If you agree, you will be asked to fill in the consent form.**

<b>Research project title</b>	Uneven second language competency in the English for Academic Purposes context: 'spiky profiles' and the role of self-efficacy beliefs
<b>Name and contact details of researcher</b>	<b>Karen Smith</b> (kfsmith@uclan.ac.uk)
<b>Names and contact details of supervisors</b>	<b>Daniel Waller</b> (dwaller@uclan.ac.uk) <b>Tania Horak</b> (thorak@uclan.ac.uk)
<b>What type of research project is this?</b>	<b>PhD Research</b>
<b>Who is funding this research project?</b>	Karen Smith is conducting the research as a PhD student from the School of Humanities, Language & Global Studies, funded by the University of Central Lancashire.
<b>What is the purpose of the research project?</b>	<p>This project investigates uneven language proficiency in people whose first language is not English. Some international students appear to have 'spiky profiles', meaning their English proficiency levels vary considerably across the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This can have an impact on their success at university in the UK, however, a better understanding of students' profiles and their beliefs about their language skills will allow English for Academic Purposes teachers to improve classroom practices and benefit students' learning.</p> <p>This part of the project during the academic year 2020/2021 investigates students' skills to see to what extent they are uneven, and what students think about their ability to listen, read, speak, and write English in academic contexts.</p>
<b>Why have I been chosen?</b>	<b>Your first language is not English and you are a student studying in English which means you need English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which is the main type of English teaching this project aims to inform and improve. Up</b>

	<b>to about 20 participants of different nationalities and first languages will also be involved.</b>
<b>Do I have to take part?</b>	No, participation is voluntary. If you decide not to take part, there will be no negative consequences from this. <i>If you decide to take part, you are free to stop participating and withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.</i>
<b>What will happen to me if I take part?</b>	The researcher would like to interview you about how you feel about listening, reading, speaking and writing in English generally and for University study. Interviews will take place online and will take 30 minutes.
<b>Will I be recorded and how will the recordings be used?</b>	With your consent, interviews will be digitally recorded. All recordings and any written documents you provide will be uploaded to the researcher's secure drive. <b>The recordings will be accessed and transcribed by the researcher only. Transcripts and written examples will only be used for analysis. No other person/s will have access to the recordings.</b>
<b>What should I do if I want to take part?</b>	<i>You will be given this information sheet to keep and you can 'opt in' to the study by signing a consent form.</i> If you would like to receive a copy of the findings afterwards then let the researcher know by providing a contact email on the consent form.
<b>What are the possible risks of taking part?</b>	The project has been approved by the University's BAHSS Research Ethics Committee as posing no risks to your participating.
<b>What are the possible benefits of taking part?</b>	By taking part in the project you can benefit by practicing your spoken English with the researcher who is also an experienced English language teacher. She will be happy to provide you with a useful diagnostic of your speaking proficiency and can also advise on future learning strategies. Your opinions will also really help teachers to provide better skills practice in the classroom in the future.
<b>What if something goes wrong?</b>	If you have any questions or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact any member of the research project team or the university's Officer for Ethics: OfficerforEthics@uclan.ac.uk
<b>How will information I provide be kept secure?</b>	The recordings and written examples will be always stored on the UCLan network in the researcher's account, which is password protected. Copies will not be stored on any personal devices. All data generated in the course of the project will be kept securely in electronic form for 5 years from the end of the project, then destroyed.
<b>Will I be kept anonymous in this research project?</b>	<b>UK Data Protection Legislation includes the expectation of 'privacy by design', therefore this project has been set up so that any identifying information about you will be removed from the data as soon as possible. Your name will be anonymised directly after interviews have taken place and before any analysis.</b> Transcription and analysis will only precede with anonymous samples. <b>Voice recordings will become anonymous once transcribed, and analysis will proceed from the anonymised transcripts. No identifying information will appear in subsequent publications.</b>
<b>What will happen to the results of this research project?</b>	<b>The research results will appear in the PhD thesis which will be archived in CLoK, an online store for the digital intellectual assets of the University of Central Lancashire.</b> The results may also be published in peer-reviewed applied linguistics journals. You can obtain copies of any published research by emailing the researcher.

## Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be the University of Central Lancashire. The UCLan Information Governance Manager & Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCLan activities involving the processing of personal data. Your personal data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this information sheet. The legal basis that would be used to process your personal data under data protection legislation is the performance of a task in the public interest. However, for ethical reasons we need your consent to take part in this research project. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this project by completing the consent form that has been provided for you or via audio recording of the information sheet and consent form content.

## Your Rights

You have the right to request access under the General Data Protection Regulation to the information which UCLan holds about you. Further information about your rights under the Regulation and how UCLan handles personal data is available on the Data Protection pages of the UCLan website: [https://www.uclan.ac.uk/data\\_protection/index.php](https://www.uclan.ac.uk/data_protection/index.php).

You can contact the Information Governance Manager & Data Protection Officer at:

Information Governance Manager & Data Protection Officer

Legal and Governance

University of Central Lancashire

Preston

Lancashire

PR1 2HE

Email: [DPFOIA@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:DPFOIA@uclan.ac.uk)

Telephone: +44 (0)1772 892561

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact UCLan in the first instance at [DPFOIA@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:DPFOIA@uclan.ac.uk). If you remain unsatisfied, you may wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Contact details, and details of data subject rights, are available on the ICO website at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/overviewof-the-gdpr/individuals-rights/>

## Copyright Notice

The consent form asks you to waive copyright so that UCLan and the researcher can edit, quote, disseminate, publish your contribution to this research project in the manner described to you by the researcher during the consent process.

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research project.**

Appendix iv. Consent form

**Project name: Uneven second language competency in the English for Academic Purposes  
context: 'spiky profiles' and the role of self-efficacy beliefs**

**Researchers:**

Karen Smith, University of Central Lancashire (PhD student) ksmith@uclan.ac.uk

Dr. Daniel Waller, University of Central Lancashire (Supervisor) dwaller@uclan.ac.uk

Dr. Tania Horak, University of Central Lancashire (2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisor) thorak@uclan.ac.uk

Please read the following statements and initial the boxes to indicate your agreement

**Please initial box**

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet, dated Feb 2022, for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

I agree to take part in the above study.

I understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my data from the study after final analysis has been undertaken.

I agree to the interview being audio-recorded.

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.

---

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

---

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature



## Appendix v. Interview transcripts

### Participant 1

Duration: 21:54 (of 29:59 recording)

Age 25

Nationality Chinese

First language/s Mandarin

Academic subject MA TESOL, BA Applied Chemistry in China, MA Chemistry Teaching

English learning background:

How long? Since 3<sup>rd</sup> year primary, 10 years old

Where? Compulsory education

What for? General education

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading / Writing / Speaking / Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? definitely / not really / no

If yes, which skills? Between writing and speaking, also listening but depends on speed of speaker

What English exams have you taken? CET 4, IELTS 5.5, UCLan pre-sessional TELL 80%

What score/s did you get? Reading 60% Writing 80% Speaking 80% Listening 90%

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no

Reading score lower than expected

1 001 IN: [8.05] all right, now, so we're going to focus more on speaking confidence, so, how confident are you when speaking English to  
2 lecturers or in front of classmates?

3 002 P1: though I have no confidence to speak with others, cos, um... maybe if I prepared the sentence or the content I will be confident  
4 but, but if I don't prepare anything I'm scared to talk with others

5 003 IN: oh ok, so what, what, for your sense of confidence, what score would you give yourself, out of 100?

6 004 P1: [laughs] speaking, er, maybe

7 005 IN: when it's an academic context...so when you are in class

8 006 P1: um, maybe just past 50 percent

9 007 IN: really?

10 008 P1: yeah

11 009 IN: ok

12 010 P1: cos I have no confidence in my pronunciation, maybe a little strange... I feel

13 011 IN: ok, that's your feeling on it yeah

14 012 P1: yeah

15 013 IN: ok, so cos I was going to ask you where, where do you get that idea, you said you think maybe 50, yeah, where do you get that  
16 idea from? Is it because of experiences you've had in the past, or is it you're comparing yourself with other people, where does  
17 this idea come from?

18 014 P1: all the aspects, yeah, like this one the past experience, I got the low, lower score in IELTS test in speaking

19 015 IN: oh ok, can you remember what it was?

20 016 P1: er, the score? 5, er 4.5

21 017 IN: oh no, oh ok

22 018 P1: so it's...cos er, I haven't, I had not study English maybe for 2 or 3 years in my university cos I passed the CET 4 test in my first  
23 year, so I also [laughs] er, I also don't pay any attention to my English after I passed the CET4

24 019 IN: ok, so, so, you're saying that when you went to the IELTS test, you didn't do much preparation? Ah ok

25 020 P1: yeah, maybe you know in China we have seldom chance to speak with foreigners

26 021 IN: of course, ok, all right then, um... ok, and um, do you ever get any comments from your teachers, does that, does that affect  
27 your confidence about the speaking?

28 022 P1: er... mmm [laughs] I just heard in my pre-sessional, er, course, when they do the presentation my teacher, I can't remember his  
29 name, but he told me I need to practice my pronounce pronounce and nobody

30 023 IN: ok, all right

31 024 P1: and nobody say my speaking is ok

32 025 IN: so, so, did that affect your confidence then?

33 026 P1: maybe

34 027 IN: ok, all right, um, so just a couple of questions here then, so um, is there anything that makes you feel confident to speak English,  
35 you said about preparation, didn't you?

36 028 P1: yeah, yeah

37 029 IN: is there anything else that makes you feel confident?

38 030 P1: um, oh...if I [laughs] if I er, talk with, er, someone whose English level is lower than [laughs] me, yeah, maybe I feel a little  
39 confident

40 031 IN: ok, so, a similar question then, what if anything makes you feel less confident speaking English?

41 032 P1: aw... um... yeah... for example in my classes they are native speaker so after they speak I don't feel, ohh, um... maybe so I have  
42 no confidence after they speak, after they speak, spoke their opinions, yeah

43 033 IN: yeah, ok so it's sort of coming after someone who's a native speaker

44 034 P1: yeah, yeah

45 035 IN: ok, all right, ok, now, one other question is, how confident are you speaking English, but this is outside of the classroom, with  
46 friends or classmates or people in the community? What score would you give yourself?

47 036 P1: er... what score

48 037 IN: yeah, out of 100?

49 038 P1: um, I think in my daily life I have a lower speaking skills than the academic contexts

50 039 IN: oh, ok that's interesting, ok why? Do you want to explain that?

51 040 P1: maybe, um... er, in China in my daily life, um, I never speak English, only in my classes or lessons, so when I came in the UK, I  
52 found I can't speak with the staff in supermarket or in my apartment, the managers

53 041 IN: um hum, oh ok,

54 042 P1: yeah... so [laughs]

55 043 IN: do you know why that is?

56 044 P1: maybe, the vocabulary... I just learn the words, the vocabularies, er, about my, er, major

57 045 IN: I see, ok, so not the everyday language

58 046 P1: yeah

59 047 IN: ok, that's very interesting

60 048 P1: yeah, I think that is the reason, so sometimes I will remember some words about my daily life, like the vegetables, or... [laughs]  
61 yeah, or some travel travel words

62 049 IN: ok, that is very interesting, yeah, ok, so you're saying higher for speaking in class and academic work, lower for everyday life?

63 050 P1: yeah, cos I also heard, er, um, er, um... a comment for me from my classmates, he said, er, he said, my daily life is terrible

64 051 IN: oh really?

65 052 P1: cos he know my, when I study in the classroom my speaking about academic content, so he told me I need to practice my daily  
66 speaking

67 053 IN: ok, and is that, is that somebody who is also Chinese?

68 054 P1: yeah, Chinese

69 055 IN: ok

70 056 P1: they are classmates in the pre-sessional course, so he know my speaking skills in the classroom and...[laughs]

71 057 IN: so, so he's noticed the difference between...

72 058 P1: yeah, yeah, yeah

73 059 IN: oh right...

74 060 P1: my daily terrible, oh you need to practice [laughs] yeah

75 061 IN: that's very very interesting, that you've got the two different levels

76 062 P1: yeah yeah, cos I, um, I also discovered this situation, but he told me I pay attention to this, after he told me, I pay attention to

77 this

78 063 IN: ok, very interesting, right ok, I'm going to move on to talking about writing confidence

79 064 P1: aw...[laughs]

80 065 IN: so, um, this next question, er, how confident are you when writing academic assignments in English?

81 066 P1: um... cos, er, er, if for I write the essay maybe I will write a draft, to organise my, er, essay, so I think when I organise my essay I

82 feel confident, I feel confident, um, but when I start to write the essay, sentence by sentence, I feel... a little, er, hard

83 067 IN: oh ok...

84 068 P1: cos I don't know, er, how to choose the... accurate words, cos I also got the feedback from \*Name of tutor who said the word  
85 choice is not good

86 069 IN: ok, all right

87 070 P1: but, I think because in my thought, um, I need to use, er, advanced words or the low... [unintelligible]... no, the other ones, the  
88 words, so I can't express my arguments, or it's clear, yeah

89 071 IN: ok, right so, you think it's because you don't have the right vocabulary, or...?

90 072 P1: er, I don't know how to choose the most suitable words

91 073 IN: yeah, ok, all right ok, so that's difficult, ok, so if you give yourself a score out of 100?

92 074 P1: for writing? [laughs]

93 075 IN: you know, for academic writing

94 076 P1: er... 55?

95 077 IN: ok, um hum, 55

96 078 P1: yeah, maybe

97 079 IN: ok, so, again, where do you get that idea from? Is that, so you said about the feedback?

98 080 P1: yeah feedback from \*Name of tutor [laughs]

99 081 IN: ok, ok, do you compare yourself with other people, or...?

100 082 P1: er, I'm not sure, but er, I also compared with my other Chinese not native speak, their scores is lower than me

101 083 IN: ok, so how does that make you feel?

102 084 P1: so, um, if I compared with them I feel a little confident but I got the feedback from \*Name of tutor, I have a huge room to make  
103 progress

104 085 IN: ok, ok, that's interesting, yeah ok, um, what types of texts do you feel confident about writing?

105 086 P1: er... maybe, what, you means the, like for example, the problem-solve essay?

106 087 IN: yeah, yeah, maybe, yeah, um hum

107 088 P1: maybe disco, discourses

108 089 IN: I'm sorry, say again

109 090 P1: the discursive?

110 091 IN: discursive?

111 092 P1: [laughs]

112 093 IN: oh, you mean when you have to argue

113 094 P1: yeah

114 095 IN: two sides

115 096 P1: to compare or, yeah, to give some suggestions

116 097 IN: ok, so you feel ok about writing essays?



117 098 P1: yeah

118 099 IN: ok, interesting, ok, um now, in comparison, how confident are you when you're writing academic assignments in your language?

119 100 P1: in my language?

120 101 IN: yeah

121 102 P1: er... [laughs]

122 103 IN: you have to, right?

123 104 P1: um, maybe sometimes, er... I don't know how to write, organise the sentence briefly

124 105 IN: um hum, ok

125 106 P1: yeah, maybe, um... I use, I don't know how to use academic words

126 107 IN: right, even in your language?

127 108 P1: yeah

128 109 IN: oh right, ok

129 110 P1: maybe I think I need to read more essays

130 111 IN: oh ok, so again, give yourself a score out of 100, this is in your language

131 112 P1: my language?... [laughs] er, um... I think it's lower than in English

132 113 IN: lower?

133 114 P1: yeah

134 115 IN: ok

135 116 P1: cos, my language in Chinese is [sighs] it's also hard to, er, to... express your argument

136 117 IN: right, ok, oh that's interesting, right ok, um, so um, I don't know, um, what if anything makes you feel confident to write  
137 assignments in English, what things make you feel confident?

138 118 P1: er, [unintelligible] um... maybe the feedback from teachers

139 119 IN: yeah, um hum

140 120 P1: yeah um...

141 121 IN: is that the main one though?

142 122 P1: yeah

143 123 IN: yeah ok, interesting, and and what, if anything, makes you feel less confident to write assignments?

144 124 P1: if, um... maybe if when I write the essay I feel I don't know which words I need to choose

145 125 IN: it's the thing with the words again?

146 126 P1: yeah, and also, um, the... cos I want to write my essay in different, er, different type of sentence

147 127 IN: can you explain that a bit more?

148 128 P1: er, like, er... I want to use some complex, complex sentence to make my essay, um, looks like advanced

149 129 IN: ok right, yeah, yeah

150 130 P1: er so, sometimes I'm not sure the grammar of the sentence I feel, er, struggly

151 131 IN: ok right, so finding the grammar to write a complex sentence

152 132 P1: yeah

153 133 IN: ok, ok, right interesting, um, so, um, is there a difference in how confident you are when speaking and writing in English?

154 134 P1: um ... um, maybe in my, I think it is different

155 135 IN: ok

156 136 P1: cos, when I writing something, er, I have time to think, to think the structure of the sentence or the content, but when I

157 speaking, like I said before, if I don't prepare some, yeah, I have no confidence

158 137 IN: yeah, ok, so um, so is there a difference then? Do you, do you...?

159 138 P1: yeah yeah different

160 139 IN: which one, are you happier with the...?

161 140 P1: er, writing

162 141 IN: with the writing

163 142 P1: yeah

164 143 IN: yeah right, ok, right ok, um, ok, now this is the last question here, does your speaking or writing confidence make a difference to

165 how well, you know, your performance

166 144 P1: er, yeah, er... when I speaking something, um, if I have no confidence... it's really really terrible

167 145 IN: yeah, ok

168 146 P1: but but, the writing, er, I, um... maybe it's better than speaking, I can express my opinion or my thoughts, a little clearer [laughs]

169 but not very good, yeah

170 147 IN: ok, cool, all right, um, thank you, is there anything else you want to tell me, you know, about using English?

171 148 P1: about my speaking and writing?

172 149 IN: or, about academic writing and speaking or...?

173 150 P1: er, and er, and er, maybe on other things is, er, when I write the essay I think I express my argument clearly but my tutor said

174 it's not clearly so I don't know why sometimes

175 151 IN: ok, so how does that make you feel?

176 152 P1: er, I feel, um... why? I want to get more feedback

177 153 IN: ok, and how does it affect your confidence?

178 154 P1: er, maybe, um... it will affect my confidence, I will, er, feel struggly, or... cos I don't know why I can't express my opinion clearly

179 155 IN: that's really difficult, isn't it?

180 156 P1: yeah, yeah, maybe I will, er, suspect suspect? myself

181 157 IN: ok, so then you feel less confident...?

182 158 P1: yeah

183 159 IN: it's very difficult

184 160 P1: if if I get, er, more details about, maybe it's a... I will feel happy cos it's a opportunity to improve myself, I know my weakness

185 161 IN: yeah, so then you've got something to work on haven't you?

186 162 P1: yeah

187 163 IN: ok, um, good, is there anything else?

188 164 P1: um...

189 165 IN: so you think feedback is very very important?

190 166 P1: yeah

191 167 IN: but but your problem is that sometimes you get feedback, but you don't, still don't understand it, it's not clear to you what you  
192 need to do?

193 168 P1: um, um, cos I like to read the feedback, sentence each sentence

194 169 IN: ok

195 170 P1: and start to find my errors, my weaknesses

196 171 IN: so you end up feeling very confused, or...?

197 172 P1: yeah, yeah, er... oh, and another thing is about the format of the essay, cos in China, er, um, we write essay in the final year, in  
198 the final year undergraduate

199 173 IN: yeah

200 174 P1: final year, we don't need to write essay in, from the first year to third year

201 175 IN: ok

202 176 P1: just as the final essay, so, maybe about the format of essay, we feel confused about that, cos they are different, different type  
203 essay

204 177 IN: that's right

205 178 P1: like report essay, or reflection essay, like this

206 179 IN: ok, and are you saying, is there a, er, is there a difference between the type of essay in China as the type of essay in the UK?

207 180 P1: um... no, we don't know the type, the format of essay, cos in China we don't need to write all kinds of essays

208 181 IN: oh I see, right ok, just the one

209 182 P1: just the one essay yeah

210 183 IN: ok right, so, so, in the UK you're suddenly asked to do different things you've never done before

211 184 P1: yeah yeah yeah, cos I've done my first report essay, er, I don't know the format

212 185 IN: ok

213 186 P1: so maybe I think I got, er, low, low scores because of the format

214 187 IN: the format rather than the...

215 188 P1: but I don't know, er, it is to or not, it's my thought

216 189 IN: ok yeah, but that's what you think is the problem

217 190 P1: yeah, yeah, one reason [laughs] just one reason cos I, um, er, for the report essay we need to write the findings and the  
218 instruction, so I didn't follow this format

219 191 IN: ok, I see, so maybe you put the wrong content in there or...?

220 192 P1: er, yes, no, I also didn't put conclusion in my [unintelligible] it's scary [laughs]

221 193 IN: ok, good

222 194 P1: and for my speaking, I think I have, I have to practice more but I don't know how to practice that, cos er, sometimes I want to  
223 practice my, um, er, pronunciation, sometimes I want to practice my, er, the sentence structure so I don't know the root of my  
224 problem

225 195 IN: ok yeah, that's really difficult

226 196 P1: I struggly too, yeah

227 197 IN: ok, right well thank you, very much, I'm just going to stop the recording now.

228 198 P1: thank you

229

230 [End of interview]

Participant 2

Duration: 23:29 (of 27:36 recording)

Age 26

Nationality Chinese

First language/s Mandarin/ South Korean

Academic subject/s International Business Law Master's LLM (UCLan), previously studied Bachelor's Financial Management, then Master's Computer Technology & Master's in Accounting in China

Which is your best skill in your language? Reading / Writing / Speaking / Listening

English learning background:

How long? Since 10 years old

Where? Primary school in China

What for? Compulsory education initially, latterly for IELTS

Which is your best English skill? Reading / Writing / Speaking / Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? definitely / not really / no

If yes, which skills? Listening is weak, difficult to focus for a long time, reading depends on the subject matter

What English exams have you taken? Multiple attempts at IELTS, most recent Jan 2020

What score/s did you get? Reading 6.5 Writing 6.5 Speaking 7 Listening 5.5

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no pleased with speaking result, likes taking tests



1 001 IN: [00.19] so, my first question...How confident are you when speaking English to lecturers or in front of classmates in the  
2 classroom... Could you give yourself a score out of 100?

3 002 P2: er

4 003 IN: this is about your confidence, how confident are you?

5 004 P2: preparation

6 005 IN: ok

7 006 P2: just in my lecture...actually tomorrow I have a lecture, so, if I will make sense on the teacher will say, so I need to do, read, so  
8 many material about this lecture, so if I do enough preparations I could have a huge confidence, but if I didn't do any  
9 preparation I feel just to black out or, you know, not enough confidence to, to talk with, argue with my instructor

10 007 IN: ok, so how confident do you feel generally when you're in a class, you think it's all about preparation, but do you get a sense of  
11 confidence from anything else? So, for example, you know, your test scores or comparing yourself with others. I've got some  
12 different choices here, like, do you get a sense of confidence when you compare yourself with others...or comments people  
13 make?

14 008 P2: I think it's my past experience

15 009 IN: past experience? Yeah ok, as in the...where does that come from, you mean from the IELTS tests...or...?

16 010 P2: er, no...it's actually...you know, I have the different degrees in different fields... so probably I know so many about so many, er,  
17 just stuffs, it's different with different majors, I can er ... integrate all the different majors, different fields... I probably some  
18 logic thinking or not, I, I don't know how to express it

19 011 IN: yeah, so you've had these past experiences in different subjects

20 012 P2: yeah, yeah, so when you have so many experience, a lot of experience can help you automatically to have a logic thinking and  
21 critical thinking, so when you face, just I started a business field but today I have a lecture, it is about a legal system, I can basis  
22 on the business field I can know other general about the legal system, but I'm not sure whether is right but, but this is my true  
23 feeling

24 013 IN: yeah, yeah, no, that's interesting, ok, um, so am I right in thinking, with this question about what makes you feel confident to  
25 speak English, you're saying it's preparation, or is there anything else?

26 014 P2: er, the daily talking I think, I'm so good for the copy and to modify and to copy, my roommate's a native speaker, er, when I first  
27 come here, perhaps very accent, huge accent in Chinglish, Chinese accent and I, I follow that accent just I change my vocal, or or  
28 my voice to, you know in China we speak English is a very high tone [participant speaks in exaggerated high pitch] 'hi, hi, how  
29 are you?' and in the UK [participant adopts a low pitch] 'hi' yeah

30 015 IN: yeah ok

31 016 P2: and it's different some meters of pronunciation, just like er, what in China before I say /wɔ:tə/ and I, the British, er,  
32 accent, [participant adopts a correct stress pattern, exaggerated /r/ and a lower pitch] /'wɔ:tə(r)/, /'wɔ:tə(r)/, /prɪ'fɜ:(r)/ ...  
33 when you have, get this key for pronunciation you have the confidence and then to, yeah this is why, yeah I copy and follow and  
34 learn to, learn from the native speakers, it's important just for me

35 017 IN: ok, right ok, and is there anything that makes you feel less confident to speak English?

36 018 P2: er, less confidence...speak to Chinese, er, you know, just like native speaker, do you find native speaker I can say something, if  
37 you understand me, probably you don't correct me, but if I speak with Chinese with English, they find my accent or some  
38 mistakes in grammar, they always correct me

39 019 IN: oh no!

40 020 P2: actually, this is true

41 021 IN: oh gosh!

42 022 P2: yeah, yeah probably we are foreign, with speakers Chinese, the first language we learn is English so we want to, how to say,  
43 more struggle to ourselves

44 023 IN: yeah ok

45 024 P2: sometimes if you talk with, for a long time, with Chinese people and the Chinese people the English level is good, better than  
46 me, so I feel less confidence

47 025 IN: ah, that's very interesting, so you feel less confident speaking with other Chinese people, than with a native speaker like myself?

48 026 P2: if they chance got IELTS 7.5 or 8, their English is good, they have good grammar, or it's very forbidden to make mistakes

49 027 IN: that's very interesting, ok, um so earlier you mentioned about your confidence speaking in your language, so um, how does it  
50 compare, your confidence for speaking English with your confidence in your own language?

51 028 P2: Chinese?

52 029 IN: yeah, but in an academic context, so when you're speaking in class

53 030 P2: um, actually before is huge difference, and now I think it's no, no big gaps... if I say the most I have the several experience about  
54 the business field and English is my first, first year to study the legal aspects, so, what a huge difference... Also the difference is  
55 probably just the preparation or experience about these two fields is different. Similar, just I have these 2 wallet, [mimes  
56 getting wallets out of pockets] this is the business field and this is the legal aspect, this wallet I have a hundred pounds and this I  
57 have only have twenty pounds, this is the difference

58 031 IN: yeah, so that's the difference for you

59 032 P2: also, the experience is also important

60 033 IN: right ok, and um, and how confident are you when speaking English outside of class?

61 034 P2: outside of class... confidence

62 035 IN: yeah, so with friends or people in Preston...

63 036 P2: actually, so many Chinese people don't want to speak the native speakers, they just have very single and small friendly, friends  
64 cycle, friends circle with Chinese people, just for me I want I have the, I eager to communicate with the native speakers and  
65 probably because of this believe I have the confidence. Probably I will make so many mistakes, but I don't care

66 037 IN: ok, so give yourself a score out of 100 for your level of confidence speaking

67 038 P2: aw, if I give a high score

68 039 IN: doesn't matter, no no, how do you feel confidence-wise?

69 040 P2: er, 80

70 041 IN: 80, right ok, um...

71 042 P2: I'm afraid of arrogant

72 043 IN: no, no, it's fine, and how confident do you feel when you're in the class having to do presentations or talk to the lecturer, in  
73 seminars...?

74 044 P2: um, 60

75 045 IN: 60, it is less is it? Ok right

76 046 P2: 60

77 047 IN: don't worry it's about your level of confidence not how good you are, so, right then, ok, let's move on now to think about  
78 writing...so this is about writing, um, how confident are you when writing academic assignments in English? It's about your  
79 confidence again

80 048 P2: compared to speaking I have less confidence in writing, er, when writing I need to open the website about phrase bank, I pick up  
81 some beautiful sentence structure, yeah, so probably if I took a test I will, you know it's not enough confidence

82 049 IN: oh ok, right, and do you have a different level of confidence depending on what it is to write, do you have to write any of these  
83 things [shows participant the interview prompt] essays or reports?

84 050 P2: actually, I just write just essay, just essay, and dissertation I didn't start

85 051 IN: so, with things like an essay, um, confidence, score out of 100, what do you think?

86 052 P2: er, 50

87 053 IN: only 50 yeah, ok, right, and do you have to write reports at all?

88 054 P2: I didn't

89 055 IN: and do you ever have to write anything inside an exam, with limited time

90 056 P2: um, but in the legal system I don't take any exams

91 057 IN: there's no exams, right ok, that's fine, just different people within the University have different things, and no dissertation yet?

92 058 P2: yes

93 059 IN: so, why is your confidence 50 out of 100, where does that come from?

94 060 P2: um, you know, probably you use a child's way, I have very logical thinking and critical thinking but you know the English writing  
95 and Chinese writing is totally different, just I say if I want to do something, so, I, I just do this, but in English, only use 'if' or 'so',  
96 and we don't use double because so if so and so many conjunction words, um, for me, it's a huge challenge and you know,  
97 when I read the academic journal article I find the words is beautiful, and so many different adverb and use beautiful  
98 conjunction word, just for me 'because'.. 'even though'...'and'... 'so'...'then'... 'hence' 'thus' and no any other

99 061 IN: ok, oh right, so that idea then that comes from past experiences with writing essays or do you, I suppose you compare with  
100 journal articles, do you? Where does your ideas come from about your writing ability?

101 062 P2: er, it's about reading possibly

102 063 IN: From reading, comparison from reading yeah with reading yeah ok, um and have you had any marks back from essays, how do  
103 you know, have you had any feedback on your writing so far?

104 064 P2: It's bad... it's not good, but the feedback just for me is I have some wrong grammar mistakes and use some words and not  
105 precise. In legal I say we need to use very precise words, so and sometimes OSCOLA, in the legal I say we need to very specific  
106 format OSCOLA

107 065 IN: yeah, yeah, OSCOLA, nobody likes OSCOLA

108 066 P2: I don't actually now I don't know, I don't can get it, I don't know how to use this, it's horrid, so tough

109 067 IN: Yes I know I've tried to use it, it's not easy at all, you're right, ok then, so um, how confident are you writing academic work but  
110 in your own language, you've done some, how does that compare?

111 068 P2: um, just first language, yeah so

112 069 IN: do you, did you have to write essays or...?

113 070 P2: yeah, actually, actually in China I study for master I see so many essays. I have confidence because first language is Chinese so if  
114 I don't care, actually I don't make the mistakes in Chinese language so this is confidence, but you know I write some things just  
115 in Chinese. I know it's beautiful right 100% sure there's no mistakes, but English, um, yeah I write I finish it, I'm not sure but I  
116 need to use a grammar, I need to check it but sometimes the grammar only check the grammar is right but the precise words  
117 and correct words, the accurate words they can't help me, so sometimes this is difference between Chinese and English

118 071 IN: yeah, ok, so what score would you give yourself, confidence-wise, in your language, for writing essays for example?

119 072 P2: 80

120 073 IN: 80, ok, not 100 then?

121 074 P2: not 100? Uh, you know actually in Chinese if you write something you're middle or beyond the middle level, it's very easy, but  
122 you want around the top level you need to read so many classical books. Chinese have a long history so many idiom, idiom or  
123 item, I forgot, it's just very specific words and these words can, it's similar, it's like, er, little words in the Bible, it's very old and  
124 classical words but it can prove you have a high level in language

125 075 IN: oh, I see, ok, so you mean certain expressions or sayings?

126 076 P2: expressions, yeah, but you know Chinese is my first language, I want to express something clearly, it's very easy, probably I use  
127 100 words, it crazy but the top-level people they can use 20 or 30

128 077 IN: oh I see right, so are you talking about the range of vocabulary?

129 078 P2: yeah, a range and, er, the, how to say, and the knowledge about the language's words

130 079 IN: ok, all right yes, I think that's what you mean, ok, right ok, um just a couple more questions, um so, um, what, if anything, makes  
131 you feel confident to write assignments in English?

132 080 P2: er, also reading

133 081 IN: reading, um hum

134 082 P2: also copying if I find a journal article, the sentence is beautiful, I remember it, copy its use to my...

135 083 IN: ok right, and what makes you less confident to write assignments, you said you don't like the OSCOLA didn't you?

136 084 P2: [participant sighs loudly]

137 085 IN: [laughs] Anything else that makes you feel less confident?



138 086 P2: Some, some subject... if some idea is my subject idea, I have no confidence actually its objective yeah sure everybody's it's right  
139 but the subject

140 087 IN: subject knowledge, yeah, ok then, right, ok

141 088 P2: subjective...?

142 089 IN: subjective? Er, yeah ok, I don't know, subjective as in meaning it's your view on something?

143 090 P2: yeah, my view, subjective...you said subject?

144 091 IN: yeah, I don't know, maybe no, maybe not subject knowledge then

145 092 P2: subject, means major?

146 093 IN: yes, so subjective is an adjective that describes...

147 094 P2: yeah, yeah, I mean my subjective opinion

148 095 IN: thank you for correcting me, no that's good, ok yeah, so you're worried that when you are writing assignments that you're  
149 being subjective rather than objective?

150 096 P2: er, my subjective, I need to express my subjective view I have less confidence see, if I just judge and do some literature review,  
151 probably I have more confidence because this is objective, it's not from me

152 097 IN: yeah ok so you feel more comfortable writing factual, things based on facts, rather than your point of view

153 098 P2: actually, facts is good, but I'm not good for putting my view in the article

154 099 IN: yeah, yeah, I think everyone struggles, that's very difficult yeah, ok, um, so is there a difference in how confident you are when  
155 speaking and writing English?

156 100 P2: totally different, and er, you know probably we can talk, I can argue with you very naturally but when I write an email I need to,  
157 oh... is there some mistakes? I use a grammar check or use some translation machine to just make sure my sentence and I'm not  
158 100% I write directly, so it's different

159 101 IN: so you think there's a big difference...

160 102 P2: yeah, yeah, in my write I need to be careful, it's very prudent, prudently find I have to sure I have no any mistakes in my writing  
161 so this [laughs]

162 103 IN: so that affects your confidence then... yeah, ok and the last question here is um, does your, um, how confident do you feel, do  
163 you think it makes a difference to how well you do things, so

164 104 P2: if I have no confidence in some field, then repeat, repeat, writing practice

165 105 IN: ok

166 106 P2: so my teacher told me actually my speaking last year was totally bad... I couldn't say anything with others, but when I came  
167 here, and every day I just watched the video, I got some beautiful sentence, I repeat, I repeat, I talk with myself, I talk with the  
168 wall [laughs] don't always the wall, I, I yeah it's good, I image yeah this or ask some question

169 107 IN: so, you'd say you are very motivated...are you very motivated?

170 108 P2: motivation?

171 109 IN: yeah, do you have high motivation for...

172 110 P2: yeah, yeah, probably I love speaking, so if I have long time I haven't talk with others I feel nervous, lonely, I have to find some  
173 people to communicate and to talk

174 111 IN: yeah ok, right good, so obviously you can see I'm interested in your writing and speaking, um, is there anything else you want to  
175 tell me about your experience of using English at the university?

176 112 P2: erm, just for me, I think the most important in English if you want, if you want to get in the native speakers, or join this parties,  
177 the most important is listening and er, you know, just for me now I'm not 100% to understand what native speakers said, and  
178 you are fine, and er, the second is use some phrase, just for me, so words or long or adjective adverb yeah, you can remember  
179 it... It's good. There are so many phrase, just like 'get over', if you don't use it or you don't have very huge interest in the words,  
180 probably some people, 'hey I get it over', 'I get over it' and I figure it out, I figure, I figure. Sometimes, if you, from the, just from  
181 the meaning in the dictionary er, you don't, actually you just know the 3rd person of this phrase, you have to, you know, it's  
182 difficult, so many phrase the native speaker always use, sometimes I don't know what that means, so, and the third, yes third, is  
183 just for me is the writing and the reading only in the daily life just, you have to use your academic or educational background,  
184 but listening and speaking is the most important, it's more important but if we want to graduate, to get a degree, we have to  
185 improve our reading and writing. Actually in a fourth aspect, reading and writing working as the boringest, I have to admit

186 113 IN: [laughs] ok right ok

187 [23.48] End of questions on interview guide, but the conversation continued on a different topic

Participant 3

Duration: 25:35 (of 25:42 recording)

Age 21

Nationality German

First language/s German

Academic subject/s BA Linguistics & Korean, 1st year

Which is your best skill in your language? Reading / Writing / Speaking / Listening: **all equal, writing slightly weaker**

English learning background:

How long? Since 3 or 4 years old, started English at school at 7

Where? Primary and secondary school in Germany

What for? Compulsory part of the Arbitur (equiv. International Baccalaureate, A level)

Which is your best English skill? Reading / Writing / Speaking / Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? definitely / not really / no

If yes, which skills? Listening is weak, difficult to focus for a long time, reading depends on the subject matter

What English exams have you taken? IELTS, Dec 2018

What score/s did you get? Reading 8.5 Writing 8 Speaking 8.5 Listening 8.5

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no showed that I was better overall, positive effect on my confidence

1 001 IN: [00.03] so, the research interest here is about, um, people's skills when they're having to operate in academic contexts, so it's  
2 the university context, ok?

3 002 P3: yeah

4 003 IN: so, these are the sorts of questions I'd like to ask, um, er, so, first of all, speaking, in an academic context, how confident are you  
5 when speaking English to lecturers or in front of classmates or for assessment, so this is very much English in class...what score  
6 would you give yourself? Don't be modest

7 004 P3: if it's actually in assessment, so, something I'm going to be graded for, let's say, an eighty? Seventy-five, eighty? Anywhere  
8 there. If it's just in class, so, participating in discussion or something, it would be like ninety-five I think

9 005 IN: ok... [notes down answer] ok, right lovely, ok, and um, where do you get that idea, idea from? I mean there's different places,  
10 you know, by comparing yourself to others, or how you feel, etc. etc., what do you think?

11 006 P3: out of these mostly the second one, so comments from others

12 007 IN: oh right, ok, that one

13 008 P3: cos I've been told by native speakers, 'oh, your English is good', and you know, it's getting better and better, so that really  
14 boosts my confidence when it comes to speaking up in class

15 009 IN: oh right, ok, right then, ok, any of the other ones at all?

16 010 P3: um...what do you mean by your emotions today?

17 011 IN: as in, sometimes, you know, some days you feel, er, very positive...or other days you feel sad

18 012 P3: oh, oh, ok...er, past experience is one as well

19 013 IN: yeah, that one, ok, of these two which one do you think more?

20 014 P3: the comments

21 015 IN: comments, that comes first, and then that one [indicates interview prompt] comes second, yeah? ok

22 016 P3: cos I'm very easily influenced by what other people think, so

23 017 IN: ok, great, very interesting, ok, so, um, I suppose you've just answered this really, what if anything makes you more confident to

24 speak English?

25 018 P3: compliments

26 019 IN: compliments [laughs] ok

27 020 P3: [laughs] or in general seeing improvement in myself as well, so for instance if there was a word I used to struggle with, like, I

28 used to struggle with the pronunciation of strategy... for some reason, now I don't do much anymore cos I'm used to using it in

29 different contexts, so just seeing personal improvement as well

30 021 IN: right ok, um...and er, is there anything that makes you feel less confident speaking English?

31 022 P3: not really

32 023 IN: and remember we're talking about the academic context

33 024 P3: yeah, not really, cos last week I had a presentation for instance, and there was a word that I wanted to use but I just didn't know

34 how to say it properly, how to pronounce it, and that boosted my motivation to learn more

35 025 IN: oh, ok

36 026 P3: so, instead of making me feel less confident I just feel more motivated

37 027 IN: um ok, that's interesting, ok, um, and so, how does, how does your sense of confidence with speaking English compare with  
38 speaking German?

39 028 P3: um...I'd say that... it used to be that I was more confident speaking in German, um, academically, but now it's the other way  
40 round I'm more confident in English to be fair, because I just haven't spoken German academically in such a long time now, only  
41 English for the past year, so

42 029 IN: so, when did you start your course?

43 030 P3: [03.25] oh sorry, I start my course back in my first year now, but before that I used to live in Japan where I worked in an English  
44 company

45 031 IN: ah right ok

46 032 P3: so I spoke English there as well, which is not academic really

47 033 IN: no, but it's professional

48 034 P3: professionally, yeah

49 035 IN: um hum, ok, all right then, so...last question here is um, how confident are you when speaking outside of class?

50 036 P3: it depends on who I talk to, if it's with my friends hundred percent, because they correct me or they help me with words I don't  
51 know, or don't understand, if there's a dialect I don't understand they help me as well, um, with lecturers like right now, it's not  
52 class, right now, also 99 [laughs]

53 037 IN: yeah, yeah, um hum

54 038 P3: because I know people won't make fun of me or anything if I didn't know a word

55 039 IN: right yeah, ok, very interesting, all right now moving onto writing confidence in academic contexts again, right so remember it's  
56 to do with university work, um, how confident are you when writing academic assignments in English, and again, you can give  
57 yourself a score out of a hundred, I know there's different types of writing you might be asked to do, you might never have  
58 done that one [points to 'dissertations' on the interview prompt] because dissertations are for final year, so you, don't worry  
59 about that one, but have you done any of these other ones?

60 040 P3: yeah, all of them, um, with essays I'd say...um...maybe an eighty

61 041 IN: all right ok, um hum

62 042 P3: reports 75, only cos I've only done it once in my whole life so, [laughs] I don't know what to say in general for that, timed-exam  
63 no I can't say anything about that because we've only had the Korean one

64 043 IN: uh, right, wrong language [laughs]

65 044 P3: [laughs]

66 045 IN: ok then, fine, ok then, and so, where does this confidence come from, again, it's the same sort of thing, is it experience?  
67 comparison? comments from others or, you know



68 046 P3: mostly past experience, because of the essays I've written so far, and the report, and secondly, comments from others because,  
69 um, one big essay that I had to do in my first semester was for ELSIE, so the English language development programme,  
70 graduate development, and we got really really good feedback from the lecturer there, because it's all about writing essays, and  
71 researching and learning all those skills

72 047 IN: um hum

73 048 P3: so it's feedback from the lecturer there

74 049 IN: ok, and so, of those two...

75 050 P3: it's more the past experience

76 051 IN: it's more, it's more this one, than that one, ok [notes answers] ok, that's interesting, ok, and does, just this thing about your  
77 emotions today, does your, does your confidence, sort of, vary, or do you think it's more or less the same

78 052 P3: no, I think it's the same at any given time

79 053 IN: right, ok, right, um, so it's not influenced by your emotions you don't think

80 054 P3: no

81 055 IN: ok, interesting, um, so how confident, ah yeah this is about

82 056 P3: [participant suddenly interrupts] oh my goodness [laughs]

83 057 IN: [laughter makes several words unintelligible] in German...

84 058 P3: um, we never have reports or dissertations, um, but for essays, we have them really rarely, so I'd say a fifty because I just don't  
85 know how to write an essay in German at all, because we never learned how to, and for timed exams, um... a seventy-five

86 059 IN: [06.42] ok, more?

87 060 P3: yeah more, because they don't really look that much into how you write there, it's more about the answers

88 061 IN: the content, right yeah yeah

89 062 P3: yeah, even if it's a um, German exam

90 063 IN: um hum, ok yeah, ok, interesting, right, [unintelligible] ok, so um, this question about, you know, what makes you confident to  
91 write assignments in English? What aspects do you feel quite confident about?

92 064 P3: the topic

93 065 IN: ok

94 066 P3: so if the topic is a really interesting topic I feel like my English is better as well...I don't know why

95 067 IN: um, ok

96 068 P3: if it's, yeah, if it really interests me I look more into how I could phrase things differently, how I could apply different grammar,  
97 um grammatical structures to it as well, it just motivates me more

98 069 IN: oh ok, it's the motivation

99 070 P3: yeah, that makes me feel more confident

100 071 IN: ok, so what aspects make you feel, if anything, less confident to write assignments?

101 072 P3: um...not having interest in the topic [laughs]

102 073 IN: oh, I see, so it's basically the opposite, so lack of interest, ok

103 074 P3: um...yeah, because I don't give my all if I'm not interested in the topic I tend to not do it properly and then my grammar, er,  
104 suffers because of that as well

105 075 IN: oh right ok, um hum, and is there a difference in how confident you are when speaking and writing in English?

106 076 P3: um... there used to be a difference, I used, like when I first came here I used to be more confident in speaking than writing, but  
107 now because I'm studying linguistics, and because we learn so many things about the grammar in English, it's equal I'd say

108 077 IN: so you think it's the grammar input that makes you more confident?

109 078 P3: yeah, yeah, because we, of course in all those thirteen years what I learn English, um, we learned about grammar, we learned  
110 about those things, but coming here just gave me a memory boost basically, so I remember all those things now, it makes sense  
111 to me now, um, and that just... makes me feel more confident as well writing because I now know all the rules, I now know that  
112 certain things that we learned in school, which were supposed to be rules, are just... style, for instance

113 079 IN: uh huh

114 080 P3: when it comes to commas

115 081 IN: ok

116 082 P3: so we learned so many rules, because German has loads of commas, loads of comma rules as well, while English doesn't, most  
117 of the things they are just style, um, and after learning that I was like, oh, I'm actually not doing bad at all, when it comes to  
118 commas [laughs]

119 083 IN: yeah, ok, so, so, basically you're saying, to recap then, you're saying you used to feel more confident in the speaking than the  
120 writing

121 084 P3: yes yes

122 085 IN: but now you think it's

123 086 P3: now it's equal

124 087 IN: so after about a year and a half? About a year?

125 088 P3: no, I've only been here for how long, wait, 7 months, 8 months, so after the first semester

126 089 IN: oh, gosh, so now that confidence in writing is about the same? Or more?

127 090 P3: [09.51] no, no, it's about the same, it's not more, I don't think it will ever get more, it even still be slightly less than speaking

128 091 IN: ok

129 092 P3: but I think it might become equal

130 093 IN: why do you say you don't think it'll never get more than your speaking confidence?

131 094 P3: because the speaking is what I'm working on the most I think, without realising it

132 095 IN: yeah

133 096 P3: speaking and listening is always the one, because it's the one you use the most in your daily life

134 097 IN: yeah, so it's a function of how much time you spend doing it

135 098 P3: yeah, yeah

136 099 IN: ok, right good, ok, um so um... yeah, this question is does speaking and writing confidence make a difference to your  
137 performance, um, it's about whether your feelings and how they make a difference to how you actually perform,um, what do  
138 you think?

139 100 P3: um, I feel for speaking, as mentioned before, I... if someone tells me 'oh you're speaking has become a lot better' or 'wow, you  
140 sound really natural when you speak', er, that influences my confidence a lot, in a positive way, um, as I mentioned last week I  
141 had my presentation, two presentations on the same day [laughs] for both I was like, you're gonna do well, it's fine because  
142 even if you struggle with a word, it's fine you can still speaking, um, so that did really boost my confidence, and actually make  
143 my performance better than I thought it would be

144 101 IN: so how did you do?

145 102 P3: I did well I'd say [laughs] we didn't get our grade yet, so I can't tell unfortunately, cos the second correcter still has to correct it,  
146 um, but I think I did well

147 103 IN: ok

148 104 P3: [11.30] when it comes to language skills I did well, I think, topic-wise I don't know [laughs]

149 105 IN: oh right ok

150 106 P3: cos it was for Korean so I don't know how well I did there

151 107 IN: no no no, ok

152 108 P3: and...what's it called...[trails off]

153 109 IN: and then, writing confidence, I mean, have you, have you done any written assignments, in English?

154 110 P3: yeah yeah

155 111 IN: yeah, how are you doing, if I may ask? [laughs]

156 112 P3: when it comes to the language part I did really well, that's what my teacher told me...it was just the topic that I completely, cos I  
157 didn't know what to write about the topic, that was my problem with it, because we had to write about ourselves and I didn't  
158 really know how to do that because I've never done that before

159 113 IN: was it like reflective writing?

160 114 P3: yeah, it was a reflective essay, and I've never done that before, so I was really really struggling with it, um, but she  
161 complimented me on the research aspect of it

162 115 IN: ok

163 116 P3: and told me that my research was really really good because that's what I learned in school, so it was easier for me than the  
164 reflective part of it

165 117 IN: yeah, so, was it because it was a non-familiar task?

166 118 P3: yeah yeah, I just didn't know how to do it, even though she gave us loads of ideas of how to do it and I just struggle a lot with it  
167 in general

168 119 IN: ok

169 120 P3: but language-wise it was fine

170 121 IN: yeah, so, yeah, um, right then, well gosh, that happened quite quickly [reached the end of the interview prompts] um, ok, um,  
171 so this last thing is about, um, so um, yeah, basically I am interested in how you feel about your writing compared with your  
172 speaking, is there anything else you want to add that I've not managed to ask?

173 122 P3: ahhh

174 123 IN: because I'm sure I haven't [laughs]

175 124 P3: I feel like it really depends on how you learn it and how you use your skills, because I've learned it first of all through school, of  
176 course, and once my language ability reached a certain level I started using my social media in English, watching English vlogs on  
177 YouTube and doing that for years that's also why I have some sort of accent going on

178 125 IN: yes, I have noticed that accent

179 126 P3: I used to have a really strong American accent before I came here but my flatmate, she's from London, and that really  
180 influenced my accent as well, so, just the same in German, my accent changes all the time

181 127 IN: all right, so you pick up the accent of the people you are around?

182 128 P3: really quickly, yeah, also happened to me in Japan, so

183 129 IN: ok

184 130 P3: um...and I feel like... the way you learn a language also influences the way it comes out, so I mostly learnt through videos and  
185 through, um, hearing things

186 131 IN: right

187 132 P3: so my speaking and my listening is, or usually is, a lot stronger than my, er, writing and reading, and um

188 133 IN: so are you a big reader?

189 134 P3: [13.55] I am, I learned vocabulary through reading a lot, so that's why my vocabulary got bigger and bigger, but especially, the,  
190 the, with the writing part, because we never really did that in school, we wrote essays but the grammar wasn't graded, it was  
191 just the context, er, the content that was graded, right so, it's kind of hard to say because I think, since I also learned most of my  
192 vocabulary from my, from reading things, my pronunciation is off sometimes, with loads of words I've never heard, or said  
193 before obviously, um, but friends correct me a lot and that really helps, because I pick up things really quickly, oh that's the way  
194 you pronounce it, and I just stop pronouncing it wrong

195 135 IN: ok, so um yeah, basically, so you, so you feel that your speaking and your listening are, they're your strongest because of the  
196 amount of input and practice you've had

197 136 P3: yeah exactly

198 137 IN: and the reading and writing is what, a work in progress?.. Is it something you think is still improving?

199 138 P3: yeah, I think, and I hope that by doing my degree I can improve that a lot, it did already improve a lot which surprised me  
200 because I did not expect it to improve that quickly

201 139 IN: yeah, so are there any aspects of the writing, in, in, academic writing that you find difficult?

202 140 P3: commas [laughs]

203 141 IN: oh right



204 142 P3: I want to put way too many in because of my German brain I guess, I want to put way too many commas, and even though I  
205 know the rules I just unconsciously do it

206 143 IN: ok all right

207 144 P3: and loads of times it happens to me that I want to write something but I just don't know how to phrase it properly, I have an  
208 idea in my head but it just doesn't want to come out properly, so I always ask my friend from London, 'hey, can you help me to  
209 say this and this, how do you phrase that? In a fancy way or in an academic way that sounds good in my essay?'

210 145 IN: ok, so you don't have it in German in your head that you're trying to translate?

211 146 P3: never, no

212 147 IN: no

213 148 P3: I mean never, I used to do that when I was younger but it stopped a long time ago

214 149 IN: ok

215 150 P3: I think in English as well

216 151 IN: thinking in English, so it's just trying to find the right words to put on paper?

217 152 P3: exactly, exactly

218 153 IN: ok

219 154 P3: it's the same way when I, unfortunately when I speak to my family back home for instance, when I talk to my Grandma on the  
220 phone, or my Mum on the phone, um, I struggle with German a lot because I'm too used to English now

221 155 IN: right

222 156 P3: I'm like 'how do you say this in German again?' and they don't know because they don't speak English so

223 157 IN: yeah yeah, so you've got words missing now?

224 158 P3: yeah yeah, it happened before when I was in Japan as well, but with Japanese obviously, but now it's with English, and it's just  
225 very annoying

226 159 IN: yeah I know, I imagine, gosh yes, um, and one other thing, um, what about with academic writing, what about the other aspects  
227 as in, as in, you know, finding the right structure for your writing or the referencing, those sorts of things?

228 160 P3: I used to be unsure about that, but that was the first thing we learned about when we came to university, they explained us in,  
229 um, pretty much all the modules I think, they, when we have to write an essay they explained to us how it has to be structured  
230 and, um, how we should start writing a draft and so on, and then we can always go to the lecture with a draft and show it to  
231 [16.59] them and they can give us feedback, so it's not a big deal anymore I think, when I first came here I was a bit unsure,  
232 since everyone helped and was really really nice about it, it's not too hard

233 161 IN: good, ok, all right, um, is there anything else you'd like to ask me?

234 162 P3: um, why are you so interested in the topic? I mean, you're doing TESOL aren't you?

235 [segment of speech not transcribed: an explanation of the research aims and some interim findings]

236 163 IN: [21.01] but I think it also happens with people in their first language, so the British students, you know, they come to class and  
237 can speak really well, and they can take part in seminars, the minute you ask them to write an essay it just all falls apart and I

238 think, how is that possible? In class you've just explained that to me beautifully, why can't you put that across in your writing?  
239 Um, so, I find that really, I wish I knew what was going on and how I could fix it, um, for people

240 164 P3: I feel that for my classmates as well, loads of them are struggling with, er, writing  
241 165 IN: do you know what it is they struggle with?  
242 166 P3: bringing the ideas across properly  
243 167 IN: it is, is it?  
244 168 P3: yeah

245 169 IN: cos I wasn't sure whether it's a function of not doing enough reading, and then not putting enough references in their work, or  
246 is it structuring their ideas?  
247 170 P3: from what I've seen it's more, they do their readings but then they just don't know, how to extract the main ideas from the  
248 reading and use it in their own way, because obviously you can't just copy a reading, that would be plagiarism, but to bring that  
249 in and connect to your own ideas, I think that's what most people struggle with, from what I've heard at least

250 171 IN: that's interesting, so it could even be a weakness in reading, that's  
251 172 P3: it could be, yeah, but I think it has more to do with just transferring it and integrating it, integrating it properly into your own  
252 text

253 173 IN: yeah, yeah, I think you're probably right actually, I'm thinking about my own experience, trying to write my thesis [laughs] it's  
254 that thing of there's this really good idea here, I do want to include that, but how, how do I get it in there? How does, their  
255 argument is different to my argument but I still want that piece of information in here

256 174 P3: exactly

257 175 IN: how do I do it?

258 176 P3: so it doesn't seem wrong or out of place

259 177 IN: um yeah, or that, I find if I'm writing something it's really hard to stick to what my train of thought was, because I get distracted  
260 by the argument in that piece

261 178 P3: yeah [laughs] me too, I think though when it comes to all that you've mentioned before, the biggest factor for me personally  
262 what I think is enthusiasm, if you're not enthusiastic about wanting to learn more and wanting to better yourself it's not going  
263 to happen, no matter how much the lecturer is trying, no matter how much your grades are crying and screaming at you  
264 [laughs] if you're not enthusiastic about it, if you're not, um, passionate about what you're doing and about, cos you know, I  
265 said about the interest in the topic for instance, if you're not passionate about it, it's not gonna happen

266 179 IN: do you think there's a relationship between, again, I'm still trying to pick at that thing about confidence, as in, erm, is it that, for  
267 me anyway, I think I get more motivated if I feel like I can do it

268 180 P3: ahhh, yeah, that's true, um...I think as I mentioned before, it just depends on the kind of person you are

269 181 IN: yeah ok, so it might be

270 182 P3: so whether you are really competitive like me [laughs], and you like challenges or whether you're more like 'oh, I'm motivated  
271 to do this because I know I can do it easily or because I know I will enjoy it'

272 183 IN: so yes, maybe there's some extra element to it I haven't thought of, I've been very much focussed on confidence because that  
273 might be reflecting my own beliefs [laughs] um, yes and it may well also be a function of character as well, I don't know, do you

274 think you are, what sort of person do you think you are? You said you're competitive, um, what about, I'm off topic now, but  
275 you know, the psychologists, and they talk about, sort of you've got extroversion and introversion

276 184 P3: oh I'm extroverted

277 185 IN: definitely?

278 186 P3: yeah I know, like I've done the MBIT test for instance, we had to do it, but I've also done it before so, I used to be really  
279 introverted, um, but I'm extroverted now

280 187 IN: all right I see

281 188 P3: I would hate having to spend too much time with myself

282 189 IN: ah that interesting, you see I'm an introvert, definitely an introvert you see

283 190 P3: most of my friends are too

284 191 IN: so it may be that some of these language profiles are also a function of people's personality

285 192 P3: that could be, yeah, that would be another research [laughs]

286 193 IN: yeah, I've got a feeling a lot of academics are actually introverted

287 194 P3: yeah, that's true

288 195 IN: but they're the ones who have to write at the highest level, so yeah, it's interesting, right, I'll stop recording now

289 [25.38] Interview ends

Participant 4

Duration: 16:52 (of 16.52 recording)

Age 20

Nationality Italian

First language/s Italian, Neopolitan- Southern Italian dialect

Academic subject/s BA English Literature & Spanish, 1st year

English learning background:

Started English at elementary school aged 7, so had lessons throughout primary, middle and high school in Italy

Also uses English for her job here in England in customer service

Which is your best English skill? Reading / Writing / Speaking / Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Reading / Writing / Speaking / Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? definitely / not really / no

What English exams have you taken? Italian state school exams, B2

What score/s did you get? Reading Writing Speaking Listening N/A, only a written test

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no

1 001 IN: [00.00] ok, right, so let's continue, um, right, here are the serious questions, um, there are four skills in English, there are  
2 listening, reading, speaking and writing, of those four skills, which do you think is your best skill?

3 002 P4: L... speaking

4 003 IN: ok, why?

5 004 P4: ok, ah, in academic field, I'm talking about academic field I feel more comfortable doing in doing presentations, and I'm very  
6 good at that and I always have like the best mark in presentation

7 005 IN: ok

8 006 P4: I just love talking and explaining myself better, you know, with my voice

9 007 IN: uh huh

10 008 P4: I feel like I'm doing that better

11 009 IN: ok, and do you think there are big differences between your English skills?

12 010 P4: well yeah

13 011 IN: ok [laughs]

14 012 P4: well it depends, because in school, just study the basic, the basic English, but they don't prepare you for like going in England  
15 and speaking with someone, so everything I learned I learned here, when I came here

16 013 IN: ok right, um hum

17 014 P4: they just the basic grammar and some sentence, but how to like have a relationship with someone, you know, talking with  
18 someone, with your tutor, with your friend someone else, yeah, I learned everything here, coming here to work

19 015 IN: ok, and and how does that work with, um, speaking and writing, reading and listening?

20 016 P4: um, er, listening is good, speaking as well, I just have some problem in writing, in academic style

21 017 IN: [1.46] ok

22 018 P14: it's my big, I'm weak in that field, yeah

23 019 IN: ok, we'll have more questions about that in a minute, ok, um, has your English level ever been tested? Have you ever had to sit  
24 an exam?

25 020 P4: yeah, when I was in school, I am B2

26 021 IN: ok, so what, who, was that an official test or was it a test by your school, or?

27 022 P4: yeah, it was a test by my school, to like, er, verify the level of English, which one was

28 023 IN: ok right and, did you have different scores in the four skills? Did they tell you what your score was?

29 024 P4: um, no, it was just like a test, er, so we just like written

30 025 IN: ok, just a written test?

31 026 P4: yes

32 027 IN: no speaking?

33 028 P4: er, yes sometimes, but in Italy they didn't do, like, kinda of like, grade b2, b1, just like, er, six, seven, eight, nine, ten



34 029 IN: ok, right

35 030 P4: yeah, like I score 8, something like that

36 031 IN: so, that's 8 for your speaking

37 032 P4: yes

38 033 IN: ok, but you don't know for the other skills?

39 034 P4: no

40 035 IN: [3.00] all right ok ok, and how did you feel after doing that test, did you feel confident about your English, or?

41 036 P4: yeah confident because I was the best in my class

42 037 IN: oh, right [laughs]

43 038 P4: honestly, er, I was really the best in my class

44 039 IN: ok

45 040 P4: and then I started to, I wanted to improve, much more, and I had the opportunity to come here, I know that I still have to

46 improve, cos I want to improve, I want to become like an A level or something like that

47 041 IN: ok

48 042 P4: being a proper bi-lingual, you know what I mean

49 043 IN: yeah yeah yeah yeah [laughs] I know

50 044 P4: that's my goal

51 045 IN: [laughs] that's everyone's goal I think yeah, ok, right now, I'm going to ask some questions now about speaking but in academic  
52 context, ok? So, how confident are you when speaking English to, to lecturers? For example

53 046 P4: very very confident, I love doing presentation or speaking to my tutor, or speaking with some member of staff, and things like  
54 that, so yeah

55 047 IN: ok, and the same thing with your classmate?

56 048 P4: yeah yeah yeah, best friend

57 049 IN: so give yourself a score out of a hundred, what's- how confident are you? Score out of a hundred

58 050 P4: 70

59 051 IN: [4.11] 70? Oh, ok, all right [laughs] ok, um, and um, where do you get that, where do you get that idea? Why do you say  
60 seventy, what's the idea there?

61 052 P4: well because...

62 053 IN: what is it, is it because of past experiences?

63 054 P4: past experiences and, because my work demands me, like improve myself better in speaking, and my, you know, my, er, studies  
64 as well, my relationship with my best friends, things like that

65 055 IN: ok, and, um, do you ever compare yourself to other people, um, in terms of your, you know, your speaking with other people

66 056 P4: no, no, I don't like

67 057 IN: no ok, all right, ok, do you get any comments from other people that, that?

68 058 P4: yeah, I always, um, because I attend the free English classes in UCLan, and they always tell me, 'oh, your English is really good'

69 or 'Oh my God, you're not a B2, you're much more higher' but I'm like, 'oh shut up'

70 059 IN: oh ok [laughs] ok, so does that give you, does that give you confidence or?

71 060 P4: yeah it give me confidence to like improve myself, but at home I go like some grammar books, and sometimes just study on that

72 061 IN: do you believe them then?

73 062 P4: yeah

74 063 IN: ok that's ok, um, ok, so, what if anything makes you feel confident to speak English?

75 064 P4: erm... ok, that's tricky, that's really tricky, you mean like what

76 065 IN: as in, what gives you, what give you the biggest sense of confidence when you're speaking English?

77 066 P4: well, er, having an audience

78 067 IN: yes, ok

79 068 P4: [5.55] having an audience, er, having, er, you know, finding a topic to talk about, er, having an inspiration, to talk about a goal, I

80 want to talk about things that I like

81 069 IN: yeah ok, um hum, ok right and is there is there any situation that you feel less confident, when you're trying to speak English?

82 070 P4: yeah, probably maybe doing, doing during seminars, er, when I know the answer for example but I miss just one word in English  
83 that I can't, I can't find the right word in English, I can find that in Italian maybe I can find that in Spanish, but there is that bit in  
84 English I can't find and I just end up not talking at all

85 071 IN: ok, because of that that word that's missing

86 072 P4: yeah, because I always have this little words that I don't remember, some connectors, that are really important, I'm just like  
87 'what is this word, what is this word?'

88 073 IN: ok, yeah that's enough to stop you from speaking

89 074 P4: well because when I speak like I don't want to feel embarrassed embarrassed, you know what I mean? You say embarrassed?

90 075 IN: yes yes yes yes

91 076 P4: so, er, because every time I read for example, I just write word that I don't understand and then find the the meaning, then just  
92 wrote down a big book and store it

93 077 IN: yeah yeah, that's a good strategy, ok, good, ok, um, how confident are you when you're speaking English with friends or  
94 classmates or people in the community?

95 078 P4: oh really, because my Spanish course mate, they're from England and they teach me, like, East Lancs

96 079 IN: aha, ok [laughs]

97 080 P4: in English, yeah, they're really cool with me and when I for example even in lecture, I like make a mistake, they never laugh at  
98 me, they like 'oh, this word, you say in that way'

99 081 IN: ok

100 082 P4: [8.01] or yeah, they're really cool

101 083 IN: ok, so, in contrast to speaking in academic circles, give yourself a score out of a hundred for your confidence for speaking with  
102 friends and speaking in the community

103 084 P4: ah, 100

104 085 IN: ok [laughs] thank you, all right then, ok, um, now I'm going to ask you some questions about writing now, ok, um, so, again, um,  
105 how confident are you when writing academic assignments in English?

106 086 P4: no very much confident

107 087 IN: okay

108 088 P4: I don't have very much self-esteem in my writing in academic

109 089 IN: ok, so give yourself a score out of a hundred

110 090 P4: 30

111 091 IN: oof, ok, and where does that idea come from, so again, is it, is it your past experiences, is it comparing yourself with others,  
112 what?

113 092 P4: erm, erm, my feedback on my assignment, so my essays, um, I start to engage with the reader but then I just go all over the  
114 place, write too many information, er, my grammar sometimes is not the best, and I don't use proper academic language, that's

115 always my feedback, I'm trying to improve going to WISER and Language Academy, but I know that I can't wake up one day and  
116 say 'oh, I'm good, I can have like an eighty' because that's never gonna happen

117 093 IN: oh, ok, all right, and how do you feel, um, compared with other people in your...

118 094 P4: oh, I feel like I'm the worst of my class, I'm left behind, everybody's better than me, I'm the only one that fails, yeah, I don't  
119 have much self-esteem on writing

120 095 IN: oh right, ok, and what about comments from other people, so, teachers or from classmates

121 096 P4: [9.53] well yesterday I talk with my tutor, and he says that, uh, my ideas are good, I do research because I plan like one month  
122 before cos I know my limits, so I never go like too, you know, too, erm, near the deadline

123 097 IN: ok

124 098 P4: I plan myself, but he said 'you're ideas are really good, but, you don't have a strategy in planning,' he say 'you could do so much  
125 better, but, you still need time, you need time to improve'

126 099 IN: ok

127 100 P4: no my tutor are really good about this kind of thing

128 101 IN: ok right, ok, so, um, what types of text do you feel confident about writing?

129 102 P4: er, something, creative writing, you know, erm... some stories, sometimes I write stories, er... and you know it's not in academic  
130 language

131 103 IN: no, are there any academic texts you feel confident about writing?

132 104 P4: writing? Er,  
133 105 IN: essays or reports or  
134 106 P4: no, I can write short stories, I can write a story, a fairy tale even if you want, but, you said to me write a report and I'll cry  
135 107 IN: [laughs] oh no, ok, so how confident are you when writing academic work, um, in your own language?  
136 108 P4: oh, really confident  
137 109 IN: ok, score out of a hundred?  
138 110 P4: er... 80, I was really good, back in Italy I was a good student, I graduate with 91 out of one hundred, and in my essay Italian I got  
139 a score of 15 out of 15  
140 111 IN: wow! Ok  
141 112 P4: [11.54] so I'm, really confident about that, I was really good  
142 113 IN: um, ok, so does that make it very difficult then when you come to write in English?  
143 114 P4: Well, it depends because as I say it's writing, it's just writing, it's not like I'm having really big difficulties on talking in presentation  
144 as well, it's just that bit of writing, and every time I have to write an essay [big sigh]  
145 115 IN: ok, all right, so um, you won't like this question [laughs] so, if anything, what what if anything, makes you feel confident about  
146 writing as assignment in English, or is there nothing?  
147 116 P4: er, I'm sorry to say that but, it's really my limit, I'm trying to have a different mindset, but I feel like I'm, I've got pressure on my  
148 shoulder because, um, basically most of courseworks in English Literature are essays

149 117 IN: yes, um

150 118 P4: most of them, so... I'm always 'I'm gonna fail this, I'm gonna fail this, I'm gonna fail this' so yeah, I'm living in fear

151 119 IN: oh no!

152 120 P4: no good yeah

153 121 IN: um, ok, so so basically, is it fair to say then you're not, you don't feel confident at all about the writing of the essays, no aspect  
154 of it at all?

155 122 P4: no

156 123 IN: oh, not even knowing about the subject area, or the accuracy of your writing?

157 124 P4: the fact is that the fact is that I even if I feel inspired in my ideas are good, the end, it's always being me all over the place, and  
158 writing too much

159 125 IN: ok, so what words does the tutor use, you know, you're saying all over the place, what, what, any feedback, what do the tutors  
160 say?

161 126 P4: [14.02] er, well my tutor say 'this essay is confusing', er, because he wrote I don't know which aspect do you want to talk about,  
162 time, money, class, just stick to one thing

163 127 IN: ok, ok, so a problem with organisation?

164 128 P4: yeah, strategy, yeah, organisation, yeah, that's my problem

165 129 IN: ok,



166 130 P4: I'm not organised, even if I plan one month before I'm still not organised

167 131 IN: ok, that's very frustrating

168 132 P4: yeah, it is

169 133 IN: ok, um, so, is there a difference then between how confident you are when speaking and writing in English?

170 134 P4: yeah... erm, if I have to choose, like, between writing, er, my assignment and doing a presentation, cos I'm, I love like visual

171 learning, I feel better doing visual learning, you know, even when I prepare my essay I just use the visual, um, template, I don't

172 know why, probably I have to see something, I have to prepare that myself, on a laptop, things like that, so yeah, doing

173 presentation, organise my presentation, er, um, it's better for me

174 135 IN: yes

175 136 P4: I feel more confident doing that

176 137 IN: ok, all right, interesting, um, and um, do you think, does your speaking and your writing confidence make a difference to how

177 you perform, so, do you understand that question?

178 138 P4: yeah, like my performance in each of the tasks?

179 139 IN: yeah depending on how confident you feel, or does that affect how well you do those things?

180 140 P4: yeah, I do well presentation, but I always get a pass mark for my essays, it's never much more than forty-five

181 141 IN: [16.02] oh, ok, um hum, ok, all right, um, and is there anything else you want to tell me about you feel about speaking and

182 writing in academic contexts?

183 142 P4: yeah, well, um, how [laughs] how do you write good? How do you write?... There is like a rule, sort of the rule you have to  
184 follow, some sort of pattern maybe, then you can follow, maybe not write really really good but, to like write good enough to  
185 have maybe a fifty, a fifty-two, is there some, tricks, about that?

186 143 : yes, there are, and I'm happy to talk to you about those now

187 [16.52] Recording stops, but interview continues with a lengthy tutorial about overall essay structure, having a clear argument, what  
188 paragraphs are for, the importance of topic sentences and bringing in evidence to support one's ideas

Participant 5

Duration: 39:34 (of 40:19 recording)

Age 26

Nationality Chinese

First language/s Mandarin, from Guangzhou

Academic subject/s MA TESOL, UG Management Logistics

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

English learning background: How long? since elementary school

Where & what for? School, GE, then Uni, ESP, Logistics; Home: watching English movies, listening to English music

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely / not really / no I think my language learning has no obvious shortcomings, only relative shortcomings

What English exams have you taken? \_\_\_IELTS in Sept 2019

What score/s did you get? Reading\_6\_\_\_ Writing\_5.5\_\_\_ Speaking\_5.5\_\_\_ Listening\_5.5\_\_\_

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no

Do these scores seem too high or too low according to your belief about your English level? Neither high nor low, just right

1 001 IN: [12:37] So, um, I'm very interested in all four skills and how you feel about those four skills, um, so, if we could, what I'd like  
2 you to do, is, I'd like you to think about, um, if you were going to give yourself a score of one hundred, um, what sort of score,  
3 um, and this is not your IELTS score, this is how you feel about your skills, um, how confident you feel in each of the four skills,  
4 so, if you want to start, you can start where you like, [indicating the visual prompt] um, you can talk about your reading,  
5 listening, your speaking or your writing, um, just tell me about, you know, what score would you give yourself, um, and this is all  
6 about using English, um, at, for your university study, ok? So, um, where do you want to start?

7 002 P5: I will start listening in the academic contexts...I think I personally confident score, maybe, er, seven, seventy

8 003 IN: ok, um hum

9 004 P5: because I think, er, the listening is my, er, advantage and I will, I listen many of the English podcast or music and, er, and I watch  
10 many movies and the TV series, so I think the listening skill is quite great for me

11 005 IN: ok, and um, for example, are you having classes at the moment, are you on a pre-sessional?

12 006 P5: er yes

13 007 IN: yeah, how does that work? Is your tutor English?

14 008 P5: yes, yes, I think when the tutor teaching something about the academic English for academic purposes, the lessons I think is not  
15 very difficult to me for the listening part

16 009 IN: ok, so you, you're quite happy with that? You think you can do that easy?

17 010 P5: er yes

18 011 IN: um hum, ok, good, so you are ok with all of that, um, and er, there's the question there, where does your confidence come  
19 from? If you look in the middle of the slide here [indicates interview prompt] um, got some different places where you might  
20 get your sense of confidence from, um, does it come from any of those sources there? Like comparing yourself with others? Or  
21 comments or experiences?

22 012 P5: er yes, I think I have many international experiences, er, and I also listening some, er, native speakers speak English and I also  
23 can listen their meaning in the normal speed

24 013 IN: so, you're happy with that, ok, all right, ok, um, is there anything you think you can't do with listening?

25 014 P5: er, I think sometimes the, the people have the different accent

26 015 IN: um hum

27 016 P5: er maybe is difficult to me hear, hear some word with some [eldern?] maybe is not understand because I don't have the culture  
28 background, maybe, er, difficult to understand the meaning of the speakers

29 017 IN: um hum, when you say different accents do you mean like, um, do you mean like, er, national ones like Americans or  
30 Australians, or... or do you mean regional accents like people from Scotland or, er, what do you mean by accents?

31 018 P5: I think the regional one, the regional one is pretty difficult like the Scottish

32 019 IN: ok, yeah, yeah, I think I struggle with Scottish accents as well so [laughs] don't worry

33 020 P5: ok

34 021 IN: right then, what else would you like to talk about next?

35 022 P5: I think I will talk about the reading, the reading in academic contexts. I think maybe my personal confidence score is the sixty-  
36 six, sixty-five because er, I in the primary school or elementary school, we reading a lot of English materials, er, and the Chinese  
37 students reading is also the advantage because they are reading a lot, er, so I think I am a good at it but I think maybe, er, a  
38 disadvantage is about we are reading somethings not very longer because I don't reading a whole English novel, I just reading  
39 some, like er, articles like the, um, maybe some modern, one or two, two thousand words not a very longer one like the IELTS  
40 reading, er, tests

41 023 IN: ok, yeah, so um, when you, when you do reading for your university study do you cope with that ok? Is it all right?

42 024 P5: er yeah, it's ok, but in the China the general English in the university is not very difficult one, it's the same as the high school  
43 work

44 025 IN: ok, so have you read anything that you think, oh I can't do this!

45 026 P5: [18:50] uh yeah, I think I also like reading some English magazines, I can, er, have my reading that I can understand the main  
46 ideas maybe some have some, a few words I don't know but I can guess that some skills like the context,

47 027 IN: um hum, yeah ok, that's a good reading strategy, isn't it? Yeah, ok, um so you feel, just to summarise there, with the reading, do  
48 you think you, you feel confident cos you've got a lot of experience with reading because of the way you're taught in China?

49 028 P5: er, yes, yes, because er, we are use the textbook, er, when we do the texts. I think the reading is, er, some part have the many  
50 word to read when we doing some test in China the exams have the many readings to do, so I think is make me confident, get  
51 me confidence

52 029 IN: yeah, ok, very good, all right then, so that's the reading and the listening, those are the receptive skills, um let's, is there  
53 anything else you want to tell me about those, or shall we move to the, the speaking and the writing?

54 030 P5: yes, I think we can move in the speaking and writing.

55 031 IN: um hum

56 032 P5: I think the talk about speaking in academic contexts, er, my personal confidence score maybe the sixty, because in China the  
57 English not, er, very used often, the speaking skills is not the environment, neither the students talk each other with English, er  
58 sometimes just in some international school have this, er, situation or occasion to let students do it, some some Chinese  
59 student just use some like the English, er, reading and listening, there are some other writing, so sometimes they are (their?)  
60 speaking skills, like me, was, so is the drawback, not very good at it

61 033 IN: no, do you think...sorry,

62 034 P5: ...I think maybe we can use some like the, some...I find a very interesting way to, er, practice or to learning how to improve the  
63 speaking skills I find some YouTube have some course about some, use TV series to improve the students, er, the speaking skills  
64 they will choose some things, er, is interesting one and, er, should use some students like for instance a very classic one to know  
65 how to express, to express English well or like native speakers, but er, I think is the great one but the Chinese student also don't  
66 have the, er, some like er, the place, maybe in the recent year is improved to talk to face to face to communicate English, but,  
67 when the technology development we can use like the Zoom or Skype to talk the another foreign people, just in home I think is  
68 a good way to improve the speaking skills

69 035 IN: yeah, like you are doing today [laughs]

70 036 P5: yes, yes, like me today

71 037 IN: [22:55] good ok, um, so how do you feel with speaking English, you know, at the moment are you having classes, um, using  
72 Zoom, as well, or? how...

73 038 P5: in, I think, er, in the my pre-sessional English course, uh, university only use Teams, the Microsoft,

74 039 IN: oh ok, I could've used Teams with you, yeah [laughs] and how does, how do you feel, how confident do you feel taking part in  
75 classes, interaction like that?

76 040 P5: uh, I think is the great one, er, because they can, also make the face-to-face, they are have some audio, they have some picture,  
77 is, is ok, to me

78 041 IN: um hum, cool, ok, so that helps, um so is there anything, ummm, are there things that you're more confident about, or less  
79 confident about with speaking?

80 042 P5: er, I think maybe the less confident like, er, sometimes I don't... because when people talk to each other they don't have the  
81 time to use some, some translation tools, so maybe I know the something the Chinese but I don't, er, know the English, so I not  
82 very good at to express my own idea in the English in the few minute, few seconds, so maybe some kind will I will speaking  
83 slowly so I made the time to thinking about and constructed the sentence, er, in my brain so, I think the speed or some, er,  
84 difficult words or some grammar maybe, not very good at it

85 043 IN: ok, so do you, do you think, do you think that is a big problem, not having the right words or vocabulary or?

86 044 P5: er, I think not really because I sometimes I will find some ways like the cinemas [\*synonyms] or some, to definitions of these  
87 words in a simple sentence



88 045 IN: um hum, ok, um, and do you, was the plan originally for you to come to England to do your pre-sessional?

89 046 P5: er, pre-sessional course is in China started, not needed to go to the England

90 047 IN: [25:48] oh ok, right, cos I wonder, if you, if you were studying in the UK or in America, um, it would be a lot easier to practice  
91 the speaking cos you need it every day, to go shopping, and etc, um, I wonder if your confidence would be different...

92 048 P5: yes, I think so because in some English environment will to push the person to improve their speaking skills because they will  
93 use it every day and life

94 049 IN: um, yeah, yeah, ok, is there anything else you want to tell me about your speaking?

95 050 P5: er not, no other one

96 051 IN: no, ok, oh! I've just thought of one thing, um, how do you, what's your confidence for your pronunciation?

97 052 P5: er, I think my pronunciation confidence because, er, I, I can, er, when I in the primary school, were, when I in school my  
98 pronunciation is not the big problem because I, when the people listening a lot, they can, er, try to follow the speakers to speak  
99 the word and sentence can make me better and better

100 053 IN: ok, so, um, again, looking at the ideas in the middle here [indicates interview prompt] yeah, um, do you think your confidence  
101 for your pronunciation, is that, is that, are you saying that's past experience, you did ok at primary school, or?

102 054 P5 er yes, er, because I the experience in the schools, in the primary school

103 055 IN: uh huh, ok, and not any of those other ones, like comparing yourself with classmates, or...?

104 056 P5: er, not, I think maybe the experience just in the primary school

105 057 IN: yeah, ok, that's good, ok, um, right then, do you want to talk about writing now then?

106 058 P5: uh, ok, I think maybe the writing academic context is the same as the speaking, is the personal confidence score is the 60,  
107 because when I in the school, when the have the English test or the writing part I also don't know how to write about it. It is  
108 very difficult to me because, er, sometimes I not good to know to translate the Chinese into the English, because English they  
109 have the different, er, sentence like Chinese, er, because the Chinese like to use some 'it' or 'there' in the first sentence, but in  
110 China they will also like to use 'people' in the first sentence, in the writing, so is, uh, difficult to me

111 059 IN: ok, ok, so, um, you're saying making sentences is the hardest part of writing?

112 060 P5: er yes

113 061 IN: ok, ok, do you feel happy about the other aspects of writing like the structure of the writing, or?

114 062 P5: er, I think the structure, structured writing, er, is also a difficult one, is needed to some complex grammar or some, er,  
115 professional grammar to make the writing, the sentence more , more great or more easy to read for the students, when the  
116 students, when the students have the great grammar they can let the two sentence become one

117 063 IN: oh, ok

118 064 P5: maybe yeah, maybe I will the difficult to use the grammar like that

119 065 IN: ok, do you mean it's difficult to write long sentences, or complicated sentences, or?

120 066 P5: yes, is the, I think me is the difficult to write the long and complicated sentence

121 067 IN: ok, right, ok, um, so, ok, um, obviously with academic writing there's lots of different sorts of writing, um, have you got any  
122 experience with writing some of things there like writing essays or reports or things like that?

123 068 P5: er yes, recently we have to do our the, er, research project, so I am try the first week we try to do the proposal, so I think is the,  
124 in the first time maybe a little difficult to me, but when I know how to find the good resources and how to paraphrase and the  
125 summary is, I think is not very difficult, because something like when the people also tried, they will miss some problems or  
126 some difficult, when they through it, they will find this is not too difficult, they can make it easy

127 069 IN: ok, uh huh, ok so um, where, again, I'm gonna go back to that thing in the middle there, [indicates to prompt] um, your sense of  
128 confidence, you say it's 60 out of 100, where does that idea come from, is it any of those things there?

129 070 P5: I think the writing skills is based on the reading skills, when the people reading aloud they will know how to write appropriate  
130 sentence, they will have the more materials

131 071 IN: ok, so for you, it comes from reading

132 072 P5: yes

133 073 IN: yeah, do you think you read a lot?

134 074 P5: [32:34] er, not, but er, just enough I think

135 075 IN: [laughs] yeah, like everybody [laughs] ok, um all right, so, um, the things more confident, less confident, what do you think in  
136 terms of writing?

137 076 P5: er, I think the writing more confidence is the vocabulary, I think I have the learning vocabulary, I think the less confidence is the  
138 grammar

139 077 IN: ok, right, uh huh, right, and what about the different types of writing, are you more comfortable, so, you say you're more  
140 comfortable now with doing a proposal because you've done one, erm, what else are you used to writing?

141 078 P5: I think the usually writing, I not very usually writing just when I want to take the exam I think some exam writing, like the easy  
142 one to me to write the short essay, or short paper, is not very difficult, like the less than three thousand words is not very  
143 difficult, when I write about more than one thousand words maybe a little difficult, but, er, when they are divided in the specific  
144 parts, like one we could do that, and another one we do like that, is not very difficult, it can make it easier

145 079 IN: ok, so when the teacher sort of um, makes the task much smaller, into smaller parts, that's easier?

146 080 P5: yes, yes

147 081 IN: ok, and do you find, well, how easy or difficult do you find it to check your writing, when you've finished?

148 082 P5: er, I think I'm not very good to check my own writing when I finish it, er, but I think recently, er, we can use some websites, to  
149 help us check, Grammarly yes, maybe is like the reference to cause some people unable to be very good at it

150 083 IN: ok, is that new to you? Is doing referencing, is that something that you're, that is new, or is that something, I don't know how it  
151 works in China, do you use referencing at school or?

152 084 P5: not very often, just when we writing some things

153 085 IN: ok, ok, so referencing is difficult for you?

154 086 P5: er, it's ok, I think not very difficult

155 087 IN: ok, um hum, ok right ok, um ok, thank you, is there anything else you want to say about writing?

156 088 P5: er, no, not another

157 089 IN: no, ok, all right then, um, good um ok, so do you think erm, so basically, am I right, you think that your four skills are pretty  
158 equal, you don't think there are any big differences between them?

159 090 P5: yes

160 091 IN: ok, that's good, um, because that's one thing I'm interested in, is, is, some people seem to be very balanced and some people  
161 seem to have big, big differences so um, I'm just trying to work out, if there's, you know, what's going on there really, um, ok,  
162 um I'm just checking if I've got anything else to say here, um no, oh yeah, just one more question, which is, um, your level of  
163 confidence, do you think it makes a difference to how well, to the marks you get? So here, we talked about your confidence, so  
164 do you think that confidence translates into marks?

165 092 P5: oh, I think the confidence maybe help influence to the test, test, because, er, when the people have the more confidence, they  
166 will try to using what can do that, when the people have the less confidence, they, the people will avoid to do that

167 093 IN: ok

168 094 P5: so I think, yes, it have some relationship between that

169 095 IN: ok, so, for example, what about yourself, is there anything you avoid? You find 'oh, do I have to do that!?' Is there anything that  
170 you...

171 096 P5: yeah, yeah, I think that in myself maybe have sometimes got, er, one day, er yes, I have that, but I will try to when I try to avoid I  
172 will to let me, to force me, to do a little and little and day by day will, [intelligible] er, will like the practice

173 097 IN: yeah, ok

174 098 P5: overcome that

175 099 IN: that sounds like something that I do which is, if there's something I don't want to do is well I'll say I'll only do like one  
176 paragraph [laughs] and then, and then once I get started I think 'oh well maybe I could do another little bit, and another', um,  
177 are you the same that way?

178 100 P5: yes, that's great

179 101 IN: yeah, ok good, all right, ok, um, right I think, is there anything else you'd like to tell me about how you think about English and  
180 the four skills, is there anything else that, erm, we've not talked about?

181 102 P5: er, I think, English about the four skills, er, not other to talk, I also talked all [39.34]

Participant 6

Duration: 33:30 (of 43:58 recording)

Age 24

Nationality Chinese

First language/s Mandarin

Academic subject/s MA Digital Science & AI, BA Communication Engineering

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

English learning background:

How long? Since primary school, 10 years old

Where & what for? Primary/junior high

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely / not really / no Reading compared with Sp & Writing, intake vs. output

What English exams have you taken? CET4, CET6, IELTS Oct 2019 3<sup>rd</sup> time

What score/s did you get? Reading \_\_7\_\_ Writing \_\_5.5\_\_ Speaking \_\_5\_\_ Listening \_\_5.5\_\_

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no worse than before

1 001 IN: [15.20] so, this is just to help us, um, help you and me talk about this, the four skills here, um, basically you can start where you  
2 like [indicating the visual prompt], you can start by talking about listening or reading, or speaking or writing, I'm interested in using  
3 English in, um, at University, you know, academic life, ok, um, I'd like to find out basically how confident you feel about using  
4 English, um, for university study, cos you're going to be doing your master's aren't you, the master's is all in English isn't it?

5 002 P6: um, yes, er, for this one I think, er, oh, maybe, 70, 70

6 003 IN: which one?

7 004 P6: first, no, listening yes

8 005 IN: right ok, 70, ok, and where does that idea come from? Where does your confidence come from? Um, you can look at the ideas  
9 in the middle of the screen [indicating the visual prompt], um, do you get that idea from these different things, from comparing  
10 yourself, or... teachers or..

11 006 P6: er, I think this I can [unintelligible] from when I take the PSE class, er, well, I in that class I can understand the, I think I can  
12 understand most of that because the teacher speak very slowly in that class but er, when we do the homework about the  
13 lecture I find I have confuse, I'm really confused about the content of the lecture, for some specific area is more difficult so, if  
14 for our, in my, in my UK study I think, er, I will have many problems on that, I will practice that now, yeah

15 007 IN: yeah, ok, so so you feel confident, confident about listening to a teacher...

16 008 P6: um yes, from the PSE it's easy, just free English study but when I, in the academic, in my pro-, in my course, for my major I'm not  
17 confident about that



18 009 IN: ok, all right, what do you think, um, is it because of the, is it because the grammar is complicated? Or is it the vocabulary? What  
19 do you think?

20 010 P6: er, I think grammar is not important, but for the, er, vocabulary you're always industry

21 011 IN: yeah

22 012 P6: always...yeah, this is a really difficult, this is really a confuse thing, that you need to understand before the class, so that you can  
23 understand it, yeah

24 013 IN: uh huh, ok, good, ok, what do you want to talk about next, which one?

25 014 P6: er, next one, reading in academic contexts, yes, this one, ok... Academic contexts? I want to know, er, you ask me this for, just  
26 for my major, or just for, just for the PSE class?

27 015 IN: um, probably, um, both actually

28 016 P6: both actually ok, um, reading I think, er, I will have a score at about, 80, 80

29 017 IN: oh very good

30 018 P6: yes, because I think I have a memorise not all the vocabulary [laughs] when I taken this exams, er, I found that vocabulary  
31 remember these words can help me, uh, understand the articles easy, but er, er... I, this idea from, uh, maybe this confident  
32 from the IELTS exam and from the, also in my CET 6 in China, so, also I do a lot of practice around that, uh, no matter in my high  
33 school, in my university, I do enough practice on that, so reading is my confident part... yes

34 019 IN: ok, so, are you, are you the sort of person who likes reading? Do you read anyway?

35 020 P6: er, actually most of the time I'm not really enjoy reading English article [laughs] um, but now is better because we always need  
36 to, we have to, to look through these English website, uh, just for the University, just now we need to write the, uh, report  
37 project, and then they, we need to find five resources from the school library, that promote me to practice my reading and to  
38 read these articles, yes

39 021 IN: and, and, and how do you feel reading the journal articles?

40 022 P6: oh journal articles, um, I actually this is really difficult [laughs] ah yeah...it's [cold?] um, um, I think er, even I read that in Chinese  
41 I still confused about that

42 023 IN: uh huh, yeah, so it doesn't matter what language, it's still quite difficult...

43 024 P6: yeah

44 025 IN: ok, all right then, um, is there anything you want to tell me about reading? Or...

45 026 P6: [21.46] listening reading and then speaking yeah, um, er, for speaking part, er, ah I think of all I'm not good at speaking really,  
46 er, like the, er uh, the local people, but most of the time I think you can understand what I say, er, I can impress the idea of what  
47 I mean, er, so, um... for this I think I will get er... 70, 70 like the listening part yes

48 027 IN: yeah yeah, ok, don't worry, you don't have to be, you don't have to be modest or anything [laughs]

49 028 P6: not modest, but I, I know that, um... speaking is just [un?] less others can understand your ideas, this is what speaking's function  
50 is, um, but first you need to understand others' question and you can speak your opinion so this is, uh, related to, this is  
51 relevant yeah

52 029 IN: yeah yeah, absolutely yeah, so again, you said about speaking to local people but how do you feel speaking to the lecturers or,  
53 you know, when you have to speak in class...

54 030 P6: oh, in class uh, I'll...we'd, er, I would go, yeah active in class, er, most of the time I will speak, I will speak a lot even though I  
55 think I'm making lots of wrong, and er, and the speaking part, I'm brave enough, I don't think...I think that if I speak more that  
56 can practice my speaking skills, so, so I got I think er, this is er, this is, er, a chance for you to practice, um, and er, this, er, from  
57 when I speaking lecture... Actually I don't have speaking lecture, what do you think that? Because I don't get, I didn't go to UK  
58 to have a lecture now, I just on the internet have the PSE class for our reading presentation and er, and presentation lecture  
59 similar to discussion, just for these three part

60 031 IN: yeah, ok, I was just asking because um, you know, it's, sometimes it's difficult to express your ideas when you're in a class or  
61 seminar, I don't know what you call them, um but, that the idea of, when you're, when you're doing university study and you've  
62 got complicated ideas, sometimes it's maybe more difficult to put those ideas, when you're speaking in the class situation...

63 032 P6: ah...

64 033 IN: but you feel like you're ok? You feel confident about that?

65 034 P6: oh yes...I have the confidence to deal the idea, I think I have some, I have some problems on that, but I'm confident about that  
66 because I can speak in another way, to express the complicated idea, so speaking is not really difficult, most I afraid of is the  
67 listening part, I'm afraid that I can't understand what the teacher say

68 035 IN: yeah ok, uh huh, so, um... where does, where does your confidence come from, again, looking at the ones in the middle here,  
69 are they any of those ideas, where do you get your confidence for speaking?

70 036 P6: er, speaking I think, er, this is a part that from my, maybe from Chinese, yes, from my mother language because I, I'm good at  
71 expressing my ideas, and actually from I got the champion in the debate contest, yes, and that help me, I think that can help me  
72 in the English too, because speaking is a skill that you can, not only by your words, but for your body language, for your habits  
73 from your own mother language, both of these can help you to speak better, it's not only for your... how good your  
74 pronunciation is, but is the how the expression you express to others is, this is the most important part for speaking.

75 037 IN: yeah, yeah, yeah yeah, I totally agree yeah, absolutely, ok, is there anything else you want to tell me about speaking in English?

76 038 P6: uh, I think I says not more, do you have any questions for that? [laughs]

77 039 IN: [laughs] ok, then, shall we move to writing then?

78 040 P6: er, writing...um, for this part, um, for writing I think, er, maybe, 70 [laughs] 70, 70, yes...

79 041 IN: I thought you said 20 [laughs]

80 042 P6: no, no, 70, 20 is too low, I think I'm not modest [laughs] um, I get this idea because, er, although... I think I'm confident about  
81 this, that is er, well, writing is the articles and, er, I think, I don't know, I don't know where I get that idea from, maybe I think I  
82 [something unintelligible 28.09]

83 043 IN: oh, ok, no that's interesting idea, ok, um hum...

84 044 P6: um yeah, and, and yes [sigh], I don't have any idea of writing it cos I'm not good at writing in Chinese too, er, for English, er, the  
85 teacher has got to paraphrase, er, paragraph so it's just a report, not an essay so, I don't need to use really, really beautiful  
86 sentence. What I should do is to write a logical and common sense article so for this, just for the report, for the report that I

87 needed to, uh, finish in my master's degree, er, is to, is to, more rigid and er, more logical, um, I think this is, er, what writing in  
88 the English, so, maybe that we don't need enough or good sentence, I think the writing is more easy, yeah

89 045 IN: ok, so you think, am I right to say, um, it's very straightforward, it's very, um, you don't, yeah, you don't... when you say, um,  
90 you don't have to write beautiful sentences, what does that mean?

91 046 P6: [29.40] oh, just like some, uh, wonderful sentences, or that... just some sentence that looks like a point [perhaps means 'poet?'],  
92 yeah, point? You give enough, er, [unintelligible] some, when you write the, when you read the article from the... from the...  
93 like, with [height?] yeah, I don't know the points name for that... shashby... sasby?...I don't know, I don't know his English name  
94 sorry [laughs] just like the, er, with me a moment...

95 047 IN: do you mean *Shakespeare*?

96 048 P6: er, with me a moment [starts an internet search] I will... I will...oh, Shak-spear! Shak-spear

97 049 IN: yeah, Shakespeare, yeah [laughs]

98 050 P6: [laughs] when you read the article that Shak-spear read, you will think that is really beautiful

99 051 IN: oh I see yeah, uh huh

100 052 P6: can I get it right, yeah? So, I don't think I have that talent to write an article like that, Shak-spear

101 053 IN: yeah, but um, you don't need to for university though, that's the good thing...

102 054 P6: ummm, yes? Yeah

103 055 IN: ok then, so... your, your confidence with writing, um, does that come from doing ok at exams, where, where does that come  
104 from?

105 056 P6: um, for writing that come from...um...er... actually I don't have enough of confidence about writing, but what I get that score  
106 maybe from the IELTS exam

107 057 IN: ok

108 058 P6: yeah because I get a thinner score on listening, speaking and writing, so I will write that

109 059 IN: right, ok

110 060 P6: but most I worry about is the fourth part, the listening, because I, I'm really afraid that I can't understand what the teacher are  
111 taught us in the... teach us in the class, I'm afraid about that because speaking and writing is a natural influence the  
112 understanding the class, so listening is my really worry about

113 061 IN: ok, yeah, so I guess that is, that is really fundamental, isn't it? If you can't understand the teacher then, yeah...

114 062 P6: yeah, yes...

115 063 IN: gosh, ok, um...good, well thank you very much, um, now have I got any other questions I'd like to ask you...yeah, ok, I think I  
116 already asked it, but I'll just check...um, so, of these skills, um, do you think there is any big differences, I think you said no, not  
117 really...

118 064 P6: yes

119 065 IN: um ok, so you think they're about the same? Yeah, in fact, you've given everything [laughs], you've given everything 70, except  
120 for the reading

121 066 P6: yeah

122 067 IN: yeah ok, good, um, is there anything you want to tell me about how you feel about your English, and skills, and how confident  
123 you feel? Is there anything else you can think of?

124 068 P6: oh, you can tell me that... I really want to know that...you're a native speaker right?

125 069 IN: yes

126 070 P6: [33.30] so, do you have any suggestions on my English, yeah?

127 Interview continued for a further 10 minutes, giving feedback on the participant's English and advice about learning English abroad.

Participant 7

Duration: 25:09 (of 36:36 recording)

Age 24

Nationality Chinese

First language/s Mandarin

Academic subject/s MA TESOL, BA Finance & Economics

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening good scores, enjoys poems and creative writing

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening finds some Chinese dialects difficult

English learning: How long? Since 5 years old

Where & what for?

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely / not really / no (If yes, which skills?)

What English exams have you taken? CET4, CET6, IELTS

What score/s did you get? Reading IELTS 7; Writing IELTS 6; Speaking IELTS 6; Listening IELTS 5.5

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no



1 001 IN: [00.20] so, using this table here [indicating the visual prompt], you can start where you want to, as you can see you've got the four  
2 skills, you've got your listening, reading, speaking and writing, um... what I'd like you to do is to think about your English but  
3 using it in an academic context, so that means using your English for your university study, um, using English for being assessed,  
4 um, everything to do with your study, not not English out in the streets or anything, but English for study, ok? um

5 002 P7: ok, ok

6 003 IN: So, I'm interested in how confident you feel, ok, so it's not about how, how good you are, it's about how confident you feel

7 004 P7: ok

8 005 IN: are you ok with that?

9 006 P7: yes

10 007 IN: ok, all right then, so you can you can tell me, you can start where you want, um, er, and tell me, what I'd like you do is to try and  
11 tell me out of a hundred, um, how confident do you feel about the different, the different skills?

12 008 P7: okay...

13 009 IN: so, where do you want to start?

14 010 P7: ok, let's start [pause] er, listening I can get maybe...er, 65 [laughs]

15 011 IN: ok, right yes [laughs] and this is yeah, I want you to give me a score that, yes, even if you, whatever test you've done in the past,  
16 you know what you really think, you know, how confident you feel when you are doing listening, so you think 65 yeah?

17 012 P7: yes, I'm not very confident about my listening but, er, compared with my other classmates [laughs]...I, I feel, I feel like, er, I'm  
18 not, er, too bad in listening...

19 013 IN: no, ok that's good, ok, so, um, what things are you confident you can do? Is there anything, yeah, what are you confident  
20 about? Um, what sorts of things in terms of listening?

21 014 P7: er, I'm not very skilled of listening to other people's English language, and er, I'm very willing to, er, um, actively listen to other  
22 English videos or movies or other, um, programmes...

23 015 IN: um hum, ok

24 016 P7: yes

25 017 IN: er, and what about, at the moment you're on a pre-sessional, am I right?

26 018 P7: yeah

27 019 IN: how do you, how confident are you with understanding your lecturer?

28 020 P7: I can understand most of the lecture

29 021 IN: um hum, ok that's good...

30 022 P7: it's not very difficult for me

31 023 IN: ok, ok, that's very good then, ok, and when you are in listening tests, how do you feel?

32 024 P7: oh... I feel... I feel very, very sad [laughs]

33 025 IN: oh, ok

34 026 P7: I can't do the tests

35 027 IN: oh, ok, right, so listening in tests is not great?

36 028 P7: yes

37 029 IN: ok, all right, ok, so, um, so you are quite confident about listening that's good, um, so you've got that question there about

38 where does your confidence come from, now in the middle of the screen [indicating the visual prompt] you can see some different

39 ideas, um, it might be one of those, it might be something different, um, just tell me, where do you think your sense of confidence comes

40 from?

41 030 P7: er... comparing with my buddies

42 031 IN: oh... ok, tell me about that then

43 032 P7: [04.17] yes... um...they they always asked me about what the teacher's said...

44 033 IN: [laughs] all right yes...

45 034 P7: [laughs] they can't understand, um, much of the teacher's requirements

46 035 IN: yes ok

47 036 P7: yes, I'll tell them again after class, yes

48 037 IN: so, you're the interpreter for them?

49 038 P7: yes, but sometimes, not every day

50 039 IN: no, ok, oh that's very interesting yes [laughs], don't you find that annoying?

51 040 P7: no

52 041 IN: no? that's good, well ok, that's great

53 042 P7: I'm not worried

54 043 IN: no, that makes you, um, that makes you feel confident, good ok, right then, um, is there anything else you want to tell me about listening?

55 044 P7: um, no

56 045 IN: no right, ok, do you want to move to another one?

57 046 P7: er, reading? [pause] reading I can get about, um, 85 points

58 047 IN: ooh, right yes, ok, that's strong yeah, ok

59 048 P7: yes,

60 049 IN: so tell me about things you're more confident you can do

61 050 P7: er... I don't have the, I don't have much patience to read much but, er, every time I urge myself to read something, um, most of that I, I can,

62 I can understand the writers, their meanings and their targets

63 051 IN: um hum, ok, right ok

64 052 P7: yes

65 053 IN: and what about, are you ok with the vocabulary?

66 054 P7: yes, I I always note down the new vocabulary

67 055 IN: um hum, all right

68 056 P7: and er, yes, sometimes I read about, I read my notebooks, and I can remember it better

69 057 IN: yes, that's, that's a good thing to do actually, yeah ok

70 058 P7: yeah

71 059 IN: um, so have you done any reading for your, for your pre-sessional course yet?

72 060 P7: yes, every day

73 061 IN: ok, and what sort, what sort of texts are you asked to read?

74 062 P7: um... some self-study documents, er, sometimes the texts, uh, long and short texts

75 063 IN: ok, and how do you, are they, are they to do with your subject area? Or are they general texts?

76 064 P7: um, they are general texts and subject, yeah, oh, both of them

77 065 IN: yeah ok, and is there any difference with how confident you are with those? Or?

78 066 P7: um... it takes me, um, much time, because I always look up the new vocabularies on the e-dictionary, and I want to, um, master the

79 pronunciation of the, of every words, so it's time-consuming

80 067 IN: yeah, yeah, that's why you talked about a patience I suppose, yeah

81 068 P7: [07.46] yes

82 069 IN: all right ok, is there anything you're not so confident about doing in reading?

83 070 P7: er... when it comes to the IELTS text or other other reading, er, examination, I, I can't, um, answer every every question very very correctly

84 071 IN: um hum

85 072 P7: yeah, but I still, er, always get, um, a good score [laughs] a score

86 073 IN: so um, that question then, where does your confidence come from? What do you think?

87 074 P7: um... maybe my my own, um, emotion, yeah, I'm not very, er, very, um, maybe I, I'm, how to say that... optimistic?

88 075 IN: um hum

89 076 P7: yeah... I always feel optimistic, to my general study

90 077 IN: ok, yeah, ok, so do you like studying then?

91 078 P7: yes, I like to study

92 079 IN: um hum, ok, uh huh, right that's interesting, do you, do you, with your listening you said you compared yourself with others, do you do  
93 anything like that, or, or not?

94 080 P7: yes, even even I'm not very confident about my own listening skills, but every time [laughs] I compare it with my other classmates I, I feel,  
95 oh, it's ok [laughs]

96 081 IN: yeah ok, does that, is that the same thing with your reading or...or?

97 082 P7: yes, about reading, yes

98 083 IN: ok, very good, is there anything else you want to tell me about reading?

99 084 P7: no [laughs]

100 085 IN: right ok, let's get on to the other ones then, speaking and writing

101 086 P7: ok, um...speaking I can get maybe... 60 points, yes

102 087 IN: um hum, ok

103 088 P7: I think most Chinese students may encounter the problems with the, the speaking skills

104 089 IN: um, what problems are they?

105 090 P7: maybe, um... we can read much, but we, we cannot speak too much, and er... it may be related to different regions in every city

106 091 IN: oh yeah?

107 092 P7: like, yes, like if you are in the south of China, er, especially in, in in er, in Beijing, Shanghai, the big cities, or if you come from

108 very small cities, er, especially in the north of China, maybe they, they can read, but, they they cannot even listen listen very,

109 very well

110 093 IN: ok

111 094 P7: and they, so they cannot speak, speak very well

112 095 IN: ok, sorry, I forgot to ask, where are you from? Where are you talking to me from?

113 096 P7: [laughs] um... my city is very, very near to Shanghai, yes

114 097 IN: ok, what's it called?

115 098 P7: er, I'm in Jiangsu province, and I live in Changzhou city

116 099 IN: Cha- how do you spell that? [laughs]

117 100 P7: Jiangsu, J I A N G S U, Jiangsu province

118 101 IN: ah, ok

119 102 P7: yes, and Changzhou city, C H A N G Z H O U, yes Changzhou

120 103 IN: [11.49] ok, yeah, thank you, I I would never pronounce that correctly, ok then... so, um, with the, with the speaking, um, how do  
121 you feel, um, what things do you think you can do, and not so confident to do, so you've got differen-

122 103 P7: er...[laughs] like when I'm talking with you, when I'm communicating with you, I I can't express myself very, er, very  
123 comprehensively

124 104 IN: um hum

125 105 P7: yes, I can't, er, talk to you very deeply because my, my vocabulary is limited

126 106 IN: yeah, oh...and how does that make you feel?

127 107 P7: I feel very regret, regret about it

128 108 IN: um hum, ok, all right, and how do you feel when you're speaking to, there are some examples there, speaking to lecturers or in  
129 front of classmates, how do you feel about those different things?

130 109 P7: oh...maybe I, I feel more confident about when I talk to my own classmates, but, er, I feel very, very, er, well, I can't, I can't feel  
131 very confident when I speak to the lecturers, or speak to my, er, to other experts, blah, blah

132 110 IN: so, is it, is it, so you're ok talking to people, is it that you are ok, you feel confident talking to other people, like whose first  
133 language is not English? Compared with native speakers, or?

134 111 P7: [pause] yes, or somebody that I'm very familiar with

135 112 IN: ok, so that's more important, is if you're familiar with them or stranger, ok

136 113 P7: yes



137 114 IN: ok, oh that's interesting, ok, um, so that question, where does your confidence, or lack of confidence, come from?

138 115 P7: uh...um... it's a little like the reading skills, I, I always look up the new words, er, from the e-dictionary and... I'm very, um, I focus  
139 on the pronunciation and, er, maybe my other classmates, er, they they just want to know the meaning, Chinese meaning of the  
140 words, but I want to know about the pronunciation [laughs] yes...

141 116 IN: [14.38] ok, so, do you, you know, do you have any ideas where your sense of confidence comes from, is it anything of those  
142 things in the middle there [indicating the visual prompt], um

143 117 P7: er...maybe I can talk with native speakers more, and er, yes, you just encouraged me right? [laughs]

144 118 IN: [laughs] that's true

145 119 P7: I feel more confident [laughs]

146 120 IN: you mean, oh no, have I, have I changed your sense of confidence already?

147 121 P7: maybe yes already

148 122 IN: that's good, that's good, that's what teachers are supposed to do I think, um... right then, is there anything else you want to tell  
149 me about speaking?

150 123 P7: er... no, we can move onto writing

151 124 IN: go on then, go on then, tell me about writing

152 125 P7: oh I can, about 70? 70 points

153 126 IN: 70 points, ok, so let's have a look, that's kind of in the middle so far, yes ok

154 127 P7: yeah...

155 128 IN: so you tell me about that then

156 129 P7: um...maybe I'm not very fluent, um, in writing because I am very, er, cautious about the grammar correction [laughs], yeah, if,  
157 er... If I, I, I, I see the many red, red ink of my grammar errors, maybe I don't want to write, write more

158 130 IN: aha, so... so... you mean when you sort of, when you've done some writing and you've given it to the teacher, it's come back  
159 again, and then it's been marked

160 131 P7: yes, yes

161 132 IN: [16.34] yeah, ok, and is that the Chinese, is that the teachers in China? Or is that your English, is that... who is it that has given  
162 you those marks?

163 133 P7: Um... maybe both because I, er, I didn't realise it was not right, when I was writing, but after I received the teacher's feedback,  
164 wow [laughs] it's not, it's not very, er, right, yes

165 134 IN: ok, so is that, does that change your confidence level?

166 135 P7: yes

167 136 IN: for the, for the worse I imagine?

168 137 P7: yeah, but the teacher always always encouraged us about the main idea of our writing, or the structure, or the org- organisation  
169 of our essay

170 138 IN: ok

171 139 P7: it's more important, yes

172 140 IN: um, I agree [laughs] um, and how confident do you feel about that, do you think you're good at writing texts?

173 141 P7: yeah, I'm very good at the the structure, the main ideas, but I, I, I always, um, not very sure about my, my other grammar  
174 expression

175 142 IN: um, it's very difficult, isn't it, when it's another language? Um...

176 143 P7: yes

177 144 IN: yeah ok, um, obviously when you're writing there's lots of different things that you can write, have you ever done any of these  
178 things here [indicating the visual prompt] like writing essays or, um, reports, anything like that? What do you have to write for your  
179 course?

180 145 P7: I, last week I wrote the, the proposal, er, and some main bodies, about about an academic article

181 146 IN: ok

182 147 P7: [18.39] We have to submit it after ten weeks

183 148 IN: yes, yes, I know [laughs]

184 149 P7: [laughs]

185 150 IN: we've all got to do the same thing, ok, and um, how do you feel about that, confidence-wise?

186 151 P7: It's it's um... yes maybe because the teacher told me that my, my structure is very clear and my sources are very solid

187 152 IN: um hum, that's good

188 153 P7: but er, yes, but some, I still have some detailed, er, incorrect some, some words or phrases

189 154 IN: ok, right, that's interesting, yeah, so, ok, so where does your confidence come from? You're pretty confident about writing, um,  
190 where does that confidence come from?

191 155 P7: most of them, most of them comes from the teacher's feedback

192 156 IN: ah, right

193 157 P7: yeah yeah... and er, er, secondly, um, when when every time when I try to write some words complex sentence, sentences, I  
194 think I can, um, better master the writing skills

195 158 IN: right, ok

196 159 P7: yes

197 160 IN: ok, that's interesting, um...ok, and um, is there anything with writing that you feel less confident about?

198 161 P7: no [laughs] I don't like to write

199 162 IN: oh right, ok [laughs] so you think you're quite good at it but you don't like doing it, is that right?

200 163 P7: yes, I'm a little lazy [laughs]

201 164 IN: [20.33] ah [laughs] ok, I'm sure you're not really, but um... anyway ok, um, right then, so, um, so far we've talked about the  
202 different skills and you're saying there is, there is a sort of, there is differences between those skills, um, does the difference  
203 between your listening and your reading for example, um, cos that seems to be the biggest gap, um, does that affect your  
204 confidence, that you've got, that you feel one skill worse than the other? Or, do you not think about it really?

205 165 P7: yes, um, I didn't recognise the confidence, the importance of confidence before but after I talk talk with you, um, maybe  
206 confidence is very important in our English study

207 166 IN: um hum, ok, you think it is? Why do you think it might be?

208 167 P7: er, what sorry?

209 168 IN: why do you think, why now do you think it might be important?

210 169 P7: um...um... because it happens every day, er, in my daily life and, er, it has an impact on my everyday life, I, I didn't realise it but  
211 today I, I think it...[laughs] it's very important

212 170 IN: that's ok, don't give up, don't give up, um, so can you give me an example, like from your everyday life? Or?

213 171 P7: everyday life? I, I do my self-study documents... and er, preview about our our lessons tomorrow and if I have some free time, I  
214 like to, to watch some videos, interesting videos about movies or listen to the music, yes, so the mobile phone is my best friend

215 172 IN: [laughs] I think it's everyone's best friend these days yeah

216 173 P7 [laughs] yeah

217 174 IN: when you say you watch movies and listen to stuff, is that in English?

218 175 P7: uh yes, half of them are English

219 176 IN: yeah ok

220 177 P7: yeah, thirty percent is Japanese and 20% is Chinese [laughs]

221 178 IN: wow, very good, so you are, are very interested in Japan aren't you? That's true

222 179 P7 [23.20] yes

223 180 IN: good ok, right well, that's all the questions I think I wanted to ask you, um, about about confidence, um, can you think of  
224 anything else at all that you want to tell me? About your English and how confident you feel?

225 181 P7: um, let me see [pause] um, I want to say about my listening, yes, cos in, um, I was not very confident about my listening skills  
226 before especially when when I saw my IELTS listening score, but um, after month of listening to the English music or watch,  
227 watching the English movies, um, maybe my my listening skills, um, improves...

228 182 IN: yeah

229 183 P7: I didn't realise it very, er, obviously, but it, it, it improves

230 184 IN: yeah, yeah, it's almost like it's invisible but it does improve

231 185 P7: yes, it's not visible

232 186 IN: um yeah, ok

233 187 P7: I have more confidence now

234 188 IN: you're more confident now, that's really excellent, I hope you feel that way about speaking very soon, um

235 189 P7: ok

236 190 IN: are you going to travel to the UK?

237 191 P7: yes, I'll got to the UK in January

238 192 IN: [ 25.09] oh fabulous ok, yes

239 Interview continues, but onto the topic of the benefits of travelling to England to study and how to improve speaking skills by making friends.

Participant 8

Duration: 23:51 (of 33:53 recording)

Age 30

Nationality Turkish

First language/s Turkish

Academic subject/s PhD. Forensic Science/Chemistry

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

English learning background: How long? From 10 years old

Where & what for? Elementary/middle school: 4 years 2-3hrs/week; High school specialising in Science + Eng. Language: intensive 1 year 30 hrs/week, then 3 years 20-24 hrs/week, but it was not an EMI education

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely / not really / no

What English exams have you taken? Lots of Turkish English tests, not IELTS or similar officially

What score/s did you get? Reading n/a Writing n/a Speaking n/a Listening n/a

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no N/A

Do these scores seem too high or too low according to your belief about your English level? N/A



1 001 IN: [7.18] so, where you do want to start? Do you want to start with listening and reading? Where do you want to start? I don't  
2 mind

3 002 P8: er, listening

4 003 IN: ok then, right so, um, here, I'd like you to tell me, out of a hundred, um, how confident you feel with listening, um, in academic  
5 contexts?

6 004 P8: um, maybe 80

7 005 IN: ok that's good, ok, um hum, um, and tell me about what things you feel, why do you think that?

8 006 P8: because I am so familiar with the words, um, you know in academic, especially in science, er... some types of words you have to  
9 use them, without them you cannot express, you cannot explain the procedure, you cannot explain the method

10 007 IN: um hum

11 088 P8: so you have to use them, so it's easier to understand to listening academic science topics

12 008 IN: ok, so, so, you're confident about understanding scientific terms in English, and that sort of thing

13 009 P8: yes

14 010 IN: ok, um, how confident are you with understanding the lecturers, um, or your classmates?

15 011 P8: um... I think it's improving, I can say 80

16 012 IN: ok

17 013 P8: cos I had, I have started to work in laboratory, at the beginning I was so, er, how can I say, I was so, um, sad, because I have  
18 question, I will understand on my course, people in there, like they speak so fast so it can be a little bit problem but then I got  
19 used to and I start to understand them

20 014 IN: ok, all right, so you say that your confident score is 80, now looking at the ideas in the middle here [indicates visual prompt]  
21 where do you get that idea from? Um, you say 80, ok, where do you think it comes from is it any of those things there in the  
22 middle or is it something different?

23 015 P8: um... past experience and... yes, past experience because when I came to the UK for the first time, it was terrible, I couldn't  
24 understand anything

25 016 IN: right

26 017 P8: accents, and then just look at people, just people, oh, they, they're moving their mouths what they were saying [mimes moving  
27 mouth and shrugs shoulders] [laughs] it's good ok past experience I can compare with my last year

28 018 IN: I see, compared with the way you were and you feel much better now?

29 019 P8: yeah

30 020 IN: yeah, ok, that's very good, ok, is there anything else there, er, that makes you feel confident? Or is that the most important  
31 one?

32 021 P8: [thinking time] um, could you say it again?

33 022 IN: is that, is that the most important one then? It's not any of the other things there at all?

34 023 P8: I think past experience is the most important because, er, maybe another, er, excuse or, maybe another matter is, in Turkey we  
35 were taught in American English

36 024 IN: right, um hum

37 025 P8: so British English so different from American English, so maybe it can be another problem, another reason, so, um, past  
38 experience

39 026 IN: yeah, I see that's also an influence, isn't it yeah ok, yeah, very different when you came to the UK, ok, all right then, um, shall we  
40 move onto something else now? Is there anything else you want to say about listening, or, shall we move to another one?

41 027 P8: er, we can move on by reading

42 028 IN: [11.55] ok

43 029 P8: I can say 99 [laughs]

44 030 IN: oh wow, ok, ok, so um, does that apply to the things there [indicates visual prompt] like reading coursebooks, journal articles,  
45 etc. etc.

46 031 P8: um, general articles yeah, I'm good at academic context, yes exactly, because in Turkey everyone can read, everyone can  
47 understand, er, English context, English academic context but the main problem with Turkish people, they cannot speak English  
48 fluently, we have a problem with speaking, not reading, not writing, just speaking is the most biggest problem for us

49 032 IN: ok, all right, so um, where does your confidence come from with the reading then, why is it that you're so confident about that?

50 033 P8: er... um... exams... and...I can say... um, marked work... um, comments, comments from others, but from teachers, classmates, I  
51 can say like that yes

52 034 IN: yeah, all of those things then?

53 035 P8: [participant nods]

54 036 IN: so is um, is reading, reading in English easy because you did a lot of it when you were in Turkey?

55 037 P8: yes, um hum

56 038 IN: right, ok then, and you're ok with reading things like journal articles, and things like that in English?

57 039 P8: sorry?

58 040 IN: for your studies, are you ok with reading things like journal articles, is that easy for you?

59 041 P8: yes, um hum

60 042 IN: well that's good, very good, yeah...ok, all right then, um, well let's move then, so reading seems to be a very strong area for you,  
61 listening has got much better since you've been in the UK, so let's talk about speaking and writing then, cos those are what we  
62 call the productive skills, so let's hear, what about your confidence in speaking?

63 043 P8: speaking, er, 70

64 044 IN: sorry?

65 045 P8: 70

66 046 IN: 70, ok so, that's, is that for er speaking, as it says there, speaking English in class, to lecturers etc. etc., is it different if you're  
67 talking to different people?

68 047 P8: um... it's easy, in school with lecturer, with classmates but, sometimes it can be difficult with someone, er, different, because I  
69 understand that in the UK everybody has different accent, so I try to understand but by the time, ok, I started to understand  
70 them, for example, I can understand you very easily because I know you, I know your pronunciation, I know your style but, er,  
71 maybe one week ago I have met someone who pronunciation was so different so at the beginning it was a little bit painful,  
72 then I started the ok, I started to get familiar

73 048 IN: yeah, ok, yeah, yeah... so, so, actually, um, with people you know it's fine but then with people who are new to you it's more  
74 difficult, yeah? All right, that's what affects your confidence is it?

75 049 P8: er sometimes

76 050 IN: ok, so, um again, where does your... you said it was 70, um, where does that personal confidence score come from?

77 051 P8: er, past experience

78 052 IN: yes, ok, ok

79 053 P8: exactly, just one year ago I couldn't say good morning, it was so hard, good morning but now, morning! [in a chirpy manner]  
80 [laughs]

81 054 IN: yeah ok, so, so are you confident, um, what things are you, you're confident in the classroom, um, is there anything you're less  
82 confident to do, um, with speaking?

83 055 P8: actually I feel confident at outside too, cos, I started, I have started be familiar to UK culture, UK language, so, er, when I look  
84 back, it was so different because the new area, new people you don't know what will you do, er, you don't know what will  
85 [17.21] understand, so, um... the pronunciation is so different, because, er, in Turkish we use, we write every letters of the word

86 and especially r sound... for example in English, you have r sound in your alphabet but I have never heard r sound in a word  
87 [laughs]

88 056 IN: ok [laughs]

89 057 P8: it's so polite, it's a so polite language, but in Turkish you have to say every letter, every sound so, er... so you can feel hesitate to  
90 speak someone because you can make a mistake

91 058 IN: yeah, um hum

92 059 P8: so, at the beginning it was like that but...I got used to it, so I feel confident, more confident, maybe at the beginning it was 10  
93 out of one hundred, now it's 70 I think it's a good score [laughs]

94 060 IN: yes, I think it's a big improvement, yeah definitely, ok

95 061 P8: actually, er, it would be good if we do this when I came first then now, we can compare beginning and the end

96 062 IN: yes I know, I know, it would be better that way but, um, yeah, um, ok, um, so is there anything else you want to say about  
97 speaking or shall we move onto writing?

98 063 P8: we can go with writing, yes

99 064 IN: yeah, ok, so what do you think?

100 065 P8: um... actually um, oh I'm good at, cos I can write academic papers... so I can say, 80?

101 066 IN: ok

102 067 P8: cause sometimes I don't know, er, which conjunction is better for, er, this sentence, it's a bit confusing sometimes, but generally  
103 it's good I think

104 068 IN: ok, so stronger than your speaking then you think?

105 069 P8: yes

106 070 IN: yes ok, that's interesting

107 071 P8: speaking is the most difficulties, difficult thing for Turkish people

108 072 IN: right ok, ok, that's interesting, can I just ask about, erm, so you're saying you, you feel quite confident about writing in English in  
109 academic contexts, what about in Turkish? Do you feel the same, do you feel better, worse?

110 073 P8: er, is good good, um hum

111 074 IN: yeah, so even stronger in your own language?

112 075 P8: er...um... in Turkish I know the grammar very well so I can say 90, 95, writing academic, and reading academic is almost 100

113 076 IN: yes

114 077 P8: listening is good in Turkish too, speaking sometimes [unintelligible] terrible for me because as I mentioned before sometimes I  
115 couldn't catch the words

116 078 IN: yes, ok, um, you broke up a little bit there but I think I got what you were saying, um, so, where does that, you've got good  
117 confidence in your writing, again where does that idea come from, is it?

118 079 P8: um...I can describe like that, er... in writing you don't need to read what you write, so you don't need to know pronunciation of  
119 the word

120 080 IN: yeah ok, uh huh

121 081 P8: [laughs] so writing, er... you can be more free when you are writing so, um, from school, from teachers, from my scores, I know  
122 that I'm good at writing

123 082 IN: ok, yeah yeah, ok, it's a little less stressful is it? With writing

124 083 P8: yeah, yes, the correct word! Correct word yes, less stressful yes

125 084 IN: yes, that's interesting because it's very different for other people, um, ok, so you're quite confident then, you're confident with  
126 writing essays? What are you confident in writing? What types of writing do you think is easy for you?

127 085 P8: [22.57] um... scientific and reflective, because you use I, my [laughs]

128 086 IN: yeah, ok, ok, um right then, and is there anything you think, aw, I'm not very good at writing that, um, is there anything you find  
129 difficult?

130 087 P8: um... writing... no, no

131 088 IN: no? ... no that's ok, that's fine, you say that you're good at writing, that's fine [laughs] yes, ok

132 089 P8: yes! In Turkish too because when I was at high school, when I was at high, I written a poem in English

133 090 IN: oh, did you? wow

134 091 P8: yeah... so it's not problem, as I said before, speaking is the problem because, er, pronunciation a little bit difficult for us



135 092 IN: ok, although I can understand you perfectly well, so that's good, ok, right now, I got just a couple of other questions I'd like to  
136 ask you, um, now, does your confidence make a difference to your performance, do you think? So, how confident you feel  
137 about something, do you think it makes a difference to how you perform in English?

138 093 P8: um... could you repeat it again?

139 094 IN: yeah ok, does your confidence make a difference to your performance?

140 095 P8: um... yeah, I understand, but I'm thinking about the answer... um... I think yes, because confidence is important, when you feel  
141 confident, er, you feel yourself, er, like a warrior and then just speaking, just writing, don't think about anything else, just  
142 speaking, just do it like that [laughs]

143 096 IN: uh huh, ok, all right, um, and so, um, obviously you're saying there are differences between your skills, you're saying speaking is  
144 the one you're less confident about, the fact that you've got differences between your skills do you think that affects your  
145 confidence?

146 097 P8: yes, even if I know my topic even if I know my, er, background, if I, if I think, er, my speaking is not good enough, I feel less  
147 confident, confident, then, er, I couldn't show, er, performance what I want, how I want

148 098 IN: and how does that make you feel?

149 099 P8: [26.22] um... it makes me more stressful, because I, I start to think about, er, I give my idea to the others, so I need to choose  
150 correct words, for example, like, er, so different so I'm trying to catch the correct word

151 100 IN: yeah, yeah, ok, so um, one more question really is, um, in your opinion, how important is it to feel confident when using a  
152 second language?

153 101 P8: oh, it's so important, if you don't feel confident, er, you are like a tennis ball, huh-huh-huh-huh, what's going on here? huh-huh-  
154 huh-huh [moves head to and fro] If you feel confident you can catch the words, you can understand, cos you are focussing on  
155 the topic

156 102 IN: yeah, ok

157 103 P8: important I think, feeling confident

158 104 IN: yeah, so you're saying then, that confidence helps you focus, is that the idea?

159 105 P8: yes, helps me focus on something, yes

160 106 IN: ok, that's very interesting, cool, so you can see that I'm, what my research is about here is the difference between the different  
161 skills, is there anything else you want to tell me about how you feel about your English language and your level of confidence in  
162 the skills, is there anything you want to tell me?

163 107 P8: um... er... yesterday I realised that by watching a series, Bodyguard, sometimes I couldn't understand anything, they are so fast,  
164 so and then I thought about this interview... if, if the topic is familiar, I am ok, in my daily life I am ok, in my academic studies I  
165 am ok, so, do I need to think about this series? Erm... do I need to give it permission to make me weak about English, I said no,  
166 because when I, if I think, er, I couldn't understand the, this series, I start to I'm weak at English

167 108 IN: oh, ok, um hum

168 109 P8: so... um... er, just some kind of series or movies watching something can make me stressful about language

169 110 IN: yeah, um hum

170 111 P8: but in Turkish, when I watch something in Turkish, sometimes is the same, they speak so fast, so, I don't understand even if it's  
171 my own language, so, I say it nevermind [laughs]

172 112 IN: yeah that's interesting, yeah, so you're saying, if it's in your own language you don't particularly, it doesn't, it doesn't stress you  
173 out, but when it's in English you think 'oh that must be because my English is bad', and, yeah, that's interesting, yeah, it's  
174 almost like it's more... I don't know, there's more emotions riding on using a second language, than the first one

175 113 P8: yes

176 114 IN: yeah, maybe we're more, I don't know what the word, we're more attentive to how we feel maybe?

177 115 P8: yes

178 116 IN: ok, that's really really good, ok, um, is there anything else you want to tell me, or do you want to ask me anything? I think I'm  
179 finished with all my questions

180 117 P8: er, I have a question

181 118 IN: yes

182 119 P8: can I ask? Do you understand Liverpool accent?

183 [31.09] Interview ends but conversation ensues about local regional accents.

Participant 9

Duration: 32:12 (of 40:06)

Age 36

Nationality Syrian

First language/s Arabic, some Kurdish

Academic subject/s MA TESOL; BA English Literature

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening -formal Arabic very difficult

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

English learning: How long? Age 7 onwards

Where & what for? at primary school and then secondary school, then 4 year English degree

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely / not really / no

What English exams have you taken? IELTS in 2019

What score/s did you get? 6 Reading 5.5 Writing 5.5 Speaking 6.5 Listening 6.5

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no -confident before university, but level shocked him to begin with at university

1 001 IN: [07.54] so, I am very much interested in how you feel about these four skills in academic contexts, so definitely for anything to  
2 do with your university study, ok? So, you can start where you want to [indicating visual prompt] um, which skill would you like  
3 to talk about first with me?

4 002 P9: er...[pause] yeah, from listening

5 003 IN: yeah, ok then, so the first question really is um, you know, if you're going to give yourself a score out of a hundred for how  
6 confident you feel, so this is about your feelings, um, it's not about, you know, the scores you get, but how you feel, um, in  
7 terms of confidence for listening, listening to lectures etc. how, what score would you give yourself out of a hundred?

8 004 P9: er, let, let me say 80 percent

9 005 IN: ok, right, ok, so um, can you tell me about things that you're quite confident about, um, with listening?

10 006 P9: like what for example? So I can, I can, I can, so if if anybody can speak formal English I can understand hundred percent, but if if  
11 sometimes you know, they talking in informal or, er, in some situation relating to the UK I cannot understand a little bit, I can't  
12 understand what they say, for example, about the, a situation happen and when, I cannot say when in my class for example,  
13 when when two, two, two colleagues talking together very fast language I cannot get them very well, but in regarding the  
14 academic situation I can understand nearly hundred percent from that tutor

15 007 IN: ok, from the tutors, yeah

16 008 P9: yeah

17 009 IN: ok, good good, ok, so you're quite confident about listening to lecturers and things like that

18 010 P9: yeah

19 011 IN: ok, and but less confident with, is that when there's two native speakers talking to each other?

20 012 P9: yeah, but they are native speaker, yeah

21 013 IN: yeah ok all right, um, now, my my my last question there in the box there is about where does your confidence come from?

22 Now, the theory says that you get your sense of confidence from different things, now if you look in the middle of this chart

23 here, [indicates visual prompt] we've got different things here, we've got comparing yourself with other people, um, comments

24 that other people give you, past experience, how you feel, um, what about with listening, where do you think your idea of

25 confidence comes from with listening?

26 014 P9: so, of course from the social media, movies, films, Youtube, by listening a lot of different things yeah, and yeah, and that's in the

27 first stage and er, er, sometimes when I er, er, when I new arrival in the UK, I, I, listen a lot to the native speakers, they give me,

28 they provide me feedbacks, even even people Arab people for example who talks two language can interpret, er, more details in

29 Arabic, so that's why they help me a lot

30 015 IN: yeah

31 016 P9: and yeah

32 017 IN: yeah ok, that's good, um, ok, so is there anything else you want to tell me about listening and um, your skills about that? Do you

33 think you do ok compared with other people in your class?

34 018 P9: I don't think so because er, because all of them native speaker [laughs]

35 019 IN: oh ok, I didn't realise that

36 020 P9: yeah, yeah, so most of them I think they are all, they born here or they lived here for fifteens or years, so, more than me, yeah,  
37 no

38 021 IN: so, how do you... so compared with them do you feel less confident then?

39 022 P9: er, not all of them because I not... there are two colleagues from different countries, er, yeah, I think we are in the same level of  
40 listening, but I never compare myself to the native speaker you know [laughs]

41 023 IN: no, no

42 024 P9: yeah

43 025 IN: of course, ok, is there anything else you want to tell me about listening or do you want to move to one of the other skills?

44 026 P9: we can move

45 027 IN: [12.56] yeah ok

46 028 P9: so reading [sigh] uh, to be honest when I did my undergraduate degree I read a lot of novels, poetry and drama, and that's, yeah  
47 that's give me like a push to understand the whole situation, how to read, how to read for long long time, yeah, and how to  
48 analyse the test [text] er, all this help, all this factors help me in the undergraduate degree how to read

49 029 IN: absolutely yeah, ok, so what's your confidence score then do you think?

50 030 P9: er, unfortunately in the IELTS they give me such a high, high, a hard test [laughs] but IELTS, you know, different when I analysed  
51 the test I cannot understand half of it, is not like a story, it's not like a novel, but I could say that I can get [sigh] let me say 70?

52 031 IN: 70 ok

53 032 P9: yeah

54 033 IN: ok, this is about how confident you are, it's not about how you did in an exam, it's it's, you know, you're saying generally that  
55 your undergraduate degree, you you do know how to read and you do know how to read critically it sounds like, um, so you  
56 don't have to be hard on yourself [laughs] so um...

57 034 P9: ok, yeah it's between 70 and 80, it's good yeah

58 035 IN: ok [laughs] I'm glad to hear [laughs] um, so, so, you're confident about reading um poetry, and literature etc? ok, is there  
59 anything that you're not so certain about reading now that you're doing your master's course?

60 036 P9: er, say again?

61 037 IN: is there anything that you're less confident about now that you're doing your master's course?

62 038 P9: ah, regarding reading?

63 039 IN: um

64 040 P9: oh no, I can, I can do all things, so so, yeah, my confidence is ok yeah

65 041 IN: yeah ok, so, so, um, that last question there, where does your confidence come from?

66 042 P9: [15.22] but but, sorry, sorry, if you ask me before I'm doing the master's degree, now my reading was is nearly, yeah, about 70  
67 because I, but when I did the master's degree I received or I been taught by my teachers how to read, how to critically read  
68 certain articles how, they teach me you know, I do feel [unintelligible] when I did master's degree

69 043 IN: oh ok, so is that a recent development for you?



70 044 P9: yeah

71 045 IN: um hum ok, so that's interesting, so um, where does your confidence come from, um, I guess it's from your previous degree,  
72 isn't it? From the past

73 046 P9: yeah yeah

74 047 IN: ok, any of those other things in the middle there, or just the past really?

75 048 P9: [pause] er... I didn't know about my colleagues or my friends about their reading because it is, you know, it is personally matter,  
76 somebody read alone always, so I cannot check with them how I am good and how he is bad, but exams, uh, [unintelligible as he  
77 reads the visual prompt] now, now after I'm doing the master degree I'll compare the English, yeah, sometimes is better than  
78 Arabic you know

79 049 IN: really?

80 050 P9: yeah, because Arabic is complicated language and very hard language but now English is more easier to me to read something,  
81 to sort something else you know

82 051 IN: yeah that's really interesting

83 052 P9: yeah, sometimes in Arabic eh I cannot understand the idea, I read the test [text] more times, I dunno because maybe I didn't  
84 use to read Arabic from years ago

85 053 IN: uh huh, yeah, maybe maybe, cos you practice with English much more yeah, maybe, ok, anything else you want to say about  
86 reading or do you want to move to the next one?

87 054 P9: yeah we can move, to the speaking

88 055 IN: [pause] so, what do you think? This is an academic contexts again remember

89 056 P9: yeah, as you notice my English is still not not very clear for the listener, er, but I'm developing my English speaking skills, slowly  
90 slowly you know, especially when I I speak faster, or sometimes, oh, especially in the classroom context I have a peer-pressure,  
91 especially if they are native speaker

92 057 IN: uh huh

93 058 P9: I feel shy to speak they cannot easily my my accent, my my mistakes in speaking, and this play a very big role especially in TESOL  
94 context I don't know, sometimes I say why I didn't change my major for example, or my degree, because TESOL needs, uh, uh, a  
95 good English, you need to speak fluently and very clear language [sighs] but before I, e, I think, my my TESOL degree, before  
96 when I did the IELTS exam I feel confident because I thought my English is ok, so a listener can understand me I can speak, I can  
97 speak about the topic and, er, I can negotiate the meaning very good, very well, but in the university unfortunately sometimes I  
98 I, I need to, I need time to speak to think about the the, for example the rules the grammar, er, it's hard to me after that when  
99 er, I practice more and more I can yeah I can let the listener understand me, I can negotiate very well, yeah but before yeah, but  
100 before that degree I don't think my English was good

101 059 IN: yeah

102 060 P9: yeah

103 061 IN: all right, so so are you saying that your confidence has changed? Um, with the speaking?

104 062 P9: exactly yeah

105 063 IN: yeah ok, so what score would you give yourself now?

106 064 P9: you should give me a score

107 065 IN: no, no, this is about, this is about how you feel

108 066 P9: [laughs for a while] ok, er, yeah seventy, between seventy and eighty, I think, eighty five?

109 067 IN: ok, uh huh, so quite confident then yes

110 068 P9: [20.45] yeah yeah

111 069 IN: good good, so um, in the academic context, so what are you confident you can do, um, how do you feel you know in the  
112 classroom, speaking to lecturers or, um, what do you think?

113 070 P9: er, er, I feel I am less confident to be honest

114 071 IN: oh, ok

115 072 P9: If I speaking yeah?

116 073 IN: yeah yeah, we're talking about speaking

117 074 P9: so when I'm talking to my tutors it's ok, but but when I talk in front of the classmate colleagues, to be honest I have, er, some  
118 anxiety you know

119 075 IN: ok

120 076 P9: or peer-pressure sometimes, even my English maybe you think I can speak, but listen I can understand but when I I, I speak, er, I  
121 don't know I feel an anxious

122 077 IN: yeah

123 078 P9: to some degree

124 079 IN: ok

125 080 P9: yeah, and this is play a role in I have to speak or

126 081 IN: yeah, so that's that's definitely speaking with native speakers is it? How do you feel with other international students?

127 082 P9: good, I did I did some lessons with the, last, in 2019 with the, in the pre-sessional course and I met a lot of international

128 students. All of them really were worse than me you know, they cannot speak, they cannot speak for only one minute or two

129 minute

130 083 IN: yeah ok yeah

131 084 P9: [22.28] and you know of course Karen, you know better than me, all of them they have very bad language, I don't know why,

132 and if we compare my approach in Syria to their approach, so I, I learned in very traditional approach in Syria, grammar

133 translation method, is hard to speak, hard to write, hard to read very well but, I, for example, students from China they have

134 native speaker to teach them, they're, they using very very current methods in teaching but still their language is not good, yeah

135 085 IN: yeah, that's interesting then, so so, more confident speaking to to other international students than to talking to native

136 speakers, um ok

137 086 P9: yeah

138 087 IN: yeah yeah, ok, and that sense of confidence, does that come from the classroom, do you ever speak English outside of the

139 classroom?

140 088 P9: of course yeah

141 089 IN: yeah ok, so how do you feel in that context?

142 090 P9: is very good you know, I am, sometimes I, er, I work as a sales representative for a big company from London, I go to people, to  
143 the business owner, negotiate them and make there good them, my English I think is good because the listener can understand  
144 me very well so we can make a deal, we can make a, you know, I can sell to them a lot of products explain everything very well,  
145 everything yeah

146 091 IN: so definitely, is it right to say then you're much more confident outside of the academic context?

147 092 P9: yeah

148 093 IN: ok, that's interesting yeah, ok, um, and I suppose some of those, um, that confidence comes from past experience, I suppose, if  
149 you've had experiences of of, working experiences etc. is that right?

150 094 P9: maybe, maybe, yeah, what do you mean what do you mean by?

151 095 IN: I mean as in, you feel confident, er, and I'm thinking that comes from your experiences rather than anyone telling you that  
152 you're good at speaking, is that right?

153 096 P9: yeah

154 097 IN: good, ok, is there anything else you want to tell me about speaking in English?

155 098 P9: um, now... let's me see, uh, but but I suffer, to be honest I suffer from one thing, I cannot speak for a long time, I when, for  
156 example, if you, if I present a, for a long presentation I cannot negotiate all of it to convince people, you know, still I'm not  
157 confident for this, I cannot speak for example one hour convincing somebody else

158 099 IN: ah, yeah, ok, so so, yes, that's a very specialist skill though I think

159 100 P9: yeah, cos you need, yeah you need to speak a lot without thinking

160 101 IN: yeah, that's a presentation skill isn't it?

161 102 P9: yeah yeah

162 103 IN: I suppose it's a teaching skill as well [laughs]

163 104 P9: a teaching skill yeah

164 105 IN: have you got any teaching experience?

165 106 P9: yeah, in Syria, two years or more before, before the war taking place in Syria

166 107 IN: yeah and so when you were a teacher in Syria, what language were you using to do your teaching?

167 108 P9: both, yeah

168 109 IN: I was just interested cos you talked about that in talking in front of a group, you know, giving a presentation, I just wondered

169 110 P9: yeah, but but you know, in Syria we we use very traditional methods in teaching so and, one more thing in Syria we didn't do

170 any training, er, our teaching training before we teach

171 111 IN: oh! ok

172 112 P9: [26.32] yeah, yeah I know I know this is very [intelligible] but but this is the situation in Syria, and the only department that

173 allow you to teach English is English literature, we studying English literature and you go straight away to the school to teach

174 English, so it is something really relevant you know, and now I did my, I will do my dissertation about the feedbacks in Syria, we

175 get very very bad feedbacks in Syria, we don't we don't know our faults our mistakes in English, we only receive like a formative  
176 er, er, feedback, so only the score without feedback from the tutor don't know anything, so yeah

177 113 IN: and you think that's a problem

178 114 P9: it is big problem, um

179 115 IN: no no I agree completely, ok, right, shall we move to the last thing then, talking about writing?

180 116 P9: um hum

181 117 IN: right so, let's find out, how confident are you with writing in academic contexts?

182 118 P9: [pause] eighty percent

183 119 IN: ok, yeah, ok and where does that idea come from? Why do you think eighty percent?

184 120 P9: er, I used to write a lot [laughs] er yeah, and especially my undergraduate period, I wrote a lot of analysis of writing, a lot of  
185 essays

186 121 IN: ok, all in English?

187 122 P9: all in English yeah, so writing is all right yeah

188 123 IN: ok, so have you got experience in in writing all those different types of writing there [indicates visual prompt] essays, reports  
189 etc. etc.?

190 124 P9: what do you mean by experience? yeah

191 125 IN: as in as in have you written many essays or reports or dissertation? Have you done a dissertation in your country?

192 126 P9: not before, yeah, I, I write I wrote a lot of essays yeah

193 127 IN: so do you feel, how do you feel confidence-wise with essay writing, fine?

194 128 P9: er, I get for example eighty percent, yeah, if you ask me before the, doing the degree, master's degree or after the master  
195 degree, so, before the master degree, er, my writing is not very academic because I don't use a lot of academic words but after  
196 that master degree I [unintelligible] I brushed up my skills and now I am fine yeah, I can write very well yeah

197 129 IN: and what are you, what are you, you are confident with the writing then, is there anything that you're less confident about? Is  
198 there any areas, where you think, 'oh, I'm not sure what I'm doing'

199 130 P9: writing? Er, to be honest, writing a start or comparing two things with numbers, er, still I'm confusing how to write it, how to do,  
200 how to compare, and sometimes I'm confused because I received a lot of feedbacks I cannot use the proper academic words in  
201 these sentences you know, I'm talking about that sentences structure

202 131 IN: ok

203 132 P9: er yeah, sometimes I use the wrong items or the wrong er, word, yeah

204 133 IN: yeah ok, so you find that, so those are the things you've got, what about, um, academic things like referencing and that sort of  
205 thing, is that ok for you?

206 134 P9: I know a lot of referencing yeah yeah, it was easy for me

207 135 IN: um, so where does your confidence come from? Um, so again, look at those ones in the middle there [indicates visual prompt]is  
208 it, where does your sense of being good at writing come from?



209 136 P9: as I said before, er, well because the past the past experience, er, er, er, like er, when I did my undergraduate degree I write a  
210 lot and er, and er, I I study a lot when I did the IELTS exam as well, so writing is the obvious thing that we can read and study,  
211 yeah it is not like listening or reading or speaking but I think we we just train ourself to write very well

212 137 IN: yeah, good ok, right, well thank you for those, um, so I've just got a couple of extra questions if you don't mind

213 138 P9: no problem

214 139 IN: [31.58] ok, um, one of them is, um, your sense of confidence um, do you think your confidence, does it make a difference to  
215 your performance? So, if you feel confident about something, do you think that changes your, how, how well you do in that  
216 subject?

217 140 P9: well, well it depends, in formal situations sometimes, yeah, I check my my, I check my speaking or listening or writing or my  
218 skills twice, and this confuse me, make me an anxious, especially in academic situations, but in normal situations I'm very  
219 confidence I can very well picture them others [?] sometimes better than native speaker

220 141 IN: um hum

221 142 P9: sometimes I read faster than anybody else, in social situations I'm talking, yeah, er, in, even I can do like, er, I did a proof for my  
222 my friends in other major, but but in academic situations, especially in TESOL, sometimes I feel less confident because all of  
223 them very good English speakers you know, most of them natives, and most of them teach for a long time, and this can give me  
224 a little bit an anxious you know

225 143 IN: yeah

226 144 P9: and yeah, it's not a shame to be honest because I am a native speaker, I'm speaking too many languages and sometimes yeah,  
227 but er, of course when I feel that peer-pressure, I even when I think about my sentences I can make a lot of mistakes

228 145 IN: ok, so do you think it's that pressure that makes your performance worse?

229 146 P9: sometimes, yeah, sometimes

230 147 IN: that's a shame [laughs] ok, um, can I, another question is, do you think there are differences between your skills and does that,  
231 does that impact on your confidence as well, so, for example if you think there's a big difference between your speaking and  
232 your writing, or your reading and your speaking, does that affect your confidence at all?

233 148 P9: er, for myself I think all of them are the same level I don't know, maybe, maybe if you asked some students from who study  
234 Business Management for example, maybe he said 'well my writing is better than my speaking', but because my major is TESOL,  
235 all all the skills, er, are the same level I think yeah, er yeah, and I should occupy, be occupied with all of them to teach English,  
236 especially in Arabs situation or when I teach about you know, er yeah, but, what I can say, er, can you repeat your question  
237 again, please?

238 149 IN: yeah no I'm just interested to know whether people have, um, people have big differences in their skills whether that affects  
239 their confidence, um, you know, for example, if you think you're very bad at one thing does that make you feel less confident  
240 about another thing, so

241 150 P9: my no, I think all of them are the same level

242 151 IN: yeah for you

243 152 P9: yeah for me

244 153 IN: ok, that's fine, ok and I've got a last question for you which is, when you're using a second language, um, how important do you  
245 think it is to feel confident, do you think it's a big, big, is it important to feel confident or not?

246 154 P9: second language, English then, er [sigh] I don't understand to be honest your question, er [sigh] can you repeat?

247 155 IN: yeah yeah ok, let's try again, how important is it to feel confident when you are using a second language? So it doesn't matter,  
248 it's not just in English

249 156 P9: in general yeah? In general, oh, I feel er, er, I think I am confident in using English language, yeah yeah, I think I am good yeah,  
250 especially if, if somebody er, er, is not native speaker so is good, my language is good I can communicate I can maybe share it,  
251 no matter how many mistake I make my idea will be received er, yeah, in very good manner maybe, yeah the listener can  
252 understand me, yeah I feel I am confident about my language, my second language

253 157 IN: so you, are you saying then that you think it's important to be confident in order to be good at it? or do you think

254 158 P9: do you mean in one skills more than other for example?

255 159 IN: no, just just generally, um, what I'm trying to see is if you feel confident about using a second language, um, what am I trying to  
256 say? [laughs]

257 160 P9: take your time no problem

258 161 IN: [37.52] yeah, basically, how important is it to feel confident, um, when you're using a second language or is it that there's other  
259 things that are more important, so, for example, um, some people might think to be good at a second language you need to  
260 study hard, or you have to have a certain strategy, other people think, no it only matters to be quite confident to to do that

261 162 P9: ok, yeah, yeah I, er, exactly that's what happened last year when I, I, newly start studying at the UCLan the university and I, I  
262 said to [name of tutor] look [name of tutor] I feel sometimes I feel, I'm anxious when I speak in front of the native speaker, she  
263 said no, try to encourage yourself to and speak all of so you are not native but just speak and your language is ok and you will  
264 help you a lot. I follow her advice, yeah, when I encourage myself to speak, yeah I can improve myself at the same time I can  
265 speak very well language, and my idea is yeah, if somebody can for example, er, encourage himself to speak to write to do  
266 something you can do it in very good manner, is it clear for you?

267 163 IN: yeah yeah, that a good explanation, thank you very much yes

268 164 P9: [laughs] no problem, did I answer you your question yeah?

269 165 IN: yes yes you did, um ok, is there anything you'd like to ask, I think I've finished with my questions now, is there anything you'd  
270 like to ask me?

271 166 P9: no that's fine, and all the best for your dissertation

272 167 IN: yes, thanks very much

Participant 10

Duration: 34:23 (of 46.02 recording)

Age 22

Nationality Czech

First language/s Czech

Academic subject/s Asia Pacific Studies with Korean

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

English learning: How long? 13 years, starting age 8-9

Where & what for? Through primary & secondary school, but self-taught using the internet thereafter

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? definitely / not really / no (writing used to be worse, not confident but no longer)

What English exams have you taken? 2017 FCE C1

What score/s did you get? Reading C1 Writing B1/B2 Speaking C1 Listening C1 (messed up writing exam)

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no

Do these scores seem too high or too low according to your belief about your English level? Trying for C1 level, but did not fully expect to get it for Speaking so exam made her feel she was better than she thought, but she was sad about the writing result. Not surprised by R/L result.

- 1 001 IN: [11.39] so, for listening, um, I'm very much interested in your feelings about listening when you're in an academic context so  
2 for your university study, um, and here's some ideas, listening to lectures, listening in class or when you're being assessed,  
3 basically how confident do you feel, give yourself a score out of a hundred
- 4 002 P10: um, ok, that's, that's something to take into consideration with that and that is usually teachers don't have strong accents and  
5 they're very easy to understand, um, because in Britain there are so many accents, people have so many accents, um,  
6 sometimes I struggle, er, understanding certain classmates for example, I have a Scottish classmate in one of my class, and it  
7 [laughs] especially since it's online and the audio is not clear, that's just hell sometimes [laughs] it's super awkward so let's say  
8 because of this, because of accents basically, let's say like 85, if, if I was in America I would give about 95 [laughs] but since I'm  
9 in Britain I have to give it like 85
- 10 003 IN: ok, uh huh, ok, um, so what sorts of things are you confident about, um, are you confident when you listen to a lecture?
- 11 004 P10: yeah, no, with lectures, er, I have no trouble at all usually, they, there might, sometimes there might be a word I don't  
12 understand but it's never, like, the problem's not in the listening
- 13 005 IN: ok
- 14 006 P10: like I said first lecturers usually do not have very strong accents and they speak very clearly
- 15 007 IN: ok yeah and so, am I right in saying that the things you're less confident about is listening to classmates with strong regional  
16 accents?
- 17 008 P10: oh definitely, definitely, yeah

18 009 IN: yeah ok, all right, now um, that that other question there is where does your confidence come from, it seems like you have a  
19 quite a high, quite a good level of confidence, where do you think that confidence comes from?

20 010 P10: I honestly don't, I would say it just comes from the fact that I do understand them?

21 011 IN: um hum

22 012 P10: I don't, when I was learning, when I was learning English, I started, one of the things I used to do, it wasn't me actual learning  
23 but I learned through it, was that I was always listening to videos and Youtube, um, and stuff like that usually they had subtitles  
24 but sometimes they didn't, so I had to listen and I would say by that, I kind of bettered my listening skills and I do not struggle  
25 with listening, mostly [laughs]

26 013 IN: ok, so in a way that's, that's, it's from experience, you've had lots of experiences with listening, am I fair to say that?

27 014 P10: yeah definitely

28 015 IN: yeah ok, good, ok brilliant, is there anything else you want tell me about, anything to do with listening to English, um, as part of  
29 your study, is there, there's might not be but that's ok

30 016 P10: no with listening, I really don't think so no

31 017 IN: no no, ok, it sounds like you're really quite confident about that, so do you want to move to, er, I don't know, reading?

32 018 P10: yeah, can be, ooh oh no [laughs] coursebooks, journal articles, for assessment [reading from prompt] um, should I give you a  
33 score?

34 019 IN: yes please, yes

35 020 P10: um, should I give a score where, but like, should I give you a score but in the scenario that I do not have a translator with me  
36 [laughs] like, you know

37 021 IN: yes yes, I suppose yes, definitely yes

38 022 P10: all right, um, ok academic, coursebooks are fine, that would be like 95, I don't, that's all right, journal articles I would give like...  
39 [laughs] 70? ish, maybe?

40 023 IN: seventy?

41 024 P10: it might be quite high, yeah 70, it depends, on the journal article, sometimes they'll hell to go through and I find myself very  
42 often, er, Googling or translating certain words just to understand the point a author is trying to make, it used to be worse in  
43 the first year obviously when I moved to England and I was like 'what?' [laughs] now it's definitely better but it's still, maybe like  
44 65 when it comes to journal, j... journal articles

45 025 In: yeah, uh hum, ok, so it's specifically that that you feel less confident about

46 026 P10: [16.31] yeah, cos materials we get in class or the stuff teachers give us, they're not hard to understand but it's like academic  
47 texts, made by academics for academics, they are just so hard sometimes, with the language written, the way they're written  
48 and the words they are using since I don't know, I don't know most of the, how would you say, like the academic, proper  
49 academic English words

50 027 IN: you mean like the terminology they use?

51 028 P10: yes yes yes

52 029 IN: um ok, all right



53 030 P10: so it's the structure and the terminology in it

54 031 IN: yeah, yeah, cos the language can be very specific, can't it, especially if its around research methods and those sorts of things as  
55 well

56 032 P10: definitely

57 033 IN: yeah, ok, um, so you're very confident about course work and stuff like that, um, where do you think that confidence comes  
58 from?

59 034 P10: I've read so...um, I used to read, well, I still read online mostly, but I've read so many stories, it's been I'm a very quick reader  
60 even in English, in both my languages so I'm able to get through a story that like, it has like four thousand, er, four hundred  
61 thousand words in a day and a half, if I have time it's a day, not even a day, um, so I've read so many things basically, that my  
62 understanding of context and everything that's fine, it's just the academic texts that I'm not used to that's a problem

63 035 IN: yeah, so do you, do you read, um, read English, er, for leisure, as in reading novels

64 036 P10: yeah yeah

65 037 IN: in English, ok

66 038 P10: yeah, even books I have here, yeah

67 039 IN: and so, are you a reader in your own language, it sounds like you might be?

68 040 P10: [18.15] yeah, yeah, I used to read loads in Czech and then I kinda since I was reading stories and stuff about things I liked, there  
69 were like, let's say the Sherlock, it's been a few years but that's a good example, er, most stories that were actually good were  
70 in English [laughs] er, Czech republic is really small, we have 10 million people here, it's not like a lot [laughs] so most of the nice

71 stories and the theories and the discourse around the stuff I used to like, or like, is in English, so let's say I'm a reader in Czech  
72 obviously, but these days or these years I mostly read in English, everything, from news, everything

73 041 IN: yeah, so you've got wide experience there, haven't you? yeah, ok, good ok, anything else you want to tell us about erm  
74 reading?

75 042 P10: um... no, no, it the academic you know, academic articles are just painful

76 043 IN: yeah, and that's not surprising I think British students struggle with those things, yeah, ok, right then let's get to the skills of  
77 speaking and writing then

78 044 P10: okay... um... [reading from prompt] personal confidence score

79 045 IN: [accidentally removes visual prompt] oops, sorry what have I done?

80 046 P10: oh no, where did it go? Ok [laughs] Um, with speaking... um... let's say confidence-wise, um... that would be around 65  
81 really?

82 048 P10: um, because I feel like I struggle to get my point across [laughs] in lectures especially, um, but right now I'm having a really good  
83 English day by the way, this is a good English day, but

84 049 IN: ok that's good, I'm very lucky

85 050 P10: [laughs] oh no honestly, because otherwise I would quite get quite frustrated with myself that I cannot explain myself better,  
86 and that's that's what happens loads of times when there's a topic that I, I have a point to say to prove and I don't I no longer  
87 do like create sentences in my head before I say them, I don't do that, so I just start talking and I hope for the best, and [laughs]  
88 erm and honestly, er, my confidence level in my speaking and listening especially, er, but in academic settings like the listening's

89 fine but like overall, went down, because back in Czech Republic I was really good compared to people around me I was one of  
90 the best, in English right, and when I went to America it was 2016, that was before I had the FCE exam in 2017 right, I still was  
91 [21.10] able to communicate and I came here and with all accents and, it it's super hard to understand and since I have to use  
92 English every day basically, I found how much I'm lacking compared, in speaking, compared to actual English native

93 051 IN: I see yes ok, so is that, that is basically comparing yourself with a native-speaker isn't it?

94 052 P10: yeah yeah

95 053 IN: so, so did that hit your confidence then?

96 054 P10: oh yeah, definitely, because I felt like, as I said I was, I'm compared to like Czech people I'm really good, of course there are  
97 people better than me, but like my level is good [laughs] and, but here my level is not good, I'm not good enough for pretty  
98 much, like, especially in lessons when I have a point to prove and I loo-, and I can't get it across, it's so frustrating, and then  
99 some British person just, you know, comes in and like 'oh yeah, this and this' because obviously [laughs] it's just so frustrating

100 055 IN: ok, so, just remind me then, what score do you think for the academic context, you know like

101 056 P10: it got worse and it's like 65

102 057 IN: 65 ok, what about speaking English outside of class?

103 058 P10: [silence] um... 75?

104 059 IN: you know chatting with friends

105 060 P10: yeah 75, even though, ok, speaking, no it still happens especially when I am at work, I still screw up for some reason, even  
106 though it's like, it's supposed to be a really easy sentence and it just doesn't go right for some reason so yeah like 75

107 061 IN: ok, that's interesting, ok, so and then does that, does your sense of confidence change, um, for example, between being in a  
108 class or at work and then that situation when you're being assessed, does that have a, make a difference to you? You know like  
109 when you have to do a presentation for example

110 062 P10: yeah yeah yeah yeah, to be honest, um, when I , when I do presentations and such, er, I prepare beforehand, erm, so I don't I  
111 don't think, for example now I'm struggling to get my point across [laughs] since I prepare beforehand I can't really compare it  
112 to having to speak on a spot with a native speaker, so, my presentation, I feel fine when I have to present or do something  
113 [23.34] because usually I have a text prepared beforehand, or I just looked into the topic, it's when I have to speak on the spot,  
114 for example, during a lesson, a question is asked I think I know the answer or I have an opinion to share, boom, you have to say  
115 it, I start and it's gone [laughs]

116 063 IN: ok yeah, I can see that that would really, yeah, that is a different situation isn't it yeah, ok, um, so um... that question where  
117 does your confidence come from, um, so you said comparison with others didn't you, really, I think

118 064 P10: yeah maybe, maybe

119 065 IN: ok, are there any other

120 066 P10: um, my confidence comes fr- definitely from comparisons because, um, obviously when I'm in a group of English-speaking  
121 people and I'm one of the best there, my confidence is good [laughs] for a good reason, but when I'm with native-speakers it's  
122 not because I'm literally the worst one in the group obviously, um, and then, I don't know how to, if that's what confidence, if I  
123 can use that example, but it's just, depending on how my first few interactions go, I usually can tell if I'm gonna be good or not  
124 [laughs]

125 067 IN: ok ok

126 068 P10: I dunno how to, how to explain that

127 069 IN: no I suppose you're quite sensitive to the person you're speaking with so you quickly recognise whether they're following  
128 what you're saying or not, maybe

129 070 P10: yep, yep... if I would say speaking English to lecturers I'm not scared because I know they won't judge me and they'll try to help  
130 me to, if I fail to get my point across they'll try to understand, in front of classmates, I'm, ironically I'm fine, because I know they,  
131 if they judge me then like that's their problem [laughs] and they u- like if I'm speaking they didn't get their point across or they  
132 didn't even try to speak so I'm fine, at least I'm trying right? [laughs]

133 071 IN: yeah yeah yeah, yeah ok

134 072 P10: and assessments that's that's usually fine and I also know that people would, I, kind of suppose that people take into account  
135 that I'm not a native speaker, so I'm not that, that scared to make mistakes I just try to do as best as I can

136 073 IN: [25.48] yeah yeah ok, that's very interesting, all right, is there anything else you want to say about speaking, I think I think  
137 you've explained yourself very well actually

138 074 P10: oh did I well thank you [laughs]

139 075 IN: ok then, let's move to writing then, um, so, what's your, how confident do you feel with, um, writing?

140 076 P10: um, since I write and I have a translator open and I might search in a Google or something, I'm completely fine because  
141 sometimes it happens both in in Eng- in speaking and writing, is that I forgot forget a word obviously and I can think as much as I  
142 want about it sometimes I just won't remember, and I have to go through several words to get to the word that I actually need  
143 like I know the general meaning so I try Googling something else and how by that I get the specific word that I need, let's say if I

144 didn't have a translator like translator open, that would be very time-consuming and I'm not very sure how that would go in  
145 case I got stuck, so should I take that into account or?

146 077 IN: yeah, you can take that into account, I mean they're different situations aren't they, so for example on this prompt you can see  
147 we've got writing essays, where you would assume that would be at home, working on your own, um, whereas a timed exam  
148 essay would be different cos you wouldn't have a translator necessarily, so, you can give me different scores according to  
149 different types. You probably haven't done a dissertation because you're in your second year

150 078 P10: no, not yet thank God, um, um, writing essays is fine, that's my writing confidence I make mistakes in prepositions as any other  
151 Slavic speaker basically, um, even though I, obviously, I'm aware of it so I put them everywhere, and then I put it like into  
152 Grammarly or something and I still just like eight ten words which are lacking a preposition where the preposition is not  
153 supposed to be for some reason I'm like 'ok' [laughs] so that happens, but um, let's say like writing essays that's around 80, I get  
154 like, I got I think it was seventy-four on my academic language in my last essay so I'm fine [laughs] er, reports, what exactly?

155 079 IN: um, you might not have ever had to write one, a report is just, it's a different format where you have headings and short  
156 paragraphs, it's rather than writing in um, in a series of paragraphs, you're writing with with headings, it's a different type of  
157 text

158 080 P10: oh, ok I don't think I've written a report

159 081 IN: no, don't worry about it then

160 082 P10: [28.38] let's say timed exam essay that would be a nightmare [laughs] so if my confidence in writing essays is like 80 to 85  
161 because taking down the twenty, fifteen percent because of the mistakes I make, then then Grammarly like catches right, but  
162 that's not me catching it that's the Grammarly doing its job [laughs] um, um, let's say like timed exam essays would be absolute

163 nightmare, oh my God, um...[laughs] I really hope I'll never ever ever have to write timed essay in an exam, uh, hum, like my  
164 confidence in my, even though I might do better I think I would if I had to, I would do better, my confidence at the moment  
165 would be like around 55 to 60

166 083 IN: ok and so what's causing that to be so low?

167 084 P10: um, that I don't trust myself that I will be able to produce academic language in timed frame, I take very long, my essays take  
168 long time to write, to research and everything, longer than my friends from what I can compare I don't know if it's like, we're all  
169 non-native speakers here, like non-native speakers of English, here, so um it's definitely not cos they're British and I'm not, I  
170 take longer overall, but I like to take my time to write it down, make mistakes, check it and everything so timed exam would  
171 take all that away from me I would have to on the spot create this perfect English essay and I know I wouldn't be able to, there  
172 would be so many mistakes

173 085 IN: hum, yeah

174 086 P10: I would be able to get, like if I knew the topic well I would be able to get like, what, um, maybe like sixty-two, sixty-five like if I  
175 was really like ambitious but I think, I usually get like seventy-four, or sixty-eight, I get around like, around a first or high second,  
176 so, a timed exam would be a no no [laughs]

177 087 IN: do you think do you think your confidence was knocked by the, by your past experiences or?

178 088 P10: um...

179 089 IN: or is it that you just know?

180 090 P10: I mean it's my, this fear maybe kind of rooted in the, in the FCE exam I took seven years ago and I remember that I, you know, I  
181 got the topic, it was not even an academic text I think it was a creative story or something, maybe story-telling I'm not really  
182 sure anymore, and yet, I struggled, to create a good story on spot, so thinking I would have to, it would be the same thing as  
183 speaking on spot in a class, but like writing it down getting the spelling right, getting prepositions right and actually making it  
184 [31.25] like, you know, you even have like the structure in English, how you have to write essays we don't have that in our  
185 Czech, like, I was for one year I was in university in the Czech Republic and I used to write like essays there, but it's something  
186 completely different, we don't have this certain structure English essays have, so I would have to do all that at one spot, I would  
187 struggle write a nice timed story, even if it was like a fantasy story or something, it would be even worse, if it was actually  
188 something about an like knowledge kind of, writing down my opinion or anything no [laughs]

189 091 IN: ok, so um, can I ask about your confid-, you sound very confident about writing essays, where do you think that confidence  
190 comes from, is that

191 092 P10: from my marks actually, oh I did not feel confident when I started, but then I started getting high marks and it continued even  
192 this year when I felt like, even when I, which is like super strange, I feel like I submit, I have to be honest, like really bad essay  
193 I'm not I'm not satisfied with it I get sixty-eight or seventy-four even, that happened to me just now I was like...what?

194 093 IN: wow

195 094 P10: [laughs] so, that where my confidence comes from, because, the lecturers even when it's, um, anonimly marked, so they  
196 cannot, like be like 'oh, she's not she's not English, so let's take that into account,' I don't know if teachers do that but they  
197 might right? So, even like in anonimly marked essays, I get good marks so that's where my confidence in writing essays comes  
198 from



199 095 IN: yeah ok, so it's definitely from marked work yeah

200 096 P10: yeah

201 097 IN: ok, right is there anything else you want to say about writing?

202 098 P10: um... yeah, I think writing is the one skill that I used... the most sources for, like, this the one skill that I, like, reading sometimes I  
203 Google something, speaking, when I'm speaking, during lectures I have translator open, so if I forget a word I can just quickly  
204 put it in and check and continue with the sentence but, writing is probably still my weakest skill, and I'm talking about it it's  
205 probably my weakest weakest skill, actually definitely [laughs]

206 099 IN: [33.41] ok, that's very interesting, good, ok, um, now I've just got a couple of other questions I'd like to ask you if you're ok, um,  
207 um, ok, right, now let's see how you go with this question, um, does your confidence make a difference to your performance,  
208 do you think? So, how you feel about it?

209 100 P10: yeah, um, I mean definitely, cos when I feel like, when I, for example fail to explain something, my confidence goes down  
210 because oh I certainly did not do that, like did not explain that well and, my confidence goes down, and when that happens I  
211 just, my English just gets so much worse [laughs] um, because I think it's a mental block, once I feel like I'm failing my brain's like  
212 'we're failing!' [laughs] and I start to forget words, I start to get stuck in the middle of sentence and I'm not able to really explain  
213 myself, um, or for example at work, I have this kind of mind set, there are, we are not they are not just English people there, I  
214 work in a Korean restaurant so we have we have, um, a Thai, a Thai guy there, a Korean a Korean guy and girl there, she went  
215 back to Korea, but you know, and then there's few English speakers, like um, English people, you know what I-, yeah [laughs]

216 101 IN: native speakers yes

217 102 P10: yes thank you, native speakers [laughs] erm, and I, I kind of, every time I go to work, no matter how good or bad of English day I  
218 have I struggle to communicate properly for some reason and it started, I guess it started when I started working there, er, but  
219 till this day I have trouble really getting, like, having good conversations because I'll forget things, even though right now I'm  
220 doing quite good because I'm speaking and it makes sense, um, it makes sense, but, every time I go to work, I, I already, and I  
221 try to ask for something, get something across, I just struggle, so I guess that's... it's a pattern at this point, and every time I step  
222 through the door my confidence is just like 'nah' [laughs]

223 103 IN: that's, that's, so then, then you don't really want to speak, so if you're thinking 'ah it's not gonna work', um, ok, interesting, um,  
224 so would you say there are differences between your skills, I think you said yes really

225 104 P10: yeah, yeah, definitely, there's a difference between my passive and active skills, and there's definitely a difference between  
226 speaking and writing, now that I've talked about it, yeah [laughs]

227 105 IN: and does that affect your confidence then, do you think? You know like having a difference between them, so so you're really  
228 confident with the reading, it sounds like you are?

229 106 P10: yeah yeah

230 107 IN: [36.43] does that affect your conf-, knowing there's a difference does that affect your confidence at all?

231 108 P10: um... it's, I don't know if it, um, necessarily affects my confidence, it makes me feel, no it's, the difference between the different  
232 areas does not make me feel less confident, it's me comparing myself with English speakers that makes me, make me feel,  
233 makes me feel less confident

234 109 IN: right ok, that's very interesting, yeah, ok, that's good

235 110 P10: because, yeah, I'll, I just kind of, I'm glad that I'm good in some areas and, if I'm just worse in speaking and writing that's just  
236 frustrating in itself, it's not frustrating because I'm comparing it to my reading

237 111 IN: got it, um hum, ok very interesting, all right, um, good, um, now yeah, I've got some other, just one or two other questions, um,  
238 have you ever thought about this before, have you ever thought about how confident you are in English?

239 112 P10: I mean yes, before I moved to England, definitely, cos, um, I went through a certain programme, it was for free, they basically  
240 set the whole thing studying in England up for me, so I just signed few things, filled in a few papers and here I went right, um,  
241 so but they had these big, big talks, with like two hundred people in the room, of everyone who was going to Britain, er, to  
242 study abroad, like study at the university here, and they were, they were talking about they move there, they were like, moved  
243 to England, they were confident and that they started talking to actual British speakers and they realised they don't understand  
244 anything they are saying, so I used to think about, like, that's what I was thinking about my confidence in the language, um,  
245 because I was like, you know, I'm pretty good, I think I'll be, I won't have the same exact problem as all these people that went  
246 there before me, or at least it won't be that bad, and it wasn't that bad, like, it's not like I didn't understand anything, some  
247 people literally don't understand anything when they moved here, even though they can speak English, they're just like 'what?'  
248 [laughs] it's so, it's really funny, uh, but, I had three British roommates and I was the only international like UK, non-UK student  
249 there basically and every time they speaking, talking to each other, no idea, especially fast paced talking to each other, they  
250 kinda, that's a big difference if British person is speaking to me specifically, or if I'm in a group and they're, or if I'm kind of  
251 included in the conversation but there's two people speaking, because the accent becomes so much stronger [laughs] so much  
252 stronger, it's like they're taking me into consideration, which is very nice, but once they stop doing that I can't understand  
253 anything

254 113 IN: right yeah

255 114 P10: [39.45] so I used to think about my confidence, I thought, um, I was quite confident that I would be ok, and then I realised that  
256 writing essays is quite hard [laughs] um, so that was, that was, it takes me a lot, it takes me a long time to put it together which  
257 is something that's happening til this day, and then understanding British speakers is also quite hard because of their accents, so  
258 yeah that was

259 115 IN: does does how confident you feel, does that impact on your motivation at all, cos you're very intrinsically interested in English

260 116 P10: um, motivation for what?

261 117 IN: um, um, motivation to continue with with learning English and using English

262 118 P10: um... I mean it's... I think my progress in English, it's just kinda happening on its, by itself, like um I can just look two years back  
263 and can see that I got better even though I did not realise, so my confidence really doesn't play a role in it because I, I'm already  
264 like interactive level [laughs] like I'm fine, mostly, in English so, I don't think so, what it does when I don't feel confident and I  
265 get frustrated in myself, it makes me want to come back to the stuff that I struggle with, so, um, for example grammar til this  
266 day some grammar is just like [sigh and laugh] no and the [laughs] um, even like basic grammar that I definitely should know at  
267 this point, so it usual-, grammar and stuff it makes me want to come back to it, and kinda learn it, I know that I got get around  
268 to do it yet after two years, but it makes me want to do it

269 119 IN: yeah

270 120 P10: um, no I don't, but other than that, I don't really think so, if I struggle to express myself some days, for example at work, it might  
271 make me want to stop talking, stop communicating mostly because, it's just frustrating, but like overall some long term I don't, I  
272 don't think so

273 121 IN: no, ok, that's interesting, yeah, ok, is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience of using English?

274 122 P10: um, ooh, confidence-wise, we have in Czech Republic, um, we graduate one year later than like British people, one year older so  
275 I graduated when I was nineteen, um, and we have this big exam at the end, uh, in which you have like four subjects, you have  
276 to, you choose them, it's Czech language, then English or Math, Maths, Math, I don't know which one is, oh, British and  
277 American English

278 123 IN: that's it yes

279 124 P10: [42.35] since I learned through the internet, that's, ooh, that's harsh, I have no idea what British, I know that British spelling has  
280 u in it, er, but like, for example, I get told is that the right... whatever, people tell me [laughs] um, people, some-, on my good  
281 English days people ask me if I'm American, um, because I pronounce stuff like tomato /tə'meɪtoʊ/  
282 125 IN: all right ok yes

283 126 P10: um, there's many of them, at work that was a big topic at one point because, um, we work with food so it's like

284 127 IN: [laughs] so it's a relevant topic

285 128 P10: yes, so my tomato always gets everyone going, honestly [laughs] it's funny, but people ask me, since a year, since year one  
286 people I ask me if I'm American when they meet me and then they figure out I'm not native speaker because I get stuck and  
287 stuff but the first impression is like 'oh, are you American or Polish?' depends, depends, honestly [laughs] um, so British English I  
288 don't know if you are going to take that into account, British and American English that's a great topic, my pronunciation is like  
289 American trying to write British English because I'm studying in Britain, er [laughs] but, I have no idea which one is actually

290 which, and I use American words and British words together as it just works like that because I learned through the internet  
291 mostly

292 129 IN: yeah, well I think that, I think that's probably true of quite a lot of British people that are a bit younger that grow up on a diet of  
293 YouTube videos, so yeah, I wouldn't worry

294 130 P10: yeah yeah yeah [laughs] yeah, sorry that was me going off topic, um, we have the, I can do Math, so I chose English as part of  
295 my exam and um, it's like, I was super confident, the the exam's quite easy first of all, like Czech people struggle with it, to pass  
296 it, but for me, we literally, me and my classmates, some of them, my friends, we were competing in who's gonna get better  
297 score, and I was mad because I lost one point in written exam, that, so I was super confid- obviously I thought about my  
298 confidence in the language because I was supposed to take this huge exam that's gonna determine my final grade from high  
299 school, right, um, but I, with English I was not worried at all, I didn't even prepare most of the topics I just switched up Canada  
300 so I could talk about it for fifteen minutes right, but [laughs] um, but otherwise I was super confident that's also why coming to  
301 Britain, was such a, such a huge, not let down but it just, my confidence kinda went down because I was this, you know,  
302 everything's fine I can communicate, someone starts talking to me in English in Prague and I'll be fine kinda person and then I  
303 moved to Britain, I was like 'oh my God' I can't understand anyone, I struggle to express myself properly, I can't write essays  
304 quickly like everyone so, yeah [laughs] I really claim moving to Britain, made me less confident

305 131 IN: yes ok, no well that's, you you're using English in a very very natural context, so yeah ok, thank you very much, you've um,  
306 you've answered all my questions really well there

307 132 P10: oh did I? Sorry if I was talking too much

308 133 IN: no, it was fine, I'll just stop the recording but I'm happy to chat with you a bit longer

309 Recording stopped 46.02.

Participant 11

Duration: 28:40 (of 42:07 recording)

Age 21

Nationality Croatian

First language/s Croatian & Italian (bi-lingual: parents Croatian but brought up in Italy)

Academic subject/s Asia Pacific Studies with Korean 2<sup>nd</sup> year

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/ Listening (referring to Italian)

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening (referring to Italian)

Referring to Croatian: productive skills worse than receptive skills, only heard the language at home, no formal education in this language

English learning: How long? starting age 7 to 17, but became much more comfortable with it aged 12/13

Where & what for? Through primary & secondary school, but self-taught using the internet as a teenager

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening (bit nervous about listening but on the phone)

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely / not really / no

What English exams have you taken? Yes, IELTS in 2017

What score/s did you get? 7.5 Reading 7.5 Writing 6.5 Speaking 7.5 Listening 8.0

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no



Do these scores seem too high or too low according to your belief about your English level?

Yes, too low in speaking. Her confidence in speaking was knocked by an incident where she struggled to understand the interlocutor in the exam, which she feels was reflected in the results.

1 001 IN: [12.04] ok, then, where do you want to start? [indicates visual prompt]

2 002 P11: um, we can start with listening

3 003 IN: yeah, that's where everyone starts, yeah

4 004 P11: [laughs] I guess it's cos it's right on the left

5 005 IN: [laughs] exactly

6 006 P11: um, so listening to lectures and listening in class or for assessments, um, I feel like I'm, er, I'm really confident in that, I can

7 understand like almost everything, or like basically everything that's been said during the lectures, um, so I'd say maybe

8 something like a 90 out of a hundred, um, I mean I don't think I get, um, that idea from anyone else except for like, I can

9 understand what's going on, I can understand what the lecturers are saying, um, although some terms might be complicated, I

10 feel like that's just for everyone it's complicated, even for English, I guess then like I'm comparing myself to others, um, I can say

11 that if some terms are a bit difficult because they're more like academic it's not just me, it's also like other English speakers that

12 don't understand these terms, just because they are complicated and so, um, it's not like I feel a bit bummed out if I don't

13 understand these terms, er, complicated words or theory or something like that, so I guess I'm pretty confident, I can do a quick

14 research and then I'll know what that word means, or not, so I guess listening is a 90 out of a hundred

15 007 IN: yeah ok, um, and is there anything that you're less confident about?

16 008 P11: when it comes to listening?

17 009 IN: yeah, any situation that makes you think, ooh...

18 010 P11: um, not really, just, as I told you, like when I talk to someone on the phone, but there's not really any, um, any of those kinds of  
19 interactions with lecturers or like, um, academics, so um, I don't think there's anything that makes me less confident

20 011 IN: that's interesting, so you're ok with, um, listening and understanding lecturers and classmates, everything yeah?

21 012 P11: yes, I'm very confident that it's really easy for me

22 013 IN: cool ok right, there's no reason why not [laughs] right, is there anything else you want to tell me, if not we'll move to another  
23 skill

24 014 P11: no, we can move on to another one, ok so when it comes to reading coursebooks, journal articles or assessments [reading off  
25 the prompt] um, again I think I'm pretty good at it, um, I do have some struggles sometimes, um, but that's just me in general I  
26 think, um, I'm better like, um, reading as in like sometimes if I don't really concentrate that much I can't pick up what a book or  
27 a phrase or whatever wants to say or means exactly, so sometimes I need to read it like a bit more, like really concentrate, um,  
28 because some journal articles and coursebooks do like have some kind of complicated language, um, that sometimes kind of  
29 bums my confidence a bit a little way, but it's not really that bad, again, as I said, um, I might not understand something but  
30 then I go and Google it really quickly and understand, so, but I guess it's a bit lower than listening when it comes to my personal  
31 confidence, I'd put it like an 86, 87, something like that

32 015 IN: ooh all right ok, very precise that's good [laughs] so you're saying yeah journal articles a little less confident but you're happy  
33 with everything else?

34 016 P11: um yes, um, definitely happy with anything else, um

35 017 IN: and where do you think that confidence comes from?

36 018 P11: oh I don't know, um, I guess, um, like in general when it comes to my English skills, um, I do find myself, um, first of all I interact  
37 I believe more with English than other non-English speakers because, um, I do speak Croatian with my family, however, um, it's,  
38 it's really interesting because I have a friend from Croatia, that's kind of the only friend that I really, two friends from Croatia  
39 that I really interact with them and with one of them I only speak in Italian, and with the other one I only speak in English

40 019 IN: oh right [laughs]

41 020 P11: although they're both Croatian, I have no idea how we came to those terms but somehow we're speaking two different  
42 languages with them, anyways, um, I don't really interact with Croatian as much as I believe other non-native speakers do, I  
43 think like they might interact more with their native languages, um, I also have a boyfriend here and he's English and so, the  
44 majority of the time I just speak English with him, um, and so I think, um, because I'm more in contact with English in a daily  
45 basis that might help me, um, also I feel like a lot of the times I do, er, actually have to help out, not really help out but like, um,  
46 er, kind of correct non-native speakers when it comes to some words in English, um, to be honest, I also review my  
47 [17.09] boyfriend's essays before he submits them to see if they're right or wrong, and again he's English so I guess, um, that  
48 kinda helps my confidence as well [laughs]

49 021 IN: oh yes definitely yeah, yeah, so that is very interesting that you're [indistinct] and he's a native speaker of English?

50 022 P11: um hum, yes he was born here and everything

51 023 IN: yeah gosh my goodness [laughs]

52 024 P11: it's quite interesting

53 025 IN: yeah it is, isn't it? So, it does sound like you're very very confident there, yeah ok, yeah, ok then, um, shall we talk, move then  
54 to the speaking and writing cos those are maybe a bit more involved, I don't know

55 026 P11: um hum yes

56 027 IN: um right, what would you like to talk about?

57 028 P11: so um, we can go with speaking, um, when it comes to speaking English, um, in lectures and in front of classmates for  
58 assessments, um, and presentations, um, I can get a little, um, nervous, er, I feel like my main nervousness is because of my  
59 accent, I er, I'm scared of people aren't going to understand me because of my accent, it has happened sometimes here, um, so  
60 I mean I'd like to have a more nice proper British accent but I can't because, um, I'm not a native speaker, um, and I have this  
61 weird like mix of languages' accent, um, and so I guess that's kind of why I feel less confident when speaking mainly because of  
62 my accent, um, sometimes when I'm also nervous I do tend to forget words, um, but that's mainly when I'm nervous or maybe  
63 um, if the lecturer is asking something and I feel kind of nervous to answer it, but then throughout the lectures if I speak more  
64 then I get more confident,, um however, when I do speak sometimes in lectures because I forget some words, I tend to use less  
65 academic words, I'm more like I'm talking to a friend kind of words, um, and so that sometimes also makes me feel, um, a bit  
66 uneasy

67 029 IN: ok yes

68 030 P11: so um, I am very confident in speaking though with like on a daily basis so for example to people or, I don't know, to friends,  
69 um, that I find really really easy but sometimes I do feel a bit less, um, confident when I'm speaking to, er, lecturers or in  
70 lectures, um, so, I guess I'll give it like a, um, like an 85?

71 031 IN: ok, that's good

72 032 P11: around there, well still very confident, just sometimes for these occasions I'm a bit less confident

73 033 IN: yeah, ok, and what about when you're, you know, having to do, um, a presentation, so that's you're you're speaking officially as  
74 it were

75 034 P11: yeah, well um, I do practice a lot, um, I mean I recently had a presentation and, er I did struggle quite a bit to get through the  
76 presentation however, when it comes to speaking, um, I'll tend to forget words or I couldn't remember what to say and things  
77 like that, um, but I do then do a lot of practice, like I'll keep going on and on and on and try to go through the presentation then  
78 if I stumble somewhere then I go again from the beginning and then I try to do it, and because of that, um, at the end during  
79 presentations I feel quite confident, um, just because I did do a lot of exercise however if I didn't do as much exercise I'd  
80 definitely be really nervous and like stop somewhere

81 035 IN: so that's more about the actual performance aspect, it's not so much the English is it, it's more about having to give a  
82 presentation, sounds like, anyway, because I think as a native-speaker you'd want to practice it before you did it anyway so  
83 yeah, ok, so that's good so you're, you're quite confident, and you were saying it's not really, the only thing that makes you less  
84 confident, is, is, perhaps your accent sometimes, yeah?

85 036 P11: yes definitely

86 037 IN: ok, and erm, well, where does your confidence come from?

87 038 P11: ah, I don't really know, it's quite, um, it's kinda weird for me, I'm usually not, I'm really not a confident person like in general,  
88 but I guess English is the one thing that I kinda feel proud of, I mean, I'm proud of my achievement because I did start from  
89 being the worst in class and I believe that now I'm probably like, if I look into people like from my high school or secondary

90 school, or how it's called here, um, like, I feel like I was probably one of the best in English and I started being the worst, and so  
91 I'm kind of proud of how well, how well I did and how well I progressed

92 039 IN: [21.45] yeah, when you say the worst, do you mean, are you referring back to when you were at primary school?

93 040 P11: yes

94 041 IN: yeah ok

95 042 P11: I think in, um, high school so secondary I believe, er, that's when I started, um, when I was one of the best in class, um, we did  
96 have also great English lecturer, she was really, um, she was really nice and always tried to, um, not have the boring like  
97 grammar kind of classes but she really loved to spark discussions and kind of, um, make everyone talk, and because of that I was  
98 pretty confident talking, um, during classes and I feel like, um, that really benefitted me as well, cos she was always amazed  
99 whenever I would speak English and so I even more confident cos I was like, 'oh if she thinks that I'm a good speaker then that's  
100 good' [laughs]

101 043 IN: yeah yeah nice ok, that's really good, so so yeah, I think your confidence sounds like it comes from, erm, well, from feedback  
102 from that teacher but also past experiences in in school, and getting good marks you know so

103 044 P11: definitely, we did, we do have something like GCSEs, um, and I took, um, English because it's mandatory for us, um, and I had  
104 like 98 percent right, or something along those lines

105 045 IN: wow!

106 046 P11: so, it was really easy for me, like, I was really nervous cos you know it's GCSEs and um, I thought this was gonna be super  
107 complicated, and it was kind of like a reading listening listening reading comprehension kind of, um, like, um, test and then we

108 had a for and against essay which was really easy to write for me at least, um, and then when I got like 98 percent right I was  
109 like 'right ok, that was really easy for me' so

110 047 IN: on that on that test was there a speaking component or was it...

111 048 P11: no, there was listening, er, there was reading comprehension and then there was the essay writing, but there was no speaking

112 049 IN: no, ok, that's interesting, ok, um, and just to be sure, I think you've already spoken about it a bit, um, you you're saying you're  
113 very confident in your course, in class etc. What about when you're speaking English outside of class, um, in the in the wider  
114 community?

115 050 P11: [23.58] um, as I said I'm pretty confident when it comes to like my friends and, um, well family I don't really speak to English but  
116 friends or classmates outside of classes I'm really confident, um, I also think it's like, um, people even if I do make some  
117 mistakes which I might, um, they're not really time to criticise me, they might just like quickly, um, tell me that I was wrong and  
118 maybe correct me but that's it so I don't really feel a lot of pressure, um, sometimes, um, like I do rehearse like for example if I  
119 have to go somewhere, like let's say the post office or, I don't know, I will rehearse what I will have to say in my mind, but I  
120 think that's just like in general, like I even do that in Croatia, I rehearse to myself what I have to say, um, so um, I'd say I'm  
121 definitely pretty confident it's just that, again I find that people, um, sometimes don't understand me because of my accent, so  
122 that's, um, just when I'm a bit uneasy, um, like, I went to a coffee shop and I asked for a cappuchino and she thought that I  
123 asked for a cup of tuna [laughs] I guess because of my accent I'm not really sure, um, and so that's why like I sometimes I get up,  
124 I mean it was funny for me at that time, but, um, I was just a bit, um, like, um, aware of the fact that people, that person  
125 couldn't understand me because of my accent

126 051 IN: yes, you might be blaming yourself, it might have been her that had the problem [laughs] um, ok



127 052 P11: it's possible

128 053 IN: it's very possible yeah, ok, brilliant, well thank you for that, so shall we move to writing now, or is...

129 054 P11: yes, so um writing essays, reports, timed exams essays

130 055 IN: so obviously, you know, in the University you might not do all of those, um, just tell me, you know, you can give me a score, if  
131 you feel differently about them, give different scores to them, I don't mind

132 056 P11: yeah, um, I'd say when it comes to writing, er, I'd say it's like academic context, um, I've gotten more confident than I was, um,  
133 last year I was very scared of writing an essay because again the only thing that I have written was that GCSE for and against  
134 essay and like the topic was like should teachers be friends with their students on social media, like it's not really all that difficult  
135 and I was like it wasn't even like a thousand words essay, um, so jumping from that to like 1000 plus word essays or having to  
136 use academic, um, words which again I kind of struggle and I go more for the like friendly language, in general it was really  
137 difficult for me, um, it wasn't a great thing that last year the first essay grade that I got back was a thirty-five but that's because  
138 the lecturer, um, he marked wrong the essays, he didn't know how to write them because he wasn't from the UK and so then  
139 we got like, a change into a sixty-five however like, it was a good thirty-five for like two weeks or something like that and that  
140 [27.05] absolutely destroyed my confidence, I was so not confident about that, but then he changed it back to sixty-five I was  
141 like 'ok, I guess this is ok'

142 057 IN: that's a very big difference isn't it?

143 058 P11: definitely, um, so um, I tend to do pretty well on essays, um, but I feel that's just because, um, first of all like I just follow the  
144 guidelines and I like to do a lot of research and what not, er, and then I also ask a friend from Croatia that we speak to, that I  
145 speak to in English, I always ask her to like proof read my essays and she kinda helps me a lot with the grammar, um, however,

146 um, I do tend to sometimes do a lot of, ok, spelling mistakes, um, sometimes I use a bit of the wrong grammar so I guess that  
147 just boosts my confidence down however I do ask my friend to, um, proof read to me and I think that, um, ever since last year I  
148 improved I feel like she's um, she's either giving me less feedback because I'm getting better or she's just annoyed at me for  
149 asking [laughs] as well as that, um, but I think I'm just getting better, um, however it is really bad with me cos um, I tend to, um,  
150 internalise criticism a lot which I shouldn't do, and so whenever I get a grade that um is not what I wanted or what I expected  
151 that gets my confidence down a lot um, like I got an essay back and I got a 68 which is a really good grade however the lecturer  
152 told me previously that I could go up to an eighty, um, he said to me that he feels like I have the, um, I can get an eighty from an  
153 essay, like if I kinda, um, keep up the work, and so getting the sixty-eight was like kind of, er, not great for me, however he did  
154 also mark things individually and so he marked me like a seventy-five for the context which was really great, however he put a  
155 sixty he gave me a sixty-five for academic writing and a sixty for structure, and so that kinda of like, um, boosted my confidence  
156 down, um, because I could've gotten a better grade if it wasn't for, er, my language and for the structure kind of thing, you  
157 know? um, so again that kind of didn't make me feel that great, um, so I guess that's what really, um, makes my confidence  
158 down is grades and I know they shouldn't really matter but, um, I think that personally unfortunately, er, that's kinds the person  
159 that I am, um, so overall, because of that I'd say my personal confidence is like um, probably an, like a 76, 77?

160 059 IN: ok

161 060 P11: um, just because it is essays, um, academic reports and I tend to get pretty nervous when it comes to them

162 061 IN: um hum, so you're definitely saying that the writing is the one you're least confident about, isn't it, yeah

163 062 P11: yeah definitely, especially because it an academic, um, like, um, environment

164 063 P11: [30.13] um ok, and how does, how does your sense of confidence for writing in English, how does that compare to if you had to  
165 write it in your language, [laughs] I'm not sure which is the one that would be, in Italian for example?

166 064 P11: yeah, well, I feel like, um, I'd be more confident to write in English than I'd be to write in Italian or in Croatian, um, I might be  
167 more confident to write in Italian if I were to use it more often because um I used to do school in Italian and we used to write  
168 essays in Italian, I was really good, I mean I wasn't that great but I, but um, I could write essays in Italian pretty easily, that was  
169 the first thing that came to me most naturally doing them in Italian, um, but now because I'm used to writing essays in English  
170 although I'm not really, I'm less confident on that out of all of my skills, um, I've even more, even less confident in Croatian and  
171 Italian, especially Croatian, um, my teacher um in Croatia literally told me I would fail my GCSEs if I keep writing like that and  
172 that I'm illiterate, so that was really bad but um, but that's just how people in Croatia are unfortunately, um, but that definitely  
173 did not help my confidence at all, um, telling me that I'm illiterate and that I would fail my GCSEs because my Croatian is bad,  
174 she didn't put any effort into helping me, she was just like 'you're bad, get better', I don't know, 'read books' [laughs] she  
175 literally said that so, um, so yeah definitely I'm really bad at, um, I'd say like that English is the best, then Italian and then  
176 Croatian

177 065 IN: so, what it sounds like to me is that, um, with the writing your your confidence is quite sensitive to feedback from other people,  
178 is that fair to say?

179 066 P11: yeah, I guess I didn't think about it before, but maybe it's, um, kind of because of that past experience of like, um, the tutor  
180 really judging my, um, Croatian, so that's why like I'm really sensitive to feedback, um, we did have a really strict Italian lecturer  
181 as well, and, um, she would give really really, really strict grades and so that was why I was always like, um, like careful, and um,  
182 I wouldn't always gain, get the best marks because she was that strict and so I guess that's why maybe I'm so, I'm least  
183 confident in writing

184 067 IN: yeah, it might be it might be why you're, maybe your confidence goes up and down quite a lot maybe, um, because you are  
185 actually reacting quite a lot to it, I don't know

186 068 P11: yeah, I think I'm also a bit of a special snowflake that's more confident in my English than my native languages, um, I have no  
187 idea how that happened, it somehow did though, I mean I always told my Mum and Dad that, um, I I feel bad that they never  
188 taught me, um, Croatian from the start because we only kind of spoke Croatian at home when we were at home in Italy but  
189 [33.22] they never really corrected my grammar, or if you said something wrong, they just let me speak, um, and they never  
190 really told me how to speak properly in Croatian but so I can't really fix it now unfortunately

191 069 IN: no, no, it's one of those things, it's the luck of how you got brought up and what your parents wanted to prioritise I suppose  
192 yeah, ok, right is there anything else at all you'd like to say about writing, um?

193 070 P11: um, I guess that's, that's kind of it, um, I think I basically said everything that, um, I feel yeah

194 071 IN: yeah, yeah, ok good, right I've just got a couple of follow up questions and then, and then we're done, um, let me see, um, now  
195 here's a question for you, um, does your confidence make a difference to your performance?

196 072 P11: um, I think so, definitely yes, um, whenever I feel more pressured and less confident I think I tend to do a bit worse, um, but I  
197 don't think it's, um, a drastic of a difference, I think it's just a slight difference for example, um, if I'm not confident I might mess  
198 up a bit more when I speak for example, um, or whatever I write I might not, if I'm not confident about an essay I might say for  
199 example, if I feel like I don't understand what I'm supposed to do on an essay, if I don't know what kind of structure I have to  
200 use, um, I think I write way worse than I usually would, um, but that's mainly because like I don't understand what I'm supposed  
201 to even write, so, I guess that's where it comes from, but also because I'm not confident about it, um, so I think definitely it is  
202 true

203 073 IN: yeah yeah, ok, all right now, I've got another question which is um, um, do you feel that there are, you said you didn't think  
204 there was much of a difference between your skills, is that correct?

205 074 P11: yes

206 075 IN: so even when there are little differences, does that affect your confidence or not really?

207 076 P11: um, I think it depends on what skill, so, for example a day I can't properly hear someone that's not really gonna affect my  
208 confidence, um, so for example if one day I can't understand a person because we talk through the phone, um, it doesn't really  
209 affect me that much, um, I just kinda feel bad because oh my god I feel bad for this person because they didn't understand  
210 them they had to repeat it like five times, um, but it doesn't really affect me, however, I'd say with like, um, writing, writing is  
211 the one that affects me most but that's because we're in a academic, um, environment and, I mean writing is basically all you  
212 really do at university and so if you're, if I'm even the slightest bit bad, um, it affects me the most, um, like for example with the  
213 [36.24] essay that I mentioned, um, I had the previous mark that I had was a seventy five, and then I had a sixty-nine, a sixty-  
214 eight, because of this mark and, um, the essay is the one that, um, is like seventy-five percent of the grade and I think my overall  
215 score is now sixty-nine, like from the grade, if I was a tiny bit better, again because the worst was my academic writing basically,  
216 if I was the tiniest bit better I could have got in the seventies and a first for that for that like module, and it really bums me out  
217 like a lot, that, so um

218 077 IN: and I guess that's because it matters so much to you?

219 078 P11: yeah, well, it definitely because of that but if it was in a day-to day basis, like I don't know I wrote something and I spelled it  
220 wrong to a friend I don't really, it doesn't really affect me that much really, um, I just be like 'ok thank you' [laughs] I'll continue  
221 you know, um, so I'd say definitely only when it comes to writing it really affects my confidence a lot

222 079 IN: interesting ok, um, right I've got one more question really, um, which is have you ever thought about this before, have you  
223 thought about how confident you are in a second language, or in your case your third language?

224 080 P11: um

225 081 IN: have you thought about that before?

226 082 P11: I did when I first came here, um, when, [sigh] because I didn't, ever since taking the IELTS test I didn't really speak English at all  
227 to be honest because that friend that I spoke English to she moved to Thailand, and, because of that I had absolutely no one to  
228 speak to, not only that but I started working and I worked for an Italian company, like a phone centre and so I would speak to  
229 Italian speakers the whole time I would basically throughout my whole day I would just speak Italian, majority of the time, and I  
230 had no one to speak er, English to, and so when I first came here I really wasn't confident, and um,, I was aware of just how  
231 different and how well not only English speakers but of other like non-native speakers would speak, or talk to me and like, um,  
232 that's how I kinda started thinking about like my skills and like,, er how confident I am in English, and I kind of understood that,  
233 um, it was like that because I didn't use it, um, I knew that if I used it more I would be more confident, um, so, I didn't really  
234 take it that harshly on myself that I was a bit less confident at that time, or I wasn't as good as I wanted to,, er because I quickly  
235 just spoke so much English that it got better and better like every single day, so definitely when I first came here, um, that's  
236 when I was first really aware of it

237 083 IN: so, do you think it is important to feel confident when you're in a second language then?

238 084 P11: [39.31] definitely, um, I think, I mean it might depend on, like the person, but I think overall in general, confidence really plays a  
239 big role especially with me, um, but in general with anything, um, I think if you're confident enough, um, you can do anything  
240 and feel good about it and, um, if, if I was more confident back in the days, like when I first came here, maybe I could've like

241 spoken a bit better or done a bit better, um, but I feel like with me confidence plays a really big role when it comes to my  
242 language because I think I even scored myself that high just because I'm very confident in English in general, I mean I might be  
243 really bad at it, god knows, but at least I'm confident, if anything I can fake it until I make it [laughs]

244 085 IN: [laughs] that's a good phrase, isn't it, yes

245 086 P11: yeah

246 087 IN: [laughs] absolutely yes, ok, well thank you, is there anything else at all you want to add? Is there anything that strikes you  
247 having talked about it?

248 088 P11: um, I don't think so, there's not really anything I would add, I don't think so

249 089 IN: ok, well thank you very much

250 Interview ended 40.44

Participant 12

Duration: 31:46 (of 44:33 recording)

Age 20

Nationality Czech

First language/s Czech & Slovak (0-3 years)

Academic subject/s BA Chemistry

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

English learning: How long? 13 years, kindergarten partially but officially starting age 9

Where & what for? Through primary & secondary school, but self-taught using the internet thereafter

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely / not really / no

What English exams have you taken? CAE in 2009

What score/s did you get? Reading can't remember Writing Speaking Listening Writing problem with exam technique

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no

The exam was different to her previous exam experiences from high school



1 001 IN: [12.47] so, basically I'd like, you can start wherever you want to, um, and we'll talk about the four different skills, um, and I'll ask  
2 you about how confident you feel, um, and then also where you think that feeling comes from, ok, is that ok with you?

3 002 P12: ok, so I'll start with listening just because it's in the top left corner

4 003 IN: that's cool [laughs]

5 004 P12: I would say listening is my weakest of them all probably, just because I'm not good at, I have problem with accents, like when I  
6 moved here in first year there was a lecturer and I could not understand him, he was like talking too fast and it was terrible  
7 [laughs]

8 005 IN: and and was this person, um, a native-speaker?

9 006 P12: yeah yeah, er, um, I can't really recognise accents, I can't like say where someone's from, I can only say 'hey they talk like my  
10 classmate by that name' and then I ask my classmates where they are from just like somehow to connect the dots, and they said  
11 that this one specific lecturer has like a proper Lancashire accent, if that's a thing?

12 007 IN: uh huh, yes

13 008 P12: very kind person, and and he was trying to speak slowly when he was teaching, but when he was like, talking, like, about other  
14 stuff, or saying stories and stuff like that, he would speak so fast, I genuinely don't know what was happening in his lectures

15 009 IN: [laughs] oh dear!

16 010 P12: I don't know [laughs] so I would say that the score is like... 80?

17 011 IN: ok

18 012 P12: maybe a bit more now, because now I can understand him

19 013 IN: ok

20 014 P12: I, I got better [laughs]

21 015 IN: that's interesting, so you got used to his accent then?

22 016 P12: yeah, I I definitely, I need to adjust to accents but then, then it gets better

23 017 IN: yeah ok, so you are quite confident if, if you say eighty, that's that's

24 018 P12: yeah yeah, like there's still people I don't understand like if they have some very fancy accents

25 019 IN: um hum, ok, ok, so um, ok, are there any, are there any, so you you sometimes, you're less confident about understanding

26 regional accents, is that fair to say?

27 020 P12: um yeah, but just some of them, for instance in first year we had a Greek lecturer, like they were from Greece, and all my

28 classmates, er, I g-, in my class I'm the only international, all of them are otherwise like British

29 021 IN: ok

30 022 P12: some of them are like that their Mum is French or something like that, but they were all raised in Britain, and they, no one could

31 understand this one specific guy except for me, that was my little super power because he was speaking in a way Czech people

32 like pronounce English when they don't know properly how to, but they sort of, when they pronounce English with Czech brain,

33 so, I was absolutely having the best time of my life [laughing]

34 023 IN: that's very, yeah, ok good, ok then, so um, yeah, you've got quite- now where do you think your confidence comes from?

35 024 P12: like right now? Probably the fact that I started understanding one lecturer from first year

36 025 IN: ok, so would that be past experience, do you think then, yeah? I guess

37 026 P12: yeah yeah, so I can see how it got better between first year and now

38 027 IN: oh so it's that idea of seeing a progression, being able, sort of getting better slowly?

39 028 P12: yeah, yeah I'd say, I started understanding my classmates as well, that was, that too plus at the time but still

40 029 IN: yeah, ok, that's interesting, yeah ok, um, and how so you feel about when you doing listening for assessment, so for example in  
41 a, in an exam situation, or?

42 030 P12: [16.30] um, I would say I don't feel too bad about it because usually in these like, um, exams and stuff like that, er well definitely  
43 when we did them in school, we don't do them now of course, but we did, when we did them at school they would always be  
44 very clear, like not any stupid background noise, I have problem that if I, if there's like too much background noise I can't really  
45 decode the, just the sound of the voice, like I can't talk with people in busy pubs because I just can't can't understand, I don't,  
46 I'm unable to

47 031 IN: is that the same, is that the same if it was in your language?

48 032 P12: yep, definitely, when there's just, like, too many people talking at the same time, like when there's too big group of people and  
49 there's not one conversation going on, or multiple of them, or if they're broken down, I can't connect with neither of them  
50 because I can hear the other ones and my brain is trying to sort of be in them all [laughs] it can't be managed

51 033 IN: yeah, I have exactly the same issue, don't worry [laughs] yeah, right then ok so, um, is there anything else you want to tell me  
52 about listening or do you want to move to another one?

53 034 P12: I don't know, nothing comes to mind about listening

54 035 IN: no, ok that's fine don't worry, um, what do you want to talk about next?

55 036 P12: probably reading, just [laughs] going in a circle [referring to visual prompt] so reading, er, reading might be like one of my,  
56 strongest ones definitely

57 037 IN: yeah?

58 038 P12: yeah, because I'm just, I have to follow words that are written better than they are said, I I just, don't know, if I'm wearing  
59 glasses I'm much more reliable on my eyes than anything else [laughs] so... I would maybe say... I don't want to sound like, too  
60 proud of myself like

61 039 IN: no, don't worry about that, remember this is how confident you are, not how well you do so

62 040 P12: ok, so maybe I'll be like 90 ish?

63 041 IN: yep, that's fine, ok, yep, now of course, I am asking about the, um, sort of in an academic context, um, so obviously there's  
64 certain different things you'll need to read as part of your university study, um, how do you feel? Do you have different levels of  
65 [18.54] confidence when you, you're trying to read different types of things, so I've got some examples there, reading  
66 coursebooks, reading journal articles, etc.

67 042 P12: yeah, er... um, I would say that, er, I'm sort of able to read books in English that took some time to make me, but it's not like, it's  
68 still not the, um, course type of book, like it's not chemical ones or anything like that, they still take me much more time and I  
69 have to push my brain to focus a lot because it just doesn't want to, stuff like that, but I can do it but I feel like... I wouldn't be  
70 able to read the type of thing that [name of flatmate] or [name of flatmate] read for their course, because it's much more like

71 sentence heavy, or like there's much more thought in the sentences, and you have to really process it a lot, but our sentences,  
72 when we have like a journal or anything and there's gonna be a stupid sentence, it's gonna be stupid just because how long it is,  
73 or just because there's gonna be loads of passive, er, like conjugation of the verb, and, if you read it few times, and just like take  
74 a passive voice out, maybe take some some useless words out, you're gonna get like maybe four word sentence so that's it,  
75 that's good, that's your information, it's not going require that their sentences or their words and I think I wouldn't really be  
76 able to do that, that's because I've never really have to

77 043 IN: ok, right, so so you're saying that there's a difference between different subject areas, and your subject area is Chemistry, I'm  
78 I'm interested in how you feel for your your, your course, you're ok with it then?

79 044 P12: yeah I would say that for my course I'm pretty well adjusted, like, I I should probably read more of, like, course stuff so that I  
80 would make my brain focus on it or be able to focus on it for more than few pages and then just explode, but I will get there  
81 eventually I hope

82 045 IN: so I'm gonna ask you that question, where does where does your confidence come from, because it is quite high

83 046 P12: [pause] I don't know, I like to read so reading in, going from reading in Czech to reading in English wasn't such a big step

84 047 IN: right, um hum, yeah ok

85 048 P12: and basically reading stuff that I like or that is fun, and then reading stuff that is for school, that was a step I had to do, that  
86 wasn't a choice [laughs]

87 049 IN: yeah yeah, ok, so yeah, you- you've got, I suppose, is it fair to say then your confidence comes from the fact that you're a good  
88 reader in your own language?

89 050 P12: [21.34] yeah, I would say, yeah, I'm definitely extremely relying on my [indistinct] anything

90 051 IN: yeah ok, that's interesting, um, and do you ever, do you ever compare yourself against how your classmates, you know, your  
91 British classmates cope with journal articles and things like that? I suppose it's impossible to know really isn't it?

92 052 P12: I mean they're all British [laughs] so they they, I, like, I know one of my classmates like reading all the cool books about how  
93 brain works and like popularised psychology stuff like that, and I always think like 'oh my God, I'd love to read that as well!' but I  
94 have to get to that level, er, like to reading this kind of stuff and it not being so brain draining that I would do just like two pages  
95 in one go and still enjoy it

96 053 IN: yeah yeah, so you're saying then that, um, the reading is, takes a lot of effort, um

97 054 P12: yeah, when it's complicated text or, or not a topic that, er, I would like straight away enjoy

98 055 IN: yeah, ok, but it's not a question of you can't do it, it's just the effort it takes, yeah?

99 056 P12: yeah, like I probably not be able even if I had, like a book in, er, that would be, I don't know, something like fantasy or sci-fi or  
100 something like it, it would be English, I wouldn't be able to read of it, like as big of a chunk in one go as I would in Czech, it  
101 would still take me more effort, it would take more time, more brain activity, and everything like that, but, I would be able to  
102 read a book, and, at the end of the day, that's the goal

103 057 IN: yes, ok, yes, ok, good ok, um, shall we move onto speaking and writing then, because they are a little bit more involved

104 058 P12: probably writing

105 059 IN: yep ok, go on then

106 060 P12: oh so... yeah, we don't do essays, in my course, er, I like, not the type of essay that [name of flatmate] does, the one where you  
107 have to have a thought and then you're saying arguments why it is a thing, why it is not a thing, comparing which one is the  
108 bigger argument, and they say 'yeah because of this argument is probably true or not true', we do more like description, that  
109 you read data and then make it into a block and say this thing does this, so I'm not sure how I am applicable to this one

110 061 IN: ok, that's fine, that's why there's different ones there because different subject areas have got different writing demands, so,  
111 do you have to do, er, you need to write lab reports do you not?

112 062 P12: [24.17] yeah but we don't really do writing there, we, it's more like, er, our lab reports look like, we have to include like what  
113 was the date, what was the other day experiment, what were the COSHH like, um, basically don't drink acid type of thing, then  
114 we have to include what we were doing, like the experimental procedure and basically the biggest part we write, like that we  
115 write on our own this is all given to us, is observation and that's where we say 'it's turned to orange when we added acid,' so  
116 that's not much of a, I, I'm not sure if it fits your description here, I don't really think it does but it's like the biggest chunk of text  
117 we would find written by me in my lab report

118 063 IN: I see

119 064 P12: and everybody else, that's not me being lazy or anything [laughs]

120 065 IN: no no that's fine, so, is that the same, er, is there anything on your, any part of your course where you need to do any extended  
121 writing?

122 066 P12: [pause] we did like, sort of essay last year, I answered it, we would call it essay in Czech, but I think the word doesn't have the  
123 same meaning in English

124 067 IN: that's fine, yeah, so what do you call it on your course then?

125 068 P12: um, I wasn't sure what the exact-, um, I think they call it just written assignment or something like that, we were basically just  
126 given two elements and just told to, talk about them, but it wasn't type of essay as like {name of flatmate] does when they have  
127 like some big complicated question, and they have to break it down, explain it, bring arguments and then so answer the  
128 question, we were just told 'talk about hydrogen'

129 069 IN: [laughs] ok

130 070 P12: so we did

131 071 IN: [laughs] yes, ok then, so, um, given that situation, um, how confident are you with doing that type of writing?

132 070 P12: well, I don't have like such a problem with writing in general, because I look at words mainly by processing them, so I'm pretty  
133 good with spelling because I remember how they should look, but writing academic context, um, it might not be strong with me  
134 because I have just not done it in English really

135 071 IN: [26.43] ok

136 072 P12: not since the the essay in first year

137 073 IN: ok, so so you, you don't feel like you have enough experience to talk about that

138 074 P12: yeah, maybe around somewhere around like 70, I don't know, but it's like very, it's a wild guess sort of

139 075 IN: ok right, all right fair enough, so, yeah, that's interesting then, so that's not really, that doesn't really feature as part of your  
140 experience of using English



141 076 P12: yeah, yeah, wait, there isn't much space for making essays in Chemistry [laughs]

142 077 IN: no, ok, that's fine, ok then, um but so, so you're saying then, at a guess, um, you think you'd be quite good at writing in English,  
143 um, if you were asked to do so?

144 078 P12: er, I would have to learn how to make these like, fancy sentences, like I don't know, [name of flatmate] always like writing it, I'm  
145 like, 'that is so much force for so much not information' [laughs] and it's, it sounds really goo-, it sounds very, er, advanced and  
146 everything, and I would just say 'yeah, it's not true thank you' [laughs] so I would have to learn this if I were to do it, but I chose  
147 a course that doesn't really need it for, for a good reason

148 079 IN: yeah, no no, I totally understand that, and and different subject areas do have different demands, you're right, um, ok, right  
149 then, do you want to move to speaking then?

150 080 P12: um hum

151 081 IN: because you do a lot of speaking in your subject area don't you?

152 082 P12: ok so, speaking English to lecturers, in front of classmates, for assessment [reading from prompt] um, I don't think I have, well,  
153 I'd probably be a little bit less nervous when talking to my classmates, because when they like would laugh at my mistakes or  
154 something, I can just like laugh at them back or just stop, something like that [laughs] so, it's less serious setting so I would be  
155 less serious about my mistakes as well. Our lecturers are pretty much understanding, well, our lecturers are either British, or I  
156 have, or are international as me, so the international ones would never ever judge me for anything, and the British ones are  
157 [29.08] absolutely ok with me saying anything down, I don't know, I think they're probably used to after being so, after being  
158 lecturers for so many years, I can't be the first one to mispronounce everything I meet

159 083 IN: [laughs] ok then, so

160 084 P12: um...and assessments we, we did like one presentation of that type where we would have to talk nicely in front of everyone,  
161 and I didn't really have much of a problem with that because, well, first of all because it was quite short, second of all, because  
162 we had everything prepared, I had also, er, like time to think, about the words and how they are said in English so it wasn't so  
163 much like talking on the spot, I could check how to pronounce certain stuff because in Chemistry lots of stuff is just the same, is  
164 written the same way in Czech and in English, it's just pronounced differently, and my brain just sometimes doesn't go up on  
165 that information, so I pronounce it in the Czech way and hope for the best [laughs] yeah, there's fifty/fifty chance I got it

166 085 IN: yeah, does it, does it usually work, that technique?

167 086 P12: oh [exhales] well, with some words it does, with some words it absolutely does not, it's bit of a gamble

168 087 IN: so, how does that leave you for confidence, how do you feel?

169 088 P12: maybe somewhere around 80

170 089 IN: ok, ok, uh huh, and is that the same, so that's eighty for, um, in, as part of your university work in class talking to lecturers etc. is  
171 it any different for speaking outside of class in the community, um, doing your daily life at all?

172 090 P12: well basically beside class, in the community is my flat, and we're all Slavic

173 091 IN: ah ok

174 092 P12: so, but we, we cannot speak the same language together

175 093 IN: ok

176 094 P12: because I, I don't want to say because of [name of flatmate] because it's not her fault, but she's Croatian and I would be, I am  
177 able to understand her because I speak Slovak, [name of other flatmate] absolutely not, and there's absolutely nothing against  
178 [name of flatmate] but Czech is, quite like a little off brand of Slavic languages it's pretty much germinalised so, she can't  
179 [31.29] understand the other ones or the close Slavic languages, I can get some words, I can pretty much understand Polish and  
180 can get some words from Croatian, but she can't because she just doesn't have the little helping hand of Slovak

181 095 IN: ok

182 096 P12: so we all speak in English, but because we're all Slavic we don't really care how we speak, we do not judge

183 097 IN: so you could say that you're totally confident then, because you're not bothered?

184 098 P12: yeah yeah, we just like walk around and show whatever

185 099 IN: yeah [laughs] ok then good, all right then, so, um, my last question there really is, um, for, going back to the academic context,  
186 um, where does your confidence come from when you are in class or, um, giving presentations, how come you've got  
187 confidence in English?

188 100 P12: um [pause] well from the beginning I was absolutely not, I wasn't confident I thought it, like, I was afraid I was gonna do stupid  
189 mistake, they're gonna laugh, stuff like that, but then in the like first few months of me being here, like when I moved in the  
190 first year, I found that they, don't care that much, that people are, in general, not mean, so I sort of, yeah, I still sometimes  
191 cringe when I say something very stupid and I realise and I just quickly 'yeah that is not how it is said, ok, why did you do that?'  
192 But I know that they... don't see it that way, that they don't judge me that hard... so it's ok, like I think I've gained confidence, I  
193 became like less nervous because I found that people are not gonna be, not gonna be as harsh with me as I am with myself

194 101 IN: yeah, ok, yeah yeah so, so that is all past experience again a bit like the, um, the other things where you feel like you've grown  
195 better, is that right?

196 102 P12: maybe yeah, I'm yeah, I probably, like my speaking got definitely a bit better since I move here of course, I think it's definitely  
197 because I have nothing but British classmates, which the other girls can't really say, their course is very mixed in that sort of  
198 context

199 103 IN: yeah, ok, ok good, all right then, that's very very interesting, um, I've just got a couple of other, er, have you got anything else to  
200 tell me about speaking, sorry, I'm rushing

201 104 P12: [34.03] er [silence] I don't know... oh, maybe, but I'm not sure if it's likely speaking, but it's like a funny thing that we found out  
202 with [name of flatmate] or sort of like worked it out, Czech people have much stronger American accent

203 105 IN: ok

204 106 P12: and British people don't like it of us [laughs]

205 107 IN: oh really?

206 108 P12: [name of flatmate] has a tendency to have American accent, a very strong one, because also first of all you do, second of all  
207 probably TV shows and stuff like that, but mainly it's much easier for us to pronounce

208 109 IN: ah

209 110 P12: it's it's just more similar to the way we speak than British accent is

210 111 IN: that's interesting, ok, so that's your preferred accent is it, to speak more American?

211 112 P12: er, I guess sort of but also, in school, like in education they prefer British one or they they teach us the British way, like grammar  
212 and everything, just because, Britain is much closer than America and there's a much better chance we'd ever get to see Britain  
213 than America because just like, closer, so it sort of makes it great mates, but lots of people in Czech Republic who never been to  
214 neither of the countries have American accent

215 113 IN: is that because they are using the Internet to practice their language?

216 114 P12: yes, yes, definitely, but also it just sticks to us more

217 115 IN: um, ok, I'm just wondering why that is, but, what did you do to develop your speaking skills? before you got here

218 116 P12: oh we had, um, I went to some like, er, how do you call it, like additional tutoring for English?

219 117 IN: yep

220 118 P12: [35.57] stuff like that because my parents just decided that English is very important, I should know it and very good, so I went  
221 to this but, I had even American lecturer and sort of, I turned out not so American, or it's difficult for me to sound American, my  
222 accent is usually when I'm speaking with natives, and not natives [laughs]

223 119 IN: yeah ok, that's fine, some people do change according to who they're talking to that right, yeah, ok, right can I just ask you a  
224 few more follow up questions?

225 120 P12: um hum

226 121 IN: so again, I'm I'm talking about confidence, um, do you think, um, confidence makes a difference to your performance?

227 122 P12: definitely, hundred percent

228 123 IN: ok, um, in what way, do you know, can you explain how that works for you?

229 124 P12: well... basically when I get nervous, er, my sentence starts to [shatter/shudder], I'll have to more think of what I'm gonna say,  
230 what words I'm gonna say, I more start to use words like, 'like,' 'um,' those like filling words, uh, I think that's how they call

231 125 IN: yeah they are

232 126 P12: because I need like more time to somehow... [laughs] stitch myself back together and... figure out what I'm gonna say, how I'm  
233 gonna say it, so, when I'm nervous I just speak very broken, basically like this now [laughs]

234 127 IN: [laughs] oh ok

235 128 P12: so when I'm confident I'm not that afraid that anyone's gonna judge me or anything, I speak more fluently and stuff like that

236 129 IN: yeah, ok, so so you think there's a definite relationship between how confident you feel and how well you perform?

237 130 P12: yeah, yeah

238 131 IN: ok, and, um, now this is another question, um, er, I think earlier you said you don't think there is any big differences between  
239 your skills, didn't you? Is that correct?

240 132 P12: yeah but I thought it was in Czech Re-, in ch-, in Czech language?

241 133 IN: [38.14] yeah, if you think if you think about your English skills, do you think there are any big differences between these English  
242 skills?

243 134 P12: I would say that the difference isn't as big, but it's definitely because it's in Czech, like in comparison to my English language  
244 there's, the differences are bigger, but relatively still not so big

245 135 IN: not so big, yeah ok, because what I was interested in is, when you've got differences, um, in how, um, differences between your  
246 skills, I was wondering if that ever impacts on your confidence as well, for example you might think 'oh well, I know I can speak,  
247 um, however I always struggle with this', does that affect your confidence to know you've got some that are very strong, some  
248 not so strong or, or does that not really matter?

249 136 P12: I would say that I, like, the fact that I, like in first year when I couldn't understand some lecturers even though everybody else  
250 could, that was affected my confidence quite a lot, but then it got better, so, this impact sort of disappeared because I knew  
251 that I, got better by being in the class

252 137 IN: uh huh, ok, right then, um, now another question which is, um, have you ever thought about this before? Have you ever  
253 thought about, um, how confident you are in your, in English, have you ever thought about it in that point of view?

254 138 P12: um, I never did about like, like definitely not all four of the, aspects, or four of the the categories, but I was like thinking about  
255 listening, just because, that's the main way how, that was the main way where I sort of struggled when I moved in, uh, moved  
256 in, when I moved to UK, because just all of the accents [laughs]

257 139 IN: ah ok

258 140 P12: and it just took me longer to adjust to them, some of them

259 141 IN: so, so that one, that one did make you start to think about how confident you were?

260 142 P12: yeah, but basically when I moved in I, moved in [laughs] when I moved to the UK, I didn't really have any problem with reading,  
261 or didn't like see any problem with that, not really, I sometimes would like, wouldn't really understand a sentence and I would

262 read it five times and then come to like one of my friends 'hey, can you just translate this sentence to simple English for me and  
263 she'd be like, 'this', yeah, 'I am stupid but thank you' [laughs] I was just like mis-reading, not mis-reading, but like  
264 [40.49] misunderstanding one word, like using it in different context that it was, and then it suddenly all make sense, so I am,  
265 but I think it was definitely not an issue and speaking, maybe a bit, but it got better

266 143 IN: ok, but those those incidents it didn't actually, affect your sense of confidence in general then?

267 144 P12: um... it didn't really affect my confidence that much, I just thought, that it was like a very... very stupid time where my brain just  
268 turned over to something, I I didn't feel like it impacted me like it it... it was a five minute of not brain activity not like a whole  
269 week so [laughs] it didn't affect my confidence I was like, yeah, I was stupid I am sorry [laughs] that was it, I moved on

270 145 IN: ok, so yeah, only a momentary, um, affect on you yeah, ok, right my last question, um, how important it is to feel confident  
271 when using a second language?

272 146 P12: ... extremely

273 147 IN: hum, extremely?

274 148 P12: yeah definitely, because if you're not confident in the foreign language you not gonna use it, so, there's that

275 149 IN: ok, do you think there's anything else that's important, um, when using a second language, so you're saying confidence is  
276 important, do you think there's anything else that's very important?

277 150 P12: um... basically, I would say like who you are speaking to also matters a lot, but not so like if it's your friend, classmate, it's the  
278 lecturer whatever, no, it's about, er, if they seem like someone who's gonna make fun of you for mistakes or not

279 151 IN: ok



280 152 P12: I had it like the majority of my classmates, ok, few of them are not so pure by soul, but majority of them really have the vibe of  
281 someone and showed it from the beginning, that they're going to be ok with whatever stupid thing I say, they're maybe gonna  
282 be like, 'I have no idea what you're saying but still good for you,' like I knew that they wouldn't really go harsh, 'oh my God  
283 you're stupid, eh, how can you say that?' like I knew that they wouldn't do this and I knew that my lecturer wouldn't do that as  
284 well, I was still a little bit nervous because I didn't want to say it for myself because I would be the one harsh to myself, but I  
285 knew that they would not be, and it really helped me a lot

286 153 IN: [43.21] uh huh, yeah

287 154 P12: so it feels like, I, I'm not sure if it's a general thing everywhere here or something, but it feels like everyone I met here in Britain,  
288 even though they could sense straight away that I'm not local, I'm not it's not like I can hide it, they wouldn't show any type of  
289 judgement against my language, which is cool, which is really nice, like, comparing to, I've been to Paris once and we tried, I I  
290 did French in my high school as well and my friends as well, they've been all from the same high school, we tried to speak  
291 French with them and it wouldn't go well, they would just like, give us like, loads of stinky eyes, so used to English because we  
292 have way better English than them, so we could beat them on that ground [laughs]

293 155 P12: [laughs] yeah, very good, all right, well, thank you, is there anything else you want to tell me about today, um, cos I think I've  
294 finished my questions, is there anything else you'd like me to note down?

295 156 P12: I don't know, uh... no, nothing comes to mind

296 157 IN: that's brilliant ok, I'll stop recording

297 Interview ends at 44.33

Participant 13

Duration: 28:47 (of 52:25 recording)

Age 43

Nationality Turkish

First language/s Kurdish, also Turkish

Academic subject/s Electrical Engineering/Technician undergraduate, 15 years as a qualified electric technician, also BA Business Administration

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening took an elocution course

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening answered wrongly: Maths, Literature

English learning: High school and University in Turkey 1-2 hrs/week

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening especially academic writing

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely/not really/no

What English exams have you taken? Pre-sessional Entry 1, 2, 3 higher class

What score/s did you get? Reading 4.5 Writing 4 Speaking N/K Listening N/K

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no better, exam easier than though, more confidence

1 001 IN: [19.53] so, where would you like to start, what would you like to talk about first, um, of these four skills?

2 002 P13: I answer this in the middle of the, this text [indicating visual prompt] it's er, yeah, if I learn, er, some new things in English or in  
3 other language it, er, makes me, er, happy, I don't know, yeah, new things, it's a, then I compare to myself in the past

4 003 IN: ah, um hum

5 004 P13: how can I going to forward or backward, going forward there is, I think, this is a good way, I have to follow this, and I didn't  
6 compare to the other students, 'yeah, I, I am ok, I'm better than this', 'no I'm less than this' the only, er, competition is myself

7 005 IN: that's interesting, yeah, yeah yeah, ok, very interesting [laughs] um, you're not the only person to say that, that is very  
8 interesting, ok, um, so, what, do you want to talk about one of the skills, more precisely, um, what would you like to talk about?

9 006 P13: listening

10 007 IN: listening yeah?

11 008 P13: it's er,

12 009 IN: so this is basically about how-

13 010 P13: listening

14 011 IN: yeah, go on, sorry

15 012 P13: er, listening in academic, is, er, harder for me at the moment, in my, er, knowledge, because not, er, I don't know very well  
16 English and, yeah, it's also sometimes confused about this sentence ok, but not and I felt different maybe I con-confuse, I mix  
17 the word, sometimes it can be normal I think for me because, er, it's not, ready at the moment I think

18 013 IN: ok, so, um, we got there, it says a personal confidence score, so, out of a hundred, in your, in your mind, um, what score would  
19 you give yourself, not not based on any exams but based on how you feel inside yourself, how confident are you out of a  
20 hundred? Do you think?

21 014 P13: 60, 70

22 015 IN: [22.17] um hum, 60 or 70, ok, now, obviously there's different situations so, um, we've got there like listening to lectures or  
23 listening to a lecturer, um, listening in class, or listening in a test situation, if your confidence different according to different  
24 things you have to listen to?

25 016 P13: erm, yeah actually I understand all my lecturer and what they say, er, because they know how they reach to the student, and er,  
26 yeah, I, yeah, it's ok, I I don't think so I have a problem with this

27 0,17 IN: ok, so so, listening in class is all right, um

28 018 P13: yes

29 019 IN: is there anything that you're not so confident about, you said, um, you said about listening to conversations, didn't you, earlier?

30 020 P13: yes, but er, some words because, er, the academic English is contained many of words and this all words it's nearly change to  
31 the normal, not even English, not this is the different language in English, I think, academic

32 021 IN: yeah, ok, so, so you find that difficult sometimes?

33 022 P13: yes

34 023 IN: yeah, ok, all right, um, and what about, have you ever had, to do, um, like a test where you have to listen to something and then  
35 answer the questions, do you find that, is that something you can do, or?

36 024 P13: yes, in the college, er, I do three, or more than three, maybe four, times, and er, and it's ok and er, yeah, I can do it, I think it's  
37 ok for me, not very bad yeah

38 025 IN: yeah ok, all right, um, so um, where do you think your confidence comes from, then? So you sound like you're quite confident  
39 about about listening and your ability to understand things, um, where do you think that confidence comes from?

40 026 P13: er, I feel confident because every day nearly one or two hours, er, I listening English, sometimes BBC Four, sometimes in the  
41 YouTube, sometimes in the TED talks, I try to improve my English, then I, er, yeah, notice something in the reading or listening,  
42 then I memorise then I checked, after then yes, er, keep going

43 027 IN: yeah that's good, so so lots of practice then? is that what you're saying?

44 028 P13: [25.00] yes, er, because, er, my aim is, er, to learnt this language, not 'ah I do only my homework, it's there, it's assigned, then  
45 I'm free', it's mean this I think

46 029 IN: yeah, it sounds like you're very motivated, yeah, ok, um, is there anything else you'd like to tell me about listening in particular?  
47 um

48 030 P13: yeah, listening is er, er, pronunciation problem, I think for me, er, because er, sometimes the word or vocabulary is, er, not clear  
49 sounds, yeah nothing, then I can't understand, also in my language, in my second language or first language sometimes I  
50 confuse, I thought, maybe this is normal, but er, yeah, time, maybe in the future I can solve this problem, I'm not sure

51 031 IN: yeah, maybe, with time, I think yeah, maybe, ok, um, good, um, right, do you want to talk about, er, is that everything? Do you  
52 want to talk about another skill now? What would you like to talk about?

53 032 P13: speaking, yeah, I can speaking, speaking is maybe 8-, 80

54 033 IN: ok

55 034 P13: and er, it's er, a little confident, and er, yeah, the other reading, er, reading is also hard, especially academic, er, reading,  
56 especially doing some academic something

57 035 IN: yeah ok

58 036 P13: yeah, it's hard for me

59 037 IN: ok, so you said for speaking you think it's 80, um

60 038 P13: yes

61 039 IN: ok, yeah, and what are you, what do you think for reading then, what score?

62 040 P13: reading maybe 60

63 041 IN: ok, so that's down, that's down, ok, all right

64 042 P13: yeah

65 043 IN: [27.12] all right, coming back to speaking again, um, again, does that change according to who you're talking to, um, is there any  
66 differences between how confident you feel, with, with those things there like speaking English to lecturers or with other  
67 people, um, does it change?

68 044 P13: yes, it change, it's completely change I think, because as I mentioned when I speak my teacher, I understand everything and er,  
69 out of the-, er, in the street maybe if I [sowt, saw?] someone who is from English and er, then I can't er, I can't say er, I don't  
70 know, I can't understand, and I can't speak it's very different day, I speak, they didn't understand me, I don't know

71 045 IN: um hum, how does that make you feel?

72 046 P13: it's, er yeah, [unintelligible] It's not good for me, but er, I have to try and I have to solve this problem

73 047 IN: um, um, and what about talking to classmates, what about that?

74 048 P13: er, yeah, it's better, but er, if your first language is not English then I can communicate easily, but if your first language is English  
75 then, er, then it's a little bit hard for me I can't speak, I can't understand, I can't communicate

76 049 IN: yeah, ok, and um, I've got that question there about, um, you said about outside the class so, is it, is it fair, to say that, um,  
77 speaking English is easier in the classroom, than outside the classroom?

78 050 P13: in the classroom it's easy

79 051 IN: easier, right ok, that's interesting yeah, ok, um, but you've given yourself a good score, you said 80, so where does that  
80 confidence come from?

81 052 P13: er, I know I can do this, and every day every day I listening and I do something, I try to do something, and er, yeah, maybe, yeah  
82 from somewhere, maybe voice maybe radio, er, yeah I try to do something and I know myself

83 053 IN: um hum, ok, so yeah, so, so you said earlier that you don't compare yourself with anyone else, or anything like that

84 054 P13: no, I'm always compare today and yesterday

85 055 IN: with yesterday, yeah yeah, I get that, ok, um, do you ever, um, looking at that thing about comments from others [indicating  
86 visual prompt] do you ever, erm, pay attention to anything anyone tells you about your English?

87 056 P13: [30.18] er, yes, they say that, er, your English is really good, and you have improved, really good improved, er, sometimes, not  
88 all, but I think I have to improve it

89 057 IN: ok, um hum, does that help your confidence though, if someone says you're doing ok?

90 058 P13: yeah, of course it's help [laughs]

91 059 IN: yeah, what I mean is, so sometimes if someone says that you might not believe it, and then you might say 'well, they're saying  
92 that but I don't believe that,' do you know what I mean, so, ok, um, all right then, is there anything else you'd like to tell me  
93 about speaking in particular?

94 060 P13: er no, it's ok I think

95 061 IN: so ok all right then, so um, what shall we talk about next, um, do you want to talk about reading, maybe?

96 062 P13: I think is, in the academic of course, hard for me,  
97 063 IN: it's hard um

98 064 P13: yeah, because of many new words, and many different words, I try reading the test, task or essay, yeah yeah I don't know I  
99 don't know, and er, yeah it's, er, if I can't understand, sometimes I can guess the word but not every time then, I try to, what is  
100 meaning then

101 065 IN: so what what sorts of things do you have to read, as part of your study?

102 066 P13: sorry?

103 067 IN: what sorts of, what things do you have to read, what different types of text do you have to read?



104 068 P13: er yeah, now I have in the pre-sessional course and every day I read something for my homework, write some summary, and er,  
105 it's er, yeah, I have to read more academic essay or some academic, er, I don't know, maybe er, yeah, article, academic essay,  
106 it's ok

107 069 IN: yeah, ok, and you, and you're saying then that it's the vocabulary that's the hardest part, yeah?

108 070 P13: [32.41] yes

109 071 IN: ok, all right, is that because there's not much vocabulary the same between your language and, and, you know, some languages  
110 have got similar words, um, is it because it is all very different?

111 072 P13: yes some, er, vocabulary is, er, national, you know, it's all people use it, maybe internet, maybe technology, but some is very  
112 different

113 073 IN: um, yeah, ok, so, so yes, this one's you're less confident about the reading, yeah ok, right, and that question, where does your  
114 confidence come from, again, is it just your own experience, or... er, do you every compare yourself with anyone else, or, for  
115 reading?

116 074 P13: reading, no I always competition myself because, er, I try to read something, maybe today I read one task and er, tomorrow I  
117 have to read one task too because, it's not a failure today 'oh I read it today and tomorrow I can, I am free' I don't it's not good  
118 because if you want to do something you can be really seriously do something

119 075 IN: yeah, absolutely, so it sounds like you, yeah, it's a motivation, yeah, ok, right, um, is there anything else you want to tell me  
120 about reading?

121 076 P13: no, it's fine

122 077 IN: no, ok, all right then, let's move to that one then, writing, so, um, what do you think? How confident are you with writing in  
123 English?

124 078 P13: my writing is not good [smiles ruefully]

125 079 IN: [laughs] ok

126 080 P13: maybe 60

127 081 IN: uh huh, ok, all right, so do you want to explain that then? why?  
128

129 082 P13: [34.44] er, yes, it's easy to explain actually because in my language, er, er, in the first or second language, how you seen the  
130 words you can read this sound and the letters, but in English it's very change, you can't, you can't, you guess only, I don't know,  
131 pronunciation is er, sometimes very different, if you write a word, you write vocabulary, but you read very different sound, this  
132 is I think due to this

133 083 IN: yeah, ok, yeah, so that's the key thing for you is it? Ok

134 084 P13: yes

135 085 IN: yeah, ok, um, what about, um, I mean at the moment you're on the pre-sessional course, um, obviously there's different types  
136 of writing, how do you feel about, the different types, you know, like essays, reports, etc? Is your confidence, um, different  
137 according to what it is you have to write?

138 086 P13: it's normally writing that is, er, hard for me, but er, in the academic it's be too hard

139 087 IN: [laughs] oh no!

140 088 P13: [laughs] it's er, yeah it's real, but I, I always watching something, how can I improve, what should I do in the, something maybe,  
141 ah, for example I give to you one example, there is one, er, 'the economy is big factor in the, the national building, although the  
142 economy is a, would be argue the economy is really, er, big impact in the national building', er, I think, the education, er, is great  
143 impact, in this example, yeah, I always try to do something, 'oh how can I write?', how can, maybe I have problem with this,  
144 maybe, er, it's er, I miss some words, yet still I think I have miss some words, because I know this is the sentence, it alls not true  
145 and I check again, check again, check again, it's...

146 089 IN: yeah, um, so do you get lots of feedback on your writing?

147 090 P13: er, yeah, my teacher [unintelligible] when I write it, writing lot of feedback

148 091 IN: and what, does that affect how you feel about the writing?

149 092 P13: yeah, sometimes half hour I make the wrong private and then maybe half hour, maybe forty minutes, after then I think teacher  
150 write good then I will very happy

151 093 IN: [37.58] yeah, so, so the um, does the feedback so the feedback, am I right to say, the feedback keeps you keeps you motivated  
152 or does it, lower your confidence?

153 094 P13: er, yeah, if I write something, yeah, of course feedback is important, but er, I know what I write and it's important, um, yeah I  
154 know how can I write, er, all word I can use I can compare the, with my before and this is I think important

155 095 IN: yeah, ok, can I ask about, um er, in in when you was doing your study in in Turkey, um, did ,did, how are you for writing  
156 assignments in Turkish? Um, did you did you find that hard as well or? Was that much easier?

157 096 P13: er, in Turkey education, er, it's a little bit different, I try to explain a little bit, er, because in UK your expectation, er, is different,  
158 teacher expectation from the students it's the, independent thinking but in Turkey not the same, er, some teachers  
159 expectations students do their homework and come to class

160 097 IN: ok

161 098 P13: yes, it's very different, and er, yeah, in Turkey of course we have some academic words, but not like English, not more, we can,  
162 er, use er, simple academic, er, essay, it's not very, er, er, with deep meaning, not like in the UK, in UK it's a I think it's a change  
163 the whole nearly words

164 099 IN: ok, right, ok, so very different then so, for example is it, am I right to say then it's impossible to take things you learned to do in  
165 Turkey and just use them just in English, it doesn't work that way, you can't just take your skills from one language and use  
166 them in English, is that correct?

167 100 P13: sorry I didn't catch it

168 101 IN: no, I'm I've not explained myself very well, um, sometimes you can learn you can learn how to do something, like for example  
169 write an essay in your own country and then when you come to work in a different language you can just take that knowledge,  
170 that skill and just basically do it again in a different language, um, but you're saying, are you saying that, writing in English so  
171 very different from writing in, in Turkish?

172 102 P13: yes, it's different, er, um, maybe you can but it's not possible, you try, and maybe I can try, but it's not possible because it's a  
173 different type of writing, very different rules in the sentence, in my second language Turkish, always verb is end of the sentence,  
174 [41.16] but in English not same, it's er, I sometimes confused and we have only three tense in my, er, both language, but in  
175 English, twelve or more

176 103 IN: yeah, there's about fifteen different ways of doing it, yeah [laughs] ok, so so, yeah, I guess you're talking about the grammar  
177 being quite different as well, yeah, so ok, grammar and vocabulary, yeah ok, um, and on your pre-sessional course, um, are you  
178 learning about things like referencing, and that sort of thing?

179 104 P13: yes, we, yes, it's good, it's going good

180 105 IN: yeah, um, are you quite confident with that? Or is it still early days?

181 106 P13: yeah, sometimes I'm, er, confused and then I share my teacher, I can't do this, I can't do this, he say you can pass [laughs] yeah,  
182 this is worse [unintelligible] maybe

183 107 IN: is is, um, yeah, ok, good, ok, is there anything else you'd like to tell me about, you know, your experience of writing in English  
184 and where does that confidence come from, well, it doesn't sound like you are very confident, but um

185 108 P13: yes, er, I try to writing every day, maybe one or two sheets, er, because it's, er, really hard to me, how can I write, er, write it  
186 and er, also vocabulary some vocabulary, if I don't know, I write down maybe ten maybe twenty, maybe fifty times, it's not  
187 easy, I believe I tried

188 109 IN: yeah, yeah, so, lots and lots of practice basically

189 110 P13: yes

190 111 IN: um hum, ok, very interesting, all right then ok, I've just got another question or two I'd like to ask you, um, which is, um, here  
191 we go, right, um, yeah, um, I hope this question makes sense, um, your confidence do you think that makes a difference to how  
192 well you perform? So, for example, if you're feeling confident about something do you think it makes you do a better job of it,  
193 or, what do you think?

194 112 P13: yes, confidence is very important because er, you can't focus to your subject, your issue and, er, if you can't, er, focus  
195 something I think you can't success

196 113 IN: right yeah, um hum, so for you confidence is about being able to focus on it, yeah?

197 114 p13: [44.06] yes

198 115 IN: hum, ok, that's interesting, all right, um, and, um, I think you said earlier you didn't think there was much difference between  
199 your skills, is that right? you said that you thought that your different skills were about the same?

200 116 P13: sorry?

201 117 IN: um, earlier, I think you said that your, you felt that your skills are about the same? Is that right? with English

202 118 P13: I don't know, maybe improved, I'm not sure

203 119 IN: yeah, ok, cos one of my questions was is about when you feel, when you feel like less confident in one skill, I just wondered if  
204 that affects, you know, your confidence as a whole, if you know what I mean? So, some people might think, 'oh, you know, I  
205 can't do this, and then they think 'well, I can't do that either', do you think that happens to you at all?

206 120 P13: sometimes ok, but er, [unintelligible] the one or two days after I, er, get back myself and I try to do something because if I can't  
207 say this or I can't do then, yeah we know the result

208 121 IN: oh, ok

209 122 P13: it's a big problem, yeah, but er, but I don't want to be this thing inside

210 123 IN: ok, so you always, you always think to yourself 'I can do this' then?

211 124 P13: yes, yes, it's really important

212 125 IN: ok, ok, yeah, it is very important to be very positive isn't it yeah? Ok, um, ok right, just one more question or two, um, have you  
213 ever thought, um, about this idea before, about confidence and um, er, your second language, and using English, have you ever  
214 thought about it? Maybe you've never thought about it

215 126 P13: no, my second language is, er, Turkish

216 127 IN: ok, sorry [laughs] I'm talking about English though, have you ever thought about that, the idea of being confident in English, or  
217 not?

218 128 P13: [ 46.16] yeah, as I mentioned, one language is different, new word, new things, new culture, everything is new, and er, I have to,  
219 er, er, how can I say, I I had to do something about this new thing for to speaking, maybe writing, maybe, er, listening, yeah, it's  
220 very important but this all confident, this all factor, it's a, it's all together working, yeah, you can't say 'oh, I don't need to  
221 reading, or I didn't needed to listening', you can't, you don't have this, er, option, you have to do something with together, it's  
222 all organised

223 129 IN: yeah, yeah, ok, all right, um, so, so, yeah, so um, I think you have, you have said then that you think it is important to be  
224 confident and also to stay motivated, is that fair, yeah?

225 130 P13: yes

226 131 IN: ok, good, ok, well that's brilliant, is there anything else you wanna tell me about how you feel about English, um, is there  
227 anything else you can think of at all?

228 132 P13: er, I went to Preston College for English Entry 2 I finished and er, IT class Entry 3 finished, and the Maths Entry 3 finished, but  
229 they said me, I have extra two, er, two test for, er, the next level because they said me, your Math is good, and er, maybe you  
230 can start to Level 2, er, past Level 1, but I don't know, er, I did this two tests after that I left to the the, er, Preston College and at  
231 the moment I'm in the pre-sessional and I have two different class, the pre-sessional and I'm trying to do something about  
232 myself and I really want to enter to the University, it's my dream

233 Interview questions and answers end at [48.40] with the conversation moving to future study plans and chat about arrangements for English  
234 lessons in the next academic year.



Participant 14

Duration: 34:44 (of 56:28 recording)

Age 22

Nationality Libyan

First language/s Arabic, Italian few words

Academic subject/s Petroleum Institute Gas Safety, BEng Gas & Safety Engineering

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

English learning: Since formal schooling, but at primary and high school the focus was on just grammar and vocab at school, coursebook & workbook based, but more recently took an English course at Petroleum Institute preparation for IELTS test Tunisia early 2020

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely / not really / no big differences with formal English, but not informal

What English exams have you taken? IELTS x 2 (in Libya: mid 2019/ Tunisia: early 2020)

What score/s did you get? Libya 5.5: Reading 5 Writing 5 Speaking 6 Listening 5 (but Tunisia 5 for everything)

Did the exam change how confident you feel about English? definitely / not really / no now more fearful about producing written English in limited time because unable to check over work

1 001 IN: [15.53] so, um, what would you like to talk about first? um, you can start where you like, um, where would you like to start with  
2 talking about

3 002 P14: let's start with listening

4 003 IN: ok, right, lovely ok, so, my first question for you then is, thinking about listening when you are in class, ok, and this is listening in  
5 English, um, if you were going to give yourself a score, out of a hundred, about how confident you feel, what do you think you'd  
6 give yourself?

7 004 P14: so...er, you mean assess my skill in, in listening?

8 005 IN: yeah, it's not about how you did in an exam, it's about how confident do you feel, when you're in, in a situation where you have  
9 to listen to English, so that might be in the class, etc.

10 006 P14: yeah, maybe it's 80

11 007 IN: oh good, wow, ok um hum

12 008 P14: yeah

13 009 IN: ok, no that's good, is that the same, do you feel that, do you feel that that confident is the same when you're in class, or when  
14 you're being tested, are there any differences there?

15 010 P14: er, yeah, er, it's different between er when you are in a class and the teacher explain the lesson and, when you are being testing  
16 on your listening skill, so, it's er, it's being, er, stressful when you are at the test, and you may, you may, er, er, miss a sentence  
17 or er answer, so you get confused and you maybe you, er, and that's happen with me in IELTS listening exam so I missed the

18 first answer then I missed four answer, er, after the first one, because I panic and I don't know how to, to get words I , er, I listen  
19 to er, I hear it, but I I can't write it down

20 011 IN: yeah, ah ok, so would you give yourself a different score then for listening in assessment then?

21 012 P14: er, in assessment I think maybe 50

22 013 IN: [18.15] ok, so that's much less, ok, uh huh, all right, so, what sorts of things are you confident that you can do? So, where do  
23 you feel confident?

24 014 P14: er... in listening?

25 015 IN: hum

26 016 P14: maybe in a, in a normal conversation chat, er about or discussing, er, er, a topic, that will not be as assessed

27 017 IN: yeah ok so, so it's it's very much, do you feel, so when that next question it says there [indicates the interview prompt] 'less  
28 confident, things I can't do', um, is there any situations, you talked about tests and assessment, is there anything else that  
29 you're less confident about?

30 018 P14: um... I think, er, that's it, I er just only at the test, er, yeah

31 019 IN: yeah, so for example, when you're in the class, like you're doing the pre-sessional, um, do you, do you, are you confident  
32 listening to the teacher?

33 020 P14: yes

34 021 IN: yeah, and what about your classmates, is it easy to follow what they're saying?

35 022 P14: yes, it's easy because, er, we all at, er, the same level and we speak, er, not, er, quickly, maybe so I can catch them, understand  
36 everything

37 023 IN: yeah, ok, all right then, so that's good, you've got quite a high confidence then haven't you really, yeah? Do you, where, where  
38 do you get that idea from, you talked about past experience for the, um, IELTS test, and that was, that's lowered your  
39 confidence, um, is there anything else you get your sense of confidence from?

40 024 P14: er, yes, er... these days I I start to listen, er, to er, some podcasts, er, from my, one's called One day Business World, so, er, I  
41 think it improved, it improved my listening skills and, um, I interesting to listen to it, er, it's the famous news story about, er, the  
42 success of the companies and the world

43 025 IN: yeah, well that's, that's lucky these days we have the internet, isn't it? Um

44 026 P14: [21.08] yeah, it's more easy yeah

45 027 IN: yeah yeah, ok, so do you feel like you're getting better then? Or, um

46 028 P14: yeah, er um, the more I listen to, the more I become confident with listen

47 029 IN: yeah yeah ok, is there any time when you're watching those things, do you think 'ah, I don't understand that', is there anything  
48 you find difficult or?

49 030 P14: yes, er, especially a new words and maybe an when when the speaker is speaking a different, er, a different er, er, what, accent  
50 yes, different accent maybe yeah, the accent is not, eh, that ,I'm not familiar with so I I may, er, not understand

51 031 IN: yeah, yeah ok, all right, very good all right, is there anything else you want to tell me about listening, or do you want to move to  
52 something else?

53 032 P14: um, no, I think that's all

54 033 IN: ok, all right then, what do you want to talk about next then?

55 034 P14: um, maybe speaking?

56 035 IN: yeah ok, let's go for that then, ok, so again it's the usual thing, um, give yourself a score out of a hundred, for how you feel  
57 about your speaking confidence, remember it's confidence, not how you did in an exam

58 036 P14: yep, so, er, actually when I was, er, alone, er, sitting, er, at my room and thinking of speaking, I, I managed to organise a great  
59 sentence with the great vocabulary, with the great vocab and, er, correct grammar, but when I come to to say it to someone, I  
60 just completely mess it up, I don't worry, it's keep happen, this thing it's keep happen to me, but, er, I think the score that I give  
61 er, when I confidence, I, er, I mean that I be, um er, as I said alone thinking of speaking, er, it would be, er, 75?

62 037 IN: ok, um hum, ok, and then what happens? Does that stay at 75 or does it go up or down?

63 038 P14: no no, it's just go down

64 039 IN: oh, really? [sounds sympathetic] ok, so is that, is that different depending on who you are talking to?

65 040 P14: [23.58] er, er, maybe, er, yes, it's have to, it had to, to er, it's related to who you talking to because if you are talking to, er,  
66 someone important and you want to tell him that important thing, so, you will be more stressed than if you talking to your  
67 friends and tell him something about something, er, normal

68 041 IN: yeah yeah, yeah, so it depends on, on that situation

69 042 P14: on the situation

70 043 IN: yeah, how do you feel about talking to your teachers, your lecturers? In English

71 044 P14: at the, speaking of the pre-sessional course, at the beginning I was too shy to speak and, er, and er... confused to organise my  
72 speech, and to, then day by day I become, I push, I push myself to become more confidence and just speak, I, I don't, er, I I don't  
73 really focussing on making mistakes, I will, I just say what I want to say, then that's it

74 045 IN: yeah no, I think that's, that's a good strategy, I think that's a really, I think you learn to speak by speaking so yeah, keep doing it  
75 [laughs] it's really good, um, ok, um so um, you're quite confident, you're less confident with the listening, you gave yourself 75,  
76 um, why is that?

77 046 P14: on speak?

78 047 IN: yeah, what are you, what are you confident about, what are you not so confident about?

79 048 P14: um, I'm not so, er, confident about, er, er, maybe, as I said, making mistakes, grammatical mistakes in sentence and, er, and er,  
80 mis- maybe, misunderstanding when I said something that I mean think, but the listener it's understanding another thing

81 049 IN: yeah ok, yeah yeah, so being misunderstood I suppose

82 050 P14: yes

83 051 IN: yeah ok, where does your confidence come from, do you think?

84 052 P14: it's come from, er, practice, er, we we have in this course, we have, er, we have a peer study group, so we have, er, about two  
85 hours discussing, discussing about, er, topics and find the answers through tasks so, er, I think, er, this the, the, the most source  
86 I become confident

87 053 IN: [27.27] ok, so do you do any of those other things, do you ever compare yourself, or do you listen to what people say to you  
88 about your speaking, or is it mostly from practice?

89 054 P14: no, I, er, at at at this time, I, it's mostly from, er, practicing, just speaking, and not, er box [referring to visual prompt?] at  
90 anything

91 055 IN: yeah, ok, that's really interesting yeah, ok, so um, ok, is there anything else you want to tell me about the speaking?

92 056 P14: um, I think the, er, er, the more, the most, er, related thing to be, er, a confident speaker and er, to speak fluency is to be, er, is  
93 to trust yourself and, it's, er, to er, to be, er, thinking in English and that's the prob- and that's, er, the problem that I I I have  
94 now because er, my first language is not English so sometimes I think in, in my first language then I try to say it in English, so  
95 that's, that's the point, that happen, that have er, er, confuse

96 057 IN: yeah yeah, so you're translating inside your head all the time

97 058 P14: yeah

98 059 IN: ok, all right, um, and how do you feel confident, do you feel confident about your pronunciation, are you ok with that?

99 060 P14: yes, I think er, I have no problem with the pro- pronunciation, I just, maybe the new words pronunciation and, but er, er only a  
100 few, a few a few times then I will, er, fix that

101 061 IN: yeah yeah, well I agree, I think your pronunciation is fine [laughs] I'm not struggling to understand you at all so it's really good,  
102 ok, right, um, what would you like to talk about next?

103 062 P14: let's go to reading

104 063 IN: ok, right then, ok, so you know what to do now, you need a personal confidence score

105 064 P14: confidence score maybe, er, that's depending on what text, what er, what type of text that I read, if it was like novel or story,  
106 it's more confidence than academic, er, essay or research, because er, in a novel and story you don't find, er, advanced words  
107 and complex sentence that you may not understand

108 065 IN: um hum, yeah, ok

109 066 P14: [30.52] so the score it will be maybe 40?

110 067 IN: ok, forty for what, the academic stuff?

111 068 P14: er, for academic yes

112 069 IN: yeah, ok, and how do you feel about reading more general English, you know, like you said, novels and stuff like that?

113 070 P14: then no, er, I think it's ok, it's really easy to read and understand things in general, not complicated and not advanced

114 071 IN: yeah, ok, so so where does that confidence come from? Why is it only forty?

115 072 P14: er, forty regarding to to reading, er, as I said, er, academic writing

116 073 IN: um hum

117 074 P14: because I think, er, er, in every, er, research or essay that I read I find a couple of words that I don't understand so this the  
118 problem, sometimes it just, er, stop at that word and, er, guessing the meaning, then look at the dictionary, er, trying to find out  
119 what's the meaning this sentence and that's it

120 075 IN: yeah, so so that, so is it right to say then that it's the vocabulary that is the thing that makes you less confident?

121 076 P14: yeah



122 077 IN: yeah ok, and do you ever, those ideas in the middle there [indicates visual prompt] do you ever, do you ever listen to, I don't  
123 know, comm- feedback from teachers or, have you had any experiences, are any of those things relevant?

124 078 P14: um, yeah, you mean that the past experience?

125 079 IN: yeah, maybe? I don't know, have you had any good or bad experiences with reading?

126 080 P14: ah actually I don't have many experience in reading English, maybe I, sometimes I go to the Reddit app and er, read some posts  
127 and maybe, er, er, rarely, er, read er articles at the Financial Times newspaper, and not too much

128 081 IN: no, but like Reddit, that's a really popular website, do you, do you, are you confident reading that, or is it quite hard?

129 082 P14 [33.56] yes yes, it's easy

130 083 IN: oh ok, do you know what makes it easy? Is it, is it the vocabulary?

131 084 P14: cos it's it's, er, er, it's not complicating, er, writing and er, so someone is, er, expressing, er, his feeling or, er, saying that, er,  
132 saying story that happened to him or discussing problems so that's kind of, er... er, easy reading maybe

133 085 IN: yeah yeah, it is very different from journal articles and stuff like that so yeah, yeah, ok, is there anything else you want to tell me  
134 about reading?

135 086 P14: um, no

136 087 IN: ok right then, well let's talk about writing then, ok, so, what about it?

137 088 P14: It's difficult [pulls a face]

138 089 IN: [laughs] ok, straightaway he says it's difficult [laughing] all right ok, um, ok so obviously there's lots of different sorts of things  
139 you might, what sorts of things you do have to write, at the moment, um, in English?

140 090 P14: er, I don't get the point

141 091 IN: ok, um, at the moment, you're studying English on a pre-sessional, um, have you been asked to write anything yet?

142 092 P14: er, yes, er, we have to do some, er, practising on writing essay introductions and er, understanding what the essay is, er, about  
143 and what is it, the container, what it contain, and er, yes, I think the problem with writing for me is to not, er, getting, er, a good  
144 a good strategy and a good teaching resource on how to write, er, er, academic essay or report or anything, yeah, because  
145 before this, er, this course, I used to, I take a, one course that a preparation for the ILETS [IELTS] and, I learned nothing about,  
146 er, about writing, he just, he just, er, hand the last, the topic about the ILETS and he want to, we, we write about it, and er, we  
147 don't know how, how we write and, what the requirements of writing essay, so I think that's important to to know before you  
148 start writing essay or research or anything in academic

149 093 IN: yeah, absolutely yeah, so do you think that teacher didn't really help you with the writing? Yeah

150 094 P14: yes

151 095 IN: [37.35] ok, so hopefully things are a bit better [laughs]

152 096 P14: yes, it will yeah

153 097 IN: so, tell me about your confidence then, is it, was your confidence, I don't know, is it low? Has it got better? Where is it at, what  
154 score at the moment?

155 098 P14: I think at the moment, er, it's getting better than the past I think, er, it's about, er, 55 maybe, 60? Yeah

156 099 IN: um hum, ok, so are there some things you feel confident about, and some things you feel less confident about? Um

157 100 P14: er, I think, er, the strategy, the structure, sorry, the structure of the, er, complex sentence maybe, and er, the to, and er, to

158 change, er, questions from, and to change from questions to an query [?] sentence, I think that's less confidence

159 101 IN: ok, right yeah, so, and are they teaching you about how to referencing and things like that, at the moment?

160 102 P14: yeah, in this course we we we don't get to that yet but er, we will, yes

161 103 IN: have you, yeah, have you ever done it before?

162 104 P14: no, I haven't no

163 105 IN: ok, so it's quite new to you, how confident do you feel about learning this?

164 106 P14: er, I think it's, er, at the first, er, er, at the at the first time, it will be strange, but er, I will I will get to use

165 107 IN: yeah, I think so too, yeah, ok, so your confidence in in writing, where do you think that confidence comes from? Where do your

166 ideas come from?

167 108 P14: er, I think it's come from, er, practising, er, writing sentences, and er, in English and er, er, trying to paraphrasing some, er,

168 sentence to my own word

169 109 IN: ok yeah

170 110 P14: so that's it

171 111 IN: [40.13] do you ever, do you ever, um, take notice of any feedback that you get on your writing?

172 112 P14: yes, er, we do, er, I do that in this, er, in this course, we we have, er, homework tasks then I get the feedback on that homework  
173 so then I take a notice about the feedback and, er, when I make a mistake and then I try to improve it

174 113 IN: yeah, does that affect your confidence, the the feedback that you get?

175 114 P14: yes, absolutely, yes

176 115 IN: ok, which way, up or down? [laughs]

177 116 P14: up [laughs] absolutely yeah

178 117 IN: oh so the feedback you think it makes you more confident, not less?

179 118 P14: yes, yes I think I think the most effective, er, method in every course especially in learning English is that you get the feedback,  
180 and so you know, er, your weaknesses point and you work on it, and you will be better

181 119 IN: ok, so it doesn't make you feel like giving up?

182 120 P14: no, no

183 121 IN: oh ok, that's good

184 122 P14: it's more it's more give you, er, power to do better in this time

185 123 IN: um hum, can I ask you another thing which is, um, how confident do you feel about writing in Arabic, is it is it better, worse, um,  
186 does it compare?

187 124 P14: erm, I think because my Arabic is my first language so I think it's easier than, er, writing in English,

188 125 IN: yeah, but but when you are writing in Arabic, do you feel quite confident about that or, um, cos you said at the beginning you  
189 said that you thought even in Arabic, writing was your worst skill, didn't you?

190 126 P14: [42.23] yes, er... when we, when we come to the, to the, academic, er, to the academic, er, side, it's, er, it's it's difficult, even in  
191 Arabic to because we have, er, more rules than English and more grammar, and more, er, fancy words, so it's, er, it's, er, I  
192 think, I think it's difficult too

193 127 IN: ok yeah, so yeah so, I was just wondering if there was any relationship between how confident you feel writing in Arabic, with  
194 how confident you feel writing in English, or are they quite different things?

195 128 P14: er... I think, er, my confident goes with writing in Arabic, more than writing in English

196 129 IN: um, oh that's interesting ok, um, because because Arabic's a difficult language or, why is that?

197 130 P14: yeah, because because, yes, er, because I, er, I think, it has as I said it has, er, er, more rules and, er, er, more grammatical  
198 things

199 131 IN: yeah ok, that's interesting, so English is an easier language, ok [laughs]

200 132 P14: yes yes [laughs]

201 133 IN: fabulous [laughs] ok, is there anything else you want to tell me about writing?

202 134 P14: er, I think that's all

203 135 IN: that's all is it, right ok, I just got a couple more questions I'd like to ask you, um, um, and um, that is, um, your level of  
204 confidence, do you think that makes a difference to your performance? So like, how confident you feel does that make a  
205 difference to how well you do something?

206 136 P14: yes, so if I become more confidence with writing so I will do better

207 137 IN: um hum, ok, you think those things are related to each other, yeah ok

208 138 P14: yes

209 139 IN: um, do you know how that works, for you?

210 140 P14: you mean confidence

211 141 IN: [44.47] yeah, as in, what effect, for you personally, what effect does feeling confident do? How does it your performance better  
212 do you think?

213 142 P14: I think by, er, um, er, getting used to it as er, maybe as er, a daily task, so you, so by doing that I will, er, getting more confidence

214 143 IN: yeah ok, so it's about, it's about getting lots of practice I suppose?

215 144 P14: yeah

216 145 IN: yeah yeah ok, um, all right then, um, I think I asked you, um, do you think, did I ask you this one, do you think, do you think  
217 there are differences between your skills and does that affect your confidence?

218 146 P14: er... maybe, um

219 147 IN: as in, as in some people might think 'oh you know, I'm really good at this, but I'm really not good at that', and then does that  
220 affect how confident you feel, or?

221 148 P14: how confident, er, between skills you mean?

222 149 IN: yeah, yeah yeah, like when you got a big difference, does that does that affect you sort of, or do you think 'oh well, nevermind,  
223 my writing I'm not so confident'

224 150 P14: I, er, yes, er, but, er, it affect, er, only the skill itself, it's not, it doesn't affect the other one that I confident with

225 151 IN: right, yeah, that's what I'm trying to ask you, my English isn't always very good [laughs] ok thank you, all right then, um, so um,  
226 yeah, ok, just another question, um, which is, have you ever thought about how confident you feel when you, with English? Is  
227 this something you've ever thought about yourself, before I asked you about it?

228 152 P14: er, it's, er, I think it's something that, er, more naturally than I think about it, it's, it's the feel that you feel yourself it's becoming  
229 more confident, and er, speaking, er, and my less confident at the reading, so it's, it's the feel from yourself that you feel, that  
230 you feel that way

231 153 IN: yeah yeah, so, so you're, you are aware of your strengths and your weaknesses?

232 154 P14: yes yes

233 155 IN: [47.40] yeah ok, all right, good, wow, ok, um, um, just one more question, you're being so good [laughs] one more question,  
234 which is how important do you think it is to feel confident when you're using any language, any second language?

235 156 P14: [repeated sound in the background] I think it's, er, very important because if you are confident with that language you will do  
236 anything and you will be success at it and no problem will, would face you, and that's my point about it

237 157 IN: yeah yeah [laughs] can I, is that a call to prayer?

238 158 P14: yeah

239 159 IN: [laughs] very good, [laughing] do you have to go now then?

240 160 P14: yes, I think so yeah [laughing]

241 161 IN: [laughing] I thought so yeah, ah well, thank you, thank you so much for having, for spending the time talking to me

242 Interview questions end at [48.37], but conversation continues with questions from the participant about how to improve further and make

243 the most of the study abroad experience.



Participant 15

Duration: 26:33 (of 36:52 recording)

Age 30

Nationality Saudi Arabian

First language/s Arabic

Academic subject/s BSc Fire Safety Engineering

Which is your best skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening

Which is your worst skill in your language? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening

English learning: How long? Started in 2009, 15 month English course

Where & what for? during a scholarship to the US to train as a paramedic, spent 6 years in the US

Which is your best English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing /Speaking/Listening Reading too

Which is your worst English skill? Circle one: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening pretty comfortable with English

Are there big differences between your English skills? Circle one: definitely /not really/ no

What English exams have you taken? Test in Saudi Arabia for Foundation year for college 93/100

What score/s did you get? Reading Writing Speaking Listening N/A it was a combined test but similar to IELTS

001 IN: [07.15] I'd just like to ask you some questions about, um, the four skills of English, um, so you can start where you like, um, perhaps you'd like to start by talking about, um, listening, I don't know, um, I'm really interested in, um, how you find using English, um, but this is for your degree study ok, it's not for just outside of, it's for when you're in lectures, and when you're doing your degree, um, so the first part is yeah, um, how confident do you feel when you're in a lecture or listening in a class or whatever?

002 P15: I'd say pretty comfortable

003 IN: um hum, if you're gonna give yourself a score out of 100, what would you give yourself?

004 P15: er, I'm gonna be modest and say 85

005 IN: you don't have to be modest. No, it's, it is genuinely about how confident you feel

006 P15: erm, 85, 90, like

007 IN: yeah, ok

008 P15: sometimes you find difficulty, especially it's different accent than the one I'm used to, so, you know, some of the words, some of the way you say things here, different than the way they say it back in the States

009 IN: right

010 P15: but still I understand like, what is, whatever is say, saying at the time you know, even if I missed a word or I didn't understand a word from the continuing of the speaking, even I understand it all, you know

011 IN: yeah ok, so, in in your lectures, do you have, um, is your lecturer a native speaker of English? Or are they an international person?

012 P15: most of them are natives, no actually, most of them are foreigners actually, some, er, Asians professors, which I find it odd because I speak better than them and they still the professor of one of the lectures which is, I don't know, kinda stupid, especially if none of the students understand whatever this professor is saying, but

013 IN: oh dear

014 P15: [9.15] yeah, and some are, I think, African and from African origin, and some are Arabic origin speakers, you know, it's different

015 IN: yeah ok, and is there anything that you can't do, anything that you find difficult, in terms of listening and understanding people?

016 P15: no no, I don't think so

017 IN: no? ok good, ok, um, and this is an interesting question, um, where does your confidence come from? How, why do you think you're, why do you give yourself such a high score?

018 P15: because whenever I speak to a native speaker, they would understand everything I say and I understand everything they say, you know?

019 IN: yeah

020 P15: that's why I would feel comfortable and confident at the same time, whenever I'm speaking to some native speakers

021 IN: yeah, so it's it's, yeah OK, so you understand everything and they understand you, yeah ok, um, is there anything else to say about listening or is it, it's just quite an easy skill for you?

022 P15: it's just sometimes the accent, you would find it difficult, different from like if I speak to a Scottish person you would have specific words or specific ways to say things different than, even, er, British people, I mean people from England, and people from US, it's all different, they have different way to start a conversation, or say specific thing, like in in the US they say university school for university, 'are you going to school?' which means university, in here they say university, it's just, you know, this is just maybe a bad example, but, I'm trying to say is, the way they say things, so sometimes you would be confused of what exactly, do they do they mean when they say things

023 IN: yeah, yeah, I I have the same problem with Americans and they do use different words [laughs], ok, um, let's move on to, um, the way, um, the reason why I'm looking this way is cause I've got, um, my my second computer up here, um, and I'm just reading my in my interview prompts, um, so what about reading? So this is reading, again, for your degree, so the reading that you have to do for your subject area, how confident out of 100 how, how confident do you feel?

024 P15: I'm comfortable reading, I would like, for example, let's go to to the reading section [reads out loud from the interview prompt] reading academic context, reading courses books, journal articles for assessment, personal confidence, more confident things [11.53] that I can do, less confident things I cannot do, where does your confidence come from... like I, I'm really comfortable with that, you know, like I, I don't find it difficult to read

025 IN: ok, what sort of reading do you have to do for your subject?

026 P15: we don't do a lot of reading actually

027 IN: ha!

028 P15: specifically because it's engineering, it's more about designing, and, you know, the drawing, er, memorising stuff, you know, it's not a lot, they give you an option to go read a book if you wanna learn more, but, I don't actually do that, but, if I had to, if I had to then I would be still comfortable doing that. I found it maybe difficult, when I'm reading something, some of the words they wouldn't understand, I would wanna help myself to learn new words so I got translated, you know, just for to become more knowledgeable, more, er, have more vocabulary in my, with my knowledge, you know

029 IN: yeah yeah, do you ever have any-

030 P15: I would understand the whole sentence, but still, I would wanna understand this exact word, what is it exactly mean, you know?

031 IN: yeah, yeah, yeah, because some of the words could be very technical, can't they? Um, do you ever, um, read journal articles or research papers?

032 P15: yeah, yeah we do that, for like, we doing a dissertation now and I've been reading a lot of articles to do that, so yeah

033 IN: yeah, how do you find them?

034 P15: um... I think it's alright, like, as I say, some of the words I would have to translate to understand the full meaning so I can, like, rephrase, er rephrase it differently when I'm writing my article, you know, so I have to understand what does this word exactly mean

035 IN: yeah

036 P15: so, I can rephrase it in a perfect way, like, you know, like, I don't write another meaning of what this article is saying, you know

037 IN: yeah, yeah, yeah yeah, ok, um good, alright then, so so you are genuinely confident about this, yeah ok

038 P15: [ 14.09] yes

039 IN: and why do you- why-, where does your confidence come from?

040 P15: as I said, it's because, just for the reading you mean, or for the in general?

041 IN: no, for reading, for reading

042 P15: when I read stuff, I don't find difficulties to pronounce words or something

043 IN: yeah, ok, ok, um, I forgot to mention, um, in the middle of the- is this visual prompt, you can see there's some some ideas, um, for where people sometimes, or in theory, this is where some people get their confidence from, so, you can see there they've got things like, um, comparing yourself with other people, or comments that people make to you, or your past experiences and sorts of things like that, um, so I just wondered if if if, you know

044 P15: yeah, yeah, compare myself to others, classmates from foreign countries, comments from others, er, feedback from native speakers, all that actually, I've had all that

045 IN: yeah, ok, um, alright then, let's um, let's move on to talking about speaking then, um, so this is now obviously, you know, I think you sound like you are already very confident, um, obviously there's different circumstances. Can you tell me a bit about that? Um, first of all, what score would you give yourself for speaking?

046 P15: 80

047 IN: 80? oh ok

- 048 P15: because mostly I am confident to say whatever, but, sometimes there are better words to use to prescribe something and, some of these words don't come at mind at the time you know, I would know some of the words, that proper word to use it whatever I wanna say, but sometimes I would just go to the basic way to say it, you know
- 049 IN: right
- 050 P15: [16.11] the other person would understand me still, perfectly, but still, like when I think about some of the things I say, I would like, I would think and say like, 'why didn't I say it this way?' you know, so he can understand me better than what the way he understood me, you know
- 051 IN: ok, uh huh, so that that's makes you feel a little bit little bit less confident, being able to get the right word at the right time, yeah
- 052 P15: I'm still helping improve myself, like, you know, I when you, you know you made something wrong, when you think about it then next time you want, you won't do it, you know
- 053 IN: yeah, ok, yeah, so so you feel like you can't, you are, do you feel like you're getting better?
- 054 P15: I get better day after day actually, keep on learning, it's not a native language for me so I keep on learning and learning
- 055 IN: yeah, yeah yeah, good, and how, um, how do you feel, um, so obviously there's different people you have to speak to so you can see there on the prompt, it talks about speaking, um, English to lecturers or with classmates or presentations. Does your confidence change, according to who you're talking to?
- 056 P15: um... maybe in a way, specially if it's, like, something important, like speaking to a professor about something important in my class, you know, like, I would wanna say it the right way, but still I would say like, 'did he understand

me fully or he didn't', you know, but yeah, speaking in front of others, well, doesn't matter if it's in Arabic or English like for a presentation or something, it's... I don't think it's about the language it's about, like, character or something

057 IN: ok, and what and what do you? How do you feel when you have to do a presentation?

058 P15: I don't like presentations at all

059 IN: ok, alright, so do you think you're a bit more introverted?

060 P15: yeah, I like to, like, I don't like to, like, be the centre of everyone's attention, yeah

061 IN: yeah, fair enough, I don't think many people do [laughs] ok, and um how do you find speaking English with, er um, with your classmates or or with with people in and around Preston?

062 P15: [18.45] it's pretty good, actually, I don't find it, any difficulties on that

063 IN: ok, good, ok um, where do you think your confidence has come from? Is it from, is it from your experiences out in the US, or, what do you think?

064 P15: the same, like feedbacks, once I start talking to someone I've just met who is a native speaker and he would just come, like give me, like a good comment on the way I speak, even though I'm not a native speaker, you know, like they would say, you, you speak pretty good for someone who doesn't, didn't born speaking that language, you know and such, so

065 IN: yeah, I I agree with you, I think your English is very good actually [laughs] yeah ok, good, alright then, is there anything else you want to tell me about speaking?

066 P15: um, no



067 IN: no, you're good, you're good, alright then, let's get onto writing, then, um, cos I think that's the area that you might have, um, more to say about, I don't know, um, so tell me about how confident you feel with, um, writing, again, this is for your degree, it's- so yeah

068 P15: well I hate writing, I never liked it

069 IN: no

070 P15: but you have to do it to get a degree so

071 IN: um hum, ok, so how- what score out of 100 would you give yourself?

072 P15: er, I would say 70 maybe

073 IN: ok, um hum

074 P15: maybe because, er, I, I mean in here, I think you start writing from an early age, so you get the skills from an early age in here, like the way you teach students from elementary, junior high, blah, blah, blah... we didn't do a lot of that, back in Saudi, like in our schools, so we didn't have the proper skills, we got classes but, I mean, it wasn't that important of a subject, you know, it was like an extra class that we just have to pass, you know, but once I started going in college in here and in the US, I started [20.59] getting skills but I still don't think I'm really that good of a writer, you know, I would like sometimes have difficulty structuring in my writing, and, where to start, 'should I put that here or here', you know, a lot of a lot of things that I would not get good, but as I said, you get better every time you do something

075 IN: so what sorts of things do you need to write on your, on your course?

076 P15: we do writing for all our courses, we have assignments for all our courses and since it's my final year, we do our dissertation which we have to write like around 8000 words, so

077 IN: yeah

078 P15: yeah, so that's, but still for that course we have a supervisor who like, whenever you finished, er, a part of your dissertation, you'd ask them for feedback and he'd read it and give you a feedback on your work and, you know, like for example, I finished my literature review, er, right now and I sent it to my professor and he, he suggested that I need more structure in my, like, er, literature review, so I'm doing that right now so I can like get a good score at the end, then at the same time get better at writing, you know

079 IN: yeah, so, it- so, you're saying that you find it hardest is to to actually organise the writing, um, is that the, the bit that you struggle with?

080 P15: yeah, yeah, I would say that, I would say that's pretty difficult

081 IN: yeah, and how do you feel in terms of, um, like the grammar and the vocabulary?

082 P15: like how, what percentage I would give myself in grammar and writing?

083 IN: um

084 P15: to be honest, I would say 50 maybe?

085 IN: ok

086 P15: [22.57] because I'm not, the hardest things for foreigner when he is writing up in another language is grammar, because, no matter what the wor-, what vocabulary you know, how to say it, the other person would understand it, but is it the right way, especially for academic writing

087 IN: yeah

088 P15: I would say no, because there are better ways to say things, specially when I, I read an article it's way different than the way I, when I read something I wrote, you know

089 IN: yeah, does that affect your confidence then, seeing, making that comparison?

090 P15: oh yeah, yeah, it's just comparison, and I would say writing grammar and writing is the hardest thing you would learn in another language, in my opinion

091 IN: yeah, um hum, yeah yeah, and what about the other parts of it? So, you said you're doing a literature review, how do you find, um, using sources or doing the referencing, those sorts of things?

092 P15: oh, that's that's easy, I mean, that's basic stuff like, reading articles, referencing it, paraphrasing it, er, writing it in your own words, you know, but still like, you you don't know because, whoever gonna grade you, is way better speaking than you are, and, you don't know what what, what grade he would give you based on his knowledge and whatever he's like reading in front of his eye you know

093 P15: yeah

094 P15: so yeah

095 IN: so that makes you feel more [unintelligible], so, in terms of things that you know you can do or can't do, there's a list there. I mean, do you write essays at all?

096 P15: do I what?

097 IN: do you ever have to write essays?

098 P15: yeah, mostly reports actually, on specific things and that consist of many essays

099 IN: [25.01] um hum, so, which ones- do you feel conf-, how do you feel, um, are there some that you're more confident with and some that you're less confident with?

100 P15: essays or what? Either essays or what?

101 IN: sorry, say again?

102 P15: between essays and what?

103 IN: and and like reports, um, or the dissertation, for example

104 P15: I would say, it's just different structure based on whatever the professor asking you to do, like, one of them would ask for investigation report, you know, it's just the structure of it and the, the, er, the things that he's asking you to write about, and he would sometimes in the preview of the assignment, he would suggest like you write the first section on this, second section on this, third section in th-, whatever the professor is asking, we do it, you know

105 IN: yeah [laughs]

106 P15: I don't, I don't do anything out of my head you know, some of them wants in the beginning a literature review, then a study, then er, analysis on that study, some of them wants just a full report on an incident, some of them want... it's just different and whatever they asking us to do, we just do it, whatever they want

107 IN: yeah yeah, yeah yeah, you do very much cos you're worried about what mark you might get, yeah ok, so where does your confidence come from when you're writing?

108 P15: um, sometimes if I get a good grade then I would say I'm up confident, that I'm doing good or doing better at least

109 IN: yeah yeah, ok, so it comes from the marks, yeah ok, alright well thank you very much, I've just got a few more follow up questions, um, I'll stop sharing this screen now because, um, it's quite hard to see you. What am I doing? I can't. I can't see what I'm doing here, just a second, how do I stop sharing this? Um

110 P15: I'm not sure how

111 IN: [27.08] oh is it 'stop presenting', oh that's what it is, I think, er, let's see. I think that's it, yes, that's it, that's better, good, ok cool, um right, just just a couple more questions, um, um, what was it I wanted to ask you, yeah, so I've been asking about confidence quite a lot, um, I wanted to ask, um, your sense of confidence in English, do you think it makes a difference to your performance?

112 P15: um, no, in my opinion no, but still, like, you just feel it inside but you still perform the same based on whatever you know, you know, you gonna do it, you're gonna speak it, you gonna say it whatever, you know, it doesn't matter, you would feel unconfident inside, but, it will help you in the future, maybe to do better, that's it, I guess

113 IN: ok, that's interesting cos that's different from what other people have said [laughs] so that's very interesting, ok, um, and er, another question is, um, do you think, and I think you've already answered this one, um, do you think there are differences between your English skills? I think you said that you felt less confident with the writing than the speaking, is that right?

Internet connection was lost [28:28] temporarily; interview started again:

113 IN: and right I I only had a few more questions to ask you really, um, so um, my last question really was about, um, when you have a difference between how confident you feel in in your skills, so I think you said that you felt less confident with writing than speaking, for example, is that right?

114 P15: yeah, and more writing than speaking I would say

115 IN: yeah, ok, so when you know there's that difference, does that affect your confidence at all?

116 P15: um... no, I don't know, I don't think so

117 IN: no, ok, alright, um, ok, and that was one of my other ones, um, and um, yes ok, my final question is how, how important do you think it is to feel confident when you're using a second language?

118 P15: how confident or how difficult?

119 IN: as in as in, you know when you have to speak English, do you think it's important to feel confident, or

120 P15: [1.12] yes, definitely... otherwise you would just show the other person the, you don't know what you're saying or, he would just like feel sympathetic for you sometimes, and that's not a fun feeling

121 IN: no, no no, ok alright, very good, ok, is there anything else you wanna tell me about your experience of, you know, using English for your degree, um, anything else at all?

122 P15: it's just important that you really learn it before you start taking academic courses, you know, like I'm, actually one of the cool things that our English institute

123 IN: I can't hear you, what's happened? [ signal drops again for a few minutes] hello, are you there again?

124 P15: yeah, yeah, it's just my phone, I don't know what's going on

125 IN: ok, what I'll do is I'll, I'll finish fairly quickly now cos, um, yeah ok, am I recording, so yeah, ok, I I didn't catch the very last thing you said I don't suppose you can remember?

126 P15: one of the cool things that the university, the English institute back in the States did is, assigned one of the college native speakers to each students and they will practice like 5 hours a week with them to just practice English which, really, my opinion is better than going to class and learning just how to say this, or how to say that blah blah blah, you know, it's just better to speak the language and understand it from someone who's speak it normally, you know, than learning it professionally yeah

127 IN: yeah, yeah, ok, I think I really agree with that actually, um, because I I I worked in Portugal and my my Portuguese is much better than my French because I learned it in the country talking to people going out to cafes, and stuff, and rather than learning it

128 P15: exactly, that's what I'm saying

129 IN: yeah

130 P15: go outside of the classroom, speak with them, interact with them, know how they start a conversation, how they carry on a conversation, how to just be more confident to speak to someone you know.

131 IN: yeah, yeah yeah, it's true, yeah, ok well, yes, thank you very much, um and yes, your English is very very good you know, I don't think you've struggled very much with talking to me at all, um, so, so yeah, um, and good luck with your dissertation

132 P15: thanks

Interview ended at [5:20] when signal dropped, but we said goodbyes via chat.