

Becoming active users of assessment in learning-oriented EAP classrooms: A mixed methods  
exploratory sequential design with wrap-up phase

Rika Tsushima

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

McGill University, Montreal

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## ABSTRACT

In education measurement, there has been a conceptual shift in the last few decades from conventional means of assessment for accountability purposes to alternative assessment formats that aim to enhance student learning. Supported by theoretical development in language assessment, a new concept—learning-oriented assessment (LOA)—which prioritizes performance evidence on both learning outcomes and learning processes has been introduced to the field. This dissertation reports on an exploratory sequential mixed methods research (MMR) study with a wrap-up phase, conducted in an English for academic purposes (EAP) program at a Canadian university in which a learning-oriented approach was incorporated into the curriculum. Taking a longitudinal approach over a period of eight months, this four-phased MMR study explored EAP learning experiences of East Asian students from Confucius Heritage Cultures (CHC) in relation to their use of classroom assessment.

Phase I was the first qualitative phase of the MMR study with 12 focal interview participants with CHC backgrounds. Three sets of individual interviews were conducted with each of the participants. It was found that participants' previous language learning experiences in their own cultures was a key factor that affected their initial response to the new learning environment. Over the course of time, similar characteristics among participants in terms of their use of classroom assessment became more notable, such as eliciting more formative feedback from others and monitoring their own understanding of assessment criteria. At the same time, it was found that the participants who failed the first EAP course also shared common tendencies among themselves.

Phase II was the second qualitative phase, and two sets of individual interviews were conducted with the same 12 focal participants. This phase highlighted the difficulties of changing

metacognitive knowledge about particular persons, tasks, and strategies that participants held, and that such perceived knowledge from the previous learning context affected the participants' acculturation process into the new assessment culture. Moreover, participants' self-regulation was found to be connected to their individual differences in the use and understanding of information from classroom assessment.

Phase III was a student survey that was developed from the main findings of Phases I and II with the aim of confirming key findings with all East Asian students registered in the EAP program ( $n = 354$ ). The survey results were confirmatory with the findings from the qualitative phases.

Phase IV was the third qualitative phase and was conducted as a wrap-up phase. One final individual interview dataset was collected to obtain the 12 participants' reflections on their entire EAP experiences. It was found that the participants' success in EAP courses appeared contingent upon their self-regulated use of assessment not only within the classrooms but also in their private activities, such as the formation of supportive communities.

The dissertation concludes that LOA can facilitate self-directed learning by fostering awareness in the need for active engagement with assessment as a key to enhancing student learning outcomes. The current study adds empirical evidence to the growing understanding of the mechanism of student learning supported by assessment.

## RÉSUMÉ

Au cours des dernières décennies, il y a eu dans le domaine des méthodes d'évaluation de l'éducation, une transition conceptuelle d'un modèle conventionnel d'évaluation à des fins de responsabilisation vers des techniques d'évaluation distinctes visant plutôt à améliorer l'apprentissage de l'étudiant. S'appuyant sur des développements théoriques en matière d'évaluation du langage, un nouveau concept, l'évaluation dite "axée sur l'apprentissage" (Learning-Oriented Assessment - LOA), qui met l'accent sur les signes de performance autant en ce qui a trait aux résultats obtenus dans le cadre de l'apprentissage qu'en ce qui concerne les techniques d'apprentissage elles-mêmes, a vu le jour. Cette dissertation présente les résultats d'une étude exploratoire en recherche par méthodes mixtes séquentielles (Mixed Method Research – MMR) avec phase de synthèse, conduite dans un programme d'anglais à des fins académiques (English for Academic Purposes – EAP) dans une université canadienne ayant incorporé à son programme d'études une approche axée sur l'apprentissage. Adoptant une approche longitudinale d'une période de huit mois, cette étude MMR composée de quatre phases a exploré, pour le cours EAP, l'expérience d'apprentissage d'étudiants d'Asie de l'Est émanant de cultures avec un héritage confucéen (Confucius Heritage Cultures – CHC) en fonction de leur utilisation de l'évaluation en classe.

La phase I, première phase qualitative de l'étude MMR, consistait en des entrevues avec douze participants CHC présélectionnés. Trois séries d'entrevues individuelles ont été menées avec chacun des participants. L'expérience d'apprentissage linguistique préalable des participants dans leur culture d'origine s'est avérée un facteur clé affectant leur réaction initiale au nouvel environnement d'apprentissage. De plus, au fil du temps, des similitudes entre les participants dans leur utilisation de l'évaluation en classe sont devenues apparentes, notamment en ce qui concerne leur tendance à demander une rétroaction plus formatrice de la part des autres ainsi qu'à surveiller leur propre compréhension du critère d'évaluation. On a également noté que les participants échouant à leur premier cours EAP avaient certaines caractéristiques communes.

La phase II, deuxième phase qualitative, consistait en deux séries d'entrevues individuelles avec les mêmes participants. Cette phase a mis en relief, d'une part, la difficulté d'altérer la connaissance métacognitive que ces participants détenaient en lien avec des personnes, des tâches et des stratégies spécifiques. Elle a révélé d'autre part que cette connaissance acquise dans le cadre de leur contexte d'apprentissage précédent affectait leur

processus d'acculturation dans la nouvelle culture d'évaluation. De plus, on a découvert que la capacité des participants à s'autoréguler était connectée à leurs différences spécifiques quant à leur utilisation et à leur compréhension de l'information provenant de l'évaluation en classe.

La phase III consistait en un sondage auprès de tous les étudiants d'Asie de l'Est inscrits au programme EAP (n = 354). Le sondage, élaboré à partir des principaux résultats des phases I et II, avait comme objectif de corroborer ces résultats. Les résultats du sondage sont venus confirmer les conclusions des phases précédentes.

La phase IV, troisième et dernière phase qualitative de l'étude, consistait en un exercice de synthèse. Un dernier ensemble de données résultant d'entrevues individuelles a été recueilli dans le but d'obtenir les réflexions des douze participants sur l'ensemble de l'expérience vécue dans les cours EAP. On a remarqué que le succès des participants aux cours semblait dépendre de leur utilisation autorégulée de l'évaluation, non seulement dans les salles de classe mais aussi dans leurs activités personnelles, par exemple, la formation de communautés de soutien.

La dissertation conclut que la LOA a le potentiel de faciliter l'apprentissage personnel en suscitant une prise de conscience du besoin d'engagement actif avec l'évaluation agissant à titre de facteur clé dans l'amélioration des résultats d'apprentissage. La présente étude offre de nouveaux indices empiriques contribuant à la compréhension grandissante qu'on a des mécanismes d'apprentissage soutenus par l'évaluation.

## Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	II
ABSTRACT.....	III
RÉSUMÉ .....	V
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION TO STUDY.....	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	2
1.3 OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR MMR STUDY .....	4
1.4 STUDY RATIONALE AND ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION.....	4
1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	6
1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2.....	11
2.2 EMERGENCE OF CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT RESEARCH IN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT .....	12
2.4 KEY LEARNING-ORIENTED ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS .....	17
2.5 KEY FACTORS IN CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT RESEARCH .....	25
2.6 RESEARCH CONTEXT: ASSESSMENT IN CHC EDUCATION .....	29
2.7 NEED FOR THE CURRENT RESEARCH.....	33
2.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2 .....	34
<b>CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY 1 - MIXED METHODS EXPLORATORY SEQUENTIAL DESIGN WITH WRAP-UP</b>	
<b>PHASE .....</b>	<b>36</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 3.....	36
3.2 MIXED METHODS RESEARCH AS EPISTEMOLOGICAL ANARCHISM.....	37
3.3 HISTORICAL VIEW OF METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN LANGUAGE TESTING/ASSESSMENT.....	38
3.4 MIXED METHODS DESIGNS USED IN CLASSROOM-BASED LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT STUDIES .....	41

3.5 RESTATING RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF PRESENT STUDY.....	45
3.6 RATIONALE FOR MIXED METHODS EXPLORATORY SEQUENTIAL DESIGN WITH WRAP-UP PHASE.....	46
3.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3.....	50
<b>CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY 2 - DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES .....</b>	<b>51</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 4.....	51
4.2 RESEARCH CONTEXT .....	51
4.3 OVERALL DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND PROCEDURES .....	55
4.4 OVERVIEW OF QUALITATIVE PHASES: PHASE I, II, AND IV .....	56
4.5 OVERVIEW OF QUANTITATIVE PHASE: PHASE III.....	79
4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND OTHER APPROVALS.....	82
<b>CHAPTER 5 PHASE I .....</b>	<b>84</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 5.....	84
5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR PHASE I.....	84
5.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	85
5.4 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS OF PHASE I .....	85
5.5 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS OF INTERVIEW #1 .....	86
5.6 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS OF INTERVIEW #2 .....	96
5.7 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS OF INTERVIEW #3 .....	107
5.8 OVERALL SUMMARY OF PHASE I.....	119
5.9 MINI DISCUSSION OF PHASE I.....	121
5.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5 .....	126
<b>CHAPTER 6 PHASE II .....</b>	<b>128</b>
6.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 6.....	128
6.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR PHASE II.....	128
6.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR PHASE II.....	129



6.4 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS OF PHASE II .....	129
6.5 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS OF INTERVIEW #4 .....	130
6.6 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS OF INTERVIEW #5 .....	156
6.7 OVERALL RESULTS OF PHASE II .....	193
6.8 MINI DISCUSSION OF PHASE II.....	195
6.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 6 .....	213
<b>CHAPTER 7 PHASE III .....</b>	<b>214</b>
7.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 7.....	214
7.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF PHASE III .....	215
7.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	216
7.4 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS OF PHASE III.....	216
7.5 RESULTS OF CATEGORY 1: DEMOGRAPHICS AND ENGLISH LEARNING BACKGROUNDS.....	217
7.6 RESULTS OF CATEGORY 2: CHC STUDENT LEARNER BELIEFS.....	220
7.7 RESULTS OF CATEGORY 3: EAP TEACHERS' LOA PRACTICES.....	224
7.8 OVERALL RESULTS OF STUDENT SURVEY .....	237
7.9 MINI DISCUSSION OF PHASE III.....	239
7.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 7 .....	251
<b>CHAPTER 8 PHASE IV .....</b>	<b>253</b>
8.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 8.....	253
8.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR PHASE IV .....	254
8.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	254
8.4 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS OF INTERVIEW #6 .....	256
8.5 MINI DISCUSSION OF PHASE IV.....	271
8.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 8.....	278
<b>CHAPTER 9 INTEGRATION AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>280</b>

9.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 9.....	280
9.2 REVISITING OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THIS MMR STUDY .....	280
9.3 INTEGRATED RESULTS.....	282
9.4 INTRODUCTION TO DISCUSSION .....	287
9.5 DISCUSSION OF RQ1: ACCULTURATION TO THE LEARNING-ORIENTED, STUDENT-CENTRED EAP.....	287
9.6 DISCUSSION OF RQ2: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN USE OF ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES.....	292
9.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 9 .....	297
<b>CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>299</b>
10.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 10.....	299
10.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS .....	299
10.3 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS.....	302
10.4 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	306
10.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND FURTHER RESEARCH .....	308
10.6 CONCLUSION OF STUDY.....	312
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>339</b>
APPENDIX A: GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS [PHASE I].....	339
APPENDIX B: GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS [PHASE II].....	342
APPENDIX C: GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS [PHASE IV].....	344
APPENDIX D: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE [PHASES I AND II] .....	345
APPENDIX E: STUDENT SURVEY [PHASE III].....	346

## List of Tables

<b>Table 3.1</b>	<i>Examples of Language Assessment Research Employing MMR Designs</i>	42
<b>Table 3.2</b>	<i>Summary of the Phase Connections and Reporting Chapters</i>	48
<b>Table 4.1</b>	<i>Pathway Program Overview</i>	53
<b>Table 4.2</b>	<i>EAP Success Rates at the ESL School: Fall 2015</i>	55
<b>Table 4.3</b>	<i>Overview of Data Collection of Exploratory Sequential MMR Study with Wrap-up Phase</i>	56
<b>Table 4.4</b>	<i>Overview of Qualitative Data Collection</i>	57
<b>Table 4.5</b>	<i>Qualitative Data Collection Details</i>	60
<b>Table 4.6</b>	<i>Sampling Procedures</i>	63
<b>Table 4.7</b>	<i>Student Participants' Backgrounds</i>	66
<b>Table 4.8</b>	<i>Pseudonyms of EAP Teachers for Participants in Phases I and II</i>	73
<b>Table 4.9</b>	<i>Example of Emergent Themes: Phase I, Interview #1</i>	78
<b>Table 4.10</b>	<i>Participant Numbers and Section Numbers in Each EAP Course Level</i>	81
<b>Table 5.1</b>	<i>Emergent Themes from Phase I, Interview #1</i>	87
<b>Table 5.2</b>	<i>Emergent Themes from Phase I, Interview #2</i>	97
<b>Table 5.3</b>	<i>Emergent Themes from Phase I, Interview #3</i>	108
<b>Table 5.4</b>	<i>Failed Participants and their Background Information</i>	110
<b>Table 5.5</b>	<i>Passed Participants and their Background Information</i>	114
<b>Table 6.1</b>	<i>Emergent Themes from Phase II, Interview #4</i>	131
<b>Table 6.2</b>	<i>Interview Participants who Passed EAP-1: Phase II</i>	132
<b>Table 6.3</b>	<i>Interview Participants who Failed EAP-1: Phase II</i>	134
<b>Table 6.4</b>	<i>Emergent Themes from Interview #4: Third Overarching Theme</i>	143
<b>Table 6.5</b>	<i>Emergent Themes from Phase II, Interview #5</i>	157
<b>Table 6.6</b>	<i>Emergent Themes from Interview #5: Third Overarching Theme</i>	174
<b>Table 6.7</b>	<i>Roles of Language Teachers in Two Assessment Cultures</i>	198
<b>Table 6.8</b>	<i>Roles of Language Learners in Two Assessment Cultures</i>	201
<b>Table 6.9</b>	<i>Roles of Peers in Two Assessment Cultures</i>	204
<b>Table 6.10</b>	<i>Individual Differences of Use of Assessment in LOA context in Phase II</i>	207
<b>Table 7.1</b>	<i>Survey Organization: Category, Included Items, Overarching Category, Main Sub-category, and Variable</i>	217
<b>Table 7.2</b>	<i>Demographic Information of CHC Students in EAP courses: Age and Country of Origin</i>	218
<b>Table 7.3</b>	<i>Demographic Information of CHC Students in EAP Courses: Length of Stay in Canada</i>	219
<b>Table 7.4</b>	<i>Descriptive Statistics: English-learning backgrounds</i>	220
<b>Table 7.5</b>	<i>Descriptive Statistics: Learner Beliefs about Classroom Practice</i>	222
<b>Table 7.6</b>	<i>Descriptive Statistics: Learner Beliefs about Error Correction</i>	223
<b>Table 7.7</b>	<i>Section Code for Each Section/Teacher</i>	226
<b>Table 7.8</b>	<i>Descriptive: Classroom Management</i>	227
<b>Table 7.9</b>	<i>Results of One-way ANOVA: Classroom Management by Sections/Teachers</i>	229
<b>Table 7.10</b>	<i>Descriptive Statistics: Feedback Interactions with Teachers</i>	230
<b>Table 7.11</b>	<i>Results of One-Way ANOVA: Feedback Interactions with Teachers by Sections</i>	231
<b>Table 7.12</b>	<i>Descriptive Statistics: Feedback Interactions with Peers</i>	234
<b>Table 7.13</b>	<i>Results of One-way ANOVA: Feedback Interactions with Peers by Sections/Teachers</i>	234
<b>Table 7.14</b>	<i>Descriptive Statistics: Assignment as a Tool of LOA</i>	236
<b>Table 7.15</b>	<i>Results of One-Way ANOVA: Assignments as a Tool of LOA by Sections/Teachers</i>	236
<b>Table 7.16</b>	<i>Organization of Mini Discussion: First Research Question</i>	239
<b>Table 7.17</b>	<i>Organization of Mini Discussion: Second Research Question</i>	242
<b>Table 7.18</b>	<i>Organization of Mini Discussion: Third Research Question</i>	246
<b>Table 8.1</b>	<i>EAP Course Results of 12 Interview Participants from Phase I to Phase IV</i>	255
<b>Table 8.2</b>	<i>Emergent Themes from Phase III, Interview #6</i>	257

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 2.1:</b> Carless' (2015) LOA Model with Three Components .....	19
<b>Figure 2.2:</b> Turner and Purpura's (2016) Working Framework for LOA (p. 261) .....	21
<b>Figure 2.3:</b> Turner and Purpura's (2018) Revised Framework for LOA (Slide 7) .....	22
<b>Figure 2.4</b> Jones and Saville's (2016) LOA Cycle .....	24
<b>Figure 3.1</b> Procedural Diagram of Exploratory Sequential MMR Design with Wrap-up Phase Adopted from Creswell (2015, p.60) .....	47
<b>Figure 4.1</b> Summary of Analytic Process .....	74
<b>Figure 4.2</b> Example of Code Frequency Analysis in Dedoose .....	76
<b>Figure 4.3</b> Example of Code Co-occurrence Chart in Dedoose .....	77
<b>Figure 5.1</b> Sequence of MMR Study with Wrap-up Phase: Phase I .....	84
<b>Figure 5.2</b> Sequence of MMR Study: Phase I .....	86
<b>Figure 5.3</b> Timeline of Phase I Interviews and EAP Final Exam .....	96
<b>Figure 6.1</b> Sequence of MMR Study with Wrap-up Phase: Phase II .....	128
<b>Figure 6.2</b> Sequence of MMR Study: Phase II .....	130
<b>Figure 6.3</b> Model of Active Use of Assessment with Turner & Purpura's (2018) LOA Characteristics..	145
<b>Figure 6.4</b> Cycle of Self-regulated Learning in EAP Coursework Context: Adopted from Zimmerman (2002, p.67) .....	175
<b>Figure 6.5</b> EAP Timeline and Learning Goals of Participants with Active Use of Assessment Characteristics .....	179
<b>Figure 6.6</b> Conceptual Framework of Metacognition Based on Flavell (1997) and Brown (1978) .....	196
<b>Figure 7.1</b> Sequence of MMR study with Wrap-up Phase: Phase III .....	214
<b>Figure 8.1</b> Sequence of MMR Study with Wrap-up Phase: Phase IV .....	253
<b>Figure 8.2</b> Sequence of MMR Study: Phase IV .....	256
<b>Figure 8.3</b> Findings of Phase IV: Self-regulated/Active Use of Assessment in Aspects of Student Learning .....	275
<b>Figure 9.1</b> Summary of Theme Development for the MMR Study .....	281
<b>Figure 9.2</b> Summary of Emerged Learner Beliefs in LOA Context of the MMR Study .....	288

## Chapter 1 Introduction

“By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.” (Confucius)

### 1.1 Introduction to Study

In education measurement, there has been a conceptual shift in the last few decades from conventional means of assessment for accountability purposes to more learning-oriented, alternative assessment formats that aim to enhance student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b; Carless, 2007; Moss, 2003). There is a growing body of literature focused on assessment in classroom contexts which has proven that classroom assessment can contribute to the development of effective instruction and promote student foreign and second language (henceforth, L2) learning (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Davidson & Leung, 2009; Hill & McNamara, 2012; Leung & Mohan, 2004). Much of these theories and research posit that classroom assessment can be utilized not only to measure the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) that L2 learners need to perform tasks, but also to inform the teacher and the students about the future steps required for mastery. To date, different concepts and frameworks of using assessment to connect teaching and learning have been developed by assessment researchers (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b; Earl, 2013; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018).

Supported by these theoretical developments, a new concept—learning-oriented assessment (LOA)—which prioritizes performance evidence on both learning outcomes and learning processes (Carless, 2007; Jones, & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018) has been introduced to the field, and has been increasingly used to investigate the possibility of using assessment for the progression of student learning outcomes. However, there is a research gap concerning the lack of comprehensive understanding of LOA effectiveness when it is applied to a real L2 classroom environment. There has not been a study focusing on the complex

mechanism of learning that explains changes of student learning behaviour in response to LOA in a longitudinal manner. In addition, one of the most significant factors related to student learning behaviours, which is cultural values in learning (Biggs, 1996), has not been investigated through an LOA lens. Therefore, this dissertation, conducted as a mixed-methods research (MMR) study with a wrap-up phase (Creswell, 2015), aimed to holistically examine the relationship between student use of assessment information and their learning outcomes, focusing on how international student acculturation materialized through their language learning over the course of time.

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

Owing to the increased attention to classroom assessment accompanied by educational policy reforms in many countries, language assessment researchers have become more involved in issues of language assessment in both school and classroom settings (Bachman, 2007). In particular, as a response to the increasing number of international students in higher education, much attention has been given to classroom assessment research in the area of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (e.g., Colby-Kelly & Turner, 2007; Kim & Kim, 2017; Neumann, 2014). EAP is a branch of English for specific purposes, in that the learning goals and assessment criteria should be congruent with the requirements of the learners (Hyland, 2002). Yet, there is a dearth of longitudinal studies examining international student cultural values on LOA in an EAP context. Research is needed on how this may affect LOA implementation and whether LOA can enhance student language learning through an EAP curriculum.

As learning is a situated process (Wenger, 1998), when a new pedagogical approach is introduced to a classroom, the culture and realities of the local classroom context must be taken into consideration. Research has indicated that one of the most significant factors in this regard

may be the differences in the learning behaviours of different cultural groups (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). Even though there are differences in political systems, economy, and educational structures, the same cultural heritage groups, such as in Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHC) that include East Asian countries, such as China and Chinese-speaking regions, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Vietnam, tend to share similar cultural values (Ho, 2016; Nguyen, 2006).

In the field of language assessment, CHC countries are known as test-driven societies where paper-based test performance rather than mastery of learning is emphasized (Carless, 2011; Cheng, 1997, 2005; Watanabe, 2004). International students from CHC countries are one of the most rapidly expanding groups within higher education systems in many English-speaking countries (Guhr et al., 2014; Li, 2019). The number of international students from CHC countries in Canada and the United States has been increasing rapidly in the last decade. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education, in 2018, Canada received 572,415 international students at all levels of study; 35% of them were CHC students (CBIE, 2019), which is indeed the largest non-English speaking ethnic group represented. In one particular EAP program, approximately 74 % of the whole student population in the last several years has come from East Asian countries with test-oriented values (Tsushima & Guardado, 2015). Yet, this fact has not been examined in relation to their learning behaviours concerning assessment information use through an LOA lens.

Considering that the majority of EAP classrooms in Canada are filled with students from cultures that place an extremely high value on paper-based exams, might this student composition affect classroom dynamics, teacher-student interactions, and student learning processes? Specifically, when such learners are put into an EAP setting where a learning-oriented, student-centred paradigm is adopted (Barr & Tagg, 1995), precisely how and to what

extent are they acculturated into this new learning culture? What factors affect student use of assessment in the new learning environment? Investigating these complex questions calls for a research methodology that is holistic, iterative, and longitudinal in nature.

### **1.3 Overarching Research Questions for MMR Study**

To attain the central research objectives described above, the following broad research questions (RQs) were formulated:

RQ1. What are the experiences of CHC students in learning-oriented, student-centred EAP courses? How does their cultural background affect their learning, specifically in their use of classroom assessment?

RQ2. Is there a relationship between CHC students' engagement with assessment and learning outcomes in the EAP courses? What is the most salient factor that affects student use of assessment to improve their learning?

These two RQs combined form the lens through which the entire study is viewed. In addition, the RQs were summarized as the main ideas that guided the entire, four-phased MMR study as follows: (1) CHC students' acculturation experiences of assessment in learning-oriented, student-centred EAP courses; and (2) The relationship between use of assessment and learning outcomes.

### **1.4 Study Rationale and Original Contribution**

The growing field of research focusing on LOA (Carless, 2003, 2007; Purpura, 2004; Turner & Purpura, 2016), specifically in an EAP context, will benefit from the current study as it provides the field with information which can be used to improve understandings of student engagement with assessment in language classrooms that adopt the learning-oriented, student-centred paradigm that was proposed by Barr and Tagg (1995). Taking a longitudinal research approach, this dissertation documents different stages of student reactions to learning-oriented,



student-centred EAP classroom practices, which provides insights into challenges that students encounter along the way. In addition, this study reports individual differences among students in terms of their use of assessment for their language learning and their learning outcomes. The information about key factors that affect learners' L2 development through classroom assessment may add a new perspective to the existing literature in language assessment as well as benefiting SLA researchers.

Another theoretical contributions of this study is in the knowledge and understanding of changes in CHC students' perceptions as they integrate new assessment concepts into their learning experiences. Through an LOA lens, the present study showcases how international students from East Asia at critical life transitions experienced the new assessment culture, which is a new addition to the literature. Given that very little research has been conducted on this topic with a specific focus on the learning experiences of international students from CHC backgrounds in an EAP context, the findings of this study may provide a deeper understanding of their need for learning support to increase their chances of success, not only in language classrooms but also in higher education.

Regarding its methodological contribution, this dissertation offers a unique and novel research method that can be useful and applicable to other classroom assessment studies that require an approach to identify the complex nature of personal, cultural, and social factors contributing to students' learning progress. Moreover, the adapted sequential MMR design (Creswell, 2015) used in this dissertation presents the flexibility and possibility of using an MMR design. By "liberating researchers from narrow QUAN/QUAL polarization" (Strydom & Fourie-Malherbe, 2019. p. 175) and by tailoring a research design that matches a specific

context, this dissertation may help researchers maximize their chances to draw sound and compelling conclusions from their data.

Finally, the findings of this study can have practical implications for other EAP contexts where a new assessment reform model may be deemed necessary. EAP program designers can obtain useful information to assess and evaluate the current assessment practices of their EAP classrooms. Practitioners may find useful and practical information that they can apply to their own classrooms and may gain an understanding of student perceptions concerning the incorporation of new assessment concepts into their learning. This dissertation hopes to play a small role in translating LOA concepts from a theoretical level into classroom-based practical teaching strategies.

### 1.5 Definition of Terms

To guide the reader in understanding necessary terms within this dissertation, the list below further clarifies the meaning of vocabulary terms that appears frequently throughout this dissertation. More detailed definitions of these terms are provided in the literature review, Chapter 2.

**Assessment:** Assessment is an act of evaluating a learner's performance. *Summative assessment* is often employed at the end of a unit or term, usually for the purpose of measuring performance to grade, rank or certify students. It is also used to document achievements and standards to present to external stakeholders. In this dissertation, summative assessment is defined as an assessment at the end of any instructional period, for example, a lesson, a unit, or a semester.

*Formative assessment* serves differently in this regard. The idea of formative assessment proposed by Scriven (1967) is to use it as a teaching tool to glean information from students in order to make decisions about what to teach next as a way to further enhance their learning. This

entails a host of assessment methods for the purpose of ascertaining the student's current level of learning so that the teacher can provide feedback to enable the student to progress towards achievement of the intended learning outcomes. This is where the link between assessment and feedback is most apparent.

**Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC):** This term is used often to define cultures of people from a variety of countries that share Confucian heritage values (Biggs, 1998). According to Nguyen et al. (2006), CHC is “dominant in China and other countries strongly influenced by China in the region's long history (Vietnam, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia)” (p. 4). In education research, CHC has been considered as a suitable framework to investigate and understand the disposition of teachers and students from these cultural backgrounds (Nguyen, et al., 2006).

**Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) students:** The term “CHC students” is used in this dissertation to refer to students from CHC backgrounds.

**Classroom assessment / classroom-based assessment (CBA):** Classroom assessment refers to any activities that are specifically designed and used within the classroom for the purpose of grading, evaluating, testing, ranking, and/or gleaning information about student learning development, as opposed to large-scale standardized exams external to the classroom. It involves both quantitative and qualitative information that can be used to enhance teaching and learning.

**English for Academic Purposes (EAP):** This term is normally defined as teaching English with the aim of assisting learners' academic study in the target language (e.g., Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, Hyland, 2002, 2006). Originally a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the early 1980s, it is a broad term covering all areas of academic communicative skills that are required for learners to successfully function in tertiary education.

**Feedback:** Feedback is information about the result of a performance given to learners from others, and in a classroom context. It is often provided by the teacher or peers. *Formative feedback* is given to the learners with the intention to modify their current thinking or behaviour for their future learning (Shute, 2008). *Summative feedback* is information communicated to the learners as a final report on the learning outcomes and is often characterized by the final grade.

**High-stakes exam:** In the assessment literature, a high-stakes exam is generally administered in a large-scale standardized test context (e.g., Cheng, 1997; Turner, 2009; Watanabe, 2004). In this dissertation, a high-stakes exam refers to a testing activity that bears important consequences or decisions for the test takers (e.g., success in completing a level of education; entrance qualification for a degree program). In other words, when results of an exam affect the test takers emotionally, financially and socially, the exam has high stakes even if it is administered on a small scale.

**Learning-oriented assessment (LOA):** As the name indicates, the notion of LOA has been conceptualized and used with a strong emphasis on the learning aspects of assessment by several assessment experts (Carless, 2007; Jones & Saville, 2016; Purpura, 2004; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). Building on formative assessment, LOA that “prioritizes the interpretation of L2 performance evidence on both learning outcomes and L2 processes” (Turner & Purpura, 2016, p. 260) was developed and introduced into classroom assessment research.

**Learning Paradigm:** The term is defined by Barr and Tagg (1995) as a pedagogical concept to refer to a learning-oriented approach in higher education. In the learning paradigm, as opposed to the instruction paradigm, the students, rather than the teacher, take ownership of student learning to enhance learning outcomes.

**Washback:** Washback in applied linguistics refers to the phenomenon of the influence of tests on language teachers and learners to do things “they would not necessarily otherwise do” (Alderson & Wall, 1993, p. 117).

## **1.6 Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into ten chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks that have guided this inquiry. First, it provides an overview of previous research on classroom assessment practices in general education. Then, it examines the relationship between learning and classroom assessment, focusing on L2 learning, by incorporating the literature on learning theories. Chapter 3 starts with relevant literature in research methodology in order to provide the rationale for the chosen methodology of the research. Chapter 4 details the MMR methodological design of this investigation, providing an overview of timelines and procedures of the data collection and analysis. It also describes the research site, participants, and data sources.

Chapters 5 through 8 summarize the key findings stemming from the four-phased MMR study, with each chapter focusing on different phases of the study. Each chapter starts with a description of data collection and analysis methods used for that phase and ends with a mini discussion which addresses the research questions for the respective phase. Chapter 5 reports on the first qualitative phase (Phase I), and is dedicated to describing the 12 focal participants’ initial reactions and acculturation process to the new learning environment from the perspective of classroom assessment. It describes the beginning of their EAP learning journey as a group. Chapter 6 focuses on Phase II, which was the second qualitative phase, and documents the learning strategies students used in relation to classroom assessment. It highlights individual differences that were salient from their interviews, drawing evidence from their personal lives

and classroom behaviours.

Chapter 7 reports on the results of a student survey (Phase III) that was administered to all EAP students at the end of the term ( $n = 354$ ). The survey design was based on data generated from the preceding phases, such as classroom observations and student interviews. Its objective was to obtain statistical data that would provide a broader picture of the demographics. Chapter 8 reports on the final qualitative phase (Phase IV) in which the same focal participants shared their reflective thoughts about their learning experiences in the EAP courses. Chapter 9 is the data integration chapter which synthesizes major findings from the four findings chapters and addresses the two overarching RQs. It also proposes a practical framework that can be used to strengthen LOA practices in L2 classrooms. Finally, Chapter 10 concludes the entire study and elaborates on its implications. Limitations of the study are presented, and, finally, recommendations for further research are provided.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction to Chapter 2

In the field of language assessment, particularly over the past decade, there has been a shift from conventional means of one-size-fits-all educational measurements to more context-specific, learning-oriented assessment (LOA) formats that directly connect assessment to learning (Carless, 2003, 2007; Hamp-Lyons, 2017; Jones & Saville, 2016; Purpura, 2004; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). This specific research area has evolved from interactions with other related areas, such as general theories of human behaviour (e.g., behavioural and psychodynamic) and educational measurement, not to mention L2 teaching and learning. Various overarching terms have been used to differentiate the assessment that is internal to the classroom from large-scale testing, such as *alternative assessment* (Fox, 2017; Teasdale & Leung, 2000), *teacher assessment* (Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004; Leung, 2004), *teacher-based assessment* (Davison & Leung, 2009) and *classroom-based assessment* (Hill & McNamara, 2012; Turner, 2012). In this dissertation, for the sake of simplicity, one term—*classroom assessment*—is used to describe “assessment internal to the classroom and managed by the teacher” (Turner, 2012, p. 65). Although the characteristics and definitions of the terms may vary, this dissertation aims to incorporate a broad array of classroom-based assessment discourse perspectives that investigate the issues of language assessment in English teaching contexts.

As a literature review, the main purposes of Chapter 2 are three-fold: (a) to introduce key concepts and terminology that are used throughout this dissertation; (b) to identify the major gaps in the literature by summarizing the existing research pattern; and (c) to provide contextual information on study participants. First, Chapter 2 starts with a brief description of the theoretical development of classroom assessment in the field of language assessment/testing in the broader,

historical context. Second, it introduces definitions of influential concepts used in classroom assessment research. Next is an explanation of LOA, which is the main theoretical framework supporting this dissertation, as well as three major LOA concepts. Then, this chapter continues with a discussion of key factors that are acknowledged as important elements of student learning, and that need to be investigated through an LOA lens. In addition, the chapter provides an overview of CHC, as it is the main contextual factor of the student population in this dissertation. Relevant literature on CHC students and their learning styles is drawn on from the perspective of general education, and educational measurement, more specifically from language assessment. Finally, the chapter ends with a rationale for the study based on the present literature review.

## **2.2 Emergence of Classroom Assessment Research in Language Assessment**

This section provides a brief description of classroom assessment research development in the field of language assessment. Until the 1990s, the topic of classroom assessment did not receive much research attention from language assessment/testing researchers compared to what other aspects of large-scale testing had received, although the pedagogical function of classroom assessment was recognized in the L2 teaching literature (Earl, 2013; Stoyanoff, 2012; Turner, 2012). The psychometric principles and test quality considerations for high-stakes large-scale tests were predominantly researched, as the central focus of the field, and testing theories for the development and implementation of large-scale tests were applied to classroom assessment (Turner, 2012). However, to meet the demands of evolving educational contexts in the 1990s, research on assessment in language classrooms started drawing more attention to provide useful feedback to test users and other stakeholders of the relevant learning (Spolsky, 1992; Teasdale & Leung, 2000). Consequently, although classroom assessment shares some principles with psychometric approaches to larger-scale testing that measure individual learners' language



proficiency (e.g., Purpura, 2016), the need for conceptualizing and investigating classroom assessment separately from large-scale language assessment became increasingly visible in the research community.

A major contribution to the field of educational assessment was made by Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b) when they determined that teachers' intentional use of classroom assessment could enhance student learning by identifying where students were in their learning ability and moving forward from that point. This concept—using assessment for learning—has been widely known as *formative assessment*, and it has been applied and studied in various fields, including educational measurement, cognitive psychology, learning theory, and language assessment. Building on such work, language assessment researchers have presented empirical evidence that classroom-based assessment, in particular formative assessment, can facilitate student language learning when it is woven into instruction to support language learning (e.g., Davison & Leung, 2009).

For so long the field of language assessment has concentrated heavily on the development of validity for large-scale standardized tests, critically described by Bachman (2013) as being of no interest in issues of classroom assessment in schools and adult education. To date, in order to address the need, it has expanded its research interests in the recent years to include classroom assessment (Fox, Abdulhamid, & Turner, 2021). Thus, there is presently a growing body of literature focused on the effectiveness of classroom assessment practices for the improvement of teaching and of students' L2 learning (e.g., Colby-Kelly & Turner, 2007; Davidson & Leung, 2009; Hill & McNamara, 2012; Leung & Mohan, 2004; Poehner & Inbar-Lourie, 2020). While formative assessment has been the leading concept associated with such

research, the body of research continues to expand as the development of new concepts and theories emerge, such as LOA.

## **2.3 Key Definitions in Classroom Assessment Research**

This section introduces definitions of influential concepts used in classroom assessment research. Where relevant, it also aims to clarify the definitions of these concepts that are used in this dissertation.

### ***2.3.1 Summative and Formative Assessment***

One of the most influential theoretical developments for classroom assessment purposes is the introduction of the concepts of formative and summative assessment. Briefly defined, *summative assessment* provides certification of achievement, and *formative assessment* is meant to be used to support learning. Although there are different terminologies used to label these types of assessment, formative and summative are the two basic types of evaluation. Both types have their own place in educational contexts, and using these two types of assessment in classroom assessment is an important mechanism for identifying students' potential strengths and weaknesses for both themselves and their teachers.

**Summative Assessment.** Black (1998) defined summative assessment as an “overview of previous learning” (p. 28). It is usually used at the end of a unit or topic coverage to capture what a student has learned, or the quality of the learning, and judge performance against some pre-specified standards. Along with the introduction to, and expansion of, the usefulness of formative assessment in present educational settings, summative assessment tends to be considered as more de-contextualized, less authentic, one-dimensional, and isolated from learning and teaching practices (Segers, Dochy & Cascallar, 2003). While it is considered insufficiently learning-oriented, summative assessment has its merits as the certification of a

level of attainment at the point of completion of a learning unit or course. It can be used in a paired manner with formative assessment in classrooms to enhance the effectiveness of assessment for teaching and learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). In this dissertation, summative assessment is defined as assessment that takes place at the end of a learning process to form a judgement about student learning, and that is often reported in terms of grades or scores (e.g., in-class quizzes and term exams).

**Formative Assessment.** As mentioned in Section 2.2, the concept of formative assessment has largely been recognized as a useful assessment framework in contemporary educational practice and research, including classroom-based language assessment. In 1967, Scriven coined the term *formative evaluation*, which fundamentally has the same connotation as formative assessment. This theoretical concept was further nurtured by the advancement of theories in cognitive psychology. According to Shepard (2005), sociocultural learning theory and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development share the same principles with the concept of using assessment to promote learning. Sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning emphasize the importance of learning through student interaction, which is believed to foster cognitive development in learners (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). In this view, learning occurs when students are actively engaged in the learning process; therefore, teachers need to play the role of facilitators who provide the students with tasks that require a meta-cognitive approach. The notion of *metacognition*—cognition about cognition—was conceptualized by Flavell (1979) who defined it as knowledge about one's knowledge. More precisely, metacognition refers to the processes used by students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own cognitive processes. The notion of metacognition has been widely studied in formative assessment research as a key factor for improving student learning.

In the early 1990s, formative assessment attracted increasing attention from researchers in education. A substantial number of studies have attempted to align formative assessment with contemporary psychological theories of learning (e.g., Black et al., 2003; Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b; Boud 1995; Gipps, 1995) in order to explore appropriate means of embedding assessment into daily instruction for the purposes of learning enhancement. Black and Wiliam (1998b), as mentioned above, made a major contribution to the promotion of formative assessment. Synthesizing over 250 studies in light of the cognitive psychological perspective, they found that the intentional use of classroom assessment contributed to student academic achievement.

The potential effectiveness of formative assessment in teaching practice was introduced to the language assessment research community by early proponents, such as Bachman (1990), Genesee and Upshur (1996), and Upshur and Turner (1995). The concept of utilizing classroom assessment for improving language teaching and learning has been widely discussed and researched in diverse classroom contexts. Brindley (1998) as well as Leung and Rea-Dickins (2007) studied language teachers' assessment of students concerning national-level educational reforms. By examining primary school teachers' assessment practices, Rea-Dickins and Gardner (2000) raised a number of conceptual issues for the practice of formative assessment, in particular for reliability and validity in relation to the function of assessment. Supported by the theoretical development of the field, there is a substantial body of research that has focused on the formative use of assessment in L2 classroom contexts.

In this dissertation, formative assessment is defined as an interactive process that provides useful information to students and teachers to improve teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998a), such as descriptive feedback from the teacher to the student and from the

student to the teacher or other students through peer assessment. Formative assessment often takes place in an informal and ongoing manner, although it does not need to. In addition, information from summative assessments can be utilized in a formative way.

### **2.3.2 *Assessment of Learning, Assessment for Learning, and Other Common Terms***

In the literature, the term “assessment *of* learning” (emphasis added) is often used as an equivalent form of summative assessment, and “assessment *for* learning” (AfL) is a term used synonymously with formative assessment (Gipps, 1994; Harlen & Winter, 2004). Earl (2013), building on AfL, proposed “assessment *as* learning” as a subset of AfL. This notion promotes students as active and engaged agents in their own learning as they assess their own learning progress. Moreover, to date, different forms and terms have been developed to discuss assessment activities that are used formatively, such as alternative assessment (e.g., Herman et al., 1992), dynamic assessment (e.g., Poehner & Lantolf, 2005; Antón, 2018), embedded assessment (e.g., Wilson & Sloane, 2000), and teacher-based assessment (e.g., Davidson, 2004). It is often the case that these terms are used interchangeably and defined differently due to their sharing of the same tenet: aligning assessment with long-term learning (Turner, 2012). In this sense, the distinction between classroom assessment and teaching becomes blurred. As mentioned in Section 2.3.1, in this dissertation, assessment activities that share the same principle of formative assessment in this way will simply be referred to as formative assessment.

## **2.4 Key Learning-Oriented Assessment Frameworks**

Building on formative assessment, the notion of *learning-oriented assessment* (LOA) which “prioritizes the interpretation of L2 performance evidence on both learning outcomes and L2 processes” (Turner & Purpura, 2016, p. 260) has been introduced into classroom assessment research in the last several years (e.g., Leung, 2020). Its emphasis is on the student learning

outcomes. The assessment information can be used for both summative and formative purposes (Carless, 2007; Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). In addition, in LOA, both instruction and assessment are designed to create synergy in order to further enhance student learning (Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018).

The LOA concept has gained increasing attention from scholarly communities in efforts to improve the educational success of students. To date, different LOA framework proposals have been put forward in different historical and cultural contexts, such as North America (Purpura, 2004, Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018), Hong Kong (Carless, 2007), the UK (Jones & Saville, 2016) and Australia (Hamp-Lyons & Green, 2014).

This section introduces the three main LOA theories and frameworks that have been widely used to investigate classroom assessment in the field of language testing and assessment. In addition, drawing common characteristics from the literature, it provides the definition of LOA used in this dissertation.

#### ***2.4.1 Carless' (2007, 2015) LOA Model***

David Carless at the University of Hong Kong has been one of the early pioneers of LOA conceptualization. In a 2003 conference presentation, he initiated the dissemination of the term—learning-oriented assessment—to cope with “challenges associated with the terminology and practice of formative assessment” (Carless, 2007, p. 56). In the following statement, Carless (2007) refined his LOA concept to institute a key idea in the field of assessment:

In LOA, learning comes first, both in the way the term is literally constructed, and as a matter of the principle of emphasising the learning aspects of assessment. A starting point for LOA was thus to characterise it as denoting assessment processes in which learning elements are emphasised more than measurement ones (Carless, 2007, p. 58).

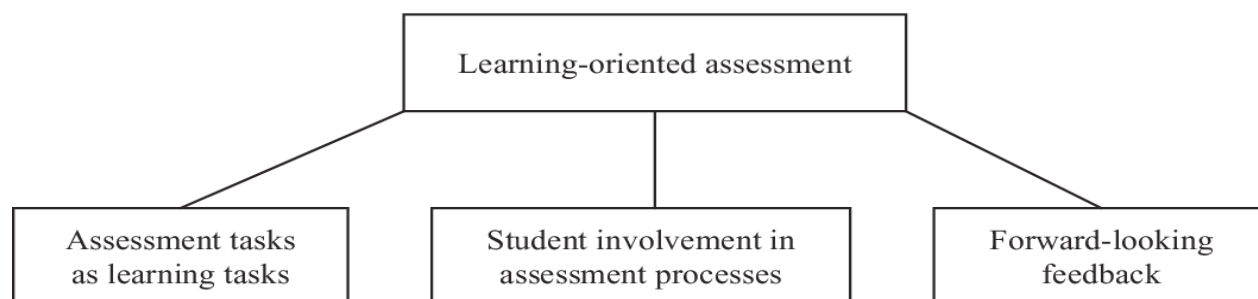
Carless' LOA model (2007, 2015) highlighted the significance of learner autonomy in language assessment activities in order to address the problems of passive learning and test-oriented

learning. Integrating the AfL literature (e.g., Black et al, 2003), Carless and his colleagues in Hong Kong have proposed and documented the usefulness of summative assessment to improve student learning (Carless, 2011; R. Lam, 2013). The idea—formative use of summative tests (FUST)—has been promoted by Carless (2011) to reconcile formative and summative assessment. Although summative assessment was primarily influenced by the behaviourist perspective, this new concept has related it to constructivist views of learning and testing.

Building on his own 2007 work, Carless (2015) proposed three components that should be implemented as integral parts of classroom activities: (1) tasks are designed to stimulate effective learning; (2) learners are actively engaged in evaluating the quality of their own performance and that of their peers; and (3) feedback is timely and shows learners how to act to progress in their work, supporting current and future learning. Figure 2.1 summarizes this idea.

**Figure 2.1**

*Carless' (2015) LOA Model with Three Components*



In this LOA framework, the importance of learner agency, such as self-regulation in assessment activities was perceived as a crucial factor to facilitate students' active engagement with assessment. Hamp-Lyons and Green (2014), as well as other language assessment researchers, have drawn upon Carless' LOA model to conceptualize their own approaches within a variety of studies addressing L2 related issues (e.g., Ali, 2013; Almalki, 2019; Gao, 2017;

Mok, 2012). For instance, Hamp-Lyons and Green (2014) added two further key elements to Carless' (2015) LOA model: (4) teacher questioning (Black et al., 2003); and (5) scaffolding of performance (Shepard, 2005).

Since Carless originally conceptualized the model to address issues around the test-driven assessment culture in Hong Kong, summative forms of assessment are not precluded or discredited; rather, formative and summative assessment are often incorporated, and distinctions between the two are rather blurred (Keppell & Carless, 2006). His LOA model has often been applied to assessment research that investigated *washback*—negative effects of high-stakes tests on teaching and learning (Messick, 1996; Watanabe, 2004) —in higher education contexts (e.g., May et al., 2020; Mok, 2012).

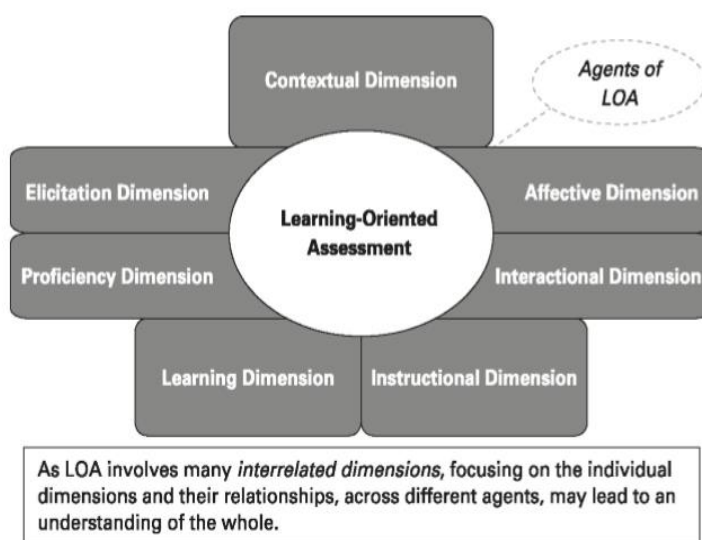
#### **2.4.2 Turner and Purpura's (2016, 2018) Framework for LOA**

The second LOA concept to be discussed here is the framework for LOA proposed by Turner and Purpura (2016, 2018). In 2016, building on Purpura's LOA concept (2004), they proposed a comprehensive assessment framework that helps theorize and understand “the interrelationships across instruction, assessment and learning” (p. 255). Their *working framework for LOA* (2016) also put a strong emphasis on learning outcomes and learning processes, as in the abovementioned two examples, as well as presenting a more holistic, broader way of conceptualizing assessment activities in relation to student learning. Referring to Wenger's (1998) notion of learning as a community of practice, this LOA framework (Turner & Purpura, 2016. p. 261) was comprised of seven interrelated and interconnected dimensions, shown as Figure 2.2 below.



**Figure 2.2**

*Turner and Purpura's (2016) Working Framework for LOA (p. 261)*



These dimensions highlighted the fact that learning is a social activity that can take place inside and outside the classroom “where cognitive, sociocognitive, and sociocultural factors all contribute to learning” (Turner & Purpura, 2016, p. 257). The uniqueness of their LOA framework is the holistic view of assessment that encompasses various key factors of assessment, such as contexts, elicitation, L2 proficiency, learning theories, instructions, interactions, and emotions and beliefs. All of these factors are indispensable and mutually influential for learners’ active engagement with assessment, calling for research attention to probe the link between assessment and learning.

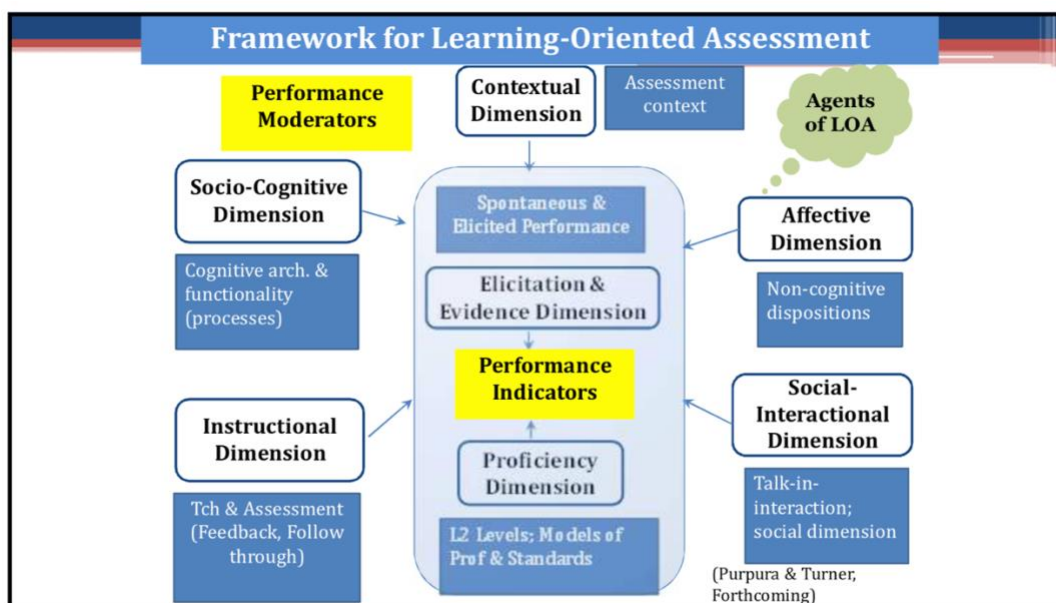
**Revised Framework for LOA (2018).** At the 2018 annual conference of the Language Testing Research Colloquium, Turner and Purpura presented a revised LOA framework in which they renamed two of the dimensions to more accurately reflect their definition, shown as Figure 2.3. They stated that “LOA is a framework of reference (not a method, more of a mindset) for helping to conceptualize the synergies across assessment, instruction, learning, and other features of an assessment event in classroom (& large-scale) assessment contexts” (Turner & Purpura,

2018, Slide 7).

In this revised framework, two of the seven dimensions are reconceptualized and named differently from the original 2016 version. The first two dimensions (i.e., Elicitation & Evidence and Proficiency) are referred to as *performance indicators*, and five of the dimensions (i.e., Contextual, Socio-Cognitive, Instructional, Affective, and Social-Interactional) are called *performance mediators*. The core of this framework is contained in the dimension *performance indicators* which involves the elicitation of learner's KSAs in relation to learning outcomes. The “proficiency dimension” entails an explicit or implicit model of learning goals, such as targeted L2 proficiency in the curriculum. The “elicitation and evidence dimension” involves planned or spontaneous language elicitations, which teachers can use as evidential information for the demonstration of learning outcomes in order to further support the student's language development.

**Figure 2.3**

*Turner and Purpura's (2018) Revised Framework for LOA (Slide 7)*



Performance moderators, the five other dimensions surrounding the performance indicators, are performance characteristics in the assessment context that can potentially impact a student's L2 performance. One dimension is called the "contextual dimension," which refers to contextual factors that influence LOA experience (e.g., values associated with teacher feedback). Another dimension, seen on the left side of the diagram, is the "socio-cognitive dimension" which involves socio-cognitive theories that are related to and support students' learning process. The dimension that follows is called the "instructional dimension" which relates to teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills to navigate students' learning in the classroom.

Found on the right side of the framework, the "affective dimension" concerns students' socio-psychological predispositions in relation to their LOA experience, which is different from their cognitive dispositions. Finally, the "social-interactional dimension" indicates the importance of understanding the nature of interaction as a language elicitation activity.

In short, Turner and Purpura's LOA framework (2016, 2018), emphasizing the importance of enhancing learning outcomes with the effective use of assessment, encompasses cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational aspects of learning. The revised LOA framework (Turner & Purpura, 2018) is a powerful tool to analyze and understand how different factors jointly work and support student learning.

#### ***2.4.3 Jones and Saville's LOA Cycle (2016)***

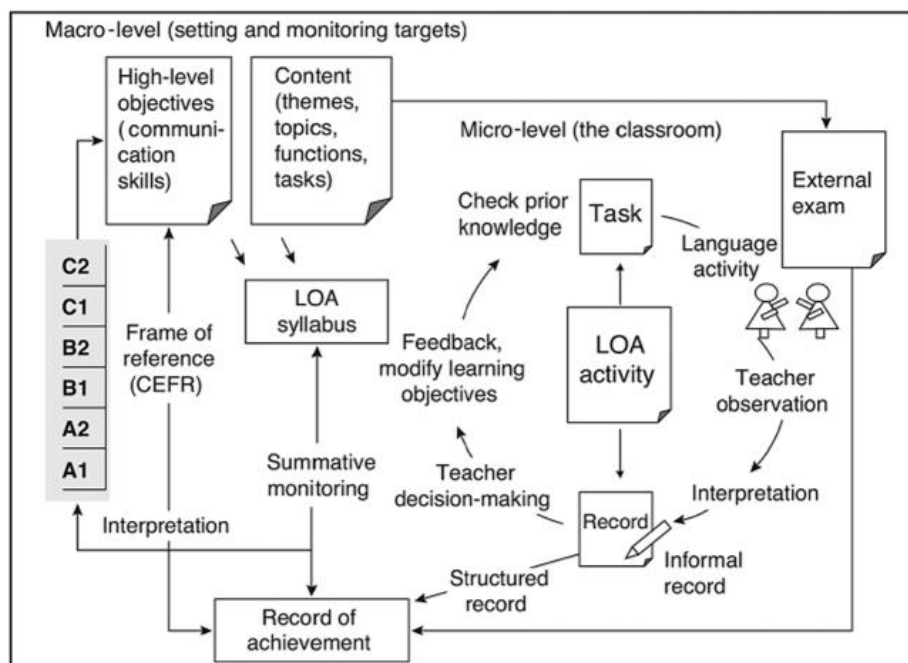
The last LOA concept to be introduced here was presented by UK-based assessment researchers, Jones and Saville (2016), who claimed LOA to be an action theory aiming at generating positive influence of tests on teaching and learning in classrooms. Jones and Saville's conceptualization of LOA was an expansion of previous theoretical work, such as Black and colleagues' scholarship on AfL (e.g., Black & William, 1998 a, 1998b; Black et al., 2003),

Carless' (2007) LOA model, and Turner and Purpura's (2016) framework. According to Jones and Saville (2016), the LOA cycle, shown as Figure 2.4, was proposed with the aim to achieve positive washback on teaching and learning, linking learning theories to assessment practice.

Their LOA cycle depicts the process of LOA implementation and operationalization in a classroom, and it illustrates how large-scale tests, classroom assessment, and the four learning worlds (i.e., personal world, social world, world of education, and world of assessment) can be organically linked within a learning-oriented ecosystem. Saville (2021) stated that the LOA cycle “incorporates features of the other two and has similarities to the seven interrelated dimensions of the Working Framework proposed by Turner and Purpura (2016)” (p. 25). In both LOA frameworks, assessment and instruction function in a synergistic manner, given the central role to facilitate and improve learning.

**Figure 2.4**

*Jones and Saville's (2016) LOA Cycle*



#### **2.4.4 Definition of LOA**

Although the three LOA frameworks presented above originated from different contexts, they share fundamental similarities, such as a strong focus on the potential of assessment to develop productive student learning processes, the reconciliation of summative and formative assessment, and an understanding of the complexity of student learning as social practice. Based on these LOA frameworks, in this dissertation, LOA is defined as assessment that prioritizes the enhancement of learning outcomes and of the learning process (Turner & Purpura, 2016). Formative and summative assessment are each considered to have their own roles to promote positive washback (Carless, 2007; Jones & Saville, 2016). Moreover, in an LOA approach, learning is perceived as a social activity that can take place inside and outside the classroom, “where cognitive, sociocognitive, and sociocultural factors all contribute to learning” (Turner & Purpura, 2016, p. 257).

### **2.5 Key factors in Classroom Assessment Research**

This section discusses some key factors that are acknowledged as having an effect on classroom assessment practice in the literature, but have not been investigated empirically through an LOA lens, for example: (1) teacher factor; (2) learner beliefs; and (3) self-regulation. Although these factors are incorporated into the conceptualization of LOA, there is a lack of empirical studies reporting how these factors affect the long-term process of L2 learning in an LOA classroom context.

#### **2.5.1 Teacher Factor**

The importance of the *teacher factor* for student learning enhancement has been well documented by classroom-based language assessment researchers (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Rea-Dickins, 2004; Turner, 2009). Teacher feedback, in particular, has been reported in the language

assessment literature as a powerful tool to support teaching and learning (Shute, 2008), although research has also shown that it could be both beneficial and detrimental to student learning (Ruegg, 2018).

One of the important elements across the LOA theories (Carless, 2007, 2011; Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018) is the teacher role as facilitator to make students more engaged with the use of assessment. Regarding initial teacher training as crucial in shaping teachers' attitudes toward assessment, Carless (2011) stressed that "high levels of teacher expertise in assessment issues act as facilitating factors" in the implementation of LOA (p. 92). Although the importance of teacher factor in LOA has been discussed and examined (e.g., May et al., 2020; Salamoura & Morgan, 2021), there is a lack of LOA studies that investigated how classroom assessment can support student L2 learning by examining student perspectives on teacher assessment practice. Turner and Purpura (2016) provided a list of eight mainly researched areas in L2 classroom assessment studies and pointed out that "research efforts have focused primarily on teachers and the teacher perspective" (p. 259). Kim and Kim (2017) investigated the effectiveness of teacher feedback at a Korean university, and suggested that a longitudinal study with student participants would provide a better understanding of the effect of LOA on L2 learners. Banerjee (2021), examining 17 classroom-based LOA studies, stated that "there has not been enough emphasis on learners and the actual learning outcomes" (p. 63). Thus, research on teacher assessment practice from a student perspective will add to the knowledge of LOA literature.

### **2.5.2 Learner Beliefs**

The second key factor that has not been explored in relation to LOA is *learner beliefs*. The concept of learner beliefs was initially developed in the field of metacognition, which

examines how people learn (Brown, 1987; Flavell, 1976; Wenden, 1999). Supported by metacognitive theories, a body of literature in SLA (e.g., Ellis, 2008; Horwitz, 1988) has demonstrated that language learners come to the classroom with a variety of beliefs about persons (e.g., roles of learners themselves, teachers, and peers), about the nature of tasks (e.g., assessment activities), about the functions of strategies (e.g., exam preparation strategies), and about how these variables influence their learning. Thus, an examination of L2 learner beliefs provides insight into student learning strategies and mistakes as well as the changes in these over time (Wenden, 1999).

In the area of language assessment, empirical studies have explored EFL/ESL learner *perceptions* of assessment through qualitative research approaches (e.g., Polish secondary school learners' perceptions of performance-oriented assessment, Czura, 2017; high school students' perceptions of AfL in Hong Kong, Carless & Lam, 2014; Finnish test-takers' perceptions of a high-stakes language test, Huhta, Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2006; Korean university students' perceptions of LOA, Kim & Kim, 2017). However, these previous studies were not examined or discussed in relation to a metacognitive theory of learning.

In LOA, learners' emotions and beliefs are perceived as an element that affects teaching and learning (Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). Turner and Purpura (2016) included such an element in the affective dimension of the LOA framework that describes "learners' socio-psychological predispositions to how learners experience and engage in the assessment process" (p. 268). Jones and Saville (2016) similarly argued that LOA views both effective learning and cognitive development in a social context, and this ecosystem of learning can take place both inside and outside the classroom. However, no previous studies have contributed to understanding the complexity of the student learning process by examining how

students changed their learner beliefs over time in an LOA context. Purpura (2004, 2008) states that no research has first examined the learning process, and then considered how assessment can serve the learning process. Thus, a study that undertakes such a discussion, focusing on the learning process and outcomes in relation to their learner beliefs, would make a valuable contribution to the growing body of LOA literature.

### ***2.5.3 Self-regulation***

The third key factor that is deeply incorporated in the LOA theories, but not fully explained through empirical research is *self-regulation*. In the learning dimension of Turner and Purpura's original LOA framework (2016) (i.e., the socio-cognitive dimension in the updated framework), self-regulation is included as "another important feature of LOA" (p. 266). Carless (2007, 2011) claimed that FUST could enhance student test performance and promote self-regulation in learning in a test-oriented context.

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989, 1993) has emphasized that self-regulated learning is influenced by contextual factors. Contemporary theories of self-regulation have been used to explain various aspects of learning, motivation, or interactions with the learning environment (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001), and self-regulation in education is conceptualized as the students' metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural active participation in their own learning process (Zimmerman, 1986, 1995). Learning is considered self-regulated when it is planned, assessed, and analyzed by the person doing the learning (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). The concept has been widely applied in educational assessment research in order to explore and explain how assessment can support student learning (Andrade, 2010; Bailey & Heritage, 2018; Black & Wiliam, 1998a; 1998b; Wiliam, 2011). Andrade and Brookhart (2016), for instance, discussed how classroom assessment is, or could be, used to support student learning by



facilitating their self-regulation skills. They reviewed research evidence to argue synergic effects of classroom assessment and self-regulation on learning.

In language assessment, specifically, the relationship between L2 development and self-regulation has been discussed in recent years by studies that focus on various frameworks of classroom assessment (e.g., Goto-Butler & Lee, 2010: alternative assessment; R. Lam, 2015, Mak & Wong, 2018: portfolio assessment; Xiao & Yang, 2019: formative assessment). Despite the different terms used to define classroom assessment, these studies make the case that assessment can support the self-regulation of learning in classroom settings. As the amount of research on self-regulation of learning in general education has increased, studies applying this concept to language assessment have been receiving more attention as well. However, there is a dearth of relevant research that focuses on the relationship between learning outcomes and self-regulation in L2 learning contexts (Turner & Purpura, 2016). In addition, Zang and Zang (2019) pointed out that there is a dearth of literature in second language learning and teaching that delineates how metacognition and self-regulation relate to learning. In this sense, using LOA as a framework to examine individual students' self-regulation in relation to their use of classroom assessment will be a timely addition to this body of knowledge.

## **2.6 Research Context: Assessment in CHC Education**

This section provides an overview of the assessment culture in CHC education, which is where the participants in the current research obtained their previous education. The section starts with a definition of CHC used in this dissertation and continues with highlights of CHC values in education. It also discusses the literature that has studied CHC language classrooms where a new assessment form was introduced to make a case for the current study.

### ***2.6.1 Definition of Confucian Heritage Culture***

The Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) is by definition heavily influenced by Confucianism, which is the philosophical system founded on the teaching of the Chinese sage Confucius (551-479 B.C.). Not only China but also other Asian regions (Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam), which share Confucian values due to a strong historical influence from China, are considered part of this culture, even though the current these countries differ among themselves politically and economically (Biggs, 1996; Nguyen et al., 2006; Park, 2011). Despite its relatively short trajectory, the academic discussion on social behaviour and practices of CHC has been highly prolific (e.g., Biggs, 1996; Ho, 2016; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Nguyen et al., 2006; Park, 2011; Watkins & Biggs, 1996). In educational research communities, there is a well-developed body of literature on learning-style differences between Western and CHC students.

### ***2.6.2 CHC Values in Education***

A sizable body of research has been devoted to exploring CHC cultural values reflected in the education systems of CHC countries. Nguyen et al. (2006), from the perspective of higher education, have pointed out that it is essential to recognize the complexity of culturally distinctive characteristics of CHC when adopting policies, theories and practices that were effective in Western education systems.

CHC education is often characterized as a “teacher-centered transmission style pedagogy, high parental investment and supervision, collectivism, and a high value placed on personal effort and discipline” (Carless, 2011, p 152). High-stakes testing and teacher-centered whole class pedagogy have long been the key defining distinctive characteristics of education in CHC classrooms (Carless, 2011; Gan et al., 2019; Wicking, 2020). Educational psychologist Biggs

(1996) has argued that the focus on examinations in CHC classrooms is a distinctive feature that has impacted student learning. Kennedy (2007) extrapolated that the strong exam-oriented culture assisted CHC students to perform well in large-scale international assessments. Certain forms of assessment, such as examinations, have been privileged in some Asian countries in ways that they are not in many Western countries (Kennedy, 2007; Carless, 2011). While some researchers have found this test-driven learning style to be an asset, education systems across Asia have been struggling to adopt new models of pedagogy influenced by Western ideologies.

### ***2.6.3 CHC Values in Language Education and Assessment***

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the influence on classroom teaching and learning from a high-stakes exam is referred to as *washback* in the field of L2 education (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng, et al., 2004), which has drawn significant scholarly attention to CHC contexts. The literature has reported that the strong impact of university entrance exams on teaching and learning has affected assessment practices in CHC language classrooms across East Asian countries (Cheng, 2005; Choi, 2008; Tsushima, 2012; Watanabe, 1996, 2004). Tsushima (2012), for example, found that Japanese teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) tended to value and follow the assessment formats used in external testing to prepare their students for university entrance exams. In a milieu where tests are used to screen candidates' academic achievement levels, classroom instructional and assessment practices continue to accommodate the dominant societal values and as a result generate negative washback effects in English language teaching and learning (Tsagari & Cheng, 2017; Yu, 2020).

The introduction of new forms of classroom assessment, such as AfL or LOA into CHC classrooms, has been highly challenging according to previous studies. Many previous studies have suggested the difficulty of implementing formative assessment in CHC contexts (e.g., Chen

et al., 2014 in China; Ma, 2018 in Hong Kong; Reugg, 2015, Wicking, 2020 in Japan; Thanh Pham & Renshaw, 2015, in Vietnam). Carless has been one of the leading scholars in English language assessment in CHC contexts owing to his extensive work on the learning-oriented assessment/assessment for learning project funded by the government of Hong Kong. Through his involvement in the project for close to two decades, he has witnessed the barriers to its implementation (Carless, 1995, 2002, 2007, 2011, 2015) and has stated that a test-oriented culture is firmly embedded in this society whose philosophy does not match that of a learning-oriented, activity-oriented assessment framework.

In South Korea, as a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Ministry of Education has been actively promoting formative assessment through policy, resources, and professional development (Goto-Butler, 2009). Goto-Butler (2009) documented the difficulties of promoting teacher-based assessment (Davison & Leung, 2009) in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms at the elementary and secondary school levels. She reported that teachers were still heavily constrained by traditional, measurement-oriented assessment.

Reugg (2015) found that Japanese university students were quite hesitant to accept peer feedback as a means of formative assessment, strongly relying on the teacher as the ultimate authority. Similarly, Thanh-Pham (2015) found the Vietnamese EFL students refused to participate in the types of assessment that required group members to assess each other's products and contributions. More recently, Wicking (2020), drawing on survey data from Japanese university students' conceptions and experiences of formative assessment practice, reported that Japanese students appeared to pay more attention to their marks than feedback, which suggested a summative orientation towards assessment.

Although the last several years have witnessed increasing numbers of classroom assessment studies in CHC contexts, there is still a dearth of literature documenting the efficacy of LOA from CHC student perspectives in order to discuss to what extent and what type of classroom assessment are used by students for their L2 learning development. Furthermore, there is no research that has explored how student cultural values in language assessment may or may not affect their learning when the students are put in a new, non-CHC learning environment. It is possible that such investigations will lead to more successful implementation of new assessment forms in CHC contexts.

## **2.7 Need for the Current Research**

There is an emerging body of research acknowledging the efficacy of LOA to enhance L2 learning (e.g., Almalki, 2019; Gao, 2017; Kim & Kim, 2017; Navaie, 2018; X. Yang, 2020). However, as pointed out by Turner and Purpura (2016), it is of great importance to further develop a knowledge base on the intertwined relationship between the actual learning process and the role of LOA used to enhance the learning process. As presented earlier in this chapter, there is a lack of literature on some key factors that are acknowledged as having an effect on classroom assessment practice, but have not been investigated empirically through an LOA lens. Empirical studies that are supported by learning theories and that report on how such factors affect the long-term process of L2 learning in an LOA classroom context will add to the accumulated knowledge of classroom assessment literature.

Moreover, as much of the L2 classroom assessment research thus far has focused primarily on teachers and the teacher perspective (Banerjee, 2021; Stoyanoff, 2012; Turner & Purpura, 2016), there is a dearth of research that examines and gives voice to the experiences of L2 learners on LOA. The effect of LOA on aspects of learning English has been investigated by

scholars, yet little attention has been accorded to student cultural values in language assessment. As social constructivism puts emphasis on effective learning in a social and cultural context (Jones & Saville, 2016), there is a need for research that explores student learning in a longitudinal and contextual manner.

Furthermore, there is little understanding of CHC students' learning experiences when they enroll in an EAP program where the curriculum embraces a learning-oriented, student-centred paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995) in a non-CHC setting. Thus, a study that uncovers the impact of an LOA approach on the student learning process and outcomes with a particular CHC population will enable researchers to better understand the complex nature of student use of assessment as well as the process of L2 acquisition.

## **2.8 Summary of Chapter 2**

Sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning emphasize the importance of learning through student interaction, which is assumed to foster cognitive development in learners (Bruner, 1986; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Vygotsky, 1981). In this view, learning occurs when students are actively engaged in the learning process; therefore, teachers need to play the role of facilitators who provide students with tasks that require a metacognitive approach (Brown, 1987; Flavell, 1979). Based on empirical insights from learning theories that emphasize learning with understanding, language assessment experts have been developing classroom assessment frameworks that stress students' metacognitive abilities, such as analyzing, synthesizing, and critical thinking (Wiliam, 2011). In this respect, classroom assessment is no longer considered just as a tool for grading or ranking students, but rather as a procedure for the integration of the teaching and learning process (Earl, 2013; Turner & Purpura, 2016). Echoing this view, in recent decades learning-oriented, alternative assessment formats that focus on students' learning

outcomes have been proposed and are increasingly receiving more attention for practical applications within the classroom context (Carless, 2007; Moss, 1996, 2003; Turner, 2012; Turner & Purpura, 2016).

However, there is a dearth of empirical studies holistically examining how LOA can serve to enhance learning outcomes over an extended period of time. Moreover, although the use of formative assessment has been rigorously promoted as part of national educational policies in East Asian countries, researchers have found that the nature of formative, learner-centered assessment does not correspond to CHC values (e.g., instruction being inherently teacher-mediated and norm-referenced) (Carless, 2006, 2011; Cheng, 2008; Goto-Butler & Lee, 2010; Wicking, 2017). Having said that, despite recent increased attention to this reconceptualization of classroom assessment, CHC students' learning experiences in the context of LOA have been given scant research attention. Based on the above literature review, it is clear that there is still a lack of studies examining the relationship between students' learning process and their use of assessment, and how student cultural backgrounds affect such a process. While this research area is still nascent, the gap has to be addressed in order to enrich our knowledge and understanding of this emerging field.

## Chapter 3 Methodology 1 - Mixed Methods Exploratory Sequential Design with Wrap-up Phase

### 3.1 Introduction to Chapter 3

Analyzing Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism, German philosopher of science Balisiger (2004) adds that Feyerabend's anti-dogmatic philosophy of science was formulated against specific positions to do science as follows:

...in a problem oriented scientific access, dogmatic prescriptions are absolutely valueless. It is the given concrete problem which drives the methodological decision and not authoritative dogmatic needs (p. 419).

On the basis of pragmatism and a practice-driven need to mix methods (Denscombe, 2008), the current research was conducted within the framework of mixed methods research (MMR), which combines two different data sources—quantitative and qualitative—to provide researchers with a more holistic picture of a target issue (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010).

Chapter 3 highlights the suitability of MMR for classroom research by incorporating Feyerabend's (1975) concept of *epistemological anarchism*, meaning that in producing scientific knowledge one should not be limited to universal rules and standards. The chapter begins with a brief description of how MMR has become the third paradigm in social science research. Secondly, the historical view of methodological development in the field of language assessment/testing is presented and discussed in the light of relevant research studies that investigated classroom assessment issues in a language learning context. Based on the literature that suggests the suitability of MMR for classroom assessment research, the chapter introduces a type of MMR design developed and used for this dissertation research. It concludes with the argument that MMR is the most appropriate methodological approach for the chosen research context.



### 3.2 Mixed Methods Research as Epistemological Anarchism

Since the 1960s, philosophers of science (e.g., Feyerabend, 1975; Kuhn, 1970, Lakatos, 1978) have questioned single method approaches for scientific inquiry. In particular, Austrian philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend (1975) contributed to the development of theoretical concepts that remain highly relevant in addressing today's complex problems. He advocated the idea of *epistemological anarchism*, also known as methodological anarchism, which claims that there is no certain epistemological grounding to conduct science. This notion is highly congruent with methodological opportunism, where scientists select a methodology depending on what is most suitable to generate knowledge in their specific context (Balsiger, 2004). As Feyerabend (1975) stated, scientists need to take an “anything goes” approach for the sake of obtaining the most optimal data that address their research questions. This philosophical discourse caught research methodologists’ attention and led them to explore the possibility of using pluralism in scientific practice. Consequently, a mixed methods approach has been recognized as a useful tool when the research questions are complex and when we seek to understand several levels of influence.

According to Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson (2003), MMR is defined as “the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in scientific research” (p. 212). MMR, in other words, encourages researchers to consider multiple worldviews or paradigms found within both quantitative and qualitative research. Through a holistic approach, this methodology has the potential of providing more convincing findings than a monolithic methodology when the data sets are appropriately merged and interpreted. Many researchers, however, have argued that quantitative

and qualitative research methods cannot be mixed due to fundamental differences between them resulting from divergent ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007).

Methodological discussion of a more pragmatic practice has dominated in the “soft” sciences over the last half-century (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a, 2010b). Regarding the epistemology of MMR, referring to American philosopher Thomas Kuhn’s (1970) concept of paradigm shift, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010a, 2010b) have presented a view in which pragmatism constitutes the most suitable philosophical paradigm for MMR, as it justifies the employment of multiple methods with different philosophical foundations, as long as they produce satisfactory results to answer the research questions. Furthermore, adopting a pragmatic worldview as the philosophical basis, the research question is the decisive factor when designing a research methodology, not the paradigm from which the method derives (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010b). This argument, indeed, aligns with Feyerabend’s “anything goes” approach, even though his name is not explicitly mentioned in their work to date. In fact, a number of methodologists have advocated for a departure from the “paradigm wars” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Accordingly, many researchers have chosen to utilize this methodology in their studies to answer questions that could not be answered by one paradigm alone (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009).

### **3.3 Historical View of Methodological Development in Language Testing/Assessment**

In the community of language assessment, owing to the established belief associated with the psychometric characterization of learning, quantitative methods have been traditionally and dominantly employed for research and for practical purposes of reporting test results (Bachman, 2000; Purpura, 2011; Moss, 2003). For instance, Chalhoub-Deville and Deville

(2008) analyzed articles published in the two major journals of the field (i.e., *Language Testing* and *Language Assessment Quarterly*) from 1984 to 2005. The dominance of quantitative methodology was noticeable even though they mentioned that qualitative approaches also gradually increased in number over time. However, to date, methodological approaches employed in this field have become increasingly diverse as the field has grown as a result of “the interaction among the findings of linguistics, psychology, and other language-related fields” (Farhady, 2005, p. 155). Turner (2012, 2013) describes historical perspectives of the emergence of classroom assessment in relation to the development of language testing/assessment research. According to Turner (2012), before the 1990s, classroom assessment (i.e., assessment internal to the classroom) was regarded as “an offshoot of traditional large-scale testing” (p. 65), and such a simplistic view was reflected in research approaches of classroom assessment investigations of that time. However, with the emergence of a greater need to better understand the complex nature of assessment issues, such as classroom assessment, the research approaches utilized became increasingly multidisciplinary (Farhady, 2005, 2018, Turner, 2012).

More and more hermeneutic and qualitative approaches that can provide deeper insights into the context researched have been adopted to gain a better understanding of the language tests that are designed, validated, administered, and interpreted (Lazaraton & Taylor, 2007). In fact, Banerjee (2021), analyzing 17 LOA studies conducted in L2 classroom contexts, highlighted that qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, were commonly used in those LOA studies. Moreover, scholars in the field are increasingly finding that the use of MMR designs can greatly enhance the relevance and significance of our research, especially when the empirical questions are complex and multilayered (Bachman, 2007, Turner, 2013).

### 3.3.1 Emergence of Mixed Methods Research in Language Assessment

Although some studies did not explicitly label their methodology as MMR despite the fact that this methodology was actually employed, the third paradigm became more widely accepted around the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Turner, 2013). Based on an examination of MMR studies published in the three major journals focusing on language assessment research (i.e., *Assessing Writing*, *Language Testing*, and *Language Assessment Quarterly*), Turner (2013) reported that by and large the evolution of MMR seems analogous to the general trajectory of the methodology in the social and behavioural sciences. Her analysis revealed that up to approximately 2003, the term MMR was rarely mentioned in the methodology section of the published articles despite the fact that research approaches and the reports of data interpretation suggested the integration of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study.

Evidence suggests that this approach has been recognized by language assessment researchers as a legitimate research tool to enhance the relevance and significance of research (Bachman, 2007; Turner, 2013). Cheng and Fox (2013), for instance, reported the increasing number of MMR studies used in doctoral research in language assessment published during 2006 to 2011 in Canada. Analyzing 24 dissertations, they found that 16 cases had employed mixed methods approaches. Moreover, in the past decade, research publications that are clearly labelled as MMR studies have substantially emerged in peer-reviewed academic journals that focus on language assessment research (e.g., Baker, 2012; Baran-Łucarz, 2019; Isaacs & Thomson, 2013; Lee & Coniam, 2013; Neumann, 2014; Saito & Inoi, 2017; Tan, 2011).

In order to delve deeply into the nature of complex, highly contextualized research issues, those researchers chose an MMR approach as their methodological framework. However, this is not an argument to claim that MMR needs to be the dominant methodology in the field; rather, as

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated, all three paradigms (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods) are all superior under different circumstances. The arguments and actual scholarly practices of MMR studies in language assessment have brought the usefulness of MMR approaches to the fore.

### **3.4 Mixed Methods Designs Used in Classroom-based Language Assessment Studies**

Using both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study provides the researcher a holistic view to understand the complexities of the intertwined nature of classroom dynamics, and hence, possibly better grounds for conclusions. Researchers of classroom-based language assessment need to be aware of the complex nature of classroom teaching and language learning as well as of current societal and political issues that potentially affect the research context. In this vein, the literature on educational research methodology has emphasized the significance of context and the influence of culture on research methodology (Park, 2011).

Prior to introducing the research methods, it is important to note the variety of typologies that exist concerning MMR. Each typology may have different labels for ways to collect and analyze data. Therefore, selection of the most appropriate research design before the research begins is one of the crucial components of this methodology (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). Each design has its own strengths and characteristics that help researchers optimize their research outcome. Therefore, for MMR researchers, it is of great importance to know how to select and implement the best design in accordance with their research questions.

#### ***3.4.1 Basic Mixed Methods Designs***

According to Creswell (2015), the data collection and analysis of MMR designs can primarily be categorized into three basic designs. Although various typologies of mixed methods

designs have been proposed, such as the “six commonly used designs” defined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), Creswell (2015) provides his view on the three designs as “the core designs underlying all mixed methods studies” (p. 35) and states that these designs can be used to further develop a more complex design: (1) convergent design; (2) explanatory sequential design; and (3) exploratory sequential design. Table 3.1 shows the summary of the example studies that employed an MMR approach to achieve their research objectives.

**Table 3.1**

*Examples of Language Assessment Research Employing MMR Designs*

study	adopted MMR design	topic	overarching procedures
Moeller & Theiler (2014)	convergent	development of spoken Spanish language at the high school level over five consecutive years	{[QUAN + (QUAL →QUAN)] + qual}
Saito & Inoi (2017)	explanatory sequential	factors that contribute to differential use of formative assessment in an EFL context	QUAN→QUAL
Tsang (2017)	exploratory sequential	ESL learners’ self-perceived washback effects following the introduction of a new graded approach used in a high-stakes exam of English	QUAL →QUAN

As explained above, the distinctive characteristic of MMR lies in combining both quantitative and qualitative elements in a single study or a series of studies. The collected data sets must be integrated at some point of the data analysis and/or the interpretation of the results. It depends on the researcher to decide how and when the analyzed data should be integrated. The research questions should determine the design, not a personal preference (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). In this section, each of the basic MMR designs is introduced with a short description of classroom-based language assessment research that exemplifies the nature of the specific design.

**Convergent Design.** In a study with a convergent MMR approach, quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed separately in a parallel manner, and they are merged at the final point to obtain the concluding results. This merging “provides both a quantitative and a qualitative picture of the problem, and because each form of data provides a different insight, the combination contributes to a view of the problem from multiple angles and multiple perspectives” (Creswell, 2015, pp. 35-36).

Moeller and Theiler (2014) conducted a type of convergent MMR study to investigate the development of spoken Spanish language at high school level over five consecutive years, involving more than 1,500 students representing 23 school districts in the United States. The raw data consisted of (1) holistic oral production scores assigned by an external independent rater (quantitative), and (2) speaking samples produced by students (qualitative).

The quantitative data produced an overarching holistic depiction of spoken language development. Concurrently, a thematic analysis of student speech samples was conducted, and the findings were used for the development of a qualitative rubric. Furthermore, the rubric was also used for quantification of student speaking samples to address the underlying nature of oral language development. Finally, all the data sets were merged to obtain the conclusion, in which a consistent growth trajectory of spoken language development was observed over the five years of the data collection period. Results indicated that 18–30% of the variance in student outcomes might be attributed to the teacher variable. In this study, the research objectives required the design to be tailored to answer the research questions.

**Explanatory Sequential Design.** In this design, the first phase of quantitative data collection and analysis is followed by the collection of qualitative data, which are used to explain the initial quantitative results. Saito and Inoi (2017), for instance, used this design to examine the

factors that contribute to differential use of formative assessment in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context in Japan. The raw data consisted of (1) survey data to understand formative assessment practices among 727 EFL teachers (quantitative); and (2) interview data and classroom observations with four selected survey respondents (qualitative). The quantitative phase was used to classify the teachers' approaches to formative assessment, which informed the second phase. The purpose of the second phase of the study was to verify and explain the results of the quantitative phase; in other words, this MMR study was designed in an explanatory manner. The data integration led the researchers to conclude that there were varying degrees of formative assessment understanding and practice among teachers.

**Exploratory Sequential Design.** This design starts with qualitative data collection and analysis that help the researcher to 'explore' the target issue. Based on the results of the qualitative phase(s), the development of an instrument or intervention for the quantitative phase(s) takes place. In addition, the deeper understanding of the context initially obtained facilitates the analysis of quantitative data. Then, the final data integration—merging the results of all data sets—should be conducted to obtain the overall interpretation of the results.

Due to the nature of this design, starting with exploring the research context, it is often employed by language assessment researchers who focus on problems related to implementation of a new assessment model in a classroom context. A washback study conducted by Tsang (2017) in Hong Kong was a quintessential example of such research. The study aimed to investigate ESL learners' self-perceived washback effects on their learning due to the introduction of a new graded approach used in a high-stakes exam of English (i.e., The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination) which contained optional parts of different levels of difficulty. Two data sets were collected and analyzed in this study: (1) three sets of



semi-structured focus-group interviews with 12 Hong Kong secondary six (i.e., Grade 12) ESL students (qualitative); and (2) a questionnaire with 150 students (quantitative). The first qualitative phase explored learners' perceived washback effects and underlying mediating factors through the interviews. The interview data were qualitatively analyzed to develop the student questionnaire for the second phase. The questionnaire produced quantitative data that were used to test correlations between the types of washback effects and the categories of mediating factors uncovered and identified in the qualitative phase.

The studies that have utilized an MMR design expose the intricacy and difficulty of an MMR study at different levels. That is, the researchers had to carry out both quantitative and qualitative research together, obtain multiple data sets concurrently or sequentially, be cognizant of different methods and approaches, and understand how to appropriately mix them. Mixing in this sense is to link, merge, or embed qualitative and quantitative strands of a mixed methods study so as to obtain the most comprehensive view of the research issue (Creamer, 2018).

### **3.5 Restating Research Questions of Present Study**

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) discuss how research questions drive the choice of a specific mixed methods design. In this introduction to the research methods of the present study, it is important to revisit the research questions that determined the design. The two overarching research questions (RQs) were formulated as follows:

RQ1. What are the experiences of CHC students in learning-oriented, student-centred EAP courses? How does their cultural background affect their learning, specifically in their use of classroom assessment?

RQ2. Is there a relationship between CHC students' engagement with assessment and learning outcomes in the EAP courses? What is the most salient factor that affects student use of assessment to improve their learning?

The first overarching RQ was intended to explore cultural influence on student use of classroom assessment when the students needed to adapt to a new assessment practice. The second overarching RQ was created to focus on factors related to classroom assessment that prompted or hindered students' learning. Moreover, there were four sequential phases in this study and each phase had a set of research questions to guide the specific phase.

### **3.6 Rationale for Mixed Methods Exploratory Sequential Design with Wrap-up Phase**

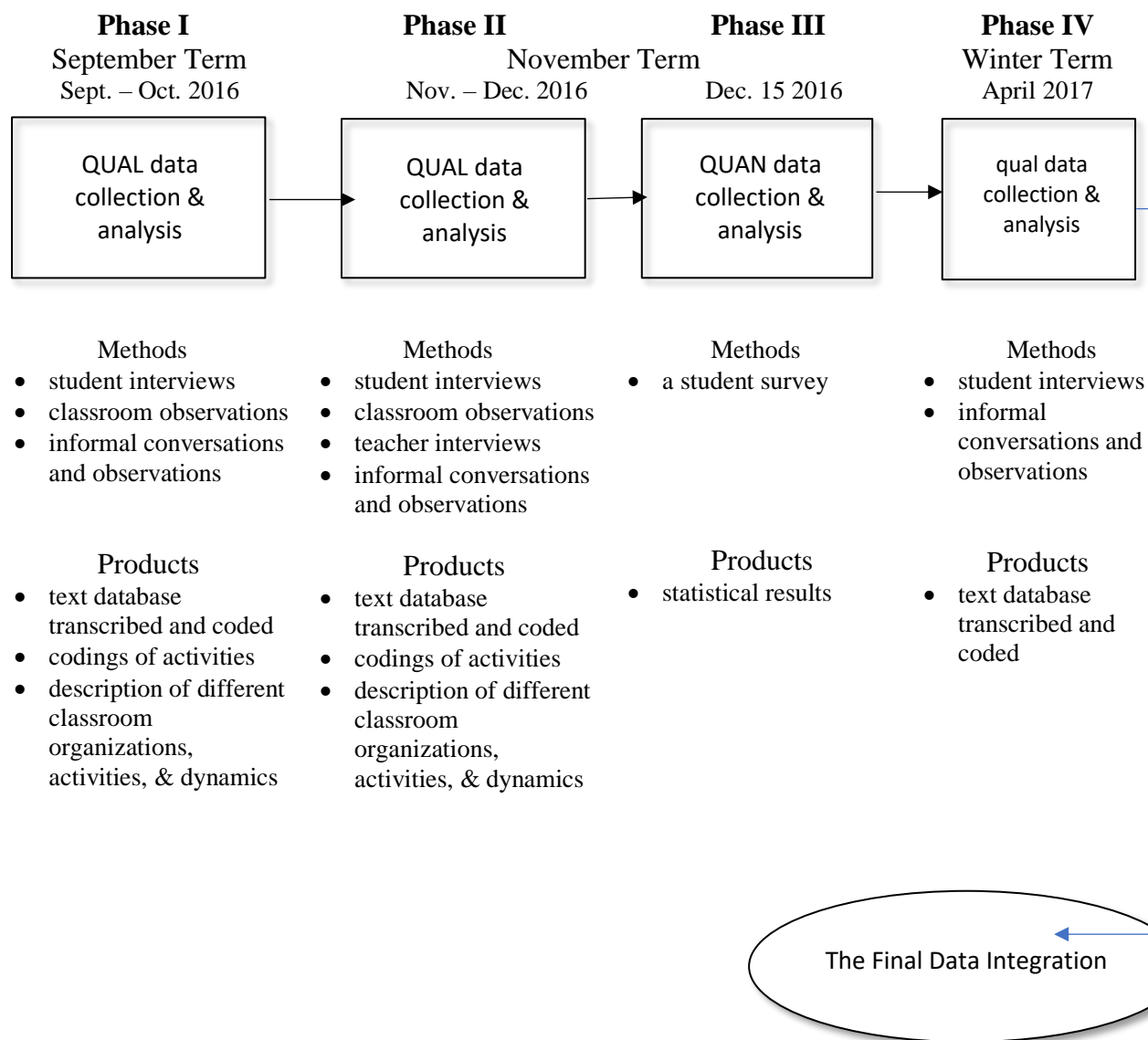
The current study was designed and conducted in the framework of MMR using a tailored version of the exploratory sequential design. It was necessary to start the process by collecting and analyzing qualitative data to unpack the complex nature of classroom dynamics and students' learning behaviours in a new learning context they had just entered. In addition, one of the goals of the study was to obtain a broader view of the target population and to test hypotheses developed from the qualitative results. Thus, the exploratory sequential design was the best suited for the research purposes, and was adopted to be the foundation of the research design. Figure 3.1 is adapted from Creswell's (2015) MMR design to illustrate the exploratory sequential MMR design and the overall relationship of different phases of this study.

As presented in Figure 3.1, this design comprised four sequential phases, and the overall procedure might be depicted as: (QUAL + QUAL + QUAN + qual). With the above-mentioned research questions as navigational tools, this study aimed to explore CHC students' experiences in learning-oriented EAP courses from the beginning of their EAP trajectory in Canada. An ethnographic longitudinal approach was employed in this study to capture in-depth data related to the students' beliefs and perceptions, as well as personal experiences of classroom assessment, and to examine the relationship between those factors and their actual learning outcomes. As the third phase, a quantitative phase (Phase III) was included to confirm the results of the two

previous phases with the larger population of students in the EAP courses.

**Figure 3.1**

*Procedural Diagram of Exploratory Sequential MMR Design with Wrap-up Phase Adopted from Creswell (2015, p.60)*



Furthermore, it is evident from the literature review that there is a dearth of classroom-based language assessment research on the impact of classroom assessment experience on

student learning after the completion of a formal form of learning. Thus, the final phase (Phase IV) was added as a wrap-up component to the conventional exploratory sequential design to obtain such information.

### ***3.6.1 Overview of Exploratory Sequential MMR Design with Wrap-up Phase***

This section provides a brief description of the chronological order of the data collection and analysis for each phase. More detailed information about data collection methods and analysis procedures is provided in Chapter 4. See Table 3.2 to understand the nature and purposes of each phase and in which chapter of the dissertation each is reported.

**Table 3.2**

*Summary of the Phase Connections and Reporting Chapters*

	type of data	main purpose	data from	results reported in
Phase I	qualitative	exploratory		Chapter 5
Phase II	qualitative	further exploratory	Phase I	Chapter 6
Phase III	quantitative	confirmatory	Phase I & II	Chapter 7
Phase IV	qualitative	conclusive	Phase I, II, & III	Chapter 8

**Phase I (exploratory):** Phase I was an exploratory phase to gain deeper insight into and understanding of the context, participants and other related issues to further develop research instruments for subsequent phases. Two types of qualitative data were collected and analyzed: student interviews as the main data source and classroom observations as the secondary data source. Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to analyze these qualitative data, and as part of this process, each interview guide was restructured and modified based on the themes that emerged from previous interviews and classroom observations. Phase I is reported in Chapter 5.

**Phase II (further exploratory):** Following the structure of an exploratory sequential

design, the results of the analysis in Phase I informed Phase II. Phase II further explored emerging themes with the same participants, but with a more specific focus on their learning. Data collection (i.e., student interviews and classroom observations) and analysis were carried out using the same procedure as Phase I. Chapter 6 reports the results of Phase II.

**Phase III (confirmatory):** Phase III was informed by the previous two qualitative phases. A student survey was designed and conducted as the main source of data. The aim of this quantitative phase was twofold: (1) to obtain a broader insight into CHC students' learning; and (2) to test the hypothesis developed from the previous two phases, which means this phase functioned in a confirmatory fashion. Data from the student survey were collected and analyzed using a statistical package for social science. Chapter 7 describes the details of the finding details of Phase III.

**Phase IV (conclusive):** Phase IV was added as a wrap-up phase to conclude the entire study with one final round of student interviews. The aim was to continue with even deeper exploration, to access the data that could solidify the findings from the preceding phases, and to obtain specific data that could help finalize the whole analysis. The guiding questions for the final set of student interviews were generated based on the analysis and interpretation of the previous phases, mostly the qualitative ones. The results of Phase IV are reported in Chapter 8.

### ***3.6.2 Summary of Exploratory Sequential MMR Design with Wrap-up Phase***

Phases I and II produced five sets of student interview data that were qualitatively analyzed. The findings were used to develop Phase III, which was a quantitative phase in this study; a student survey was collected and analyzed to obtain a holistic view of the research issue, combined with the qualitative findings. Finally, in Phase IV, one more student interview set was collected as follow-up interview data. The data of Phase IV were analyzed qualitatively, adding

further insights to the findings from Phases I and II. Finally, the four phases were merged to integrate the salient findings and to conclude the study.

### **3.7 Summary of Chapter 3**

The role of assessment in the language classroom has occupied an increasingly visible place in the language education literature, as teachers, researchers, and test specialists examine how assessment can be woven into instruction to support language learning (Davison & Leung, 2009). Owing to intertwined interactions between different disciplines, language assessment research on classroom assessment involves diverse research perspectives (Farhady, 2018). This means that the research methodology that is used to investigate issues that are multidisciplinary in nature requires a highly flexible approach (Feyerabend, 1975; Balsiger, 2004).

Supported by the body of MMR studies in the field of language assessment, a MMR approach was chosen for this research project. The design—a sequential exploratory design with a wrap-up phase—was an adapted version of the basic exploratory sequential design that starts with a qualitative data collection and analysis component followed by a quantitative phase (Creswell, 2015). In this particular design, a follow-up qualitative component was conducted to finalize the entire research process. For the present research, concerning multilayered issues, MMR was the optimal approach to delve deeper into the research issue and to contribute to the areas that are relevant to this disciplinary scholarship. With the precedent having been set by many MMR studies, which achieved their research objectives by making the most of this particular research approach, the number of studies framed in the pragmatist worldview will likely increase as the research community expands and grows.

## **Chapter 4 Methodology 2 - Data Collection Methods and Analysis Procedures**

### **4.1 Introduction to Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 aims to provide the detailed information about technical aspects of the research design employed for the current study. This chapter starts with the overall context of the research setting along with a general profile of the participating students. It introduces the overview of the entire MMR study, and continues providing the details of the data collection methods and analysis procedures as well as rationale for the two types of data sets used in the current study: (1) qualitative: a series of individual student interviews; and (2) quantitative: a student survey. Chapter 4 ends with the description of ethical considerations and the informant rights.

### **4.2 Research Context**

All the data for this study were collected in the ESL school at a research-intensive Canadian public university, where Tsushima (henceforth “the researcher”) worked as an instructor during the data collection period. This school offered various ESL courses for adult learners of English, both short-term and long-term, including general ESL and EAP. The majority of the students in the ESL school were enrolled in the *pathway program*, which was designed for students who needed to further develop their English language skills to study at the tertiary level.

#### ***4.2.1 Pathway Program and English for Academic Purposes Courses***

There is growing interest in post-secondary education among international ESL students, a trend that aligns well with the policies of the Canadian government in support of the promising ESL industry in this country (Tsushima & Guardado, 2015). The pathway program was designed to conditionally admit students who were academically strong, but whose English proficiency could benefit from further development. This type of conditional admission program is offered at

many universities in English-speaking countries (Klahr, 2015). In such pathway programs, students with lower English proficiency than the requirement of the degree program are admitted on a conditional basis and spend their first year at the institution taking 1-2 junior-level degree courses while developing their EAP skills in the transitional program. As defined in Chapter 1, EAP refers to teaching English with the aim of assisting learners' academic study in the target language, mostly in higher education (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Thus, EAP courses for pathway students generally function as the core of their learning experience. The program was one of the school's full-time programs. There were approximately 25 EAP teachers at the time of data collection, and all instructors were highly qualified professional ESL educators with Master's or Ph.D. credentials.

Table 4.1 shows an overview of the pathway program structure at the research site. The pathway program consisted of two 3-credit EAP courses offered at the ESL school: EAP-1 and EAP-2. This program combined 19 hours per week of ESL instruction, which included EAP classes as well as other supplemental seminars and workshops designed to help them understand expectations in Canadian higher education and culture. To be admitted into the pathway program, students had to meet the language proficiency requirement of the program as shown. Pathway program students had the status and institutional privileges of regular degree program students, such as taking an academic credit course with other domestic and international undergraduate students and having access to university services with undergraduate student status.



**Table 4.1***Pathway Program Overview*

<b>EAP courses</b>	<b>other courses</b>	<b>entry requirement</b>	<b>duration</b>
EAP-1	supporting seminars	a minimum TOEFL score of 70 iBT or 5.5 IELTS	minimum of two months
EAP-2	optional: one academic course (3 credits) per term	EAP-1	minimum of two months

**4.2.2 Learning-oriented Curriculum**

Supported by Barr and Tagg's (1995) learning-oriented paradigm, a major curriculum reform for the pathway program was launched in 2015. The curriculum was revised to reflect students' future plans, areas of academic interest, and strengths and weaknesses in language learning. A core principle of the curriculum was learner-centredness, moving away from a teaching paradigm that outlines what needs to be taught, and towards a learning paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995) that emphasizes the end result. Thus, based on literature that provided a basis for the outcomes-based approach to curriculum design and learner assessment, the EAP curriculum was constructed around the achievement of learning outcomes, so that the learner was assessed through a demonstration of target skills, not individual language items (Guardado & Light, 2020).

One of the main goals of the curriculum reform was to create learning environments that could support the quality of learning. Active learner involvement was considered as fundamental, following the principle that "learners learn best through doing" (Nunan, 2004, p. 36).

Collaborative learning tasks were implemented as key to engage students to collaborate actively and practice the target skills. Although the official curriculum document did not refer to a specific LOA theory, both summative and formative assessments were explicitly presented and prescribed as equally important parts of student learning support. Through professional

development retreats, seminars and workshops, teachers were trained to employ assessment tasks and tools that stated specific outcomes, and to review them with students as part of standard program practice. For example, the standardized assessment rubrics were used for course group discussions, presentations, and writing to make explicit reference to the performance indicators of the appropriate student learning objectives. In such a learning environment, students were expected to actively engage with learning tasks, through which they were expected to develop the degree of learner autonomy that may be expected of them in 100-level undergraduate classes.

#### ***4.2.3 High Stakes of EAP Courses in Pathway Program***

The stakes of the EAP courses were high for pathway students in terms of time, finance, and other resources. Students in the pathway program were required to complete the two term stages by passing the two EAP courses (EAP-1 and EAP-2) to continue as full-time undergraduate students at the university. Once students completed the highest level in the program—EAP-2—they were considered to have met the English language proficiency requirement of the undergraduate programs at this Canadian university. If students failed to achieve the required mark in an EAP course, they had to repeat the same level. In addition, if students were unable to meet the standards after taking the course three times, they were not permitted to re-enroll; this meant that their conditional student status would be terminated.

In order to provide more information about the size of the program and the passing rate, Table 4.2 shows the success rate of EAP-1 and -2 in fall 2015, a year prior to the data collection period. In this ESL school, the majority of pathway students started taking EAP-1 from September and moved to EAP-2 in November. The student enrollment number for the EAP-1 level in the September Term in 2015 was 328, and 271 students passed the course (the passing rate was 82.6%). 274 students were enrolled in the EAP-2 level in the November Term, and 204

students were able to complete EAP-2 successfully (the passing rate was 74.5%).

**Table 4.2**

*EAP Success Rates at the ESL School: Fall 2015*

EAP-1: September Term (September – October)			EAP-2: November Term (November – December)		
total	pass	pass rate	total	pass	pass rate
328	271	82.6%	274	204	74.5%

#### ***4.2.4 General Student Demographic Information of ESL School***

Concerning the student demographics in the ESL school, according to the school administration, approximately 74% of the student population in 2014 to 2016 came from countries with CHC values, such as China, Japan, and Korea, according to the administration. Although the detailed information of the population was not open to the public, the large majority of the students were from China and had international student status.

### **4.3 Overall Data Collection Methods and Procedures**

As explained in Chapter 3, an exploratory sequential MMR approach was chosen to conduct the current study (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) in order to optimize the possibility of obtaining a deeper understanding of a complex issue that is largely unexplored in a language classroom context. Table 4.3 gives an overview of all data collected over the entire MMR study, comprising of four sequential phases. The main data sets for this research were generated using two different data collection strategies: (1) a series of individual interviews with CHC students (qualitative data); and (2) a student survey from the larger CHC population (quantitative data). In addition, supplemental information was also collected to maximize the usefulness of the two main data sets.

**Table 4.3**

*Overview of Data Collected in the Exploratory Sequential MMR Study with Wrap-up Phase*

<b>phases and chapters</b>	<b>ESL school Term</b>	<b>timeline in relation to EAP courses</b>	<b>main data collection</b>	<b>supplemental data collection</b>
<b>Phase I (qualitative)</b>  Chapter 5	2016 September Term  (September 6 - October 25)	the beginning of EAP-1	Interview #1	classroom observations (4 sections)
		around the midterm exam of EAP-1	Interview #2	informal conversations and observations
	Break	after the final exam of EAP-1	Interview #3	
<b>Phase II (qualitative)</b>  Chapter 6	2016 November Term (October 31 - December 15)	the beginning of EAP-2	Interview #4	classroom observations (1 section)
		before the final exam of EAP-2	Interview #5	informal conversations and observations
	2016 December	after the final exam of EAP-2		teacher interviews
<b>Phase III (quantitative)</b>  Chapter 7	2016 December 15th	on the last day of November Term	student survey	
<b>Phase IV (qualitative)</b>  Chapter 8	2017 April	the first full-academic term as a first-year undergraduate student (Jan.– April)	Interview #6	

#### **4.4 Overview of Qualitative Phases: Phase I, II, and IV**

Phase I, Phase II, and Phase IV were the qualitative components of the MMR study in which individual student interviews were conducted as the main data collection instrument. Semi-structured interviews were considered a valuable data collection strategy for these phases of the study so as to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent[s], and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1988, p. 74). Table 4.4 illustrates the

outline of the data collection of the three qualitative phases.

The main data were collected six times in total, individually from 12 student participants ( $n = 12$ ) from September 2016 to April 2017. These interviews were designed to identify student perceptions and behaviours concerning their learning experiences and EAP learning process, focusing on the relationship between their use of language assessment and learning outcomes.

**Table 4.4**

*Overview of Qualitative Data Collection*

phase	Phase I	Phase II		Phase IV
ESL School terms	September Term	November Term	January Term	March Term
university terms	Fall Term		Winter Term	
courses	EAP-1 ( $n = 12$ )	EAP-1 ( $n = 3$ ) EAP-2 ( $n = 9$ )	post-EAP courses, regular university content courses	
main data collection	Interview #1, #2, #3	Interview #4, #5		Interview #6

**Phase I.** Phase I was started in September 2016 with 12 interview participants. Each of them was individually interviewed three times over the two-month duration of the term (Interview #1, #2, and #3). Phase I aimed to explore and understand participants' backgrounds, past learning experiences, and how they experienced their new ESL learning in the Canadian context.

**Phase II.** Two interview data sets were collected as the main data of Phase II from November 2016 to December 2016, which were labelled as Interview #4 and Interview #5. These two interview sets aimed to build upon the findings from Phase I and to elicit information about participants' individual differences in their learning process.

**Phase IV.** Phase IV, completed in April 2017, was the final phase of the data collection in the MMR design. It was labelled the Wrap-up Phase. This phase was dedicated to the collection of the last interview data set (Interview #6) with the intention of obtaining the interview participants' reflections on the entire EAP learning journey after the completion of the pathway program. The collected data set collected consisted of student interviews with the same interview participants from the preceding qualitative phases (i.e., Phases I and II). The guiding questions for the final set of student interviews were generated based on the analysis and interpretation of the previous phases, mostly the qualitative ones.

#### ***4.4.1 Qualitative Phases: Data Collection Methods***

This section provides information about the data collection methods used for the three qualitative phases. Table 4.5 sums up the data collection process for each phase.

**Ethnographically-informed MMR approach.** The study was designed as an ethnographically-informed mixed methods research where the researcher employed first-hand observation and interaction with the chosen population to obtain data from multiple sources. For the qualitative part of the study, examining student learning through the lens of social cognitivist theories (Bandura, 2001), an ethnographic approach was chosen to collect in-depth information on the research topic. Ethnography is known in language education research for its robustness as it represents "a range of possible techniques, levels of analysis, and domains of inquiry; ethnography offers a holistic, grounded and participant-informed perspective..." (Duff, 1995, p. 507). Thus, this approach has been traditionally used by language education researchers for exploring the practices of social and cultural groups that display multiple unknown variables (Chapelle & Duff, 2003).

The most distinguishable principle of ethnography from other types of observational approaches lies in its *longitudinal* research design (Friedman, 2012). Thus, the current researcher implemented prolonged and rigorous engagement in the field in order to provide “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). See Table 4.3 for the timeline. The fieldwork included formal (recorded) and informal student interviews, classroom observations, teacher interviews, informally interacting with other teachers and students, and field notes. In addition, it should be noted that the experience of working as a teacher and as a program evaluator of the ESL school for six years also helped the researcher conduct systematic and constant fieldwork, although, for the purposes of the study, fieldwork only lasted two years. The qualitative data collected in Phases I and II informed the following quantitative phase, Phase III; hence, the research approach was an ethnographically-informed MMR study (Schensul & LeCompte, 2016).

**Main data: Individual interviews.** For the main data collection, the qualitative phases consisted of individual semi-structured interviews conducted in English and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted in a meeting room of the ESL school where the participants were able to answer questions with their privacy guaranteed. The interviews were done individually and face-to-face. Each interview was audio-recorded using a digital device and transferred to a password-protected personal computer for transcription. Using a series of open-ended discussion techniques, interview data were gathered for qualitative data analysis. Based on the analysis of each interview set, guiding questions for the following interview meeting were created. In order to build on the findings from the previous interviews, many questions were specifically tailored for each student. This building-on method was used throughout the entire data collection period.

**Table 4.5***Qualitative Data Collection Details*

	Phase I	Phase II	Phase IV
main data: individual student interviews (n = 12)	approx. 30 minutes each, twice; meeting room at ESL school office	approx. 30 minutes each, three times; meeting room at ESL school office	approx. 30 minutes each, once; in meeting room at university
supplemental data: classroom observations	selected classrooms from four EAP teachers; 4 hours, 3 times, each section	selected EAP classroom from one EAP teacher; 4 hours, 3 times	

The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A, B, and C) presented guiding questions only. The specific phrasing of the questions and the order in which they were asked varied slightly to follow the flow of the conversation. The guiding questions for the initial interview set (Interview #1) were created based on the research questions, the literature, and the researcher's own experience working at the research site as an instructor. The guiding questions for the following interviews—from Interview #2 to Interview #6—were created by building on emerging themes from the previous interview data. As an aside, extra minutes of casual chat after each interview session (approximately 30 minutes) were offered to students who expressed interest in informally discussing other topics. Such an extended chat took place in an informal manner without specific questions. Most of the student interviewees extended the meeting in which they shared insights from their lives, such as difficulties in learning English or making local friends, reasons for coming to Canada, and their families and friends. These details also helped the researcher analyze and interpret their interviews.

**Supplemental data: Classroom observations and teacher interviews.** In addition to the main data described above, classroom observations and teacher interviews were conducted



and used as supplemental data to obtain a deeper understanding of the learning environment, classroom dynamics, teacher-student relationships, and the research setting. However, the formal analysis of these data is not included in the dissertation for the following reasons. First, the primary goal of the study was to provide an in-depth and longitudinal analysis from the perspective of students. Indeed, following core principles of the ethnographic MMR approach (Schensul & LeCompte, 2016), the study was conducted in a responsive manner in which the researcher made pragmatic decisions to analyze and present the data sets that best answered the research questions. In this way, while conducting the investigation and analysis, the researcher continuously went through a process of adjustment and readjustment of the original data collection and presentation plan in response to emerging findings. Thus, even though certain data were not explicitly included in the actual research report, the fact the study followed an ethnographic approach that included multiple data sources, prolonged engagement, and participant observation (including classroom observations), enabled the researcher to provide the thick description and data triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that was originally sought. All the above directly and indirectly informed the analysis and overall findings, and therefore, the dissertation. Another reason for not including the formal analysis of these data in the dissertation is that it would have produced a lengthy dissertation, which was not deemed desirable.

***Classroom Observations.*** Observations were conducted during Phases I and II to obtain a deeper and comprehensive understanding of students' experience in their EAP classrooms. The teachers who agreed to participate in this study chose the observation dates to facilitate smooth data collection and confidentiality. In Phase I, four class sections were visited three times, and in Phase II, one section was visited three times for a full classroom period (4 hours). See Table 4.5 to understand the details for each phase. The observations were conducted qualitatively, using an

observation guide (see Appendix D) that was adopted from Turner's (2000) and Colby-Kelly & Turner's (2007) classroom observation guides. The observation guide was developed to focus on the identification of assessment procedures, objectives, and goals. The focus of the observations was on classroom assessment practices (e.g., how instructors explained and administered their classroom assessment, how students reacted to them, and what kinds of assessment opportunities were provided to students). Moreover, field notes and audio recordings were collected during the sessions. These observations were done as unobtrusively as possible. The data were analyzed and used to obtain the necessary information for the following data collection and analysis steps (e.g., to develop interview guides). However, because the priority was given to reporting on student perspectives, and the page limitations, the formal presentation of this data set is not included in the dissertation. The observation data are, rather, presented in a supplemental manner to add background information on the emergent findings from the student interviews. A comprehensive report of the observation data will be included in future research publications to come out of this work.

***Teacher Interviews.*** At the end of Phase II, individual interviews with the four teachers whose classes were observed were conducted in an unstructured manner. Each interview lasted for an hour. The interviews were audio-recorded, and the researcher took field notes. This data set served as a member checking process to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings from Phases I and II, such as ensuring the researcher's interpretations of classroom observations were warranted. This member checking was confirmatory, but redundant if reported in the dissertation. Therefore, considering the results of the initial analysis of the data, the researcher made a pragmatic decision not to formally analyze this particular data set for the dissertation. In this way, the researcher's time and resources were invested in the data collection and analysis of

Phases III and IV. Thus, as with the classroom observation results, the fully analyzed teacher interviews will be presented in future work.

#### ***4.4.2 Qualitative Phases: Sampling Procedure***

With permission of the university and the ESL unit, the researcher joined a teacher meeting in August 2016, a week before the September Term began, and explained the research objectives to the teachers to ask for their support for the study. Table 4.6 illustrates the procedures of participant recruitment.

**Table 4.6**  
*Sampling Procedures*

<b>timeline</b>	<b>communication with teachers</b>	<b>communication with student interview participants</b>
last week of August, 2016	joined the teacher meeting to explain the research and asked for volunteer participants	
first week of September, 2016	communicated with five teachers regarding classroom observations. Confirmed their participation and arranged first classroom visit	
second week of September 2016	visited classrooms in five EAP sections and explained the research to students to ask for volunteer participants	exchanged emails with potential participants and further explained procedures and ethics of research. Confirmed 12 student participants

Purposeful sampling was chosen for the interview phases (i.e., Phase I, II, and IV). This is a well-established technique used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Key criteria for participant selection were designated to investigate critical factors influencing learning

practices of academic English in a learning-oriented classroom. Thus, the study sought to recruit students who:

1. were conditionally accepted by an undergraduate program
2. were from a Confucian heritage culture
3. arrived in Canada in the year of 2016 as international students
4. started taking the EAP-1 course from September 2016

In addition to these criteria, the importance of availability and willingness to participate were given high value. It was important that participants communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Bernard, 2002).

Regarding the actual participant recruitment, the researcher visited five EAP course sections to invite volunteers. Students in the classrooms (approximately 18 students in each classroom) were informed in advance by the teacher about the researcher's visits. A 10-minute presentation was carried out to explain the research objectives, procedures, and pros and cons of participating in the project. Students received the contact information after the presentation, and the same day, 12 students from four sections directly emailed the researcher to volunteer. These participants were East Asian students who met all the above-mentioned criteria. The identity of the students was not shared with the course instructor, the School, or other student participants.

#### ***4.4.3 Qualitative Phases: Profiles of Focal Participants for Student Interviews***

Taking an ethnographic approach to the qualitative phases, this section provides some of the most important information that contextualizes the qualitative data: a brief profile description of each student. "Thick description" of the research context is essential to interpret data in a qualitative study (Geertz, 1973) because who the participants are—their personalities, interests, and life goals—is often highly related to how they respond to questions.

The interview participants were 12 international undergraduate students coming from CHC backgrounds: 11 Chinese and one Japanese, eight female and six male students. The age range was 18 to 20. All arrived in Canada in August of the data collection year, just before the start of the September Term (Phase I). The students were enrolled in the pathway program for international students who met all the university's academic criteria but did not satisfy the language requirement so as to be able to fully start a degree program. The same 12 students participated in all the qualitative data collection phases (i.e., Phase I, II and IV). In other words, the qualitative data were a record of the personal experiences of the 12 individuals over eight months.

Regarding confidentiality, pseudonyms used in this study were chosen by the participants themselves. The following descriptions of the participants were developed from the field notes, email correspondence, and informal chats. See Table 4.7 for the details of each student, which shows their pseudonym, origin, gender, education, and test score on a standardised test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers, a passing score on which was required to apply to this Canadian University. All of the students provided a test score from the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) which was at the time one of the most common language tests with testing centres in major cities in Asian countries.

**Table 4.7***Student Participants' Backgrounds*

pseudonym	origin	gender	age	previous educational backgrounds	IELTS score*
Barry	China	male	18	public high school in China	<b>6.0</b> R: unavailable L:6.5 W: unavailable S:5.5
Dez	China	female	21	2nd year in a Chinese university, transferred as part of her program requirement (public high school in China)	<b>6.0</b> R: 6.5 L:6.5 W:5.5 S:6.0
Eeali	China	female	18	international high school in China (Maple Leaf)	<b>5.5</b> R: 5.0 L:5.0 W: 5.5 S: 5.5
Jericho	China	male	19	international high school in China (Maple Leaf) + private language school for IELTS (5 months)	<b>6.0</b> R: 6.5 L: 7.0 W: 5.0 S: 5.0
Lucy	China	female	18	international high school in China (Maple Leaf)	<b>6.0</b> R: 6.0 L: 6.5 W: 5.5 S: 5.5
Neal	China	male	18	public high school in China + private language school for IELTS (1 year)	<b>6.0</b> R:6.5 L:6.0 W:5.5 S:5.0
Marshmallow	China	male	18	public high school in China + private language school for IELTS (half a year)	<b>6.0</b> R:6.5 L: 6.5 W:5.0 S:5.0
Panda	China	male	19	international high school in China (Maple Leaf)	<b>5.5</b> R: unavailable L: 7.0 W: 5.5 S: unavailable
Rachel	China	female	18	public high school in China	<b>6.0</b> R:6.5 L:6.0 W:6.0 S:6.0
Sky	China	female	18	international high school in China (Maple Leaf)	<b>6.0</b> R: 6.0 L: 6.0 W: 6.0 S: 5.5
Sunny	China	female	18	international high school in China (Maple Leaf)	<b>6.0</b> breakdown: unavailable
Watson	Japan	female	18	international high school in Switzerland	<b>6.0</b> R: 6.5 L: 6.5 W: 6.0 S: 5.5

\*The score presented in bold is the overall bandscore. R – Reading, L – Listening, W – Writing, and S - Speaking

**Barry.** Barry had graduated from one of the most strict, academic-oriented high schools in China, where he said that he “got disciplined.” Having joined a study-abroad program in high school, he had spent a month in Germany. Thus, studying in Canada was his second and much longer sojourn abroad. His future goal was to pursue a PhD in physics at a North American university, and he said that it was a natural choice to come to Canada. He was accepted by the Faculty of Science with a physics major, and was taking a 100-level math course in September along with the EAP program. He always gave the impression of being a calm but confident person. His interests were diverse, including cooking, playing basketball, reading novels, and watching Marvel comic TV shows.

**Dez.** Dez was the only participant who joined the pathway program through a credit transfer program. This transfer program, established between her Chinese university and the Canadian university, involved two years of post-secondary education in China followed by program completion at the Canadian university. She was in the Faculty of Arts, majoring in economics, but chose not to register in an academic course during the Fall Term so she could focus on her EAP development first. Dez was two years more advanced in her academic study than the majority of her peers and appeared confident in her planning and study in Canada. In addition, she had several friends who had also transferred from the same Chinese university, which meant that she came with a potentially supportive community to start her study abroad journey.

**Eeali.** Eeali started learning English when she was six years old. She graduated from a private international high school in Beijing, called Maple Leaf, which had a strong emphasis on academic English development. Many of her teachers were expatriates from Canada, since the school was operated by a Canadian offshore educational foundation. Due to the school’s strong

connection to Canada, she applied to Canadian universities to do her undergraduate program in economics. Eeali participated actively in the program, not only in the EAP course but also in extracurricular activities organized by the school, such as parties and day field trips, to enjoy her new life in Canada. Through such activities, she met Neal (another student participant described below) and they started seeing each other soon after the program started.

**Jericho.** Jericho's high school was also a Canadian offshore international school. He said all the courses, except the course of Mandarin, were completely instructed in English by Canadian, English-speaking teachers. In addition, he spent five months in a private language school in which he took an intensive exam preparation course for IELTS tests. Enrolled in the economics program, he was taking a 100-level statistics course in September along with EAP. Jericho often described himself as a shy and introverted person. However, he made two close friends in EAP, and they were always together in the classroom talking about EAP homework, TV shows, and music. His uncle had immigrated to Canada several years before, and lived a two-hour drive away; Jericho visited him from time to time.

**Lucy.** Lucy was another Maple Leaf high school graduate. She said everything was taught in English in her school to prepare the students to enter western universities. She had a short study abroad experience in Vancouver, Canada, during high school. Coming to Canada again to study at the postsecondary level was "an obvious option," according to Lucy. Her major was economics with a minor in art & design. She had not registered in any academic course yet, so as to be able to focus on EAP. She already had some friends and acquaintances from the same high school in both of the programs she was in—the pathway and economics programs. Moreover, since high school, she had been close friends with Panda, another participant described below. She was a quiet but tactful and practical person who was well organized.



**Marshmallow.** Marshmallow graduated from a public secondary school in Wuhan, China. The curriculum placed a particular emphasis on English training and was named “Foreign Language School.” His major was East Asian Studies. He was particularly interested in Japanese language and culture. Like Jericho, Marshmallow went to a private English school to prepare for IELTS tests for a year. According to him, the exam preparation school added a heavy workload to his life but was worth it. Marshmallow stated that his experience as a leading member of the Student Senate in secondary school helped him develop skills for managing his time and emotions. He was always focused during the interviews, but afterwards, he enjoyed some extra discussion in which he shared his enthusiasm for Japanese culture.

**Neal.** Neal went to a highly prestigious public school in which both the students and the teachers lived on campus. This boarding school was for male students who aimed to get into top ranking Chinese universities. He, like other students in the boarding school, hoped to be accepted by a top university in China, but he could not perform well at the national university entrance exam. Consequently, he decided to study abroad, rather than settling for a lower-ranking university in China. After graduation, he spent several months on IELTS test preparation at a private language school so he could apply to a Canadian university. He was accepted by the Faculty of Arts; his hope was to major in psychology. His mother, however, wanted him to change the major to business or computing science, which made him “slightly stressed,” according to Neal. He was a soft-spoken person with a quiet nature. He found the new environment significantly different from where he was from, especially after experiencing boarding school. He got to know Eeali (another participant described above) through their mutual Chinese friends in EAP, and they started seeing each other.

**Panda.** As mentioned in Lucy’s profile above, Panda also graduated from Maple Leaf

along with several other students. He reportedly had not been so serious about learning English in high school, but after coming to Canada, all of a sudden, he realized the importance of developing his English skills, especially speaking. At the same time, he preferred socializing with his friends from the same high school both in and out of the pathway program. His major was economics. Although his first choice had been the Computing Science program, he was unable to meet the program's requirements. His plan was to obtain a high GPA in Arts in the first year, which would then allow him to transfer to Science. Panda was an easy-going person and good at making people laugh, as his pseudonym choice suggests.

**Rachel.** Rachel was a public high school graduate. Her school was also a highly academic-oriented one in which “paper exams were more valued than anything else,” as Rachel described. The students in the high school studied hard to get into high-ranking Chinese universities. Thus, English courses in her school were taught to pass the university entrance exams with a strong emphasis on grammar and reading skills. She was accepted by the Faculty of Science at the Canadian university with a major in computing science. Rachel was a shy but friendly person who liked sharing personal stories and insights. Before her departure for Canada, she had already communicated with students at the University through an app called Sina Weibo (新浪微博), which is one of the largest social media platforms in China. Thanks to Sina Weibo, Rachel made some Chinese friends who helped her settle into the new environment.

**Sky.** Sky was a student in the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation with a future dream of becoming an athletic trainer. Her English learning history started in kindergarten, and was intensified in the Maple Leaf middle school. She was confident in her English. For this reason, she was shocked to learn that she was only conditionally admitted. Her mother convinced her to be patient and to develop the academic English skills that would help

her in the long run. Along with EAP, she started taking her first academic course in September, which she reportedly enjoyed due to “the absence of other Chinese students (in the class).” Her personality was straightforward, active and confident. Sky was the only interview participant who stated that speaking was her strength. One notable feature of her communication style was the overuse of interjections and fillers such as “like,” “kinda,” and “you know” accompanied with uptalk.

**Sunny.** Sunny came to Canada to please her parents because her parents decided on and planned her future direction. She had relatives who had immigrated to Canada and lived in the same city. This made her feel more comfortable about coming to North America to obtain a degree in economics. Her background in terms of English learning was similar to other Maple Leaf graduates. Her life in the last three years before her departure was intensely dedicated to improving her English skills. Sunny’s pseudonym was suitable for her: a person full of smiles. Her future goal was to work in the United Nations in peace-keeping. After each interview meeting, she always chose to discuss topics related to social justice. According to her, such interactions in educational settings seldom happened back in China.

**Watson.** Watson was the only interview participant from Japan. She graduated from a boarding school in Switzerland. She also had a long English learning history, like the other participants. The school in Switzerland was founded as a private co-educational Japanese boarding high school, accredited by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and also recognized by the *Swiss Service de la Protection de la Jeunesse, Département Sociale et des Assurances*. She decided to go to the boarding school on her own at age 15 to live as a person with a global mindset. Her future career plan was to work for an educational non-profit organization. She chose the pseudonym because of her favourite TV

show, Sherlock. Watson is a fictional physician, a devoted friend, and the assistant to the main character in the show. Additionally, this participant mentioned that the name was also inspired by a famous actor and gender equity advocate, Emma Watson. This reflected her personal traits: an intellectually curious and empathetic person. She did not have any acquaintances or friends in Canada initially, but she quickly started developing connections with local people through extra-curricular activities like volunteering. Another noteworthy fact is that even though both Watson and the researcher spoke Japanese as L1, Watson never used Japanese even in emails, because of her motivation to develop her English-speaking persona.

**Interviews with Focal Students.** All of the participants acted responsibly, with serious attitudes towards the research, which greatly facilitated the data collection. There were no difficulties in terms of communicating with them; on the contrary, these students were reliable participants, coming to our meetings on time, emailing to update the researcher on their life happenings, and offering more time to talk about their personal interests.

In terms of their language level, although all participants were in the same level of EAP course, there were some individual differences in their IELTS scores (see Table 4.7). For example, Panda and Eeali had an overall band score of 5.5, whereas other students had 6.0. Moreover, taking a closer look at the four sub-scores when available, there were some differences among the students. Another major difference was whether or not they were taking an academic course along with their EAP study. The pathway program allowed the students to register in one academic course in the first term, and in fact, many students in the program took advantage of this opportunity to start their academic study as early as possible. Among the participants, as shown in Table 4.5, five students took an academic course in the first term. The remaining seven students chose not to take any, and focused only on EAP-1.

**Participants' EAP Teachers.** To help with teacher references in the following quotations, the pseudonyms of each participant's EAP teachers during Phase I (the September Term) and Phase II (the November Term) are presented in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8**

*Pseudonyms of EAP Teachers for Participants in Phases I and II*

student participants	pseudonym of teacher in Phase I	pseudonym of teacher in Phase II
Barry	Edona	Gena
Dez	Arthur	Kelly
Eali	Arthur	Julie
Jericho	Martha	Alex
Lucy	Nadia	Talia
Neal	Edona	Martha
Marshmallow	Nadia	Julie
Panda	Nadia	Talia
Rachel	Nadia	Gena
Sky	Edona	Lynn
Sunny	Edona	Nadia
Watson	Martha	Roger

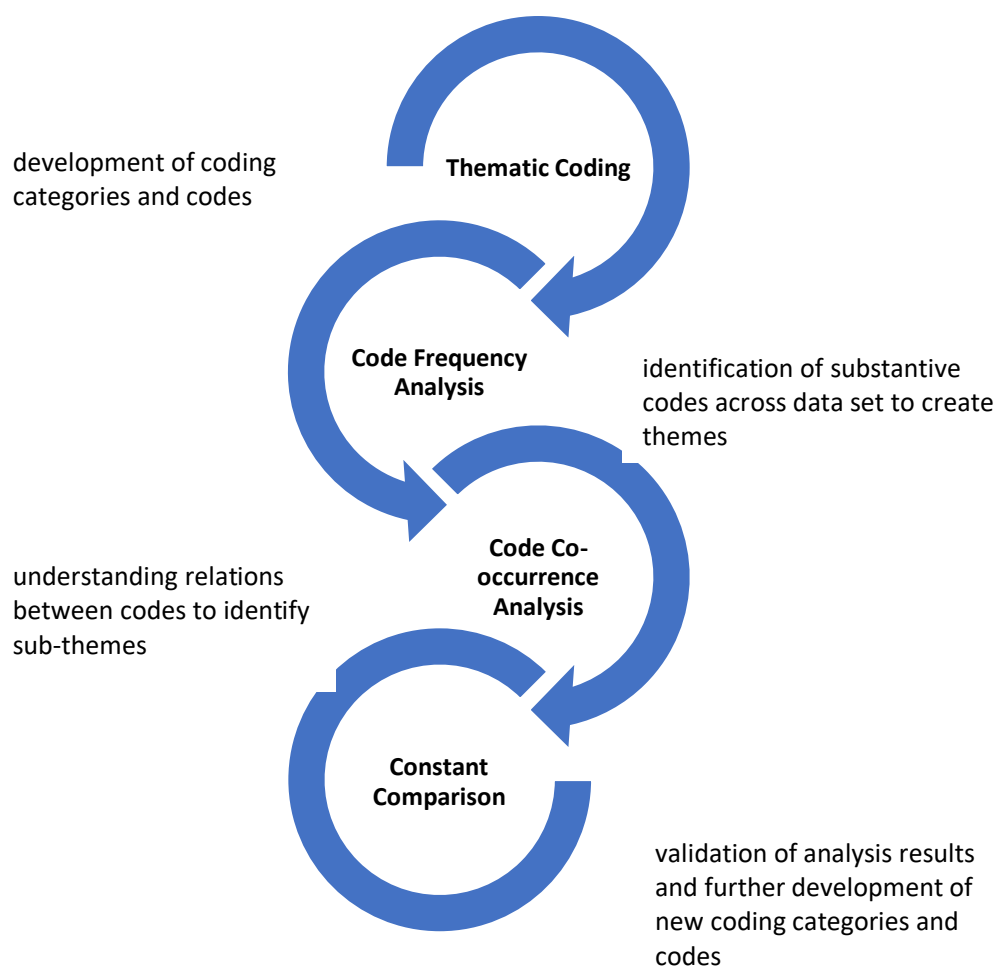
#### ***4.4.4 Qualitative Phases: Analytical Process***

Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to analyze the qualitative data. As part of this process, each interview guide was restructured and modified based on the themes that emerged from previous interviews and classroom observations. In keeping with an ethnographic

approach, the qualitative data were continually interpreted and re-interpreted, to inform the subsequent data collection stages. Figure 4.1 displays a summary of the analytical process used for the qualitative analyses in this dissertation.

**Figure 4.1**

*Summary of Analytic Process*



**1<sup>st</sup> Step.** The first step in the qualitative analyses was the coding of the transcribed interviews. This coding process was followed by content analysis, which included the four sub-processes of thematic coding, code frequency analysis, code co-occurrence analysis, and constant

comparison. Codes were obtained through an interpretive thematic analysis method (Duff, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Saldaña (2009), a code is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. The headers in the interview guide were used to organize over-arching themes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Dedoose, a web-based application for mixed methods data analysis. Both the content analysis sub-processes of code frequency analysis and code co-occurrence analysis were completed using Dedoose Version 8.0.35. Transcribed data were coded following an interpretive thematic analysis method, which is a process for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns in qualitative data (Duff, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In addition, relevant data from field notes taken during the interviews were entered into Microsoft Excel and used to inform the coding of transcripts. In Dedoose, standard procedures for qualitative data analysis were used (e.g., Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2003) in the development of coding categories and the identification of themes. Dedoose allows the application of multiple codes to a single excerpt from the interview transcripts. An excerpt is simply a quote from the interview respondent.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Step.** Once the data were completely coded, these data were processed through a review of code frequency and the co-occurrence of two codes together in Dedoose. The results generated in Dedoose were downloaded as Microsoft Excel files. Code occurrence and co-occurrence are often employed to analyze qualitative data, especially to generate patterns across the interviews and to extract illustrative quotes (Namey et. al., 2008; Saldana, 2009). In Dedoose, the data were analyzed using the code occurrence matrix to identify repeated ideas within a large body of text. This code occurrence method is used to analyze the frequency of a word or a phrase in data, which helps researchers understand “an idea of the prevalence of thematic responses

across participants” (Namey et. al., 2008, p. 141). The most substantive codes were used as themes to describe the data.

As an example, Figure 4.2 presents an example of the code frequencies of each interview transcript from Interview #1. As can be seen, the 12 interview transcripts are represented as rows and the codes are represented as columns. At the intersection of a row and a column is the frequency of occurrence of that code in the particular interview transcription. For example, the yellow cell in E3 indicates that the code “activities in EAP” was applied a total of six times in the transcript from interview #1 with Watson. In addition, the same code was applied 17 times in total across the participants as shown in cell E15. On Dedoose, frequency is mapped to the colour spectrum—reds and greens being more frequent and blues less—to identify patterns.

**Figure 4.2**

*Example of Code Frequency Analysis in Dedoose*

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
1		Academic courses	Acculturation	No need for acculturation	Activites in EAP	Appreciating Feedback	Assessment/T esting	Bridging Program	CHC Education	Discipline	N le ex
2	EAP Data Analysis WK1										
3	#1 Watson				6				5		
4	#1 Sunny	1		1							
5	#1 Sky	6	8	1		1		3	1	1	
6	#1 Rachel		5	1	5	1	3		5	6	
7	#1 Panda				1		1		1		
8	#1 Neal				2	2			4	1	
9	#1 Marshmallow		3				3		6	2	
10	#1 Lucy			3	2	1			1	1	
11	#1 Jericho	2				2	1			2	
12	#1 Eeali			1		2	2				
13	#1 Dez								2	3	
14	#1 Barry		4		1	3	1		2	1	
15	Totals	9	20	7	17	12	11	3	27	17	
16											

**3<sup>rd</sup> Step.** The third step of the content analysis sub-process was code co-occurrence analysis, which was also conducted in Dedoose. Figure 4.3 presents an example of the Dedoose



code co-occurrence feature employed in the analysis. Code co-occurrence indicates the relations and connections among particular codes and provides supportive information in understanding how thematic domains, concepts, or ideas are distributed within a data set, which adds more meaning to a frequency analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In this process, sub-themes were identified by examining the frequency with which each code was applied throughout the data as well as the frequency with which codes were paired together in an excerpt.

**Figure 4.3**

*Example of Code Co-occurrence Chart in Dedoose*

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1		Academic courses	Acculturation	No need for acculturation	Activities in EAP	Appreciating Feedback	Assessment	Bridging Program	CHC Education	Discipline	Negative learning experience [CHC education]	Changes experienced
2	Academic courses		3					1	1		1	
3	Acculturation	3			1	1	1	1	5		3	
4	No need for acculturation											
5	Activities in EAP		1			2	1				1	
6	Appreciating Feedback		1		2		3		1	3	2	
7	Assessment		1		1	3			10	2	2	
8	Bridging Program	1	1						1		1	
9	CHC Education	1	5			1	10	1		4	11	
10	Discipline					3	2		4			
11	Negative learning experience [CHC education]	1	3		1	2	2	1	11			
12	Changes experienced	3	4		1		1		7		6	

**4<sup>th</sup> Step.** As the final step, the method of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which seeks an interpretive understanding and situated knowledge, was employed with the themes. Constant comparison is a method of comparing ideas developed in one data sample with the concepts developed for similar situations in previous and ongoing data samples (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During this step, the list of themes and subthemes were examined and refined against the study purpose, research questions, and theoretical framework. Moreover, emerging themes from one interview set were used to understand and to analyze other interview sets. For instance, if codes related to students' positive attitudes towards teacher feedback were found to

be salient discovered in the first interview sets, the other two interview sets were examined to determine whether the same codes appeared there as well. This analytic process was iterative rather than linear, involving moving backwards and forwards between the data and the emerging categories. This last step was particularly important for this research, as the project was designed in a sequential manner. Through this comparison, the validity of analysis was examined to ensure that important themes were captured correctly and were free from redundancy or missing components. These analytical procedures were used to interpret and analyze the three qualitative phases of the current study.

**Product.** As an example, Table 4.9 shows a product of the analytical process from Phase I. The themes presented in the table were obtained by examining the most frequently used words or phrases in relation to each overarching theme, using Dedoose's frequency counting features.

**Table 4.9**

*Example of Emergent Themes: Phase I, Interview #1*

overarching theme	main theme	sub-theme
cultural adjustment in terms of learning	English learning history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English-focused vs. non-English-focused curriculum</li> </ul>
	traditional CHC Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>university entrance examinations</li> <li>discipline</li> </ul>

Note. This table was created based on the code occurrence and the code co-occurrence analysis generated in Dedoose software Version 8.0.35.

Sub-themes were also generated in Dedoose using the co-occurrence function. In this dissertation, sub-themes are employed to further contextualize overarching themes. The order of the selected themes and sub-themes in the table was determined by the degree of salience. The results sections of the three qualitative phases in this dissertation have been somewhat reduced

because of page limits imposed on this dissertation. They were selected to provide the necessary evidence (i.e., detail and data samples) for each of the overarching, main and sub- themes; if desired, further information can be obtained by contacting the researcher.

#### **4.5 Overview of Quantitative Phase: Phase III**

Phase III was the quantitative phase of the MMR study. A student survey ( $n = 354$ ) was conducted to collect data. As explained in Chapter 3, the results from the qualitative phases (Phases I and II) were used to design the following quantitative phase (Phase III) because in this way, the new instrument—a student survey—would be well “grounded in the actual experiences of participants” (Creswell, 2015, p. 39).

##### ***4.5.1 Quantitative Phase: Data Collection Method***

**Survey.** Surveys have traditionally been used to obtain statistical data, but in more recent years these have also been used by social scientists to supplement their interpretative-ethnographic observations in, for example, mixed methods research. Following this strand of literature, quantitative data were collected using a student survey to understand the perspectives and experiences of CHC students from East Asian countries who were enrolled in learning-oriented EAP courses.

The survey items were developed from themes that emerged from the classroom observations and the student interviews conducted in Phases I and II. The survey comprised of 20 closed-ended questions divided into three categories, and two decoy questions to determine if respondents truly read the survey questions before answering. The categories and the question items were selected only from the key findings of Phases I and II that fit the purpose of having a broader view of the target population. These questions were formulated by incorporating actual quotes from the interview data. The details of the survey design are described in Chapter 7. The

entire survey can be found in Appendix E.

Question items were designed using a 4-point Likert-scale format ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 4 “strongly agree.” The decision to have a 4-point scale was based on Dörnyei and Taguchi’s (2009) discussion of designing rating scales for Japanese participants. They recommend the use of a scale with no middle point (e.g., a 4- or 6-point scale) so that the participants would need to indicate a tendency in one direction or another and not provide a null response. Regarding the survey administration, due to logistical constraints, this survey was designed to be quick and simple, taking approximately ten minutes to complete. In addition, it was administered in paper format to avoid any technical problems that might have arisen.

#### ***4.5.2 Quantitative Phase: Sampling Procedure***

The data collection of Phase III took place in the same ESL school at a Canadian university where the qualitative data collection phases were conducted. A convenience sampling method was used to recruit student participants, administering the survey along with the course evaluation of the November term for all EAP students. There were 25 EAP sections in the term. The student participants of each section came separately to a conference room in the ESL school building to write the official course evaluation. Student participants completed the course evaluation first. Then, the student survey for this study was explained and administered for each section by the researcher, myself. The student participants were able to ask questions freely during the survey. They were informed that this survey was confidential, voluntary, and for research purposes only.

#### ***4.5.3 Quantitative Phase: Survey Participants***

The total number of individuals who completed the survey was 390, including students from non-CHC countries. For the purpose of the study, the data from non-CHC students were

excluded from the analysis. The total number of valid surveys after data cleaning (e.g., elimination of incomplete surveys) was 387, of which 354 were from students identifying themselves as CHC students. This means that the majority of the students (91.47%) were from CHC countries, reflecting the current economic trends in Canadian higher education (Li, 2019; Tsushima & Guardado, 2015). Table 4.10 shows the breakdown of the number of responses from each EAP course level. It also gives a description of each course level.

**Table 4.10**

*Participant Numbers and Section Numbers in Each EAP Course Level*

course levels	<i>n</i>	sections in each course level	description of course levels
EAP-0	14	1	preparatory course for EAP program
EAP-1	107	8	most students started from EAP-1
EAP-2	233	16	final ESL course before starting regular academic program
Total	354	25	

There were 25 EAP sections in total in the ESL school. Each section had approximately 17 students on average (the range was 16-18 students per class). EAP-0 was the lowest level in the program. It had only one section. Most of the EAP students started their EAP training at the EAP-1 level from the September Term and moved onto EAP-2 in the November Term. EAP-2 had the largest number of students in the EAP courses in the November Terms every year.

#### ***4.5.4 Quantitative Phase: Analytical Process***

Concerning the data analysis procedure, data were cleaned, validated and uploaded to IBM SPSS version 26 for statistical analysis. To evaluate the internal consistency of the survey, a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was calculated. The analysis of data from the samples

showed that Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.71. This result met “the acceptable values of 0.7 or 0.6” for a survey developed for a social science study in the field of education (Griethuijsen et al., 2014). Moreover, Dall'Oglio et al (2010) claim that a 0.5 Cronbach alpha can be legitimate and acceptable with a short survey, which also proves that this result met the satisfactory threshold levels to address reliability. Further statistical analyses were performed, focusing on teacher factors, by using a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to investigate whether there were any differences between the 25 sections/teachers. In the data analysis, the statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ . The data are presented with means and standard deviations. In cases where the ANOVA showed statistical differences, a subsequent Tukey's multiple comparisons test was performed.

#### **4.6 Ethical Considerations and Other Approvals**

In terms of ethics permissions, it was mandatory for all researchers who planned to conduct research within the institution to obtain approval from the Research Ethics Board of the university. Therefore, ethics approval from the research site university was obtained in addition to the approval from the researcher's home university (i.e., McGill University). Prior to the project launch, a presentation was given to all EAP instructors to explain the purpose of the research project. Therefore, teachers as well as the administration office of the school were aware of the research project; however, they were never privy to any information identifying the participants.

*Qualitative Phases: Phase I, Phase II, and Phase IV.* Student participants in the interviews received a \$5 gift card as compensation for each interview, which was meant to cover the cost of coffee/tea and snacks they consumed during the interviews. Because the amount of compensation was small for the time they had to commit for this voluntary work, it was unlikely

to be considered as an influential factor in the research results. Prior to the start of the study, all participants were given written descriptions of the intended research and their informed consent was individually obtained in accordance with ethical procedures for research with human participants. Regarding confidentiality, pseudonyms chosen by the participants themselves were used in the study. All the respondents were recruited on a voluntary basis and informed that they could freely withdraw from the research at any time.

***Quantitative Phase: Phase III.*** Students were informed as to the nature and purpose of the survey, were guaranteed anonymity, and were assured that their answers would in no way affect their grades. The student participants were able to ask questions freely during the survey, and they were informed that this survey was confidential and voluntary, and for research purposes only. Students who agreed to volunteer signed the consent form. No incentives were given to any participants.

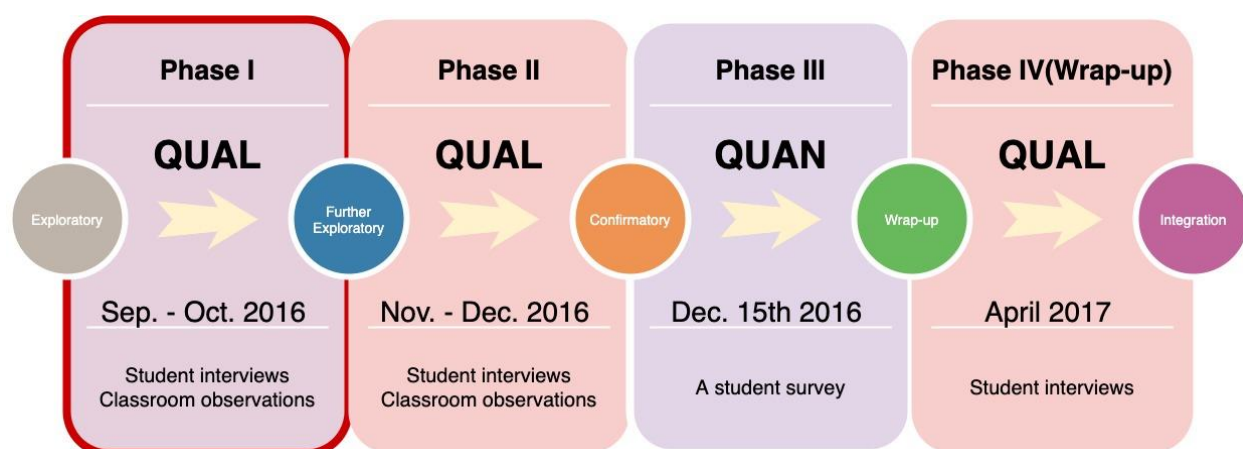
## Chapter 5 Phase I

### 5.1 Introduction to Chapter 5

Chapter 5 reports on the first (qualitative) part of a larger MMR project that consisted of three main phases and one wrap-up component. Figure 5.1 shows the sequence of this MMR study. This chapter presents the findings stemming from interactions and observations of the focal students over two months, from the beginning of their life in Canada to the end of the first EAP term. In other words, Chapter 5 is dedicated to describing students' initial reactions and acculturation processes to the new learning environment, in relation to classroom assessment. It ends with a mini discussion of findings that are particularly unique to Phase I.

**Figure 5.1**

*Sequence of MMR Study with Wrap-up Phase: Phase I*



### 5.2 Research Questions for Phase I

This study investigates how a group of international undergraduate students with CHC backgrounds who had just started taking an EAP course, responded to any sort of information they received from classroom assessment so as to improve their English for academic study.



Considering the fact that these students were from test-driven, teacher-centered cultures (Cheng, 2004; Watanabe, 1996, 2004), it could be assumed that they would find some significant differences in this new learning environment, the curriculum of which was developed incorporating learning-oriented, problem-driven, and student-centred approaches (Barr & Tagg, 1995). At the same time, it would also be possible for some students to find no major difference in this regard because of some particular circumstance they might have previously experienced. Hence, the following research questions (RQs) were formulated in order to accomplish the goals of the first phase.

RQ1. What are the initial perspectives of EAP students from Confucian Heritage Cultures on learning-oriented, student-centred classroom practice?

RQ2. How and to what extent do students from Confucian Heritage Cultures utilize classroom assessment in the EAP course to advance their language learning?

### **5.3 Research Methodology**

As described in Chapter 3, an MMR approach was chosen, where both quantitative and qualitative measures are employed in a single study (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), with the aim of optimizing the possibility of obtaining a deeper understanding of a complex issue that is largely unexplored in a language classroom context. See Chapter 4 for information on the data collection methods and analysis procedures.

### **5.4 Introduction to Results of Phase I**

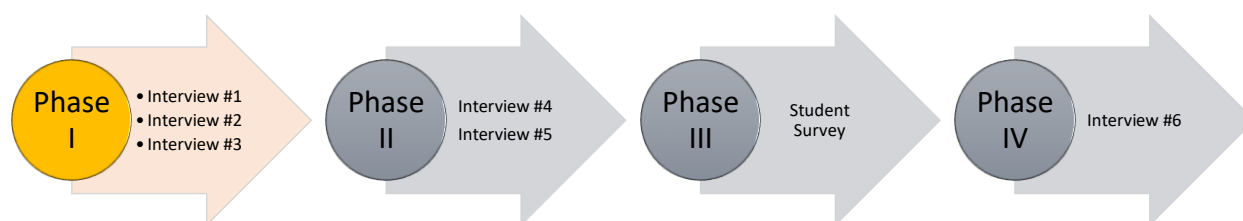
Phase I was dedicated to exploring the students' backgrounds, values, education, and personalities in relation to their learning in the EAP courses. The 12 focal students' profiles are presented in Chapter 4. The three interview sets of Phase I are reported in chronological order. The results sections of each interview set starts with a summary of findings, followed by brief descriptions and data examples giving evidence of emerging themes from the interview data.

## 5.5 Introduction to Results of Interview #1

The goals for Interview #1 were to develop rapport with the 12 participants and to document their initial acculturation process to the EAP environment, in particular to the learning-oriented, student-centred classroom assessment practice in EAP. The importance of the relationship between language learning and acculturation process has been acknowledged in the field of second language acquisition/education (Schumann, 1986; Cheng & Fox, 2008). The guiding questions for Interview #1 are in Appendix A. Figure 5.2 illustrates the sequence of the present study and where Interview #1 was located.

**Figure 5.2**

*Sequence of MMR Study: Phase I*



### 5.5.1 Summary of Results: Interview #1

Table 5.1 presents emerging themes and associated codes—sub-themes—from these interviews. The themes were obtained by examining the most frequently used words or phrases in relation to each overarching theme with Dedoose’s frequency counting features. See more details about the data reduction methods used for this process in the section Analytical Process section of Chapter 4.

**Table 5.1***Emergent Themes from Phase I, Interview #1*

<b>overarching theme</b>	<b>main theme</b>	<b>sub-theme</b>
cultural adjustment in terms of learning	English learning history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English-focused vs. non-English-focused curriculum</li> </ul>
	traditional CHC Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>university entrance examinations</li> <li>discipline</li> </ul>
general EAP coursework and classroom assessment	positive learning experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EAP teachers' teaching style and feedback</li> <li>student-centred approach</li> </ul>
	challenges in EAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cultural difference in "good writing"</li> </ul>

Note. This table was created based on the code occurrence and the code co-occurrence analysis generated in Dedoose software Version 8.0.35.

The first overarching theme related to how participants perceived the EAP course and appeared to be heavily influenced by two main themes: their previous English learning history and the differences between CHC and Western educational culture in terms of expectations around English language teaching and learning. The second overarching theme brought to light similar patterns across participants. One in particular was their positive impression of the EAP teachers. Through their interaction with teacher feedback, participants reported becoming more aware of challenges to overcome in their writing. The themes that emerged from the interview set are further explained in the following sections.

### ***5.5.2 First Overarching Theme: Cultural Adjustment in Terms of Learning***

The first overarching theme addressed how the participants experienced the new learning environment. Two main themes saliently emerged from the interview data, in the following order: (1) English learning history; and (2) traditional CHC education.

**English Learning History.** The most salient theme regarding the participants' cultural adjustment in terms of learning concerned the differences among the English learning experiences of the participants. One sub-theme was strongly identified in relation to the main theme of English learning history: *English-focused vs. non-English-focused curriculum*. This difference in the participants' English learning history was a substantial theme, due to the clear divergence in the description of their initial impression of the EAP course. Seven participants graduated from private schools with a strong emphasis on English language development, whereas five participants were from public schools that were by and large operated and organized in a traditional CHC education style with no particular focus on the development of English as a communication tool (see Chapter 4 for the details of participant profiles).

Watson, who was the only participant from Japan in this research, was an example of those who were from an international school with an emphasis on English fluency and cultural awareness. According to Watson, all her previous education was conducted in English as the medium of instruction, except for Japanese language courses, and many of her school teachers were non-Japanese and native speakers of English. The excerpt below is a conversation between Watson and the researcher (Tsushima):

Tsushima: How many years did you study English?

Watson: Um, 15 years. I guess, like, I went to an international school when I was a kindergarten, so maybe, it's 15 years almost.

Tsushima: Was it like an immersion school? The language used there was... just English?

Watson: Yes.

Other participants from international schools also described their English learning backgrounds similarly, highlighting their familiarity with English-medium environments.

In fact, participants reported that many students in EAP graduated from the same educational foundation, namely Maple Leaf International Schools. According to their official

website, it was the largest private international schooling system in China, offering curriculum and credentials approved by the city and/or provincial government educational authorities both in China and in Canada (Maple Leaf Educational Systems, 2021). For instance, Sky described her Maple Leaf life as follows:

Actually, the class here is kinda like, similar to my international high school class. Yeah, but like, it's hard to tell, but basically, it is the same. Actually, [EAP] 1 is not hard for me. I learned how to write cause and effect in my high school, and how to write a good essay in my high school, so yeah, it is like, it's not hard for me at all. Also, it is not new for me. But maybe for others, you know, just coming from public school [in China]. It can be hard for them (Sky)

As Sky stated, for these participants, the transition process did not seem hard at the time, owing to the Maple Leaf curriculum designed to provide a soft landing. Thus, these students did not appear to find major cultural barriers in the current classroom in Canada.

On the other hand, students from academically-oriented public schools with non-English-focused curriculum seemed to have found noticeable differences in the EAP classroom. Barry was a participant from a public high school in China, and although his school was known as prestigious and competitive, according to him, English was taught as a subject matter, not as a communication tool. When asked about his impression of the EAP class, Barry shared his opinion as follows:

Of course [the EAP class is different from my high school]. The most difficult thing I found is that, um, how to write in a North American way. It's, it's difficult. I need to change the habit I learned for maybe, for years in China. I think it's difficult to change the habit (Barry)

In his view, there were clear differences in the new learning environment, in which he found it challenging to adjust, as it required unlearning what he had been taught in China. In addition, Rachel, another participant from non-English focused public schools, shared her thoughts on the differences between the two learning cultures. She commented on her previous English learning experience in China as follows:

All of my teachers [in my high school] were Chinese. Actually, they use Chinese, because we just study grammar. We study English in school because we want to have a high grade for our university exam. This is the most important. Yeah. So, our Chinese teacher teach us how to get a high grade. She explain some difficult vocabulary or grammar in Chinese. This is how we study English. Actually, I have never taken a class all in English because our teachers speak Chinese [in my high school in China]. But, Nadia [her EAP teacher] is kind and patient, and she is a great teacher, and she, she teaches us some skills in English, which is great (Rachel)

Rachel stated that learning English in the target language was an entirely new experience for her, and was pleased that the goal of language learning was not for university entrance exams any longer. Her positive impression of the new classroom was extended to her EAP teacher as well. As seen in this section, the participants' first impressions of the EAP course seemed to be divided into two groups, depending on their previous learning backgrounds.

**Traditional CHC Education.** The second main theme concerning the participants' cultural adjustment in terms of learning was traditional CHC education. This theme was saliently found in the participants who were from academically-oriented public schools with traditional CHC values. The following two sub-themes were identified in relation to the main theme: (1) university entrance examinations; and (2) discipline.

Participants from academically-oriented public high schools associated their school life and especially EFL learning experience with traditional CHC education values, and it became another salient theme. They referred to large classes in public schools, lack of personal interactions with teachers, and negative influence from *entrance exams for university admission*. For example, Neal, who attended a segregated public boarding school with a prestigious but traditionally strict school culture, described his English classes. In this quote below, Neal referred to *Gaokao* (高考), which is short for 普通高等学校招生全国统一考试 ("The National Higher Education Entrance Examination"), to explain the reason for his lack of confidence in speaking and listening skills.

We had, we had English lessons, but they just taught us some grammar and writing. Because Gaokao, Chinese Gaokao, there is no speaking component or a listening test. Actually, there is no English in our daily life. Um, that's why... [my skills are not good] (Neal)

As Neal pointed out, public school graduates understood that the values and focus of English learning in the traditional CHC education were strongly influenced by Gaokao. Such strong washback effects from Gaokao on teaching and learning in mainland China (Zhi & Wang, 2019) seemed to deeply affect these participants' initial acculturation to the EAP environment.

Another sub-theme related to traditional CHC education was English learning as *discipline*. As seen in the data extract from Marshmallow, below, academic achievement was often associated with student discipline in the CHC education (Biggs, 1998; Ho, 2009):

Parents in China, they think the exam is very important. And some children may be punished if they do bad on their exam (Marshmallow)

Other participants from schools with traditional CHC education values also reported on successful learning experiences associated with mental discipline.

Even though this interview was conducted at the beginning of their EAP journey, these students from schools with more traditional CHC values had already developed some awareness that they needed to make cultural adjustments in their learning. Despite the fact that all participants were from a CHC background, the differences in their English learning history affected their perceptions of the new learning environment.

### ***5.5.3 Second Overarching Theme: EAP Coursework and Classroom Assessment***

The second overarching theme of Interview #1 concerned participants' experience with EAP coursework, in particular with the classroom assessment practice in the new environment. Two main themes were saliently associated with this overarching theme, as follows: (1) positive experience in EAP; and (2) challenges in EAP. It should be noted that these findings were universal across the 12 participants; however, participants from non-English focused, public

schools voiced their thoughts about the cultural differences between their previous CHC education and the EAP more explicitly than participants from English-focused, private schools.

**Positive Experience in EAP.** The first main theme concerning the overarching theme—the interviewees’ EAP coursework and their perspectives on classroom assessment—was their positive experience in their EAP classes. Firstly, *EAP teachers’ teaching style and their feedback provision* was found as the most positive experience for the interview participants. Regardless of their learning background, participants expressed their enthusiasm about their EAP teachers’ professionalism and teaching methodology, reporting that their teachers created a friendly, non-threatening, and cooperative classroom atmosphere. In relation to the participants’ positive experience in the EAP course, the amount and the quality of teacher feedback was described as the main reason for their satisfaction. In particular, teacher feedback on their writing assignments seemed to generate meaningful interactions between the instructors and the students.

Importantly, such comments were more frequent among students who had graduated from public schools in China. In this category, Neal’s interview provided a general summary of the participants’ view on different types of classroom assessment. When asked to describe the differences of the classroom assessment styles, Neal answered as follows:

Nadia is better than all teachers who taught me. But in China, these teachers are... not as good as Nadia. They gave us only marks. But, but when Nadia taught us how to write an essay, she specifically taught us..., um. For example, we write a sentence on the board, and she points out our mistakes, and according to the mistakes, I can get more information (Neal)

Furthermore, Neal found that assignments had a different function in EAP. In his schools in China, assignments were given to students as part of discipline, but in EAP, these tasks were seen as a feedback opportunity. Neal stated that receiving teacher feedback through assignments could help a student improve their writing skills as follows:



Um.... every part of the EAP help me improve my English. I really think that. Every part. Homework, for example. Even though I am not good an essay writer, but from the mistake Nadia point out for me, I can know how to improve (Neal)

Another example can be found in an excerpt from Barry. Similar to Neal's comment on the assessment style of EFL teachers in China, Barry also referred to the "only marks" assessment practice he observed in his previous school. Barry also stated that his previous English teacher in China seldom provided such formative feedback as follows:

China, she, our teacher in China, just found our mistake, um, in article or homework. But in EAP-1 class, my teacher tell me how to change this sentence or something into a North American way. She will tell us how to, North American, how to explain it in North American way. But our teacher in China just find mistake (Barry)

As seen in these examples, those participants reported that detailed and frequent feedback from teachers was new to them. They also expressed their awareness of the reasons for formative feedback, that is, that the information was provided to help them improve their English. Especially, formative feedback given through written assignments seemed to provide them with a strong sense of improvement in writing skills.

The second sub-theme to emerge in relation to the main theme of participants' positive experiences was the *student-centred approach* employed in the EAP classrooms. Such an EAP classroom environment seemed to have a strong impact upon students, which Watson found helpful and welcoming. Here is an excerpt from her interview:

In Japan, like, most students don't speak out without like the teacher points out them, but here, everyone likes to speak without, like, without, um, um, teacher's permission. So.... I like it. I feel I can speak out too (Watson)

The classroom observations in Watson's section were well-aligned with her description. Students in the classroom were given frequent opportunities to share their ideas and to demonstrate learning in front of their peers. This type of student engagement was the core tenet of the ESL school's curriculum, and the instructors implemented diverse tasks that triggered the students'

active engagement to facilitate their learning. Dez, who was the only participant who came to the EAP program through a degree transferring pathway, shared her perspectives on this matter:

Actually, studying here is more interesting, I think. Because teacher wants you to be more active in classroom. But in China, maybe, teacher just want to teach you some academic knowledge or something about ... um, language, um, background of the language. But here, they focus on communication and writing skills, and I think it's more useful for us, our life (Dez)

According to Dez, her English learning experience at the Chinese university was dominantly teacher-centred and grammar-oriented. Dez found the Canadian EAP classroom to be a contrast.

Marshmallow, who was from a public high school in China, said that he was pleasantly surprised with the student-centred approach and attentiveness of his EAP instructor. To make a comparison, he referred to his previous learning experience in the Chinese educational system where teachers were more authoritarian in the classroom. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

I remember when I was in secondary school, our teacher told us, some top ten or top five students, like, "you don't need to listen to me in class. You can do whatever you want to do."  
"Just review your textbooks before the exam, and you can sleep if you want" (Marshmallow)

Having experienced the teacher-centred as well as the test-driven schooling, Marshmallow found the differences of classroom atmosphere and teaching styles striking. Other interview participants who were from public schools similarly described their experiences with their previous EFL teachers who tended to value the results of summative assessment highly, and their teaching was reportedly organized and practiced accordingly. As seen in these examples, participants' positive experience in the EAP classrooms was associated with EAP teachers' teaching style and feedback as well as with the student-centered approach.

**Challenges in EAP.** The second main theme was challenges the interview participants experienced in their EAP classes. The most salient challenge appeared to be their struggle to adjust their writing style to the course objectives; accordingly, the corresponding sub-theme was labeled as *cultural differences in "good writing."* Some participants found academic writing

difficult and enigmatic because it was so different from how English was taught and assessed in their previous schools. For instance, Panda, when asked if there was any challenge in his EAP class, reported that it was writing an academic essay in a cohesive and organized manner. The following excerpt came from the interview with Panda:

- Panda: In my opinion, it's writing. You know, it's different. We don't know, um, don't learn how to connect sentences. And some words are different. How to use fancy words in my essay.
- Tsushima: Can you explain?
- Panda: You know, 'nevertheless', 'furthermore', 'however'... something like that. We don't write like that. Well, I think it's EAP.

Apparently, he noticed the need to change the writing style he had previously learned in China to be successful in the EAP course. In Panda's case, he understood the challenge as a process of learning a new type of more formal communication style.

Other participants connected this challenge—differences in what was considered “good writing”—with cultural values. In their view, each of the two cultures had different expectations towards English learners as far as the performance of their writing tasks. For example, Marshmallow shared his surprised feelings regarding the teacher feedback he received on his first essay in the EAP class:

Edona said that North Americans like short sentences. But in China, we learned how to write a long sentence with a complicated structure (Marshmallow)

During the classroom observation of this particular classroom, the EAP teacher explained that simpler sentences would potentially help students avoid careless mistakes. Sky, who was also in the same section with Marshmallow, expressed her frustration as follows:

We're so used to write one long sentence. That's all what we practice so many years. So, suddenly she is asking us to change. It is kinda hard for us. We are used to long sentences (Sky)

Interview participants, as exemplified by the three students, seemed to find it difficult to understand and accept the new concept of ‘good writing’ as demonstrated in their EAP classes.

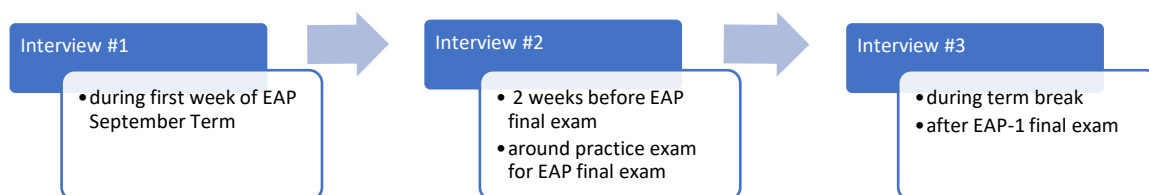
The participants had been in the program for only one week when the data was collected. While they expressed mostly positive impressions of their EAP classes, some students reported challenges associated with cultural differences in assessment of writing.

## 5.6 Introduction to Results of Interview #2

The second set of interviews—Interview #2—was conducted about two weeks before the EAP final exam. Figure 5.3 shows the timeline of the three sequential interviews in relation to the EAP final exam. Classroom observations continued simultaneously; the interview participants appeared to be more relaxed and confident in their EAP classrooms. The guiding questions for the second interview set incorporated the findings from Interview #1, and were developed to explore the participants' learning experiences before the EAP final exam.

**Figure 5.3**

*Timeline of Phase I Interviews and EAP Final Exam*



### 5.6.1 Summary of Results: Interview #2

This round of interviews was carried out to continue understanding the research context and to explore the participants' learning experiences before the EAP final exam. In this second interview set, the following three overarching themes were investigated: (1) engagement with classroom assessment; (2) perspectives on roles in classroom; and (3) preparation for the final exam. The guiding questions for the second interview set can be seen in the appendices

(Appendix A). Table 5.2 presents themes that emerged from the second interview set. These themes are further explained in the following sections.

The data from Interview #2 indicated that the 12 participants developed individual differences in terms of their use of classroom assessment. Different understandings of using information from classroom assessment were captured. In addition, it was revealed that interview participants held beliefs about roles that people played in their learning, especially in relation to feedback provision in classrooms. In general, formative feedback from EAP teachers tended to be appreciated and incorporated into participants' learning, although peer feedback in public settings (i.e., classrooms) was largely associated with rudeness.

**Table 5.2**

*Emergent Themes from Phase I, Interview #2*

<b>overarching theme</b>	<b>main theme</b>	<b>sub-theme</b>
engagement with classroom assessment	different types of assessment use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active use of assessment</li> <li>• non-use of assessment</li> </ul>
perspectives on roles in classroom	roles in feedback provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EAP teachers</li> <li>• peers</li> </ul>
preparation for EAP final exam	emotion and motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high-stakes of EAP final exam</li> </ul>
	use of classroom assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• roles of peers in exam preparation</li> <li>• score-driven exam preparation</li> </ul>

Note. This table is created based on the code occurrence analysis and the code co-occurrence analysis generated on Dedoose software Version 8.0.35.

In terms of the EAP final exam preparation, the high stakes of the exam were highlighted by the participants as an emotionally and motivationally influential factor. Concerning the cognitive aspect of their exam preparation, participants reported that quiz results were often shared among peers as important information to enhance their learning, which apparently facilitated collaborative learning with peers in an informal manner. However, such assessment

information was understood as absolute evidence of performance by some participants, and their exam preparation process was organized accordingly.

### ***5.6.2 First Overarching Theme: Engagement with Classroom Assessment***

The first overarching theme investigated in Interview #2 was how participants were engaged with classroom assessment to improve their learning. While cultural differences continued as the main underlying theme in the EAP experiences among the 12 participants, some individual differences started to appear in terms of their engagement with classroom assessment. Some interview participants actively took advantage of classroom assessment to advance their learning more than other participants. This became one of the main findings from Interview #2. Therefore, the main theme was created and labeled as “different types of assessment use.” There were two subthemes created under this main theme: (a) active use of assessment; and (b) non-use of assessment.

**Different Types of Assessment Use.** This theme emerged by analyzing participants’ learning behaviours in relation to the purposes of classroom assessment to improve students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities in the EAP context. The data suggested that some interview participants seemed to be developing learning strategies in terms of their active use of classroom assessment, and such learning behaviours were labeled as *active use of assessment*. These participants valued formative information of classroom assessment, and reflected on their own learning process after receiving classroom assessment to improve their learning.

One quintessential example of active use of assessment consists of the multiple steps of self-assessment that were facilitated by teacher feedback. For instance, after receiving teacher feedback on her assignment and trying to correct the mistakes on her own, Watson realized that

she was unsure about the correction and decided to talk to her instructor in person after the class.

Here is the excerpt:

I don't know how to fix it, and I need her. Like, "I want to change this. However, is this correct or not?" So, I ask her how to think about this change. Or I ask, like "Do you have any suggestions for me that makes my learning more efficient?" (Watson)

Watson was meta-assessing herself in this context and decided to seek further teacher feedback.

Furthermore, Watson was not only seeking to have the mistake itself corrected, but was also attempting to elicit further formative feedback from her instructor, which indicated her awareness of the importance of formative feedback.

Another salient pattern indicated that a cognitively engaging task paired with a well-designed assessment component was preferred by several participants as an effective learning method. In one class, for example, the students received teacher feedback on their writing assignment in voicemail format. This meant that students needed to listen to the voicemail first to work on their essay revision. Two participants in this section liked this approach, describing it as follows:

She provides us her feedback in a voicemail. I listen to it and write it down. It's clear. And very good for my listening skill too. It is so, so clear. It's like she was with me (Sunny)

I can get some advantages of this homework. For example, when I rewrite my essay, I can see my mistakes and it [voice mail feedback] gives me, um, deep, deep impression of my mistakes. So, maybe I won't make the same mistake again (Barry)

These two participants stated that they enjoyed working on the revision task due to the effective feedback approach, although the revision process was time-consuming. As seen above, some participants reported their learning strategies in which assessment components played a significant role to help them reflect on their learning.

The data also indicated that some interview participants seemed to be less engaged with classroom assessment, and their learning behaviours were labeled as *non-use of assessment*.

Non-use of assessment was used as a label of the condition where participants who were

primarily disengaged or not engaged with assessment information to improve their learning in the EAP context. One salient pattern of such behaviours was a tendency that formative information from classroom assessment was perceived as less important than summative information (i.e., scores or grades). Panda, for example, mentioned that he did not even read the teacher feedback on his essay, as shown in the following quote:

Actually, the first thing I do is check the score. And leave it for a while. (Panda)

He reported the feeling that he felt satisfied with the score he received because it was higher than the cut-off point for the standard of the course.

Furthermore, the interview data showed another salient pattern of non-use of assessment among some participants, which consisted of their negative attitudes towards the tasks that required their cognitive engagement. Sky reported that she disliked time-consuming homework and did not much care about receiving formative feedback from her instructor. She was in the same section with Barry and Sunny, and for her, the homework with the dual feedback approach—the exact same task that was praised by Barry and Sunny— was a confusing assignment. She shared her frustration as follows:

I think it [voicemail feedback] does not work on me. I'm, like, confused. My sentence is like this, and she does like this [drawing a circle on a word]. And I don't know what happened. It's like a word or something I don't know. It's like, 'ing', or 'SP' or 's'. Sometimes I know what kinda mistake, but sometimes I don't know (Sky)

The confusion seemed to come from Sky's lack of understanding of metalinguistic feedback, or from her not taking a proactive approach to try to understand it. It should be noted here that a coding system was used in the EAP courses to inform students about their errors in their writing. Errors were coded and classified into certain categories. For example, errors were highlighted using symbols, such as 'SP' for spelling, 'GR' for grammar, 'PREP' for preposition, and 'WO' for word order, and so forth. EAP teachers explained the codes to their students at the beginning



of the course, and students were expected to understand how their work would be assessed. This coding system was intended to help students develop a greater awareness of their own mistakes so that they could correct them themselves.

In other words, Sky was supposed to know what to do with the coded feedback, like her classmates (e.g., Sunny and Barry). However, Sky did not pay close attention to the formative information; rather, she found it unhelpful and even confusing. Furthermore, she suspected that it could just be an easy way to reduce the instructor's workload, which was described as follows:

It's kind not of clear. I don't know what happened. You know, Edona has a lot of students. She has a lot of work to do. So, this is easy for her (Sky)

Sky was frustrated with the extra effort required she had to make to decode metalinguistic feedback. When asked about the actions she took when the meaning of feedback was unclear, she described a common scenario as follows:

So, it's, like, I bring back home, and I'm just like, "Oh well!" 'Coz I don't get it. Sometimes I ask guys in the class, but sometimes I just forget to ask (Sky)

Not only Sky, but also Panda and Eeali sometimes left their teacher's feedback unread, especially when they could not easily understand the meaning of the comments. This behaviour implied that even when assigned a carefully planned and implemented task, some students seemed to dismiss the value of formative feedback, apparently because of its complexity. While the 12 participants reported their enjoyment in the current EAP classrooms, some differences started to appear among them in terms of their engagement with classroom assessment.

### ***5.6.3 Second Overarching Theme: Perspectives on Roles in Classroom***

The second overarching theme investigated in Interview #2 focused on participant perspectives of roles their teachers and peers played in EAP classrooms. As the interview participants became increasingly familiar with their new learning environment, more differences between their L2 learning experiences in CHC and their present EAP course were reported in

relation to roles that different people played in their learning. In this regard, one theme strongly emerged as the main theme: roles in feedback provision.

**Roles in Feedback Provision.** The analysis suggested that the participants held beliefs that teachers and peers should play different roles in feedback provision. That is to say, formative feedback provision was seen as an important duty of EAP teachers, but not of peers. Thus, two sub-themes were created under the main theme, as follows: (a) EAP teachers; and (b) peers.

As a continuing theme from Interview #1, participants generally expressed their appreciation for *EAP teachers*, in particular their formative feedback. Several participants, comparing two learning contexts, stated that they had not received personalized teacher feedback frequently, as they had in the current EAP classroom. Marshmallow, in the following quote, shared his thoughts on teachers' roles in feedback provision:

[In China] My teachers did not tell us how we can improve. Because, it is our responsibility. But in Canada, Edona is, um, she tells us what to do. I think it very effective, actually, because I don't waste time. I think all teachers should do that (Marshmallow)

Other interview participants similarly stated that the most important roles of EAP teachers were providing formative feedback provision in the current learning context.

On the other hand, the level of appreciation towards formative feedback from *peers* was found to be low. Sunny explained why she did not rely on peers as sources for learning as follows:

Tsushima: OK. So, when you have some questions, what do you do?

Sunny: Ask my teacher. Um, sometimes, I ask my classmates, but I prefer my teacher.

Tsushima: The reason is?

Sunny: Because I think the first impression is very important. My classmates, they are not sure. They [might] tell me something wrong. I don't like that. So, I will go to my teacher.

Tsushima: I see.

Sunny: That's the best way. The best way to do.

This excerpt exemplified how participants generally perceived the role that different people played in feedback provision.

In addition, none of the interview participants mentioned receiving meta-linguistic feedback from their peers unless it was part of a task evaluation that involved scoring. Some interview participants said it could be even rude to point out peers' mistakes and that such corrections should be done solely by teachers. Jericho shared his experience of giving formative feedback to his friend when they worked on making a PowerPoint presentation as a pair. Jericho corrected some pronunciation as well as grammatical mistakes the partner had on his slides. Here is an excerpt from his interview:

Jericho: Yeah, so I corrected it, spontaneously.

Tsushima: It happened spontaneously.

Jericho: Yeah. It did. Feedback.

Tsushima: How did he take it? Did he say thank you? Or did he look... um, embarrassed?

Jericho: Um.... Actually, he didn't say anything.

This peer feedback took place because the mistakes would affect their performance score as a pair; yet, his partner did not respond to the feedback, which appeared to be awkward for Jericho.

Eeali shared her reasons for not providing feedback to peers voluntarily. In her case, these reasons were lack of confidence in her speaking ability and in her own knowledge. In fact, this feeling of self-doubt and uncertainty was repeatedly mentioned by some of the other interview participants as well. Here is an excerpt from Eeali's interview:

Eeali: No [I do not provide feedback to peers]. Because I am not sure I am right. And, it's hard to speak. I don't know how to say it.

Tsushima: I see. Like, you could say, "Rika, it would be more accurate if you say blah blah..."

Eeali: I don't know how to say that. And... for classmates... I will not. I don't think they need my advice.

As Eeali described, overall, participants stated that they did not want to make a classroom faux pas by providing feedback to each other, since that might cause unnecessary tension and conflict.

Especially, peer feedback related to form or pronunciation was reported as an impolite gesture by participants. In this context researched, participants reported that voluntary peer feedback was less likely to happen within EAP classrooms.

#### **5.6.4 Third Overarching Theme: Preparation for EAP Final Exam**

The third overarching theme concerned the final exam of EAP-1, focusing on the participants' preparation process and strategies. Interview #2 was conducted two weeks before the final exam, and participants' *emotions and motivations* strongly emerged as the first main theme related to their exam preparation experiences. The second main theme concerned cognitive aspects of participants' exam preparation process: *use of classroom assessment (quizzes)*.

**Emotions and Motivations.** The most salient finding associated with interview participants' emotions and motivations consisted of the *high stakes of the final exam*. Participants reported that the classroom atmosphere had changed drastically as the exam day approached, which influenced their emotional state. The word “nervous,” “stressed” and “worried” appeared repeatedly in the interviews to describe participants' emotional states. In this program, the final exam was worth 50% of the final grade, which was referred to by participants in a concerning manner. Most of the interview participants were keenly aware of the grading criterion. In the following excerpt, Jericho expressed his concerns about the final exam:

Tsushima: How do you feel about the final?

Jericho: Final. The final is gonna be hard. Yeah, I need to do some reviews for the exam. I think it's very important because it takes 50% of the grade. 50%! A lot.

Tsushima: Yes, 50%. So, are you feeling a bit nervous?

Jericho: I'm feeling tense.

In addition, all interview participants referred to the fact that failing the course would affect their future plans in terms of time and finances; this was a strong motivational factor for

them to pass the course. In fact, as international students, they paid higher tuition fees compared to domestic students. The EAP course fee was approximately CA\$3,000. The excerpt from the interview with Rachel exemplifies this sub-theme:

I am a bit worried about the exam. Because, you know, the fees of EAP is very expensive, I don't want to pay it again. And, because I am majoring in computing science, I really want to have my real courses as soon as possible. But I don't know if I can pass the exam (Rachel)

Rachel also stated that the stakes were too high for her to take a break until the end of the final exam, which affected her well-being, causing issues such as restless sleep. It should be noted that several participants similarly expressed self-doubt about their performance even though their classroom assessment results did not indicate problems. The impact of the high-stakes exam was evident in the interviews.

**Use of Classroom Assessment (quizzes).** The second main theme concerned how participants utilized the information from classroom assessment. Although the interview questions were formulated to investigate their use of any type of classroom assessment, participant responses were heavily focused on their engagement with quizzes. Under the main theme of the “use of classroom assessment (quizzes),” two corresponding sub-themes were created: (a) the role of peers in exam preparation; and (b) score-driven exam preparation.

The first sub-theme—*role of peers in exam preparation*—focused on how participants valued roles of peers in relation to using classroom assessment for the exam preparation. The data suggested that participants used classroom assessment, particularly in-class quizzes, with peers as a formative tool in order to enhance their chance of passing the EAP course. The data from Interview #2 and the classroom observations suggested that CHC students tended to talk about the results of assessment, especially in a casual manner (e.g., after class in their L1).

Several participants stated how essential discussing classroom assessment with their classmates was in their culture, in particular for quizzes, as follows:

Yes, oh, we do. I think a common phenomena. Yes, Chinese students like sharing their test result. Like, "Oh, I got this mark. How's your mark?" Something like that. But I don't like that. I don't like the culture, though (Sunny)

Oh yeah [laugh]! I always talk my results with my classmates. How to improve. And we compare our mistakes and try to help each other. Of course! (Barry)

Owing to the fact that the large majority of EAP students were from China, “the culture” appeared to be imported into their current classrooms, which was also documented through classroom observations. In other words, quiz results were used as an opportunity to provide peer feedback among them. This might appear to contradict their negative perspectives towards the role of peers in feedback provision that was reported earlier. However, concerning the process of the high-stakes exam preparation, the role of peers in providing help and support was significantly highlighted by the participants.

Spontaneous peer feedback to better prepare themselves for the EAP final exam was apparently considered as a collectivistic social obligation among CHC students. In Panda’s interview, such a value was described as follows:

[If someone does not join the reflective conversation after quizzes] It's odd. We think he is selfish. Because it is a way we learn. We can point out mistakes and discuss. And your friends can tell where is wrong, where is right (Panda)

Panda, who had previously showed his clear hesitation towards formative peer feedback activities, expressed his strong belief in the importance of peer engagement as an exam preparation strategy. In this sense, the results of classroom assessment (e.g., quiz scores) were not seen as private information but were an important part of public information that classmates used to help each other to prepare for the high-stakes exam. The role that peers played in the exam preparation process was valued and even considered as a responsibility.

The other sub-theme that emerged in relation to the use of classroom assessment for exam preparation concerned *score driven exam preparation*. As reported above, the exam

preparation process was strongly associated with negative emotions, such as anxiety and nervousness, by many participants. However, there was a contradictory pattern among some participants who expressed confidence based on the information from their classroom assessment results, specifically scores of in-class quizzes or essays. The excerpt from Neal's interview exemplifies this pattern:

My scores [of in-class essays] are high. So, I think I'll pass. I will maybe review some things before the exam, I think (Neal)

Similarly, Sky's exam preparation was also driven by the scores of her classroom assessment, as shown below:

Sky: I still feel like it's [the EAP exam is] far away. I feel like I'm very good, and so... our classmates have a lot to learn so far. So, like, the final exam is not the bother thing I guess?

Tsushima: Ok, so you are not worried about it, but other students are?

Sky: Yeah, I guess. I don't need to do too much work to practice to pass the course, 'coz I'm good... I mean, I'm above the average... I'll be fine on the final exam.

It was further mentioned that the results of Sky's essays and quizzes were constantly above the average of the section; thus, there was no urgency for her to pay much attention to the details of mistakes she made in those assessments. This pattern saliently appeared among some specific participants, but not all, and this sub-theme indicated the emergence of some individual differences in the group of student participants.

### **5.7 Introduction to Results of Interview #3**

The final data set in Phase I was Interview #3, which was conducted immediately after the EAP final exam. The interview participants had already been informed about their results before the interview. The main purposes of the interview were to find out about their exam results, and to collect data about their participants' reflections on their exam preparation process and strategies in relation to their use of classroom assessment. Interview #3 also aimed at further

exploration of emerging themes from the preceding interviews. The guiding questions (see Appendix A) were developed by incorporating preliminary findings from Interview #1 and #2.

### **5.7.1 Summary of Results: Interview #3**

Interview #3 captured how the participants reflected on their exam preparation process and strategies in relation to their use of classroom assessment. The overarching themes for Interview #3 emerged from the previous interview data: (1) the results of the EAP final exam; and (2) exam preparation strategies. The main themes, along with their corresponding sub-themes, are summarized in Table 5.3, and explained further in the relevant sections.

**Table 5.3**

*Emergent Themes from Phase I, Interview #3*

<b>overarching theme</b>	<b>main theme</b>	<b>sub-theme</b>
results of EAP final exam	non-use of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● score driven learning</li> <li>● maintaining past assessment culture</li> </ul>
	active use of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● formative feedback driven learning</li> <li>● understanding of assessment criteria</li> </ul>
exam preparation strategies	formative use of summative assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● practice exam</li> <li>● role of peers</li> </ul>

Note. This table was created based on the code co-occurrence analysis generated on Dedoose software Version 8.0.35.

In Interview #3, individual differences among the 12 participants in terms of their use of classroom assessment became increasingly evident. These differences were reflected in the results of their final exam. The first overarching theme explored the participants' reflections on their EAP learning in relation to the final exam results. Some key themes from Interview #2 reappeared and were used as the main themes to characterize two types of participants' assessment use: (a) non-use of assessment; and (b) active use of assessment. Non-use of assessment was observed in the data from the three participants who failed EAP-1, such as their



dismissal of formative information from classroom assessment. On the other hand, the nine participants who passed the course shared similar characteristics as a group in terms of their active use of assessment. Classroom assessment was utilized to revise their learning behaviours through a critical self-assessment of their own progress, and such behaviours seemed to help them pass the EAP-1 course.

Concerning the second overarching theme, exam preparation strategies, the data suggested that summative classroom assessment seemed to have a strong impact on participants' exam preparation process. In particular, participants reported that scores from the practice exam prompted them to identify problems in their learning and to seek formative assessment information from others, such as teachers and peers. In other words, the summative classroom assessment was used to generate formative feedback interactions in the context researched.

### ***5.7.2 First Overarching Theme: Results of EAP Final Exam***

The first overarching theme concerned the participants' results on the EAP final exam. Some key themes from Interview #2 reappeared with sufficient frequency to suggest that these themes were salient findings. These findings were used as the main themes to characterize two types of participants' assessment use: (a) non-use of assessment; and (b) active use of assessment. The themes emerged through an analysis of participants' learning behaviours in relation to the purposes of classroom assessment to improve students' knowledge, skills, and abilities in the EAP context.

***Non-Use of Assessment.*** Amongst the 12 interview participants, three did not pass the course and had to repeat EAP-1: Sky, Neal, and Eeali. As can be seen in Table 5.4, background factors did not seem to be associated with failure in the final exam. To be precise, their EAP sections, genders, past English learning experiences, or even taking an academic course

concurrently did not appear to be determinants of the exam results. There was one salient pattern among them, however, which emerged as a strong indicator of their failure: Non-use of assessment. Two sub-themes emerged under the main theme: (a) score-driven learning; (b) maintaining the past assessment culture.

**Table 5.4**

*Failed Participants and their Background Information*

pseudonym	gender	instructor pseudonym	previous educational background	academic course taken along with EAP-1
Eeali	F	Arthur	international high school in China	(Only EAP)
Sky	F	Edona	international high school in China	PERLS 104 (Introduction to Sociology of Sport and Leisure in Canadian Society)
Neal	M	Nadia	public high school in China + training school for IELTS (6 months)	(Only EAP)

One of the characteristics observed as non-use of assessment among the three failing participants was that their learning was strongly *score driven*. That is, they focused strongly on the numerical information of summative classroom assessment but not enough on the formative information. For example, Neal reported that he was overly confident in his writing skills because all his in-class essays were marked over 25, above the cut-off score:

Neal: The score. Practice exam. It was good. Good enough to pass EAP-1.

Tsushima: So, you found it easy?

Neal: Yeah, yeah. Maybe, it took away some pressure. But now, I think it was wrong.

Because his score of the practice exam had met the course standard, Neal felt confident and secure about the actual final exam. Similarly, Sky's confidence in her EAP skills was associated with the scores of her classroom assessment results. In this interview, Sky expressed her surprise

with the exam results, referring to how she had thought about the final exam, as follows:

- Sky: 'Coz, um [laugh], I'm surprised with the result. 'Coz, like, before, I don't think I would fail this course. I didn't think. If there is a small chance, like, I make a big mistake or if I miss the test, or stupid reasons something like that, or like, if I just write normally, I don't think I fail. So, yeah, I don't think I fail. This surprises me a lot.
- Tsushima: You did not think you would fail.
- Sky: 'Coz, like, my scores were good. Better than my classmates. So, yeah. Why me?

As reported in Interview #1 and #2, Sky's learning was predominantly score driven. Without paying attention to her teacher's formative feedback, Sky missed critical learning opportunities to realize the growing gap between the required skills in EAP-1 and herself.

Eeali also exhibited characteristics of the score driven learning. There were in-class essay writing activities four times in total over the course of the term, and Eeali received the scores of 25, 20, 20, and 25 respectively. The cut-off score for the essay component was 25. Based on her scores, Eeali thought she would pass the final as long as she could finish the essay part. The excerpt below captured the thought:

- Tsushima: Can you tell me why [you thought you would pass the exam]?
- Eeali: Um... Because I passed the fourth one [in-class practice essay], um... so yeah. We had three essay writing practices in class, and I got 25 for the first one, and 20 for the second and third one. And when we rewrite our essay, I always got 25. So, I thought if I have time to check my essay, I will be fine.
- Tsushima: After the exam, did you talk about it with your classmates?
- Eeali: I think I said, "my essay is good, because of my content and organization. I am good" [laugh]. And, although the time was not too much, I was, I finished it.

Time management was perceived as the central and only concern of her preparation although the formative feedback Eeali received from her teacher had suggested a weakness in her grammar.

The second sub-theme related to the characteristics of non-use of assessment was that the participants *maintained their past assessment culture*. Findings suggest that past learning experiences, especially how participants had been assessed, continued to influence their current

learning. For example, Eeali's past learning experiences affected her judgement of the nature of formative feedback. This is an excerpt from her interview:

Arthur told me if I want to pass EAP-1, I need to pay more attention to my language. I always have language problem, I mean, in my whole life. In my whole English. But I was fine (Eeali)

Coming from an international high school in China, Eeali said that her high school teachers who were from Canada did not assess grammatical mistakes in a formal manner. It became the norm for her to ignore comments on grammar. Thus, when her EAP instructor provided formative feedback to foster her awareness of her recurring grammatical mistakes, Eeali did not think she needed to take it seriously. Sky also shared a similar experience as an international high school graduate. She knew that her writing had issues, but this awareness was not strong enough to prompt a change in her learning behaviour. This might have been the result of her not having had to face the consequences of dismissing teacher feedback in the past.

Neal explicitly connected his failure to his previous English learning experience in his high school, which was a prestigious boarding school for boys in China. In the high school, English classes were developed to help students pass university entrance exams. Neal's English teachers in China told the students to write long, complex sentences to achieve higher scores as a test-taking strategy. Instead of following the assessment criteria of the EAP final, he recalled his Chinese teachers' comments on "good writing" and decided to use those complex sentence structures to write his EAP final exam. The following excerpt captured his reflective thinking:

- Neal: This is mainly because... [sigh], my, Chinese English teacher always taught us that makes sense, and I thought that made sense. But, actually, that does not make sense. And that makes problems. If I do the simple sentence all the time and write one or two complex sentence, I can pass the exam. But maybe, I write too many complex sentences and some of them, um, have some serious problems. And they thought my language has problems. They did not pass me.
- Tsushima: I see. So, you used too many complex sentences in the final essay, just because your Chinese teacher told you that?

Neal: Yeah, well, this is, this kind of sentences are higher, better. But, actually, it didn't work [laugh]. And one more important thing is Chinese compound sentences. Chinese teacher taught us. Chinese [way of writing] compound sentences are not, as seen, um, not how foreigners use. So, they didn't know some of the sentences I made.

Neal reflected on how he operated with the assessment culture from his past English learning, and realized that he had not followed the assessment criteria of the new learning context. His reflection was quintessential in terms of how learners' past learning experiences—especially assessment cultures—can influence their decision-making process.

The interviews with the three participants indicated that those who failed the exam shared similar characteristics of non-use of assessment; the score driven learning practice that was associated with their continuous dismissal of formative feedback, and the lack of understanding of the assessment standards in this new learning environment.

***Active Use of Assessment.*** The second main theme in relation to the results of the EAP final exam concerned participants' active use of assessment. Data from the nine participants who passed EAP-1 showed common characteristics of active use of assessment, which was used as the main theme to describe their learning behaviours. Their use of assessment to advance their learning showed a clear difference from the failing group. Such learning behaviours were labeled as sub-themes: (a) formative feedback driven learning; and (b) clear understanding of assessment criteria. The nine participants' background information is shown in Table 5.5, below.

The first sub-theme emerging in the data in relation to active use of assessment was the nine participants' *formative feedback driven learning*. These participants respectively referred to the importance of incorporating information from formative assessment into their learning as the key to success in the final exam. There was a profound awareness of the value of formative assessment among the passing group, and this pattern was evident in Lucy's interview. She

explained why she often approached the teacher immediately after receiving her work back. She described it as a learning strategy as follows:

When I received feedback on my essay, and um, there are some mistakes I was not sure how to fix it. I asked questions to her because she just analyzed the part, and she can help me how to fix it (Lucy)

It was a practical approach to have the conversation in person when the teacher's memory was still fresh to elicit more detailed feedback. Lucy's learning was facilitated by having a personalized formative assessment conversation regularly with the teacher.

**Table 5.5**

*EAP-1: Successful Participants and their Background Information*

pseudonym	gender	EAP sections: teacher pseudonym	previous educational backgrounds	academic course taken along with EAP-1
Barry	M	Edona	public high school in China	Math 125
Dez	F	Arthur	public high school in China, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year student from Chinese university	(Only EAP)
Jericho	M	Martha	international high school in China + training school for IELTS (5 months)	Stats 151
Lucy	F	Nadia	international high school in China	(Only EAP)
Marshmallow	M	Edona	international high school in China	(Only EAP)
Panda	M	Nadia	international high school in China	(Only EAP)
Rachel	F	Nadia	public high school in China	Math 140
Sunny	F	Edona	international high school in China	Stats 151
Watson	F	Martha	international high school in Switzerland	(Only EAP)

Jericho's report provided another example of formative assessment driven learning practice. He articulated how he was challenging himself during the revision process, stimulated

by the formative feedback from his instructor. He described how he self-monitored to improve his writing as follows:

[after receiving teacher feedback] The first thing I did was to correct my mistakes. Second thing, I think "what can I do for the next time if I face the same situation?" And, analyze the mistake. "Where is the mistake from?" "Is it because of the vocabulary? Grammar? Maybe the logic problem? Because I often do that!" Something like that (Jericho)

He appeared to be using self-assessment skills and critically monitoring whether he understood the expectations in relation to the course objectives. As shown above, the participants who passed EAP-1 conveyed their awareness of the value of formative teacher feedback to facilitate their learning.

The second sub-theme of active use of assessment was concerned with the participants' use and the *understanding of assessment criteria*. In Interview #3, the data analysis revealed that the participants who passed EAP-1 highlighted the importance of understanding assessment criteria for classroom activities, assignments, and the final exam as an essential step in their learning. In addition, some of them were even critical about their own self-assessment skills when assessment criteria were confusing or inconsistent.

The most common item of assessment criteria mentioned by the passing group was the rubric. In the following excerpt, Sunny mentioned the way she used it:

Tsushima: Do you use the writing rubric? If so, how?  
 Sunny: Not always, but sometimes. Like, homework, when I was writing my homework. My teacher asked us to use it, so I used it.  
 Tsushima: OK. So, you used the rubric only when your teacher told you to do so?  
 Sunny: Yeah. Because I remember it now. Important points.

Sunny continued listing other items from the writing rubric which she had memorized. She knew the rubric was in alignment with the course objectives and that it would be beneficial to remember the key information in it, rather than checking it each time before her assignment submission.

Furthermore, it was found that the passing group were critical about their *understanding of assessment criteria*. Valuing an understanding of assessment criteria was highlighted as one of the crucial learning steps by them. Several participants mentioned that they occasionally questioned themselves on whether they had understood the criteria correctly. Such a thought process, assessing themselves and assessing their self-assessment process, was perceived as beneficial not only for the purposes of the final exam but also for participants' overall language development. This meta self-assessment—the process of evaluating their own assessment skills (McDonald, 2010)—was seen only in the data for the passing group. Watson, for instance, shared an experience of her frustration with the oral presentation rubric. In EAP-1, there were two major oral presentations that were graded by the teacher, according to the rubric. Watson had received a score of over 60% for the first presentation, and the same score for the second one as well. She described her disappointment in the following quote:

The writing rubrics were clear, um, to me. It was clear. But for the presentation, I feel like, actually, I got the point like over 60%, but I wasn't satisfied. So, I looked at the rubric again to see what I can do to improve myself and I think I followed it, but it did not change much. So, I was like, "what does this mean?" I am not sure if I... Yes. I don't know if I understand the rubric well (Watson)

Watson had tried to improve her oral presentation skills by paying more attention to the rubric, but the score on her second presentation did not reflect her effort, which made Watson question her understanding of the assessment criteria. Some other participants also shared experiences in which they considered the rubrics as an important resource to ensure their performance would meet the course objectives; in other words, rubrics also functioned as self-assessment tools so that students could monitor their own development.

### ***5.7.3 Second Overarching Theme: Exam Preparation Strategies***

The second overarching theme of Interview #3 reflected participants' exam preparation



strategies, focusing on a practical aspect of such learning behaviours. The participants shared their experiences of test preparation for the exam, in which the formative use of summative assessment (Black et al., 2003; Carless, 2011) appeared as the most salient factor that promoted participants' exam preparation; thus, it was used as the main theme. Under the main theme, two strong sub-themes that emerged were (a) practice exam; and (b) the roles of peers.

**Formative Use of Summative Assessment.** The most salient theme concerning exam preparation strategies was the formative use of summative assessment (Black et al., 2003; Carless, 2011), particularly the *practice exam*. The participants reported that the practice exam had provided formative information for them to plan and/or revise their next step of learning. The practice exam was administered in class two weeks before the EAP-1 final; the stakes of this practice exam were not high, since it was simply a mock exam. However, it was marked, recorded, and returned to students with detailed feedback. The impact of this particular assessment on students' learning seemed to be profound, especially for the interview participants who passed EAP-1. Those participants clearly articulated the details of the steps they took after the practice exam. For example, Barry explained how he felt about the practice exam in the following excerpt:

The practice exam was absolutely helpful. I was able to learn how to manage my time and got used to the test. My writing was not good. I did not have enough time, so I learned I need to manage my time to write an essay. I marked my own practice exam in the class. It helped me find my problems, bad habit, etc. Very helpful (Barry)

As seen in the quote, the practice exam not only provided summative data (i.e., scores) about his achievement but also showcased how the final would be implemented. Barry obtained the formative information from the practice exam to improve his weak areas and reinforce his strengths. The information in the summative assessment was capitalized upon, combination with formative data, to modify these participants' exam preparation strategies.

Another key approach as an exam preparation strategy was integrating assessment information. That is, based on the results of the practice exam, participants proactively gathered, analyzed and reviewed other relevant assessment information, such as quiz results, teacher feedback, writing rubrics, and assignments. For example, Dez described how the results of the practice exam directed her to study more efficiently, as follows:

The practice exam was terrible. I did not sleep well before the practice exam, and I was so tired. I could not finish the essay, and I got only 21 [out of 50]. It made me very worried. Listening and reading was terrible as well. So, two weeks before the final exam, I started preparing for it. I reviewed materials gave us. Because I knew my essay writing was a problem, I knew it from my homework, so I searched online to look for everything that will help me. For listening, I found a website to practice my listening. It's ESL website (Dez)

She reported how she first analyzed the practice exam results and then gathered useful information (e.g., in-class materials, homework, and online listening exercises) accordingly.

The second sub-theme of the formative use of summative assessment was the *role of peers* in the exam preparation. As presented in the report of Interview #2, this theme emerged again in a confirmatory manner. Many participants, regardless of their results on the final exam, referred to their peers as a learning resource and emotional support during the final exam preparation. Such peer interactions seemed to happen frequently in a less controlled and more spontaneous way. For example, Lucy relied on her peers to obtain formative feedback to improve her weak areas after the practice exam. This was captured as follows:

Tsushima: Did you talk about the practice exam with your friends afterwards?

Lucy: [laugh] Yes. We did. We talked about the questions and checked the answers together. We discussed mistakes we made, why we made such mistakes.

Even though this interaction was conducted in her L1, Chinese, arguably, a discussion and exchange of knowledge that constructed and enhanced students' learning took place between Lucy and her peers.

Dez revealed that many students exchanged private texts after the practice exam to discuss some challenging question items using the mobile application software WeChat. The following excerpt suggests how such interactions were organized by students:

- Dez: We chat a lot after tests or quizzes. For example, after the practice exam, we talked a lot. We use WeChat to talk about things we want to know soon. Because we can respond quickly on WeChat. I try to help others when I can.
- Tsushima: OK, WeChat again. Does your teacher join your chat? Sometimes?
- Dez: No, no. Only students [laugh]. We made a group for the class.

WeChat is a popular messaging and social media application developed in China, and many interview participants mentioned the name of the software as a communication tool among Chinese students. According to Dez, the group was formed organically to support group members' learning during the course. The platform was used as a virtual collaborative environment unrestricted by time and space.

As presented above, the second overarching theme of Interview #3 addressed students' exam preparation strategies. The data revealed that the practice exam was considered as a crucial learning opportunity for participants. Specifically, by those who passed EAP-1, the practice exam was used as a piece of key information to understand the gap between their current performance and the learning goals. In addition, it was found that the practice exam seemed to generate peer interactions and facilitated their learning in an informal manner.

## **5.8 Overall Summary of Phase I**

Phase I captured how newly-arrived international undergraduate students navigated and adjusted to the new learning environment. Three interview sessions were conducted to explore the first two months of the 12 interview participants from CHC backgrounds taking an EAP course at a Canadian university, from September to October 2016. Interview #1 was dedicated to explore the participants' initial acculturation process to the EAP environment, in particular to the learning-oriented, student-centred classroom practice that was implemented in the curriculum

(Barr & Tagg, 1995). The main finding that emerged from Interview #1 pertained to the differences between their past learning culture and Western educational culture and expectations in relation to English language teaching and learning. The participants' perceptions of the EAP course seemed to be heavily influenced by their previous English learning history. Another major finding was their positive learning experience with the EAP teachers, particularly with teacher feedback.

Interview #2 was conducted about two weeks before the EAP final exam, with the goal of further understanding the research context and exploring the participants' learning experiences before the high-stakes exam. While their past learning experiences continued to influence their perspectives and attitudes in the EAP course, participants began to attend to both formative and summative information from classroom assessment to improve their learning. However, some individual differences in terms of their use of classroom assessment became noticeable. Two types of participants' assessment use emerged as a key finding: (a) active use of assessment; and (b) non-use of assessment. In terms of the EAP final exam preparation, the high stakes of the exam were highlighted by the participants as an emotionally and motivationally influential factor. Summative information about classroom assessment was often shared among peers as part of their exam preparation strategies, which facilitated collaborative learning with peers in an informal manner.

After the final exam of EAP-1 exam, Interview #3 was conducted to document how the participants reflected their exam preparation process and strategies in relation to their use of classroom assessment. Individual differences among the 12 participants in terms of their use of classroom assessment (i.e., active use of assessment or non-use of assessment) appeared to be related to the results of their final exam (i.e., pass or fail). The key finding from Interview #2—

non-use of assessment and active use of assessment—reappeared in relation to the exam results. The formative use of summative assessment also emerged again as an important tool of participants' exam preparation. Especially, scores of the practice exam prompted them to identify problems in their learning and to seek formative information from others, such as teachers and peers.

## **5.9 Mini Discussion of Phase I**

This chapter focuses on key findings that are particularly unique to Phase I. Other major findings are discussed in Chapter 9, where the results of all phases are integrated.

### ***5.9.1 First Research Question: Initial Perspectives on Learning-Oriented Classroom***

The first RQ of Phase I addressed the interview participants' initial impressions and reactions to the EAP course at a Canadian university. Their perceptions of the EAP course seemed to be heavily influenced by their past education in their home culture. This finding echoes the literature that underscores the importance of cultural background in language classroom research in order to understand the English literacy level of learners (e.g., Arumugam et al., 2013). For instance, Arumugam et al. (2013), examines two CHC groups (i.e., Malay and Chinese), revealing that students' cultural background is a dominant controlling factor that impacts their way of learning and communicating in an ESL academic setting. In fact, similar patterns were observed in the current study as well. These are discussed further below.

Along with the influence from the participants' past learning culture, there was another factor that added complexity to the participants' acculturation. Among several demographic factors, participants' past schooling experiences, in particular, emerged saliently as a key element of their acculturation process in this phase. There is a dearth of research conducted to understand international school graduates in an EAP context. Research on CHC students in

private international schools or other unconventional schooling systems is a recent development. The majority of literature addressing the topic has come from the fields of education and sociology, focusing on Chinese student contexts (Liu, 2016; Schulte, 2018; Young, 2018). According to the data of Phase I, participants from private international schools that offered a westernized curriculum and school environment assumed that there was no need for them to adjust their learning behaviours in this new learning context, an assumption which they soon realized was wrong. On the other hand, participants from public schools were more open and susceptible to the different learning environment and were even excited to adjust their learning behaviour. This is an ironic finding because these international schools' main mission purports to prepare students for future study-abroad sojourns (Liu, 2016; Young, 2018). This private-vs-public schooling factor in the present study added more complexity to the investigation of participants' learning behaviours.

For instance, it took time for the international school graduates to change their perspectives on classroom assessment in the EAP course. Some did not change them at all (e.g., Sky) throughout Phase I, and consequently did not pass the course. This finding—facing the reality of high language assessment standards in an English-speaking academic setting—is similar to what Lan (2019) reported in his master's thesis on the perspectives and experiences of first-year university students who graduated from Canadian offshore schools in China. One of his interview participants expressed disappointment with her own writing skills because her performance was more strictly assessed in an ESL writing course (e.g., grammatical errors). Because of the premise that their curriculum was aligned with North American standards, these international school graduates were confused and shocked by the different assessment standard when they began their studies at a North American university.

Although more research is definitely necessary to investigate the differences between international school graduates and public-school graduates in terms of their EAP development, as well as their academic achievement, the current research findings suggest that it would be beneficial for all students to receive more explicit guidance on the language assessment criteria at the beginning of EAP courses. Additionally, practitioners need to be aware that these students might have difficulties in adjusting their learning behaviour to the new classroom, even if students from international schools appear sufficiently fluent and appear ready for the new environment.

### ***5.9.2 Second Research Question: CHC Students' Use of Classroom Assessment in EAP***

The second RQ investigated interview participants' use of classroom assessment to advance their language learning. Overall, participants did utilize classroom assessment for their learning, but the data from Phase I revealed that their past learning experiences in their home cultures continued to influence their perspectives and attitudes towards the different types of classroom assessment (i.e., formative and summative assessment).

***Formative Assessment.*** The participants repeatedly expressed that detailed, frequent, and personalized formative feedback from their teachers encouraged and motivated their learning. Such an effect of formative feedback on student motivation has been largely documented by researchers in educational psychology (e.g., Pat-El, Tillema & van Koppen, 2012). In the field of language assessment, research on formative assessment has shown that teacher feedback affects students' emotional states (e.g., McGarrell & Verbeem, 2007; Séror, 2008). Moreover, CHC students tend to believe in a hierarchy of relationships and in collectivism and they tend to regard teachers as authority figures in language classrooms (Campbell & Li, 2008; Reid, 1987; Tao & Gao, 2017). These points are relevant to the findings of Phase I of the present study.

In addition to the established argument about the effectiveness of formative feedback (Shute, 2008) in current research, a specific context seemed to add even more efficacy to this assessment approach. That is, all interview participants were newly arrived international students, most of whom did not have any local acquaintances. There is a sizable body of research on the acculturative stress experienced by CHC international students in higher education (e.g., Du & Wei, 2015; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Ye, 2007). For instance, Poyrazli et al. (2004) found that compared with international students from Europe, Asian students experienced greater acculturative stress because of “stark differences in fundamental cultural values” (p. 79). Ye (2007) has stated that such CHC students could benefit from emotional support to cope with “a number of academic and cultural challenges related to acculturation” (p. 3). In the present research, the interview participants reported that individualized feedback from their EAP teachers was perceived as supportive and encouraging for their learning. This echoes Noels’ (2003) argument that if students perceive the teacher's behaviour as supportive and safe, they are more prone to accept the feedback.

On the other hand, in Phase I, peer feedback did not have such a positive impact on participants’ learning in classrooms. The participants were unsure and hesitant about activities that required peer feedback, especially when these included immediate verbal interchanges. When the problem was simple and straightforward (e.g., multiple choice quiz items), participants seemed to feel safer and more confident to provide their own opinions to others. This tendency was general among the interview participants, including the participants who graduated from international schools. The result of the present study, documenting that participants associated critical peer feedback with a social faux pas, echoes findings from previous research that reported on the complexity of implementation of peer-feedback activities in CHC contexts (e.g.,



Carson & Nelson, 1996, Chinese EFL context; Gerera, 2012, Malaysian ESL context; Sato, 2013, Japanese EFL context; Thanh, 2014, Vietnamese EFL context).

***Summative Assessment.*** The other type of classroom assessment—summative assessment—was found to be as important as formative assessment for the participants’ learning, but in a different manner. The present study found that the preparation for a summative assessment organically generated interactions for learning between peers. The formative use of summative assessment (Carless, 2011) was observed in this sense. In particular, assessment items related to the final exam (e.g., in-class quizzes and the practice exam) were used to discuss and further identify weak areas of students’ EAP skills in and outside the classroom.

In addition, the high-stakes situation of this EAP program in which the students had to prepare themselves to pass the final exam added pressure on the students to use each other as an obvious resource for learning. Carless (2011), dedicating an entire book to the topic of formative assessment implementation in a CHC setting, Hong Kong, explains that examination preparation can lead CHC students to discover a new sense of purpose in engaging in peer assessment. The finding of the current study echoes Carless’ argument, and adds the evidence that such peer interactions can happen organically under the pressure of high-stakes exam preparation.

Overall, the findings of Phase I indicated that the participants’ use of classroom assessment was influenced by their past learning experience, but it was also found that the student-centred EAP approach seemed to be accepted by participants, especially those who practiced active use of assessment. Even though Phase I reported only the first two months of their EAP journey, some changes in participants’ use of assessment, especially of formative assessment, could already be observed. This finding seems to be in accordance with Purves’

(1986) following statement: “instruction in any discipline is acculturation, or the bringing of the student into the interpretative community of the discipline” (p. 39).

### **5.10 Summary of Chapter 5**

This chapter focused on Phase I of the study, which had a two-month duration, from the beginning of the students’ life in Canada to the end of the first EAP term. As education should be understood from a cultural point of view (Biggs, 1996, 1998), this phase focused on documenting and investigating the initial acculturation process of CHC students into a learning-oriented EAP classroom.

Even though the 12 participants shared similar profiles, the differences among the participants became increasingly evident towards the end of the phase. The salient theme that emerged in this regard was participants’ previous schooling experience and its effect on their acculturation process. Some participants showed similar characteristics in terms of their ways of actively using the information obtained from classroom assessment, such as eliciting more feedback from others and monitoring their own understanding of assessment criteria. On the other hand, it was found that the participants who failed also shared some common traits, such as dismissing formative feedback.

The discussion dealt with the findings that were unique to this particular phase of the study. The first item was the participants’ initial response to the learning-oriented classroom. The participants from the English-focused and westernized schooling systems (i.e., private international schools) took more time to realize the different expectations in the EAP program from their previous schools. The second item concerned the use of classroom assessment for learning. The interview participants quickly developed a positive impression of the EAP teachers and the program itself, owing to the personalized and detailed formative feedback provided to

them. Additionally, while participants were hesitant and skeptical about the effectiveness of peer feedback when it was planned as a classroom activity, albeit in their L1, organic peer interactions for learning were observed through preparation for the final exam. Furthermore, these findings continue as the key themes and are further discussed in the following phases of the study.

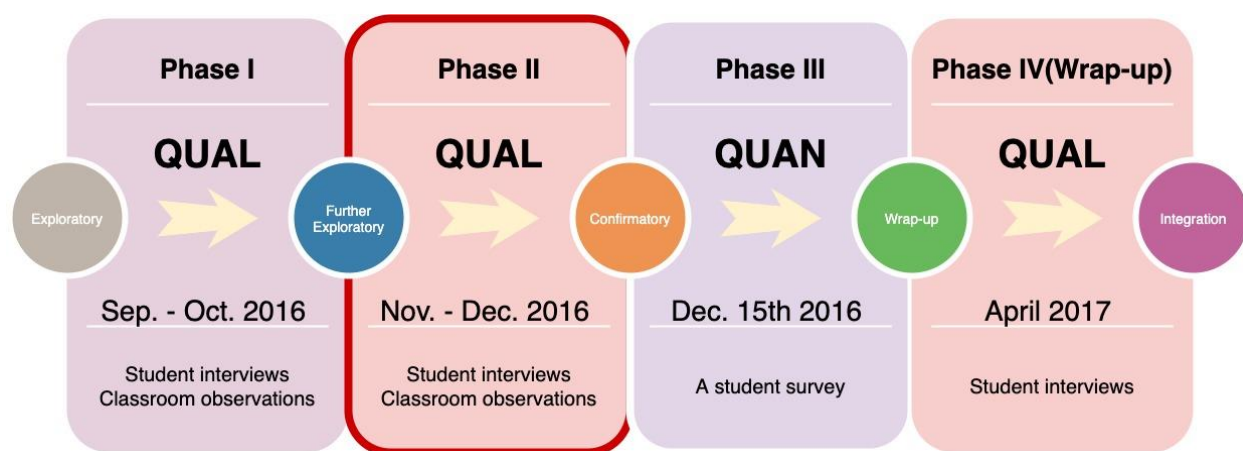
## Chapter 6 Phase II

### 6.1 Introduction to Chapter 6

This section reports on the second qualitative phase—Phase II—that was conducted during the November Term (from November to December) in 2016. See Figure 6.1 to understand the chronological sequence of the data collection and the nature of data types in this MMR study.

**Figure 6.1**

*Sequence of MMR Study with Wrap-up Phase: Phase II*



Chapter 6 reports on the findings of Phase II (Interview #4 and #5) which capture the second term of the EAP journey of the focal interview participants ( $n = 12$ ). It first summarizes results and then, elaborates on the evidence for the arguments. Chapter 6 documents participants' dynamic engagement with information obtained from different classroom-based assessment aspects and provides evidence of how their learning became more individually different and complex. The chapter ends with a mini discussion of learning strategies successful students used at that time, as well as how and why they used those strategies in light of relevant literature.

### 6.2 Research Questions for Phase II

This qualitative phase set out to further explore how and why a group of international

undergraduate students with CHC backgrounds in the EAP courses responded to and utilized the information of classroom assessment to improve their English for academic study. In Phase I, participants' individual differences in their use of information from classroom assessment became apparent. Based on findings of Phase I, the following research questions (RQs) were formulated in order to accomplish the goals of Phase II.

Q1. What changes in learning-oriented EAP classrooms do the group of CHC students experience over a few months?

Q2. What individual differences are there among the CHC students in relation to their use of assessment to prepare for the final exam?

### **6.3 Research Methodology for Phase II**

There were some minor changes in terms of the data collection procedure in this phase. In Phase I, the interview participants were in four different sections, each of which was visited three times. During Phase II, now that the 12 students were spread over nine different sections, it was not feasible to observe all the sections. Thus, one of the sections, taught by the instructor Nadia (EAP-2), was used for classroom observations in order to develop further understanding of the context of the EAP program where the participants were studying. Only one interview participant, Sunny, was in the observed class. See the methodology section of Chapter 4 to understand the detailed data collection and analysis methods for Phase II.

### **6.4 Introduction to Results of Phase II**

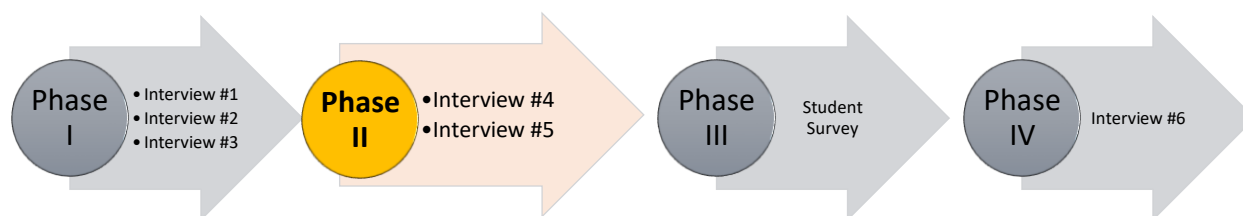
Phase II aimed to further investigate the focal interview participants' use of classroom assessment to improve their English for academic study. The two interview sets of Phase II are reported in chronological order (i.e., Interview #4 and Interview #5). The results sections of each interview set start with the summary of findings followed by brief descriptions, and evidence of emerging themes from the interview data.

## 6.5 Introduction to Results of Interview #4

Interview #4 was conducted two weeks after the new term started. It was the first interview of the two in Phase II. Phase II explored and delved into participants' personal learning styles, in particular their use of assessment in relation to EAP learning. Guiding questions for Interview #4 were created and refined to build on the information gathered from the three previous interview sets. Figure 6.2 illustrates the sequence of the current MMR study and where Interview #4 was conducted in relation to the entire data collection.

**Figure 6.2**

*Sequence of MMR Study: Phase II*



### 6.5.1 Summary of Results: Interview #4

Guiding questions were developed for Interview 4 based on the results from Phase I. The data from Interview #4 yielded information-rich results that help us understand how and why participants connected classroom assessment to their language learning or not. The interview data was analyzed on Dedoose as described in the section Analytical Process of Chapter 4, above. Table 6.1 presents emergent themes and associated codes—sub-themes—from these interviews. The first overarching theme dealt with participants' experience of starting the second EAP term (the November term). It was found that participants' learning attitude was significantly affected by the results of the final exam of the previous term. The second overarching theme

concerned their use of information in the formative assessment from different feedback providers. The analysis indicated that the participants tended to value teachers more than peers as feedback providers in classrooms. Considering feedback as an authoritative power, it seemed that peer feedback required that they have more emotional and cognitive readiness to be able to fully incorporate it into their learning. The third and last overarching theme concerned the individual differences among the 12 participants in terms of their learning behaviours. The data revealed that two types of learning behaviour emerged as the main themes: active use of assessment; and non-use of assessment. The themes that emerged from the interview set are further explained in the following sections.

**Table 6.1**

*Emergent Themes from Phase II, Interview #4*

overarching theme	main theme	sub-theme
EAP experience at beginning of November term	starting EAP-2/Passed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive reflecting on EAP-1</li> <li>• concrete goals for EAP-2</li> </ul>
	repeating EAP-1/Failed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• influence from EAP final exam: Washback</li> </ul>
different formative assessment providers	teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• higher expectations in teacher feedback practice</li> <li>• importance of feedback interactions through assignments</li> </ul>
	peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• power in feedback</li> <li>• peer feedback conducive conditions</li> </ul>
individual differences in use of LOA	self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active use of assessment</li> <li>• non-use of assessment</li> </ul>

Note. This table was created based on the descriptor x code count analysis and code-cooccurrence analysis generated on Dedoose software Version 8.0.35.

### **6.5.2 First Overarching Theme: EAP experience at beginning of November Term**

The first overarching theme addresses participants' EAP learning experiences at the

beginning of the new term. The most salient theme concerned their exam results of EAP-1: that is, the difference between “fail” and “pass.” The exam results affected participants’ learning experiences in their new classrooms. This section reports the first overarching theme by comparing the two groups: (1) the participants starting EAP-2; and (2) the participants repeating EAP-1.

**Starting EAP-2: Participants who Passed.** Table 6.2 shows background information of the nine participants who passed EAP-1 and started EAP-2 in the November Term.

**Table 6.2**

*Interview Participants who Passed EAP-1: Phase II*

pseudonym	faculty	previous educational background	academic course
Barry	Science	public Hs in China	yes
Dez	Arts	public HS in China transferred from a Chinese university	no
Jericho	Arts	international HS in China (Maple Leaf) + IELTS preparation school (5 months)	yes
Lucy	Arts	international HS in China (Maple Leaf)	no
Marshmallow	Arts	public HS in China + IELTS preparation school (half a year)	no
Panda	Arts	international HS in China (Maple Leaf)	no
Rachel	Science	public HS in China	yes
Sunny	Arts	international HS in China (Maple Leaf)	yes
Watson	Education	international HS in Switzerland	no

There were two sub-themes that described the learning experience of this group: (1) positive reflection on EAP-1; and (2) concrete goals for EAP-2. The first sub-theme emerged



when asked about their thoughts on starting the new course. The participants in EAP-2 shared their *positive reflection on learning experiences in EAP-1* while reporting on their impression on the advanced course. One clear example was from Jericho, shown as follows:

- Tsushima: I see. You think EAP-1 was helpful. Um, so, what do you think if you hadn't had the experience? I mean, if you hadn't taken EAP-1 but just directly starting EAP-2?
- Jericho: Actually, that's a good question. I think about it a lot. I am sure I will encounter more difficulties than now. In 1[EAP-1], it gives you the foundation of how study goes here. I mean, not only my English. But if you just come here and take 2[EAP-2], you feel more, um, small, um, not prepared.

Jericho further mentioned that he started to see the EAP program as foundational training for success at the North American university as an undergraduate student, rather than just an extra ESL training to meet the language requirement. The participants in EAP-2 generally expressed their reflection on EAP-1 in a positive manner, being proud of how far they had come.

The second sub-theme was their *concrete goal setting for EAP-2*. Their descriptions of goals were aligned with learning outcomes of the course. When asked about their thoughts on challenges in this term, participants explicitly made a connection between their learning concerns and assessment criteria. The following quotes were examples of how participants in EAP-2 felt about the challenges they had in the current course:

Difficult thing is listening. It's more difficult than EAP-1, and reading is getting longer and hard to understand. I need to have more academic vocabulary to understand that (Sunny)

My challenge right now is essay. They are asking for less grammar mistakes and also better organization for my paragraph. It's more complex than EAP-1 (Marshmallow)

The participants provided precise and eloquent descriptions of their learning challenges in relation to the assessment criteria of the course, demonstrating their awareness of expected learning outcomes to achieve in this course.

**Repeating EAP-1: Participants who failed.** As reported in Chapter 5, three participants—Eeali, Neal, and Sky—failed the EAP-1 exam and therefore remained in EAP-1. These EAP-1 repeating participants (henceforth, EAP-1 repeaters) emerged as the second main theme. Table 6.3 shows their background information. This group’s description of the EAP learning was in contrast to that of participants in EAP-2. The EAP-1 repeaters respectively stated their situation of having to repeat EAP-1 this term as a stressful experience. For example, Eeali and Sky used the phrase “stressed out” repeatedly in their interview.

**Table 6.3**

*Interview Participants who Failed EAP-1: Phase II*

pseudonym	faculty	previous educational background	academic course
Eeali	Arts	international HS in China (Maple Leaf)	no
Neal	Arts	public HS in China + IELTS preparation school (1 year)	no
Sky	Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation	international HS in China (Maple Leaf)	yes

The salient sub-theme that corresponds to the learning experience of EAP-1 repeaters was the *influence from the final exam* on them. A clear pattern across these participants was that their learning focus for the new term was only on the writing component of the final exam, because it was the most challenging part. Such influences of tests on learners’ behaviour are considered as washback (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Sky, for example, stated that her goal for this term was to focus more on writing so as to be able to pass the course. See the excerpt below:

I got, like, 20 for my essay [EAP-1 final exam]. So, it is like obviously, you know. I know my writing is not really good. But this time, really, um, influenced me a lot. So, my goals is, like, attention to writing, um like, although I don't like her [EAP teacher] much, but in class, I kinda like paying more attention (Sky)

The score of her essay, which was lower than the cut-off score of the final exam (i.e., 25 points),

was the only information she used as an indicator of her writing skills. The analysis of her interview data suggested that her choice of learning focus was driven by exam-related goals.

Similarly, Neal expressed his concern about the new term in relation to the final exam by sharing the score of his first in-class essay in the repeating EAP-1 class as follows:

Tsushima: What is the most difficult thing for you so far, if there's any?

Neal: It's a forever question, but it's writing. I don't know how to improve my writing. Here, I got my first essay back. I think that's so hard. 25 is just OK to pass the exam. This time, my teacher gave us 70 mins to write this essay, but the final exam, we only have 50 mins. And I only got 25. So, it is hard. Yeah, I got 25, which is okay, but in the final exam, the time is shorter and I will get more nervous. You need to practice more.

In this data excerpt, although detailed teacher feedback was provided on Neal's essay, he stated that he did not know how to improve his writing skills. His focus seemed to be more on the time management and the cut-off score of the writing task. Information from the participants in this group indicated their learning was heavily influenced by the final exam, in particular, the cut-off score.

### ***6.5.3 Second Overarching Theme: Different Formative Assessment Providers***

This section reports on the second overarching theme for Interview #4: how the participants utilized or dismissed information in the formative assessment from different feedback providers (refer to Table 6.1 above to see the second overarching theme and its corresponding themes). In contrast to the previous section (6.4.2), this section reports the analysis that includes the data from all 12 participants as a group.

Shute (2008) defined formative feedback as “information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behavior to improve learning” (p. 153).

Formative assessment was a deeply incorporated concept in the EAP curriculum, and it was used to conduct in-process evaluations of students' comprehension, learning needs, and progress

during lessons (Shute, 2008). In formative assessment, feedback is understood as information given to a learner in response to some action connected to the learner's performance. As described earlier, feedback is an important component of Turner and Purpura's (2016, 2018) LOA concept as "it can help learners develop an awareness of some aspect of the target learning point, sort out differences between new information and prior knowledge, remember new information, understand learning goals, and compare current performance with expected criteria for success" (Turner & Purpura, 2016, p. 266).

As previously reported in Chapter 5, the findings from Phase I revealed that participants' use of teachers' formative feedback evolved over time. In addition, the data suggested that participants had particular perspectives on different formative feedback providers. Analysis of Interview #4 indicated that this change continued even further in the new term. This was a common pattern across the 12 participants, no matter which EAP level they were in.

**Teachers.** In relation to the participants' engagement with different formative assessment providers, it was found that teachers made up the most salient theme that connected tightly to the participants' EAP experience in Interview #4. The following sub-themes corresponded to the theme of teachers: (1) higher expectations in teacher feedback practice; and (2) importance of feedback interactions through assignments. The pseudonyms of each participant's EAP teachers are presented in Chapter 4, Table 4.8.

As the first and most salient sub-theme, the data indicated that participants developed *higher expectations of their teachers in terms of teacher feedback provision*. Several participants reported that they were not impressed with their teachers when their feedback provision was not timely, constructive, and/or detailed. Watson and Rachel both in EAP-2, spoke respectively about their frustration with the lack of formative feedback on their speaking skills, since

speaking was not assessed as formally as other skills in the course:

Speaking. We don't get tested. It depends on how we try hard. We need to get tested (Watson)

The thing is... I don't get feedback from my teacher. And my friends are all Chinese. How can I improve my speaking? (Rachel)

In fact, there was no speaking component in the final exam; thus, teachers did not invest their limited class time in speaking activities that would not be tested. Noticing a washback effect (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng, 2004) in their courses, these participants expressed their agitated feelings. This finding suggests some participants' awareness of the importance of classroom assessment, in particular teachers' formative feedback, as a key to their successful language learning.

The second sub-theme was the *importance of feedback interactions through assignments* that promoted learners' active incorporation of teacher feedback. This finding was intertwined with the previous sub-theme because participants expressed their expectations towards teacher feedback in connection with the assignments they had. In Phase I, it was found that the more feedback participants received, via well-crafted assignments, the more motivated and engaged they were in learning. However, in Interview #4, interview participants reported that their assignments were not generating enough feedback interactions between the teacher and them. For example, Jericho, who was in EAP-2, commented on the lack of teacher feedback, comparing with his EAP-1 teacher, as follows:

Tsushima: What do you think about homework in this class?

Jericho: Oh, it's decreasing. Alex, you know, he doesn't give us many homeworks like Martha. His purpose is to make us study spontaneously. That's different from Martha.

Tsushima: So, are you happy with the change?

Jericho: Well, no! If I, well, actually, Martha is my preference. She was more useful. Because sometimes I am not good at learning. If there is nothing to learn, I cannot push myself.

Jericho preferred his EAP-1 teacher because of her detailed feedback through assignments that helped him realize his weak areas. Assignments seemed to function as an important communication tool to inform the teacher, and the students themselves, about their learning progress.

Such expectations of teachers' feedback practices was found in EAP-1 repeaters as well. For example, Sky in EAP-1 also compared her two teachers' feedback practices in relation to their assignment designs and implementation. Sky asserted that the assignments in Edona's (her previous teacher) class were more complex but learning-conducive than those of her current teacher. Showing an assignment from the current class, she expressed her frustration as follows:

Edona's homework, like a weekly journal, I had to listen and read, sometimes I had to go back to the reading because I needed more information there... and then I had to summarize it... Lots of work. Then, oh, you have to understand her feedback! You need to pay a lot of attention while. Then, now it's like vocabulary journal. I don't remember anything after that. It's kinda waste of time for me. I hate those homework. 'Coz I know I am not thinking to do that. You just copy and paste. But takes a lot of time, and I hate the homework! During the homework, I'm not thinking. Just copy & paste. It's like, just [inaudible], you know (Sky)

As reported in Chapter 4, Sky had not enjoyed the weekly journal assignment in Edona's class (her previous EAP-1 class) due to the complexity of the assignment, but now she noticed that these assignments with rich formative feedback were more meaningful for her learning than the present simple vocabulary journal because the cognitively heavy assignments helped her to monitor her own learning development.

As reported above, these anecdotes indicate that participants developed high expectations towards teachers to provide formative feedback that facilitated their learning because they believed that quality teacher feedback would potentially enhance their learning (Sérór, 2008). When assignments did not generate meaningful interactions, the participants seemed to feel less connected to their teachers and their own learning.

**Peers.** The second salient theme that emerged concerned different formative assessment providers. This time it was *peers*. The following two sub-themes were strongly associated with this theme: (1) power in feedback; and (2) peer feedback conducive conditions.

The first sub-theme concerning the participants' perception of peer feedback was labeled *power in feedback*. As was reported in Phase I, interview participants disclosed their hesitation to accept formative feedback from peers as part of assessment activities within the classroom. Associating feedback with the power to modify learners' behaviour, some participants strongly held the idea that only teachers should play the role of knowledge provider in the classroom; thus, these participants did not appreciate feedback from peers whose status was equal to their own. This finding was by and large observed across the participants, but some of them held this idea more strongly than others.

Panda's interview was typical in this regard. In EAP-2 in the November Term, Panda reported becoming less enthusiastic about group activities, compared with the previous term. His classmates, according to Panda, were not as advanced as he thought they would be, and he was not providing peer feedback because he thought it would be pointless, even when he was supposed to exchange feedback on a collaborative writing task. Here, he describes the reasons for his rejection of the activity:

Tsushima: So, you mean, you don't provide feedback to your classmates? But it was a group activity, right?

Panda: Not really. I don't.

Tsushima: Why?

Panda: My classmates has too many mistakes, like grammar. I don't know how to correct, because too many mistakes. It makes me feel... [giggling].

Tsushima: Do you think it'd be rude to correct classmate's mistakes?

Panda: Um... No. I think it depends. Um, but I think teacher should do it.

It was clear that he knew that peers were making mistakes but thought it should not be his job to assess and correct his peers, granting the teacher this authority without question.

Lucy was very candid with her opinion about who should be assessors of her learning. She asserted that non-native speakers would not be suitable to provide formative feedback, and thus, she did not provide or accept formative feedback from peers. she expressed her thoughts in the following data excerpt:

- Tsushima: So, it's rude to give feedback to your classmates?  
 Lucy: Oh, um... If someone who is a native English speaker and he corrects me, it's fine. But if someone who does not speak standard English and she corrects me, I think it's rude.  
 Tsushima: I see. So, if this person is a native speaker of English, then you accept his feedback.  
 Lucy: Yes.  
 Tsushima: Which means, your classmates and I, I am not a native speaker of English. So, if I say, "Lucy, you should say it in this way, not that way," would it make you feel awkward?  
 Lucy: Yes, it's awkward, um. Yeah.

Lucy sounded quite adamant when describing her negative perceptions of non-native speakers of English. In fact, Lucy also mentioned in this interview that she was quite displeased with her current EAP teacher from China due to her strict teaching style as well as accentedness. Lucy's perception could be connected to the colonialist ideologies of who is a legitimate English teacher (Amin & Kubota, 2004). For her, discussion with peers was useful when sharing results of quizzes or exams in the L1, but not for formative feedback purposes because of its association with prestige.

This notion—feedback is exercising power to control others—could be even reinforced by teachers unintentionally through classroom activities. Marshmallow in EAP-2 described how he perceived his role during a group presentation activity as follows:

- Tsushima: Did you talk about your classmate's English after the presentations? Formally or informally?  
 Marshmallow: No.  
 Tsushima: Did your teacher ask you to do so?  
 Marshmallow: No. We are not supposed to. It's not allowed in our class.



He reported that some teachers prohibited their students from commenting on each other's English, especially errors, during meaning-focused activities. Such conditions could have reinforced participants' perception of feedback as power, and of teachers as the only ones who could impart knowledge in the classroom.

The second sub-theme concerning peers was *peer feedback conducive conditions* (see Table 6.1). This referred to the conditions that led learners to be engaged with peer feedback more organically and actively. As reported in Phase I, using their L1 in peer feedback exchanges was reported as a feedback conducive condition. Through the classroom observations, it was confirmed that Chinese interview participants were prone to use their L1 in order to be more accurate and effective, especially when the given task was meaning-focused. Another condition conducive to peer feedback, also reported in Phase I, referred to form-focused classroom activities that called for straightforward answers. What became more tangible in Interview #4 was learners' confidence in their own ability to provide accurate and helpful information to peers. As the key factor to facilitate peer feedback activities, form-focused exercises that were implemented in a structured manner were reported as a condition that participants were familiar with; thus, they felt more confident to provide peer feedback.

For example, Sunny in EAP-2 found the metalinguistic discussion meaningful and enjoyable, although she had held the view that "peer feedback is untrustworthy" (see Chapter 5 for details) in Phase I. This difference stemmed from the condition of peer feedback activities. This time, the teacher prompted the students to find each other's grammatical errors, and there were some specific types of errors that students had to focus on. Sunny, even without realizing it by herself, changed her attitude towards peer feedback from the previous term, as shown below:

I like discussing with my classmates, like group work. When we do exercise, especially grammar checking exercise, I like discussing with my friends. Because if I am not sure, I can ask her. And

I think efficiency is improved (Sunny)

When the activity was explicitly presented as an error correction opportunity and items had one clear, less ambiguous answer, it created a non-threatening condition for students.

Along with the use of L1 and form-focused tasks, classroom dynamics was found as a key condition to promote students' peer feedback exchanges. Sky's experience was highly relevant in this regard. Sky, repeating EAP-1, expressed surprise at the new class. Although it was the same course, the classroom atmosphere was quite different from the previous term. Her previous EAP-1 teacher (Edona) regularly rotated her students to ensure everyone had an opportunity to work with different classmates, which fostered a non-threatening, friendly atmosphere to work collaboratively. However, her EAP-1 teacher for the November Term (Lynn) had a different approach to her classroom management. In the end, it was affecting the students' participation in peer feedback activities. Sky shared her frustration as follows:

- Sky: You know, in Edona's class, the first day, like, we are like friends already. You know, she made us talk, like, talk a lot. So, when the class starts, we already know each other. But in Lynn's class, they hardly talk. They are like, just quiet, you know?
- Tsushima: Yes, I remember.
- Sky: But, in [the current] class, like, participation is different. People don't talk in class. We are not close to each other. And, because of that, when we have seminar discussions, it's not like Edona's class. Not talking much, you know. Some people are even not listening.

Taking the same course twice, Sky was startled by how the same activity could be implemented differently. The less vibrant classroom dynamics impacted on students' engagement with the task. Classroom management in this sense was a central part of creating a peer feedback conducive environment.

As seen in this section, the data from Interview #4 suggest that participants' engagement with peer feedback remained generally similar to that of Phase I in terms of their hesitant views on peer feedback. For these participants coming from the teacher-centered and teacher-being-

authoritative pedagogy, changing their values about formative feedback did not happen naturally in a short period of time. However, Interview #4 revealed that some conditions seemed to foster their positive attitudes towards exchanging opinions with peers to improve their learning, and that teachers were playing an important role in this regard.

#### ***6.5.4 Third Overarching Theme: Individual Differences in Use of LOA***

This section reports on the third overarching theme for Interview #4: individual differences in the use of LOA. The findings from Phase I of the current study suggest that the participants developed more diverse and individual views on their use of assessment, in particular teachers' formative assessment, over the two months of the first EAP term. Thus, in Interview #4, guiding questions were asked to elicit information about individual differences in their use of assessments. Table 6.4 represents corresponding themes for the third overarching theme (taken from Table 6.1 above).

**Table 6.4**

*Emergent Themes from Interview #4: Third Overarching Theme*

overarching theme	main theme	sub-theme
individual differences in use of LOA	active use of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● self-regulation</li> <li>● learning goals</li> <li>● practice</li> <li>● feedback &amp; other assistance</li> <li>● performance evaluation</li> </ul>
	non-use of assessment	

Interview #4 revealed two types of learning behaviour as the emerging main themes: (1) active use of assessment; and (2) non-use of assessment. These themes have previously appeared in the Phase I findings of Interview #3 in Chapter 5, and they emerged saliently again in Interview #4. The unique finding from Interview #4 was that participants' individual differences

in their learning behaviours were aligned well with the characteristics of an LOA approach, presented by Turner and Purpura (2018) as follows:

An LOA approach highlights **learning goals, practice, feedback or other assistance, performance evaluation and the role they play in developing individual learning** (slide 30). [emphasis added]

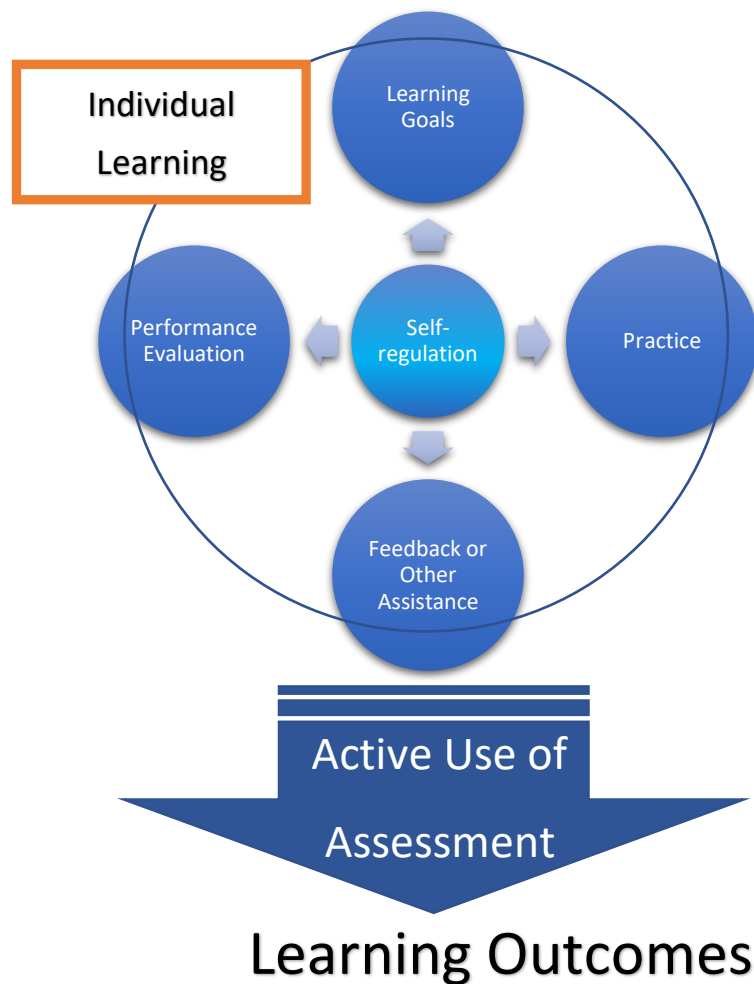
Thus, the following LOA characteristics were used to label factors of individual differences in the use of assessment: (1) learning goals; (2) practice; (3) feedback or other assistance; (4) performance evaluation; and (5) roles they play in developing individual learning. Through the analysis, the last element was identified as a thread throughout the other four elements and as the most salient variable differentiating individual learning behaviours. Through the analysis, *self-regulation* emerged as the dominant sub-theme that connected the LOA characteristics to participants' use of assessment; thus, it was chosen as the main sub-theme to define and explain findings in this dissertation.

As described in Chapter 2, self-regulation in education is conceptualized as students' metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active participation in their own learning process (Zimmerman, 1986, 1990). Turner and Purpura (2016) include self-regulation in the learning dimension of their original LOA framework (the socio-cognitive dimension in the updated framework) and note its role as "another important feature of LOA" (p. 266). They refer to the fact that self-regulation connects students' thinking about learning (metacognitive strategies) to the actual use of mind (cognitive strategies), and that this process enhances students' learning. Based on those points, the term was selected to highlight the importance of individual differences in learning, instead of "the role they play in developing individual learning" as the original text reads. The model of active use of assessment, presented as Figure 6.3, was developed by incorporating Turner and Purpura's LOA characteristics to hypothesize

how self-regulation interconnects and supports students' use of assessment to enhance their learning.

**Figure 6.3**

*Model of Active Use of Assessment with Turner & Purpura's (2018) LOA Characteristics*



**6.5.4.1 Active Use of Assessment.** As the first main theme, this section reports *individual differences* in participants' use of assessment in different formats (summative or formative) with the intention to improve their learning. Some participants' active use of assessment was observed not only in the EAP classroom context, but also in their activities outside of the classroom where

individual differences were well documented.

***Self-regulation.*** The first sub-theme corresponding to participants' individual differences in their active use of assessment was the presence of *self-regulation*. As mentioned above, Turner and Purpura's LOA framework (2016) includes self-regulation as a key element of LOA as it prompts L2 processing and enhances learning outcomes. The analysis of the current findings also showed that the role of self-regulation in relation to participants' use of assessment, in particular self-assessment, emerged as a crucial factor that might link assessment to their learning outcomes. Especially, participants' everyday life information provided deeper insights into the connection between self-regulation and individual differences in their use of assessment.

For instance, attending an academic course along with their EAP course apparently benefited some participants in this sense. They explicitly mentioned their awareness of using informal interactions to try to apply the knowledge they gained from EAP. For instance, Barry in EAP-2 reported how informal interactions with his Math 101 classmates benefitted his language learning, as presented below:

They help me a lot, for example, when I need to take care of phone stuff. Which company to use. And my English. Sometimes I don't understand English jokes... idioms or some difficult words, right? I ask them, "What does it mean?"

I also often use words, or... skills I learned from EAP, to, to communicate with them. It's good. It's good to use my new knowledge (Barry)

His statement suggested the presence of self-regulation, which controlled his thoughts, emotions, and behaviours to help improve his language learning. Moreover, the use of metacognitive strategies was presented in his statements of "I don't understand..." and "It's good to use my new knowledge," because these examples show Barry's monitoring and assessing process of his own learning. In addition, it accompanied cognitive strategies to facilitate his learning (i.e., asking questions to clarify meanings and outputting newly acquired knowledge).

Similarly, Jericho in EAP-2 shared an experience in his Statistics 101 course. The course itself turned out to be a serious challenge for Jericho, but he found it enjoyable to write a report with his lab partners because it served as an opportunity to improve his writing skills, which had been a concern in his EAP learning. The following statement shows Jericho's reflective thoughts on informal interactions with non-EAP people as a learning opportunity:

I have to write emails to my lab partners, and my instructor, about some questions. And lab report. Honestly, yes. I have to take time and think about it, what I need to say. Also, not too casual. It's difficult. But my lab partners, they help me. They help my English, you know.  
(Jericho)

In this case again, the interview data presented participants' use of metacognitive strategies (e.g., self-regulation) and of cognitive strategies (e.g., use of feedback). These examples indicate that some participants, even outside of the EAP setting, self-monitored their performance, utilized informal feedback, and evaluated it in relation to their learning goals.

Such a self-regulated attitude—taking responsibility for their own learning—was also observed in some participants who did not attend any academic course. Self-regulated learners seemed to continuously monitor and manage their thoughts and actions to reach their learning goals, even outside the EAP classrooms. Moreover, their learning was often driven by their self-assessed competence of EAP knowledge as well as external assessment information, in line with the concept of self-regulated learners who are masters of their own learning (Zimmerman, 1997, 2000).

***Learning goals.*** The second sub-theme in relation to active use of assessment was *learning goals* (see Table 6.4 above). In LOA (Carless, 2007, 2011; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018), learning goals must be clear to all involved in the teaching and learning setting in order to enhance students' learning outcomes. Self-regulation and self-efficacy can also be effectively enhanced by learning goals (Schunk, 1995). In the current research, as reported above in this

chapter (Section 6.4.2), some participants' learning goals were well aligned with the learning objectives of the curriculum. This indicated that they internalized the learning goals of the course, understood the value in these goals, and accepted them as their own. The individual differences in participants' learning goals likely played some roles in influencing their learning.

***Practice.*** Another clear individual difference lay in participants' active engagement with *practice* (the third sub-theme). It was found in Interview #4 that paired with active use of assessment, practice seemed to function as a problem-solving strategy. Self-regulation was found to play an important role in enabling participants to identify such a strategy. For instance, Sunny in EAP-2 reported how she identified her weakest area with the help of classroom assessment:

I think reading, I need to improve. Because I am a slow reader. I cannot read faster. My reading quiz is not good, not too bad, though. It take many times for me to understand. There is a homework called 'seminar discussion' which need, um, students need to read newspaper and write a report. I wanna have better reading skills, which means I can read faster, and I don't need to read carefully but I understand the main ideas (Sunny)

Sunny's statement indicated the presence of self-monitoring in relation to the learning goal, which was a use of self-regulation (Zimmerman, 1995). She further explained what problem-solving strategies she chose to address the weakness in her learning:

I practice rapid reading to improve my reading skills. I do enjoy reading books. I read books to practice my critical thinking, but it takes lots of time to digest it. Oh, you know? On the train stations, they give us free paper, free newspaper, so I read it too. It's easier and good (Sunny)

Cognizant of the problems in her reading skills, Sunny needed a different approach besides the rapid reading practice that was suggested to the class by the teacher. She then discovered that reading the free newspaper was appropriate practice for her current skill level. This example presented an active use of assessment, through which, facilitated by the information from classroom assessments, a learner explored different means to practice the target area to improve her skills. Self-regulation was employed in order to reach the reading practice that fit her own



learning needs. Practice was a strategy used post-performance to deal with weak areas identified through assessment.

***Feedback or other Assistance.*** The fourth sub-theme concerning individual differences in learning behaviours was the participants' active use of *feedback* and/or *other assistance*. As reported in the previous section, the data showed that a strong sense of respect towards teacher feedback was associated with participants' active use of assessment. Dez in EAP-2, for instance, paid attention to formative feedback given to the whole class, not only feedback provided to her. Here, Dez described her thoughts on teacher feedback:

After the quiz, Kelly always says something to us. Like, common mistakes we make. I think it means that's something everyone needs to remember. So, I take notes (Dez)

This statement exemplified an individual difference in the use of assessment and their self-regulation skill. Some participants seemed to be more proactive than others in incorporating any information that would solidify their learning, and when obtained, this information was valued and utilized to improve their learning.

Another example was an active use of assistance reported by Jericho in EAP-2. After incorporating teacher feedback into his writing assignment, Jericho voluntarily visited the Writing Centre service at the University to seek support. See the excerpt below:

Alex gave me some feedback on my essay already. I cannot remember exactly what he said, but I remember he says like, um, I need to change my language from descriptive to persuasive. First, I corrected my essay, of course. Then, I rewrite, um, it on my computer, print it, and bring it to Writing Service. They help me. Then, I will bring it to my teacher (Jericho)

In this case, a different source of feedback was incorporated as assistance in addition to the teacher support, and it was clear that this participant created the opportunity to improve his learning, which was not reported by any other participants. Such an awareness of the importance of feedback and other assistance was present in some participants.

***Performance evaluation.*** The fifth and last sub-theme concerned *performance evaluation*. Performance evaluation is a process of assessing the performance of an individual student or a group of students in relation to predetermined standards. As one of the most salient traits, some participants perceived performance evaluation as a valuable opportunity to improve their learning, rather than a screening tool. For example, Watson and Rachel, both in EAP-2, respectively expressed their frustration with the lack of performance evaluation on speaking in the final exam. Their opinion was that all four skills should be equally evaluated so that students would be able to improve them. Such a view of ownership towards evaluation was found in some participants more evidently than in others. For instance, Watson liked one particular classroom activity the most because the assessment criteria for group presentations were developed by the students, not only by the teacher, which she found “helpful” as stated below:

His class is based on us. For example, on Tuesday, we did this... Um. We have a presentation, and our teacher didn't just give us his criteria. We had to think our own criteria for our presentation together. Like, voice and body language. What is important in presentations. He added something, of course, but it was based on us, our ideas. I think it's helpful and I really like it (Watson)

This statement showed that Watson did not see herself as just a receiver of assessment information, but also as an active consumer of the information for her learning. The finding revealed that some participants held the view that performance evaluation was a necessary and important process for their language development, which is indeed congruent with the LOA concept (Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). Moreover, their strong sense of ownership in assessment was connected to the presence of self-regulation—active participation in one's own learning—as described by Zimmerman (1995, 2000).

**6.5.4.2 Non-Use of Assessment.** (See Table 6.4 above) The data from Interview #4 revealed that participants' use of assessment to advance EAP learning varied significantly

depending on individual participants, and some participants displayed some tendencies to dismiss information from assessment, which was labeled as *non-use of assessment* for analysis. It should be noted that non-use of assessment seemed more prominent in the EAP-1 repeater data, but such non-use tendencies were also expressed by EAP-2 participants. Additionally, the analysis suggested that characteristics of non-use of assessment in a participant appeared fluid; in other words, it was possible for a participant to present some characteristics more strongly than others.

***Self-regulation.*** The main sub-theme that was associated with non-use of assessment was a dearth of *self-regulation*. Zimmerman (1995) argues that self-regulation in learning involves more than metacognition and skill; thus, learners' social and emotional conditions were important factors to understand their learning behaviours. Participants' lives beyond the EAP classroom, in this sense, provided relevant information to analyze the data. For instance, Neal in EAP-1 shared concerns about managing his life and emotions. He changed his morning class to the afternoon due to his lifestyle. He stayed up late playing online games to cope with the depressing situation of repeating EAP-1. He had a small circle of friends who were all from China; thus, his English use was limited to the classroom. Similarly, Panda in EAP-2 reported on a situation where he had no opportunities to use English outside the classroom, always surrounded by his Chinese-speaking friends from the same international high school in China. His life in Canada was described as "[it did not] look difficult or different at all." In both cases, there was no report of connecting classroom assessment to learning in their everyday lives. This situation indicated that these participants did not self-monitor and self-regulate their own language learning, and as a result, they could not obtain any memorable interactions that could have contributed to their learning.

One participant, Sky in EAP-1, was taking an academic course from September besides the EAP course. Although she found the course too challenging for her, she liked the fact that she was the only international student in the academic course. She also reported that she joined a sports club and a volunteer club “to make Canadian friends.” Compared to other participants who did not belong to any community outside the EAP course, Sky had more opportunities to use her L2 skills in these settings. The main difference lay in Sky’s non-use of assessment, as reported by her:

Tsushima: Do you remember any feedback from your friends? Like, grammar or pronunciation?

Sky: [pause]... I don’t remember. I don’t think so. Actually, people are like, I’m native like.

Sky was quite proud of her speaking, repeatedly referring to it as “native like,” and she did not remember any incident of talking about her English skills outside the classroom. It seemed that non-EAP settings were not considered as opportunities to further develop her language, which suggested a lack of self-monitoring. As seen in the data, the findings concerning non-use of assessment were associated with the absence of self-regulation.

***Learning goals.*** The next sub-theme, reflecting participants’ non-use of assessment was about their exam-driven *learning goals*. As reported earlier in this chapter, participants repeating EAP-1 described their goal for the new term as simply to pass the final exam. This behaviour was also reported by a participant in EAP-2, as shown in the excerpt below:

Just pass the course. If I don't pass the final exam, this means I cannot study winter term. The class, I need to do. Also, my parents have to pay more. So, it's waste of my time and waste of money. So, I have to pass 145 (Panda)

Panda’s description of his goal for the second term did not include any specific skill improvement but focused only on the final exam and its potential consequence. In Interview #4,

Panda's data showed the presence of non-use of assessment characteristics even though he passed EAP-1 successfully.

Such an exam-driven mindset was seen in Neal in EAP-1 as well. He refused to review and rewrite his in-class essay because it was marked at the cut-off score of the final exam (25 points). Although the essay was returned with detailed teacher feedback, the information was not incorporated into his learning. See the excerpt below:

Tsushima: And do you need to rewrite the essay?

Neal: Um... She said if you got 25 or more, you don't need to rewrite. But if you got lower than that, you need to rewrite.

Tsushima: Are you going to rewrite it?

Neal: No. I'm not going to. I don't need to, 'coz I got 25.

The score he received for the practice task apparently made him feel secure enough to dismiss the teacher's feedback although he previously expressed concern about his writing skills. This behaviour could stem from the influence of a high-stakes exam—washback—on learners (Alderson & Wall, 1993) since the cut-off score was apparently the key factor in deciding what he would do with the assessment. As learning goals affect learners' engagement with their learning and progress in their learning (e.g., Tafail, 2018; Zimmerman, 2000), individual differences in their goal setting seemed to affect how they responded to the information from classroom assessment.

***Practice.*** Another LOA characteristic that was absent in some participants' learning behaviours was *practice*. Neal's example shown above was a typical pattern of non-use of assessment: avoidance of practice if possible. This tendency was connected to a sign of weak self-regulation capacity because practice was a controllable factor (i.e., efforts). There was an example from Sky in EAP-1, who did not familiarize herself with the feedback system used in the EAP courses. In the EAP classrooms, meta-linguistic codes operated as the way to provide

the correct form in the student's written text so that they could facilitate their own error correction (Chandler, 2003). EAP students were expected to correct and practice their errors by learning such codes. However, Sky did not invest efforts to learn the codes for the reason she described below:

- Sky: I don't like it. Like Edona, Lynn's feedback is kinda similar... you know, grammar mistakes and word choice... but there is a one way that I really don't like about her feedback.
- Tsushima: Okay, can you tell me why?
- Sky: There is a sheet and she just circles some words. Like this. And then, like, she just write 'SP'. What's [inaudible]? Whatever! I don't know what SP!
- Tsushima: SP is a spelling mistake.
- Sky: Ugh. It's like lots of time to, to, check her feedback. Like, I need to like, I have to go back to checklist.
- Tsushima: I see. So, for articles, word choice, spelling, yeah.
- Sky: It's so waste of time. It's like, you, like, you know. Like, adverb is ab, or, whatever, I don't remember. I think it is easier for her to mark, but not for us, yeah. And she has bad handwriting.

The coded feedback on her assignments was perceived as a frustrating and confusing system by Sky; thus, the feedback was not utilized for her learning. Her citing the teacher's "bad handwriting" as a reason to avoid practice matched Weiner's (1979) description of students with a lack of self-regulation.

As another example, Panda in EAP-2 disclosed that he did not complete his essay revision because he also found coded feedback too cumbersome to use, echoing Sky's dismissive approach. See the interview excerpt:

- Panda: Yeah, I didn't know what SP means.
- Tsushima: Spelling. Spelling mistakes.
- Panda: Yeah. I didn't know. Also, I didn't know 'run-on sentence', yeah. Actually, I still don't know what run-on sentence. What's that?

As seen in the excerpts, the fact that they did not remember these basic codes even in the second term suggests that there was a paucity of practice in their learning. Self-control is considered as a crucial aspect of self-regulation, and the practice avoidance behaviours presented in the data did

not match the trait of self-regulated learners.

***Feedback or other Assistance.*** In relation to non-use of assessment, a clear lack of use of *feedback* and/or *assistance* from others was found as another indicator of individual differences. In Interview #4, as reported above, the tendency to dismiss feedback or opportunities to obtain formative information became even more salient in some specific participants. These participants did not have or remember any incidents in which they proactively sought additional feedback or assistance in order to deepen their learning, or even when they needed to obtain clarification on the feedback. An example from the interview with Panda in EAP-2 was representative of this sub-theme:

- Tsushima: After receiving the feedback, so, what did you do? Any suggestions from her?  
 Panda: She just said, "If you have any questions, ask me"  
 Tsushima: Did you ask her any questions?  
 Panda: Oh, no, no [laugh]. Because I didn't have any question. Everything was clear.  
 Tsushima: What did you do after receiving the feedback?  
 Panda: Just looked at it. Just.

However, it became clear that Panda did not understand the teacher's feedback (e.g., coded corrective feedback) during his interview. This behaviour seemed to stem from a lack of the self-monitoring that would have been an accurate assessment of current benefits and future consequences (Zimmerman, 2000). Even though Panda passed EAP-1, this anecdotal evidence suggested the existence of non-use of assessment in his learning. Such attitudes of indifference in feedback and in communication with the teacher to seek support was a common pattern that distinguished some participants from others.

***Performance evaluation.*** A lack of understanding of *performance evaluation* as a learning tool was also a sub-theme that helped to understand the participants' learning behaviours. Associated with non-use of assessment, there was a tendency to interpreting summative assessment as the be-all and end-all evidence of their performance. This particular

perspective on evaluation seemed to be related to these participants' emotional reaction to the results. Eeali an EAP-1 repeater, for instance, expressed disappointment with the score of her first in-class essay as follows:

I got only 20! 20! That's so bad. I'm so worried (Eeali)

The score was 5 points below the cut-off score of the EAP-1 final exam, and the possibility of failing the course again affected her emotionally to the extent that she was too disappointed to read the teacher feedback attached to the essay. In this regard, the lack of self-regulation in terms of emotion was evident in Eeali. A similar behaviour was seen in another participant in EAP-1. Sky also received 20 points for her in-class essay and reported it as follows:

But, like, I got like 20 for my essay. So, it is like obviously, you know. I know my writing is not really good (Sky)

The score was received as the absolute judgement of her performance but nothing more than that. This view corresponds to the general notions that underlie large-scale testing, rather than to LOA (Hamp-Lyons, 2017). In this particular behaviour, the feedback on the essay provided by the teacher could have been used to inform the learner about the gaps to be filled to achieve better results in the future. It was not used, however, because the quantified information of performance evaluation was valued much more than the descriptive information which would take more time and cognitive capacity to process.

## **6.6 Introduction to Results of Interview #5**

Interview #5 was conducted just a few days before the final exam of the November Term. This particular interview set was intended to capture the specific moment of the forethought phase of an exam, which is defined as the phase for test-takers "to determine how to best prepare for an exam and to actually prepare for an exam" (Schutz & Davis, 2000, p. 246). The following three areas were investigated as the overarching themes for Interview #5: (1) perceptions of the



second EAP final exam; (2) different formative assessment providers; and (3) individual differences in preparation for the EAP final exam. Some main themes that emerged from Interview #4 recurred in a confirmatory manner, and the corresponding sub-themes were also repeated.

### 6.6.1 Summary of Interview #5

Table 6.5 shows the overarching, main, and sub-themes that emerged from Interview #5.

**Table 6.5**

*Emergent Themes from Phase II, Interview #5*

overarching theme	main theme	sub-theme
perceptions on second EAP final exam	change in role of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• differences of assessment cultures between past learning and current EAP contexts</li> <li>• interaction as test preparation strategy</li> </ul>
different formative assessment providers	teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• higher expectations in teacher feedback practice</li> <li>• importance of feedback interactions through assignments</li> </ul>
	peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• power in feedback</li> <li>• peer feedback conducive conditions</li> </ul>
individual differences in use of assessment for EAP final exam	active use of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-regulation</li> <li>• learning goals</li> <li>• practice</li> <li>• feedback &amp; other assistance</li> <li>• performance evaluation</li> </ul>
	non-use of assessment	

Note. This table was created based on the descriptor x code count analysis and code-cooccurrence analysis generated on Dedoose software Version 8.0.35.

The first overarching theme concerned how the participants perceived and prepared for their second final exam. The main finding was their changing views on the role of learners in language assessment. Cultural differences in assessment practice between participants' past learning and the current EAP contexts were presented as the reason for their role transformation. In addition, the importance of interactions between teachers and students in the process of exam preparation was highlighted by participants as an effective test preparation strategy in the EAP context.

The second overarching theme concerned factors that generated more formative interactions between learners and providers of assessment information. Building upon the findings from Interview #4, the analysis of Interview #5 revealed that participants' beliefs in specific feedback providers remained the same in Phase II. For instance, the data revealed that the 12 participants shared some tendencies in their views on specific assessment providers. They were more inclined to appreciate teachers' formative assessment (i.e., feedback) than that from their peers due to their beliefs in feedback as authoritative power over students. In addition, participants continued to develop higher expectations of the quality of teacher feedback, and assignments played an important role as LOA tools in the participants' learning. Regarding peer feedback, the data showed that some tactfully-designed tasks did indeed facilitate participants' engagement in peer feedback; in particular, the teachers' presence and guidance seemed to have a significant impact on participants' successful engagement with peer feedback activities.

The third and last overarching theme of Interview #5 concerned individual differences in the participants' use of assessment in relation to their preparation for the EAP final. Building on Interview #4, the two types of learning behaviours—active use of assessment and non-use of assessment—emerged again as the main themes that defined differences among individuals.

Salient differences were observed in their use of LOA characteristics. Interview #5 revealed that the participants who demonstrated active use of assessment were aware of their strategic use of formative information, and self-regulated their learning to become self-directed language learners for the post-EAP phase. On the other hand, the cases of non-use of assessment were associated with a lack of knowledge of the use of LOA characteristics and with poor self-regulation. Such behaviours were strongly linked to the fact that the participants were emotionally and cognitively affected by the final exam as the absolute judgement of their performance. The themes that emerged from Interview #5 are further presented in the following sections.

### ***6.6.2 First Overarching Theme: Perceptions of Second EAP Final Exam***

The first overarching theme concerned how the 12 participants from CHC backgrounds perceived and prepared for the final exam of their EAP course—the high-stakes exam—in the November Term. As explained in Chapter 5, all EAP students must complete a paper-based final exam with a weighting on the overall evaluation of 50 percent. In addition, it was necessary to reach a minimum of 60 percent in the final. If a student failed to meet the criteria, they had to repeat the course, which could generate negative emotional, financial, and academic consequences. Because of the fact that test-takers' perceptions of test design and test use affect their learning practices (e.g., Alderson & Wall, 1993), this overarching theme emerged and captured the participants' thoughts on the EAP final at the point where they had spent four months in the student-centred, learning-oriented EAP classrooms.

**6.6.2.1 Change in Role of Learners.** The main theme that emerged in relation to the participant perceptions on school internal exams was a changing view of the role of learners. As argued in the literature, language learners hold beliefs about teachers and their roles, and about

themselves as learners (Cotterall, 1995). These beliefs can affect learners in both the process and outcomes of their learning (Ellis, 2008; Horwitz, 1988). The findings of the current study revealed that the participants' views on exams changed as they became more aware of the cultural differences in their new learning environment. In addition, the importance of interactions between teachers and students in the process of exam preparation was highlighted as a test preparation strategy. Thus, two sub-themes emerged: (1) differences of assessment cultures between participants' past learning and the current EAP contexts; and (2) interaction as exam preparation strategy.

The sub-themes are further presented in detail in relation to the change in the role of learners.

### **Differences of Assessment Cultures between past learning and current EAP**

**contexts.** The first sub-theme concerned *differences of assessment cultures between participants' past learning and the current EAP contexts*. The role of learners/test-takers in assessment cultures of two different learning contexts was described differently by the participants. Referring to term exams in schooling systems of their home countries, in comparison to the EAP final, they voiced a recent realization that test takers' expectations for and experiences of such exams could vary in a different learning context.

Some of the high schools the participants graduated from, specifically the international schools, seemed to have a relaxed approach in terms of students' performance evaluation. For instance, Sky, an EAP-1 repeater, explained that internal exams in her high school, which was an international school in China, were generally perceived as low-stakes events with little or no consequence on students' final grades. She stated that this past experience had shaped her perspectives on English language assessment as follows:

Honestly, last time [for the EAP final], I didn't want to do anything for the final. I didn't do anything at all. 'Coz, in my high school too, I thought we don't need to study or review. Like,

English? No! English is just like, what do you do, like... You don't do that. You don't care (Sky)

This statement suggested the influence of the absence of washback from low-stakes assessment on behaviours of students, and that such effects were maintained even in a new learning context. “You don’t care” was the attitude that Sky developed as the result of the assessment culture in her school. Similarly, Lucy in EAP-2 also reflected on the term exams in her previous school in China as follows:

I'm used to these [paper-based] exams, but it's different here. In China, our teachers always tell us what to review, how to prepare. But here, I have to do it myself. Totally different (Lucy)

According to her, study materials which students could simply rote-memorize were provided by the EFL teachers before each term exam, and there was almost no necessity for the students to ask questions to their teachers. The role that learners played there was as receivers of information; rather than information seekers. Lucy then emphasized her awareness of the importance of self-guiding learning as a crucial part of the EAP exam preparation. This particular statement exemplified the change that occurred in participants’ attitudes towards exams, which was also reflected in their behaviours around exam preparation for the EAP final.

**Interaction as Exam Preparation Strategy.** The second emerging sub-theme concerned the use of *interactions as an exam preparation strategy*. This was a highly salient finding among the 12 participants, suggesting that a major transition happened in their learning behaviours and beliefs at this point of their EAP learning journey.

For instance, Neal, an EAP-1 repeater, disclosed his recent realization that it was vital for him to communicate well with his teacher to prepare for the EAP final, as its assessment criteria were complex and abstract, unlike what he had experienced at his schools in China. His exam preparation approach in the past had not involved interactions with his EFL teachers. In the high school, in particular, due to its highly academically-oriented schooling, rote memorization and

self-study formed the basis of schooling and learning. When students expressed their need for clarification, teachers did not always respond in a positive manner; consequently, Neal had developed a learning behaviour of not sharing information about his weak areas with his teachers. In the excerpt below, he described the role of teachers in the two learning contexts:

- Neal: Well, it's different. They [EFL teachers in China] just mark our paper. But here [EAP], we need to talk.
- Tsushima: What do you think about the difference?
- Neal: It's better. Because we can ask something that is related to the question. When we have a question, and you have different questions, you can ask your teachers. But in China, our teachers did not like that. They said, "oh, that's a stupid question. You should find the answer in books." But it is difficult to find right books.

In the EAP classroom, asking questions to his teacher was not taken as a sign of disrespect or of lack of student capability. On the contrary, actively initiating such interactions to advance students' learning was encouraged by EAP teachers.

A reflective comment made by Dez in EAP-2 exemplified participants' realizations about the learner-centred paradigm as she highlighted the critical role that the learners themselves had to play in their own learning, described in the excerpt below:

I like here [EAP]. I think you have the power to talk to your teacher. You have the power to talk to your classmates to improve your skills. I think that's the best way to improve your English. If you just listen to your teachers, you don't know what you are learning. Actually, you cannot tell that. You are just listening. Maybe you are not paying attention to your learning (Dez)

It should be noted that she emphasized the word—power—in this part, reflecting that she felt ownership of her own learning by enabling herself to interact with others to advance learning. Moreover, she acknowledged that the passive learning condition in the past learning context had not helped her monitor her own language development. In Interview #5, Dez seemed to hold a view that language learning was facilitated in the EAP classroom by proactive interactions with others that prompted self-assessment.

As shown here, the data from Interview #5 revealed that participants' perspectives on

school-based exams changed over the course of time due to their realization of the different cultural values associated with such exams. The role of learners themselves in exam preparation were described differently in each culture as well. The importance of interactions with EAP teachers and peers was emphasized as an effective exam preparation strategy by participants because they found that the formative feedback generated by such interactions promoted their learning.

### ***6.6.3 Second Overarching Theme: Different Formative Assessment Providers***

The second overarching theme of Interview #5 concerned how the 12 participants interacted with different assessment providers, which was a continuous thread from Interview #4. Table 6.8 shows how the related themes emerged in accordance with the second overarching theme. Building on the findings from the previous four interview sets, the second overarching theme of Interview #5 continued to explore how the participants used feedback to advance their learning, and whether their views on different feedback providers changed as they became more familiar with the learning-oriented EAP classrooms. Factors that were related to formative interactions between learners and providers of feedback were analyzed and categorized into two main components: (1) teachers; and (2) peers.

**6.6.3.1 Teachers.** The first main theme corresponding to participants' experience with different feedback providers was teachers. This theme—the teacher factor in learner experience—consistently appeared from Phase I as an influential factor in participants' learning. As the participants became more aware of about the divergent feedback practices of different teachers, this theme emerged with more frequency and detail. Under the theme of teachers, two sub-themes were identified in the data analysis process: (1) higher expectations in teacher feedback practice (continued); (2) importance of feedback interactions through assignments

(continued). These sub-themes emerged again in Interview #5, but with more intensity as reports from participants included more specific details about their experiences with teachers.

***Higher Expectations in Teacher Feedback Practice (continued)***. As seen in the report of Interview #4, some participants expressed their frustration when the quality of teacher feedback did not match their expectations. This sub-theme emerged strongly in Interview #5 again, as participants' expectations of teachers' feedback provision became more explicit and pronounced. The analysis suggested that the first EAP-1 teachers had a strong impact on participants' perspectives on the use of assessment information, and their standard of ideal feedback practice seemed to be set by those teachers. Some participants imported the assessment culture to their new classrooms, and when teacher feedback was not sufficient or critical, they acted as formative feedback advocates for their new teachers.

Having been trained by the previous EAP instructor in EAP-1, for instance, Jericho held the opinion that teachers were supposed to help him realize linguistic problems that he himself did not notice. In the excerpt shown below, he expressed his candid feeling towards the current teacher of his EAP-2 class, comparing him with his previous teacher, Martha:

Jericho: So, he doesn't provide much feedback. You know, as I said, he doesn't explain a lot, like Martha. But, he encourages us to ask questions. And, yeah, feedback...I prefer Martha. Martha provided more feedback. And, she made me think about my mistakes through feedback.

Tsushima: So, although you said you like both teachers, when it comes to teacher feedback, you prefer Martha's style.

Jericho: Yeah, to be frank. She corrected my mistakes. Because if we need to ask questions always, I think I don't know exactly what I need to ask, my question, my problems, so...

Supported by a learning-oriented pedagogy (Barr & Tagg, 1995), the teachers in this EAP program were expected to provide timely and individualized feedback that could facilitate students' learning (Shute, 2007). However, not all of the EAP instructors sufficiently understood



or subscribed to the approach. Influenced by the first teacher who was active in her feedback provision, Jericho seemed to consider the lack of quality feedback as a disadvantage, since he was aware that unnoticed problems existed in his own learning.

Rachel in EAP-2 was another example of how participants developed a strong view regarding the teachers' responsibility for quality feedback. Rachel was from a public high school in China where formative assessment was not explicitly incorporated into the classroom practice. Her statement exemplified how some participants developed a strong awareness towards teacher formative feedback practices that facilitated student learning. In the following excerpt, Rachel shared her opinion on teachers' feedback practice by referring to her previous EAP-1 teacher Nadia:

Some teachers are more like talking about how students are doing, how much improved, and some teachers don't tell anything. Maybe because they think it is students' responsibility, our responsibility, to, to think about our improvement. I think, there are different type of English, English teachers, I think. I think. But for me, Nadia is a good teacher. I prefer Nadia. Because she cares [about] us. She cares [about] students' improvement (Rachel)

Apparently, Nadia's feedback practice led Rachel to be conscious about the use of feedback and to have high expectations for other teachers.

In addition, some participants reported their strategies for generating teacher feedback when they were not content with the quality or amount of teacher feedback. These participants considered it their responsibility to obtain the information that would help their learning. Such proactive attitudes towards teacher feedback became progressively visible in the data. For instance, Barry was enrolled in the same EAP-2 section with Rachel, where the amount of teacher feedback was apparently scarce; however, he took a different approach to solve the problem. Through emails and face-to-face meetings, he informed the teacher—Gena—that the quality of her feedback needed to be enhanced. See the excerpt below:

- Tsushima: How many times did you email her?
- Barry: I have emailed her, hum.... maybe 30 times.
- Tsushima: What? Three zero?
- Barry: Yes [Laugh]. Because every day I have something to ask her. About homework, about presentations, about the class, so I have lots of questions to ask her. When it is harder to answer for her, then she will, um, on the next day, she meet me in person and let me understand the question. After class, we meet. After class, we sit together and discuss the questions I did not understand. Um, Gena, she can know what we didn't understand.

His intention was clear in this regard: "she can know what we didn't understand." This example demonstrated that some students were more aware of the importance of formative assessment than their teacher. While Rachel was frustrated with Gena's feedback style, Barry accepted the reality and exerted his agency to attempt to change the teacher to a formative feedback practitioner through the interactions.

Another example of a proactive participants was Jericho in his EAP-2 class. When his in-class essay was marked higher than the cut-off score for the final exam, and it was returned to him with only positive comments from his teacher, Jericho found it "not really helpful." Thus, he decided to have an assessment conversation with his teacher (Alex), a type of session which his previous EAP teacher often had with her students, as described below:

- Tsushima: So, you asked him to give you feedback?
- Jericho: Of course, yes, I did. At the end of the class, I give him my writing and asked, "I need to know more about my writing. What do you think where I should improve?" So, he said, "Here, you have problems. Some grammar mistakes, but not a big problem. Your writing is good, but some mistakes here"
- Tsushima: Uh-hum. Were you happy after talking to Alex? Did you get enough feedback this time?
- Jericho: I should say yes. Alex, now he knows, "Your writing is good," well, it's not really helpful [laugh].

Like Barry, Jericho was also assertive about his intention to have the explicit assessment conversations with his teacher to better inform him about Jericho's expectations for quality feedback. As seen in these excerpts, in relation to the theme of teachers as feedback providers,

participants' high expectations with regards to quality formative feedback emerged as a corresponding sub-theme.

*Importance of Feedback Interactions through Assignments (continued).* The second sub-theme related to teacher feedback was also a recurring theme from Interview #4. In Phase I, it was previously found that assignments functioned as an educational aid, enhancing autonomous and individual learning, and as an important assessment tool that bridged learning and teaching. The analysis of Interview #4 indicated that assignments served as a valuable means for participants to be interactive with and motivated by their teachers. The new set of data from Interview #5 added more detail to this sub-theme, and it also revealed that the influence of their first teacher was significantly strong on participants' views in this regard.

For example, Rachel who was in EAP-2 shared her opinion on teachers' assignment practice, comparing her two EAP teachers as follows:

In Nadia's class, our homework was complicated. You cannot find the answer on Google, but in Gena's class, I know some students are using their phone to answer questions. Because it is easy to find answers. If you google, you can finish the homework in, um, maybe in 10 mins. It depends on the students, but... I think we should have more complicated homework so that we think. Gena has her own way to improve our language, but I think it's not, um, not helpful. Actually, homework is not enough. We don't have real homework. Our homework is so, um, different. Listening and reading, and online quizzes. They are not connected like Nadia's homework. In EAP-2, no homework. I am really worried because I cannot see my progress now (Rachel)

Cognitively engaging assignments in EAP-1, which Rachel referred to as "real homework," seemed to facilitate her self-assessment process and provided information to monitor her own progress. Assignments in EAP-2 (e.g., the online quizzes without formative information), on the other hand, did not generate such learning interactions between the task and the learner. Rachel's case exemplified some participants' realization about the efficacy of assignments that helped them self-assess and self-correct their production.

Besides the instructional value of assignments, the analysis of the data signaled that teacher-student communication through assignments affected socio-psychological aspects of participants' learning, since feedback on assignments tended to be administered through personal interaction, compared to feedback given to the group or the class. Lucy's situation was quintessential in this regard because her emotions, motivations, beliefs about learning, and attitudes towards learning and performance were significantly affected by teacher feedback on her assignments. As previously reported in Interview #4, Lucy had held a negative impression of her EAP-2 teacher because the teacher was a non-native English speaker and had a strict teaching style; however, the more feedback interactions Lucy experienced through assignments, the more positive were the attitudes Lucy developed towards the teacher and her own learning. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

- Tsushima: I remember you were concerned a lot about the new course.  
 Lucy: [giggle] Yes. It's better now. When I have some questions about my essay, I talk to her. Twice, actually. After the class. Too many students want to talk to her. It's still hard to have her standard, but I think it's doable now.  
 Tsushima: Did her feedback change?  
 Lucy: I think so. the positive side is increasing. She writes a lot. She writes a paragraph for my homework [chuckle].  
 Tsushima: Do you think it's helpful? Example?  
 Lucy: She points out my weak part, like organization and how to develop my argument. And, she writes something good about my writing, too.

Her description of the new teacher differed from the previous interview, and she did not refer to the teacher's non-nativeness as a disadvantage for students at all this time; on the contrary, Lucy provided a very positive view on the feedback practice of her current teacher. This example was another evidence that feedback interactions through assignments, when they were done in a way to support learning, had a major impact on the learners' socio-psychological predispositions (Turner & Purpura, 2016).

When teacher feedback was paired with cognitively engaging assignments, the information seemed to have a strong impact on learners' automatized learning. It was also found that such feedback interaction through assignments was connected to affective factors of learning, as participants developed respect towards the teacher when the teacher used assignments as a tool to interact with students and provide meaningful feedback.

**6.6.3.2 Peers.** The second main theme related to feedback providers was *peers*, which was another recurring theme from Interview #4. The analysis of Interview #5 added further detail and profound insight into this theme. The following sub-themes—the same sub-themes from Interview #4—appeared in a confirmatory manner and continued to evolve with more specific detail: (1) power in feedback (continued); and (2) peer feedback conducive conditions (continued).

***Power in Feedback (continued).*** The first theme corresponding to peer feedback indicated that the fundamental view on feedback providers did not change drastically in a few months. Carless (2007) emphasizes the importance of peer evaluation/feedback as a crucial factor of LOA, supported by the Vygotskian concept of scaffolded learning (Vygotsky, 1978). In Phase I of the current research, it was found that when a task was designed to find a straightforward, single right answer, participants reported that they felt more comfortable to exchange their ideas with peers. However, the provision of peer feedback with critical messages, especially in front of other peers in the classroom, seemed to trigger their uncertainties about its efficacy. This tendency was frequently reported by participants in Interview #4 and in Interview #5.

A common pattern reported by participants was the lack of acceptance of peer evaluation among CHC students. For example, Watson in EAP-2 described the tendency of peer feedback practice among CHC classmates as commenting “only positive things.” She shared one bitter

incident she experienced with her CHC classmate (i.e., Chinese) during a peer editing activity.

Here is the excerpt from her interview:

- Watson: When we write an essay, we have to peer editing. So, we have to give peer feedback to each other. Also, when we do a presentation, I tell them like, "good job" or "I like what you said."
- Tsushima: OK, did anyone say a critical thing?
- Watson: No. Only positive things.
- Tsushima: Is it difficult to include critical comments?
- Watson: Um, I think it is difficult. Especially for presentations. But when we do the essay editing to each other, I try to include some negative comments. Because I hope they can learn from my comments. So, that's why.
- Tsushima: Do you remember what kind of feedback it was?
- Watson: My partner, the essay topic was like, performance enhancing drugs should be banned or not. She just listed the side effects of the drugs, and provided no opinions. So, I pointed out and said she should write it to show her opinion of that part, not just listing things. Because it was not clear for readers.
- Tsushima: How was the partner's reaction?
- Watson: Um... She looked, um, upset. She was actually, um, almost going to cry.
- Tsushima: Oh.
- Watson: Yeah, she was almost crying. So, I felt really sorry for her.

Although the peer editing activity was valued by Watson as an important learning opportunity, her feedback was taken as an offensive gesture by the partner. This situation probably stemmed from the different values in peer feedback that the two students espoused, and as a result, the interactions did not turn out to be learning-conducive but rather conflictual.

Panda in EAP-2 described how awkward he felt during a peer evaluation activity, which was insightful because of his explicit opinion on feedback as authority assessment. See the excerpt below:

- Tsushima: What did you focus on when you were evaluating them? How about grammar? Or, fluency?
- Panda: Grammar? I don't care. I don't care about it. I think it's rude. You know, it's too rude. And, it's not my, my job. Only our teacher can do that.

Barry in EAP-2 also provided another example of how participants felt about such activities.

Barry had been highly proactive in terms of his use of assessment connecting to his learning;

however, as the contents of the course became more advanced and complex, Barry became concerned about his knowledge accuracy in feedback. Apparently, he felt uncomfortable playing the role of a feedback provider because he did not think his knowledge was adequate to correct peers' grammar. Rachel, in EAP-2, similarly shared her opinion that Chinese students were familiar with dealing with questions that have only one right answer, and therefore tended to think that only teachers or advanced students who knew the right answer could take the position of feedback providers. Such beliefs in feedback seemed deeply ingrained in their minds and prevented them from seeing a peer feedback activity as a learning opportunity.

***Peer feedback Conducive Conditions (continued).*** The second sub-theme related to peer-feedback conducive conditions, which was another continuous theme from Interview #4. The data from Interview #5 added more precise detail to the previous findings. The analysis revealed that certain conditions seemed imperative when implementing peer feedback activities effectively to generate more meaningful interactions. Three key factors fostering such conditions were; (a) explicit learning goals; (b) strong teacher presence; and (c) comfortable, supportive classroom dynamics. When these conditions were met, students seemed to develop more positive attitudes towards peer feedback and utilized the assessment to improve their learning.

One typical example was reported by Eeali, an EAP-1 repeater, who had been in fact hesitant to provide peer feedback in the past. In the following excerpt from her interview, she described one particular activity she enjoyed in the current classroom:

In my class, we correct each other. Julie teach how to use '*which*' and '*that*,' for example. And we, class, write own sentences on the board, you know. After, we correct each other. It was a game. It helped us to realize, realize, um, how you can use *which* and *that* correctly. I really enjoy grammar games like that. I think everyone enjoys that. Because it's fun and humorous. Julie laughed a lot too. And we can correct each other. But first, I correct myself, yeah. Julie gave us time to correct our mistakes first. Because I need to correct myself before other students notice my mistake [giggle] (Eeali)

As mentioned in the analysis of Interview #4, form-focused tasks seemed to evoke more interactions among CHC students owing to their familiarity with such tasks; thus, task objectives and the learning goal tended to be clear to them. In addition, the “fun and humorous” classroom ambience was another key factor reported by participants for a successful activity that included a peer feedback component. The teacher’s presence was strong in this setting, which seemed to enable the students to assess each other’s work, as they were aware of the authoritative figure who would correct or guide them when necessary. Several other participants similarly reported on supportive and collaborative classroom dynamics in relation to active peer feedback provision, and such an atmosphere seemed to be contingent upon the teacher’s classroom management.

Conversely, it was also reported that negative classroom dynamics impinged on student learning. Comparing two different classroom dynamics between the previous EAP class and the current EAP class, Sky, an EAP-1 repeater, described how teachers’ classroom management and instruction practices could change the behaviour of students in the class, especially around peer feedback provision. See the excerpt below:

[in the current EAP-1 classroom] We are still not close. You know, when we have a discussion, we don’t, um, we don’t do anything! Like, we ask questions we prepared. We need to ask questions, but that’s it. We don’t discuss. We don’t. We just don’t feel like talking more than that. Edona’s class [the previous EAP-1 class], we had more group discussions. Group work, and we really enjoyed. Because we were closer to each other. And, Edona’s discussion was more interesting. More interesting topics and questions, and actually, we had to prepare more, like, a lot, but we laughed a lot too.

[in the current classroom] Actually I had a seminar discussion last week. And I asked my group, like, “anyone?” And no one was like, you know. I was so confused. It’s for the points, come on. We need to discuss. But they were like looking each other and [sigh]. I was like, “oh, no points for me!” Nobody cares! Nobody cares what you are talking, nobody cares the task (Sky)

Sky’s description indicated that the three factors that seemed to stimulate peer evaluation were missing in her current EAP-1 class. There was a lack of a supportive atmosphere among peers,



an absence of understanding the learning goals by the students, and no real teacher presence. The teacher role in this regard seemed to be profoundly important to prepare students to be aware of collaborative learning.

Building upon the finding from Interview #4, the analysis of Interview #5 revealed that some tactfully designed tasks indeed facilitated participants' engagement in peer feedback; in particular, the teachers' presence and guidance seemed to have a significant impact on participants' successful engagement with peer feedback activities. Additionally, considering that students associated feedback with power, the presence of the teacher as mediator seemed to create an auspicious condition for engagement in peer feedback.

#### ***6.6.4 Third Overarching Theme: Individual Differences in Use of Assessment for Final Exam***

The last overarching theme of Interview #5 concerned individual differences in the participants' use of assessment in relation to their preparation for the EAP final. This section focuses on individual differences among the 12 participants. This theme had become one of the most central threads of this study as the results of Phase I showed that participants' use of classroom assessment varied from person to person and that such differences in learning seemed to affect their learning outcomes. Thus, the guiding questions were asked in relation to the participants' thoughts before the upcoming final exam, their preparation strategies, and their overall reflection on the two EAP exams in the past four months. Building on the findings from the preceding interview sets, the data of Interview #5 were analyzed to identify learning behaviours that fit the purposes of classroom assessment to improve students' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) in the EAP context. Table 6.6, which is taken from Table 6.5, shows the related themes that emerged in accordance with the third overarching theme of Interview #5.

**Table 6.6***Emergent Themes from Interview #5: Third Overarching Theme*

overarching theme	main theme	sub-theme
individual differences in use of assessment for EAP final exam	active use of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-regulation</li> <li>• learning goals</li> <li>• practice</li> <li>• feedback &amp; other assistance</li> <li>• performance evaluation</li> </ul>
	non-use of assessment	

Consequently, the two types of learning behaviours—active use of assessment and non-use of assessment—were observed as factors that determined differences among the individuals, which was the same pattern that had emerged in Interview #4. These two recurring main themes were associated with various sub-themes which identified several issues that contributed to the main theme. In the analysis of Interview #5, the characteristics of the LOA approach (Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018) emerged again as codes that defined and described participants’ learning behaviours in this context (see Section 6.5.4 of Interview #4 for the details). The first sub-theme—self-regulation—continuously emerged as the thread that connected the LOA characteristics to participants’ active use of assessment. The five sub-themes were recurring themes from Interview #4; however, the description of each sub-theme varied from the previous data set, reflecting the complex nature of language learning.

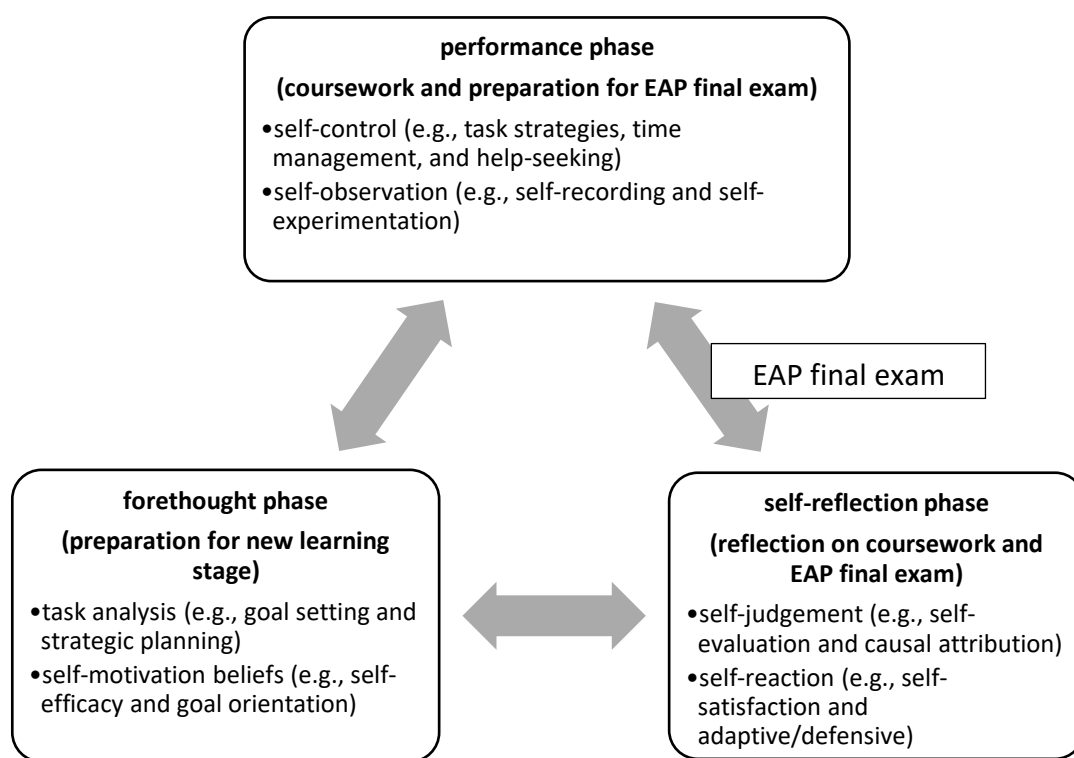
#### **6.6.4.1 Zimmerman’s Three Phase Model of Self-regulated Learning**

Prior to reporting the results of the third overarching theme, it should be noted that an additional concept—Zimmerman’s (2000, 2002) three phase model of self-regulated learning—was used to analyze the data of Interview #5, because it offered sufficient explanatory power to interpret the most salient sub-theme: the role of self-regulation in relation to participants’ use of assessment. Zimmerman’s model postulates that a student’s learning processes and

accompanying motivational beliefs fall into three cyclical phases: *forethought*, *performance*, and *self-reflection*. In the current research, this concept was applied to describe the participants' learning process in relation to the EAP course, shown in Figure 6.4.

**Figure 6.4**

*Cycle of Self-regulated Learning in EAP Coursework Context: Adopted from Zimmerman (2002, p.67)*



In the forethought phase, self-regulated students analyze tasks (i.e., EAP course objectives) prior to learning and hold self-beliefs that impact their approach to the learning tasks. During the performance phase, the students engage in the actual tasks (i.e., EAP coursework), and they self-control and self-observe their learning progress to achieve the learning goal (i.e.,

passing the EAP course). In the self-reflection phase, students make judgments on their own learning performance and self-react to outcome information (i.e., results of the final exam), which helps them to perform better in the future. In the research context, this phase was seen as a reflection stage of the EAP course after the final exam. This concept of three cyclic phases that self-regulated learners go through aligned well with the findings of Interview #5. Thus, it was used to analyze and explain the data related to participants' use of assessment.

**6.4.4.2 Active Use of Assessment.** The first main theme related to the individual differences in participants' exam preparation. "Active use of assessment" emerged as the most salient theme. This means that assessment information in different formats (summative or formative) was utilized with the intention on the participants' part to be better prepared for the final, but that there were individual differences among them.

***Self-regulation.*** Self-regulation emerged again as the main sub-theme corresponding to participants' active use of assessment for the final exam preparation, in a similar manner as with Interview #4. For instance, this example from Eeali, an EAP-1 repeater, was particularly interesting because she started sharing anecdotes that indicated her use of self-regulation. The following statement is in response to a question about her preparation for the final exam:

Many students have essay problems in my class, so we have lots of quizzes too. Like, every day. We have quizzes. Listening, reading, grammar, vocabulary [sigh]. We did not have lots of quizzes in my high school. So, this is tough for me. But I am trying. I review quizzes now, because I really want to pass the course this time. I need to pass. So, I review quizzes now.

I am happy because my score is higher than other students. I think quizzes are helpful. We sometimes check each other's quizzes and teach each other. I didn't do that in my high school, but now I know it is very helpful (Eeali)

Her statement indicated that she employed self-regulation was employed to be better prepared for the final exam through the classroom assessment. Her quotes can be analyzed using the analysis of self-regulation according to Zimmerman's (2002) model (see Figure 6.4 above).

“I think quizzes are helpful. We sometimes check each other’s quizzes and teach each other”  
(self-control)

“So, this is tough for me. But I am trying” (self-control)

“I am happy because my score is higher than others” (self-observation)

“I didn’t do that in my high school, but now I know it is very helpful” (self-observation)

As the excerpt indicates, Eeali’s metacognitive and cognitive state was in the *performance phase* of the self-regulated learning cycle. As the classroom assessment (i.e., quizzes) was perceived by Eeali as an effective preparation strategy for the final exam, she employed self-controlling was employed to utilize the assessment information to improve her learning.

Such self-regulation practice in conjunction with the use of assessment was observed in other participants as well, and some of those cases suggested that there was another layer of individual differences in their learning. That is, some participants who were in EAP-2, even though the data was collected before the final exam, described their learning as if they had already moved out of the performance phase and on to the *forethought phase* of the next learning stage (i.e., beyond the EAP courses). In the following example, Barry in EAP-2 also responded to a question about his readiness for the EAP final exam and initiated his response by referring to his life out of the classroom:

Barry: I made lots of friends here. During the weekend, we went to Toronto. Local friends, and some friends from China. We live in the same building, so we meet each other every day. We eat lunch or dinner together. We discuss questions about the classes we are taking together.

Tsushima: Ah, yes, the math course, right? [100-level math course]

Barry: Yes. We study together. Because we talk a lot, I am more confident with my English, especially listening. I understand what other people are saying, my friends, instructors.

Tsushima: I see. So, do you think the listening of the final is easy now?

Barry: [laugh] Actually..., yeah. My listening quizzes are much better now. I only use English when we are with my local friends. So, yeah.

Tsushima: That’s good to hear, Barry.

Barry: But, I think it's more important for me to focus on, to understand academic lectures now. EAP is...it's not..., um, we graduate. I hope I can be ready for my physics course. My friends told me they use so many difficult words in the course [laugh]

In this example, he shared an experience of self-monitoring his progress in relation to the academic course, not to the EAP exam. In addition, his comment—"we graduate"—was a strong indicator that he envisioned his learning beyond the EAP course. The data implied his self-regulation was already directed towards the forethought phase of the next learning stage (i.e., post-EAP learning). The interview data was analyzed using Zimmerman's (2002) model as follows:

"But, I think it's more important for me to focus on, to understand academic lectures now" (task analysis)

"My friends told me they use so many difficult words in the course" (task analysis)

"I hope I can be ready for my physics course" (self-motivation beliefs)

Based on these utterances, Barry's self-regulation state had move on to the forethought phase of the next learning stage while he was still preparing for the EAP exam. This tendency was found in several participants who were also in EAP-2; this was the unique finding of Interview #5.

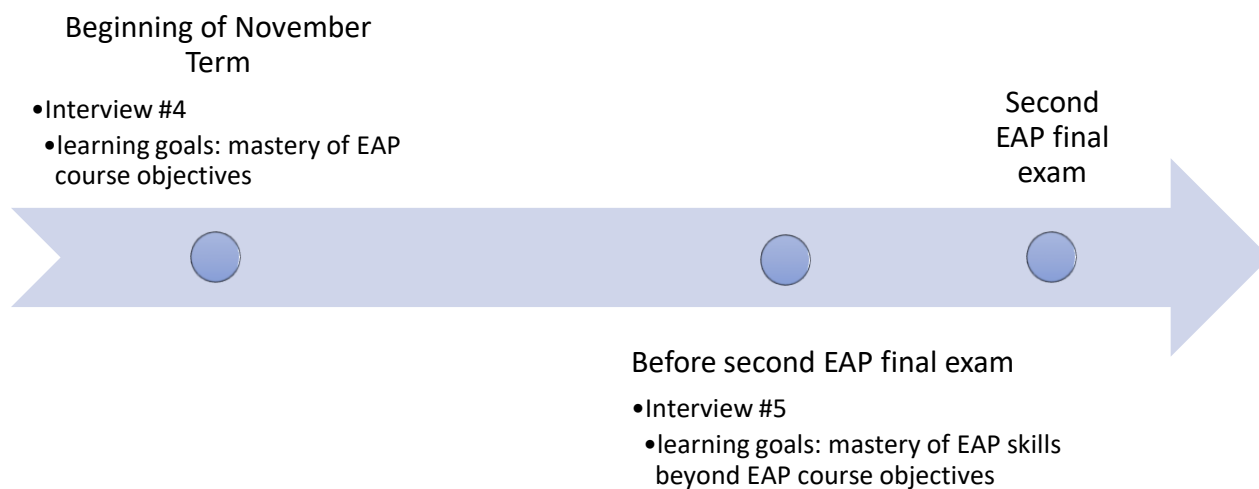
***Learning goals.*** The second sub-theme concerning participants' active use of assessment was *learning goals*. In the LOA concepts, learning goals must be clearly understood by learners, and assessment can help them identify necessary steps toward reaching those goals (Carless, 2007, 2011; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). Self-regulation theories state that learning goals are known to function as metacognitive prompts that encourage learners to achieve desired objectives (Zimmerman, 2000, 2002). Successful learners set both long-term and short-term goals to motivate themselves (Safdari & Maftoon, 2016). Moreover, clear goals are known to regulate test-takers' emotional states, "because the more information we have about the task characteristics of the test, the more we may develop a perception of control" (Schutz & Davis,

2004, p. 249).

The results of Interview #4 indicated that some participants with active use of assessment characteristics used classroom assessment to fill the gap between their learning, and learning goals that were aligned with the EAP course objectives. Subsequently, the analysis of Interview #5 revealed that at this point, those participants perceived the EAP exam as a rather minor challenge in comparison to their long-term goals that were set beyond the EAP learning. This point was an indicator of those participants having moved on to the forethought phase of a new learning cycle (Zimmerman, 2002). Figure 6.5 illustrates those participants' learning goals at each interview point.

**Figure 6.5**

*EAP Timeline and Learning Goals of Participants with Active Use of Assessment Characteristics in Relation to EAP Final Exam*



This tendency of holding a long-term learning goal and perceiving the EAP final exam as a minor challenge was enunciated by several participants. For instance, Jericho in EAP-2

expressed his current view on the final exam in a confident manner and commented on the assessment criteria as follows:

Well, it's not about EAP now. When I start taking English 101, I think it [the assessment] will be more strict. Not like EAP (Jericho)

Similarly to Jericho, some participants considered that the learning goals of EAP courses were set rather leniently, sharing thoughts that a much higher level of proficiency in English would be demanded in credit courses. Watson in EAP-2 commented on her learning goals as follows:

I always think, like, when I take a quiz in EAP and get a low score, I think I am not ready to study at a credit course as a university student. So, my goal is to be able to study without constraints in a university. I think if I struggle in this level [EAP], means I cannot survive in credit courses.

I should understand more difficult materials than the listening we have in a class. More academic words, and casual vocabulary too. I have to study English by myself after EAP (Watson)

This excerpt highlights the fact that Watson's real goal was to be a successful student in credit courses. Compared to EAP skills required in academic credit courses, she thought that the EAP classroom assessment was lenient. At the same time, Watson acknowledged that assessments in the EAP course helped her monitor whether she was ready to embark on a journey of self-directed learning. This indicated that her situation was in the forethought phase; that is, the first phase of the self-regulation model (Zimmerman, 2002), because her self-regulation was directed at ensuring she would be ready after the EAP, and would be an independent learner.

**Practice.** Another sub-theme—practice—was also captured differently from Interview #4, which found that some participants who were in EAP-2 used practice as their problem-solving strategy to improve their weak areas to prepare for the EAP final. In the data from Interview #5, however, these participants mentioned that their practice for the EAP exam had been completed already. As reported above, this seemed to be related to the facts that the participants described the current situation as if they had already moved away from the performance phase. These participants self-evaluated their preparedness for the final exam in a



reflective manner, which suggested that their metacognitive state was in the *self-reflection phase*. This phase refers to processes that occur *after* the learning effort (Zimmerman, 2002: see Figure 6.4). The following excerpt from Lucy was a quintessential example:

No. Because I don't think I need to do something special to prepare. Because we always practice during class (Lucy)

In Lucy's view, the practice was already done through the coursework; thus, she did not need to practice for the final exam at this point. Other EAP-2 participants answered the question about their readiness for the EAP final exam similarly. See the excerpt from Watson below:

I am strangely confident. This time, I actually feel more prepared. Taking the course, I know how the exam looks like now, and I know I can meet the requirement. I think if I continue preparing myself like now, the only thing I will do before the exam is to relax (Watson)

As the word “relax” suggested, coupled with the completion of practice for the EAP final, an absence of test anxiety was displayed by these participants. Test anxiety is an emotional state that influences a test-taker both physiologically and behaviourally in formal testing or other evaluative situations (Dusek, 1980; Saraton, 1973). Language testing researchers have found that such anxiety that test-takers experience often decreases their test performance (e.g., Loghmani, & Ghonsooly, 2012). The test-anxiety-free state that the participants expressed in Interview #5 seemed to stem from their strong confidence in understanding the assessment criteria of the course and in the consistent practice in which they had engaged. The following quote from Dez illustrates this point:

I am less nervous than the last exam. By now, I am familiar with the essay writing and listening, reading. So, I think I am ready. I feel Zen (Dez).

Dez in EAP-2, jokingly mentioned she felt “Zen” even though it was just two days before the final exam, and reported that her practice had been completed by that time. She connected the relaxed feeling to her current view of the a language exam, as follows:

Because this is a language exam, you cannot prepare well. You cannot prepare quickly. So, just relax and sleep well [laugh]. I just hope I can sleep well. This time, we don't know what we need to review. There is actually, nothing we can review. It's more like, um.... everything we did (Dez)

As presented above, in relation to their current learning goals set beyond the EAP, some participants perceived the practice for the final exam as a completed task. Self-reflection for the learning effort was even observed. This self-regulatory state seemed to generate a sense of relief—the absence of test anxiety—in these participants.

**Feedback and Other Assistance.** The fourth sub-theme concerning individual differences in learning behaviours was the participants' active use of feedback and/or other assistance. This particular theme continued to appear as a key factor in relation to participants' active use of assessment in Interview #5. There were individual differences in how each participant understood, utilized, and optimized such information to prepare for the final exam. Ultimately, their account of that process was clearly connected to the self-regulatory phase in which they seemed to be.

For instance, more active use of teacher feedback was reported by Eeali, an EAP-1 repeater, this time. In Phase I, Eeali's teacher provided detailed feedback paired with personal consultation to his students. Even though the feedback and assistance were not deeply incorporated into Eeali's learning at that time, the experience of having assessment conversations with her teacher seemed to remain in her mind as a helpful learning opportunity. She explained why she had asked her current teacher to have a meeting, as follows:

- Eeali: So, I rewrite [rewrote] my essay and submitted it to my teacher. It was 25, so I did not need to rewrite it. But I did it. I checked the rubric and made sure I am writing something, um, something good. I didn't do that before, um. So, I did it. And my teacher said it's good. Now I know how to get more than 25. I think so.
- Tsushima: How do you feel about it?

Eeali: I feel good, actually. She said, like, “Direct sentence. Simple sentence. Simple sentence is better than complex sentence with mistakes” [giggle]. I think I know. I tried to use difficult sentences and vocabulary before. My teacher said, um, my Chinese teacher, said, “use more difficult words and long sentences.” So, now I think I was using Chinese writing, Chinglish writing style.

This example shows that some changes had occurred in Eeali regarding her use of assessment: the use of teacher feedback and assistance to close the learning gaps and acceptance of her weak areas emerging from the formative assessment, which were latent in her previous data. This implies that her learning was in the performance phase of the self-regulatory model, in which learners make efforts to achieve the goals set in the forethought phase (Zimmerman, 2002).

As described above, some participants seemed to already have directed their self-regulation towards the post-EAP phase. This might be related to why they reported the importance of development of self-assessment and self-feedback skills as a crucial learning strategy. Marshmallow in EAP-2 was a case in point, as illustrated in the quote below:

I hardly had questions to ask her [EAP teacher] now, so yeah, I did not need to talk to her a lot. She always write clear. She give us feedback, and it is clear, so... With her feedback, I can analyze my mistakes. So, I don't really need to talk to her. Also, when I review my essay, I see mistakes. My mistakes, so (Marshmallow)

This statement indicates that, similar to the finding for the sub-theme of practice, feedback or other assistance was not urgently necessary for Marshmallow at this time because he reached the point of functioning as an autonomous learner. This echoes Sadler’s (1989) argument that the purpose of formative assessment is to help equip students with the evaluative skills that their teachers possess so that they will become autonomous learners. Several participants who strongly displayed LOA characteristics reported similar information. The following report from Sunny in EAP-2 shows her dilemma about being a high achiever because she gradually received less teacher feedback:

Essay. I got 40 and 35+. I feel good. But..., feedback, not really. Because I have a few mistakes, so I did not get a lot of feedback. That's... [giggle]. Boring. I need to find my way to improve English (Sunny)

The decreased amount of teacher feedback was perceived as “boring” by Sunny; yet, she acknowledged the importance of becoming a self-regulated learner to improve her learning. As the aforementioned sub-themes suggested, at this point in their EAP learning, some participants seemed metacognitively and cognitively ready to move onto the next learning stage. Their decreased use of feedback or/and other assistance reflected their readiness to become autonomous language learners.

***Performance Evaluation.*** The last sub-theme dealt with participants’ active use of performance evaluation to enhance their learning. Previously, Interview #4 showed that performance evaluation was perceived by some participants as a vital opportunity to reflect on their learning and to compare their self-, internal evaluation against the external evaluation. In Interview #5, performance evaluation was perceived as information that was contingent upon the evaluated context of the EAP course. Some participants reported that they used the formal performance evaluation as referential information and employed self-evaluation skills to make their own judgement on their performance.

For instance, Dez, who was in EAP-2, reported her experience on the evaluation results she received for a group presentation. In addition to the paper exam, the EAP courses implemented an in-class presentation that was evaluated and included in the final grade. This was an important and rare opportunity for EAP students to have a formal speaking assessment.

Dez commented below:

I have a good news. I got the full mark for the presentation. I was surprised but I am very excited. I think it's because it was the first presentation. So, although I had some mistakes, um, it was not perfect, but she gave me the full mark. I think so. I think, I hope I can do better (Dez)

Her words—"although I had some mistakes, um, it was not perfect, but she gave me the full mark"—indicated the use of self-evaluation. The performance evaluation was understood by her as information that was contingent upon the evaluation context, because she was aware that the same performance would have been assessed differently in a different evaluation context, and that the learning outcome she presented was worth "the full mark" within the given context. This behaviour—interpreting performance evaluation as contingent information—is one attribute of the LOA characteristics presented by Hamp-Lyons (2017). Moreover, her remark of "I hope I can do better" suggested her use of self-regulation, as the evaluation informed her to improve her speaking skills for the future.

It also became evident that participants' focus was on learning outcomes, not on the numerical information of evaluation. Particularly, summative information (e.g., a grade on assignments or a score of evaluation) was described as supplemental information to understand their performance within the course context. Eeali, repeating EAP-1, shared her current thoughts on the final exam and her learning:

- Eeali: Also, before, I was just, um, like "I want to pass!" But now, I am confused. I think I cannot, um, I cannot pass when I am not ready.
- Tsushima: So, you don't wanna pass now? [laugh]
- Eeali: [laugh] I want to pass! But, it is, how can I say? I think I cannot pass with my Chinglish writing. I need to learn how to write in North American style. Um, how to write like a foreigner [/English-speaking/] student in academic course.

In the past, Eeali referred to the final exam, especially during Phase I, as the absolute goal to achieve and as her motivation to study, which showed the influence of washback on a test-taker. However, Eeali's current view reflected that language improvement had to come first and that the exam results would follow if the mastery of skills was present. Moreover, the use of self-evaluation in relation to the long-term learning goal (i.e., beyond the EAP courses) was presented in this data.

Overall, active use of assessment was observed in some participants' learning behaviours. The findings of Interview #5 revealed that their learning focus was directed towards self-regulated use of the LOA characteristics to become autonomous language learners.

**6.6.4.3 Non-Use of Assessment.** Related to the participants' individual differences in their exam preparation, the theme of *non-use of assessment* emerged again in Interview #5. As opposed to the previous theme (i.e., active use of assessment), this theme emerged from categories concerning the participants' latent use of information from assessment in relation to their learning.

**Self-Regulation.** In the English language learning literature, it has been argued that formative assessment supports students' self-regulation (e.g., Jing Jing, 2017; Xiao & Yang, 2019); however, there is a dearth of research that focuses on self-regulation failure in conjunction with formative assessment or LOA contexts. The analysis of Interview #5 revealed that some participants exhibited difficulty in learning to regulate their own emotions, attention, and behaviour. Such low self-regulation was connected to their anxiety related to the final exam and to the strong value they put on high-stakes exams.

Self-regulation failure became more evident in Interview #5 because of the exam preparation. Some participants reported negative cognitive responses to the upcoming final exam, which was understood as test anxiety in the data. As defined above, test anxiety is a negative response to an evaluative situation and its known for frequently causing detrimental effects on knowledge acquisition as well as performance (Dusek, 1980; Sarason, 1959). See an example from Panda, taking EAP-2, below in which he described a lack of focus he had experienced of late:

I'm really stressed lately. Can't focused. So, I wrote it in my journal and submitted [to my teacher] (Panda)

The lack of study focus was associated with his apprehensive thoughts about the final exam. It should be noted that Panda did not report such test anxiety in Phase I. Neal, an EAP-1 repeater, also expressed his unfocused situation throughout Phase II, and when asked why he felt so anxious, this explanation was provided as follows:

I cannot focus, but I really have to pass the final. My life is, my life depends on the final (Neal)

This particular statement from Neal might be related to the test anxiety concept posited by Sarason (1959), one of the earliest contributors to test anxiety theory. Sarason described that in a test-conscious culture, “the lives of people are in part determined by their test performance” (p. 26); thus, test can be a source of anxiety. In contrast to the examples of active use of assessment that showed that participants’ self-regulated learning was directed towards the achievement of future goals beyond the EAP, this statement implied that Neal’s self-regulation was affected by this view of the EAP exam as the ultimate goal.

In addition, test anxiety seemed to affect not only these participants’ academic success but also their social life. See the excerpt below as the interview with Neal continued:

In beginning, when I came Canada, I feel everything is new, so I went to everywhere I can go. I went everywhere, like IKEA, shopping mall, and... And then, I find everything is boring. So, I stay, stay in my room now. Because I think everything is boring now. I more like to prefer to staying at home and play game and sleep (Neal)

During Phase II, he frequently described his life as “boring” and shared his struggles with the difficulty of regulating his motivation for learning. Sky, repeating EAP-1, also shared her difficulty in emotional self-regulation due to the pressure from the exam and how it affected her perspective on her life, especially the social aspect:

At the beginning, I didn't feel the stress, but kinda now, like I feel a stress. I find myself start to worried about life. I am, like, kind of like, I am more worried about my life now. Before, like, I am kinda, just, like, let's see how to preparing myself, for the university life.

Like, but now, I am more worried about my school stuff. Yeah, I am not thinking how to join the society any more, like. At the beginning, I was like how to join the society, but now, I am like, how to have a normal life, like, you know? (Sky)

In Phase I, Sky did not report any concerns about her EAP learning even before the final exam; however, in Phase II, her emotional state revolved around the exam. She had been trying to make Canadian friends during Phase I by taking a credit course and joining different extracurricular activities on campus, but it seemed that the stress she expressed prevented her from such social engagement with others. These reported cases in Interview #5 were in line with the current literature that argues self-regulation failure and test anxiety are profoundly connected to each other and affect students' successful learning (e.g., Schutz & Davis, 2000).

***Learning Goals.*** The second sub-theme corresponding to non-use of assessment relates to a lack of long-term learning goals, and this sub-theme displayed major overlaps with the previous section on self-regulation. Having clear learning goals facilitates learners' engagement with their learning and help advance their learning (Zimmerman, 2000). It is argued that learners tend to be less successful when these learning goals are short-term in nature and related to external rewards instead of some intrinsic source of motivation (Tafail, 2018). In addition, educational psychology researchers argue that a lack of clear goals is related to test-takers' self-regulation in emotional and behavioural spheres (Schutz & Davis, 2000).

These arguments are congruent with the findings of the current research, as reported above. In the interview data of some participants, there was an absence of long-term language learning plans and goals. Their learning was mainly driven by the exam content, rather than the learning goals of the curriculum and/or intrinsic motivation. As reported above, for instance, Panda in EAP-2 mentioned his goal as "just pass the course" without specifying concrete learning skills to master. Neal, an EAP-1 repeater, was similar in this regard, concerned about the high-stakes exam and its consequences, and his self-regulation was not directed to the next



learning phase at this point yet. The priority of his learning was apparently the final exam, as he reported in the interview as follows:

I don't think I need to do a different thing. I am preparing for the same final.  
I will not do anything other than prepare for the exam content (Neal)

Such examples suggest that the lack of long-term learning goals, except for passing the final exam, was present in some interviews and was associated with emotional and behavioural aspects of self-regulation in those participants.

**Practice.** A lack of consistent practice was found in some participants in Interview #5 as another sub-theme. This tendency also appeared to be paired with low self-regulation skills. Previously, in Interview #4, as a result of dismissing formative information from assessments, a dearth of practice was observed in some participants. In Interview #5, however, these participants reported sudden practice strategies for the exam which were mainly dedicated to rote-memorization of evaluative criteria. These behaviours were coded as an non-use of assessment, since the intention of the practice was not connected to mastery of language skills, but was to boost test-wiseness to pass the exam (Gebril, 2018).

The data from Neal, repeating EAP-1, suggested there was a negative washback effect in his exam preparation strategy, which was test-driven learning. His study plan was to review materials by staying up late for a few nights before the exam because it was his usual exam preparation routine in his high school in China. See the excerpt below:

- Tsushima: So, you mean, you are not going to sleep? [before the exam] Really?
- Neal: It's OK. I will work harder and review more. Because after this class [/exam/], I can feel relaxing, so it doesn't matter how hard this week is. If I can pass this exam, I can do everything.
- Tsushima: Hum.... Yeah, but what else do you need to do this week?
- Neal: I also need to do extra reading and listening to make sure I'm familiar with the exam. I will review my notes too.

As seen in this interaction, his focus was to enhance test-wiseness at the last minute, which might relate to the rote memorization approach to paper-based exams in the CHC culture (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Similar to Neal's plan, Sky in EAP-1 also put weight on memorization and enhancement of test-taking skills. Even though a presence of practice was presented by these participants, their learning seemed to be largely driven by the EAP exam. This finding echoes the claim in the literature that students with low self-regulation ability are likely to end up cramming for tests (e.g., Andrade & Heritage, 2017; Nakata, 2020).

***Feedback and Other Assistance.*** The fourth sub-theme dealt with the non-use of feedback and/or assistance from others, which was another salient indicator of individual differences. One of the underlying assumptions of LOA is that feedback and other assistance can enhance students' learning through engagement of their cognitive abilities with the task. Thus, in the analysis of Interview #5, participants' behaviours of dismissing feedback, or an opportunity to obtain formative information, was coded as non-use of assessment. Moreover, seeking help has been attested as an important self-regulated learning strategy because it requires self-regulation skills to realize, and accept, the fact that assistance is necessary (Newman, 1994, 2008; Pintrich, 2002; Zimmerman, 2001, 2002).

One of the themes that recurred most often in the qualitative part of this study was indeed the lack of feedback uptake observed in some participants. For example, even a few days before the final exam, such behaviour was reported by some participants. Sky in EAP-1 appeared frequently as a participant who ignored formative feedback provided by her teacher. Through several interviews, it became clear that in Sky's schooling in China, the in-school exams had no consequential effects on the students. This particular assessment culture, according to Sky, influenced her learning style. Inevitably, the teacher feedback she received in EAP did not affect

or inform her learning, especially when the feedback required some effort to understand. In the following excerpt, Sky described how she had been preparing for the final exam:

Tsushima: OK. Good. When you have something you are not sure, what do you do?

Sky: Um, first, I go through it by myself, and I try to find what's wrong there by myself. Then, if I cannot understand, I skip it. I check it and if I don't understand why she circled it, I just, like, skip it.

Sky seemed to employ an avoidance strategy often when she was frustrated, which was reported in Interview #4 as well, and did not invest time to explore forms of assistance to understand the feedback. Seeking some assistance from the teacher or others did not occur to her, because of the following reason:

The only part I am worried is writing. 'Coz like, I got 20, 20, 25 [for three in-class essays]. I just need a pass line. I just need to pass, you know (Sky)

The statement of “I just need a pass line” implied that her goal was focused on the summative evaluation rating itself rather than areas for skill mastery. As presented here, even at the last minute of the exam preparation stage, feedback or other assistance was not utilized by some participants due to their belief in the final exam as a judgement-focused task. It was also associated with their poor self-regulation skills to self-monitor the current situation where they should have sought some external help to solve their learning problems.

***Performance Evaluation.*** A lack of awareness of performance evaluation as learning-enhancing information was used as the final sub-theme to understand participants’ learning behaviours. The LOA theories posit that both formative and summative assessment can be used in a synergistic manner to maximize knowledge acquisition (e.g., formative use of summative test presented by Carless, 2011). Performance evaluation is therefore envisioned as “learning-focused tasks,” rather than “judgement-based tasks” (Hamp-Lyons, 2017), especially when the evaluation was meant to be contingent and to provide learning-focused feedback (e.g., in-class

evaluation). However, Interview #5 revealed that some participants understood such evaluation opportunities as judgement-focused tasks and did not self-regulate their learning.

For instance, Sky constantly shared a view that scores of performance evaluation would determine her level of learning achievement, but that feedback would not. This was reflected in the following statement, in which she reported the result of an in-class mock exam for the EAP final exam:

Listening and reading, we just had the practice exam, and I know I'm fine. I got like 80 points [for the listening and reading section], so it's like, yeah, I'm fine.

Well, the feedback, you know, I don't care, I don't care, like, that's useless. It's just opinion and it depends on the teacher (Sky)

As the score of assessment was prioritized to interpret the evaluation, it demotivated her from learning from the feedback because her score indicated to her that her performance met the standard of the final exam. Her remark about teacher feedback suggested that the formative assessment did not function as intended to promote student learning and self-regulation. Panda in EAP-2 also reported a similar attitude by repeatedly saying, "I'm fine." As a result, Panda did not review the details of the practice exam, dismissing the formative feedback provided to him. In a LOA framework, the result should have functioned as a formative use of summative assessment that prompts learners to further improve their learning (Carless, 2011). Even though they expressed test anxiety in Interview #5, due to their belief in evaluation opportunities as an absolute judgement of their performance, formative use of summative assessment did not occur to these participants. This echoes the self-regulated learning literature that points out that "test-takers can be emotionally and cognitively affected by the exam when they know less about the nature of the exam because of a lack of knowledge in preparing for the specific transaction" (Schutz & Davis, 2000, p. 246).

Overall, the findings of the third overarching theme suggested that the development of such characteristics in a participant appeared quite fluid, which means that it was possible for a participant to develop some of these characteristics but not others, or not all of them at the same time and to the same degree. Moreover, the findings suggested that participants' lives outside of the EAP classroom settings continuously and profoundly informed their learning styles, in particular their self-regulation skills.

## **6.7 Overall Results of Phase II**

This section summarizes the findings of Phase II, which contained two sets of student interviews, namely Interview #4 and Interview #5. Building on the findings from Phase I, there were three overarching themes to explore in Phase II. The first and second themes were developed to investigate the 12 participants' experiences in the EAP courses, and the third theme dealt with questions concerning individual differences in their use of assessment to advance their EAP learning. In this section, the results are summarized to present the results of the overarching theme from each interview set.

The first overarching theme captured the 12 participants' learning journey and their responses to the specific timeline/events of the EAP courses they were in. In Interview #4, which explored their experiences in terms of starting the second EAP term, it was found that participants' learning was significantly affected by the results of the final exam in the previous term. Interview #5 focused on how the participants perceived and prepared for their second final exam. The main finding was their perspective change about the role of learners in language assessment. Different from their past education, in the current EAP context, they found their role to be that of more active and self-directed learners. In this sense, the importance of having quality interactions between teachers and students was voiced by participants, as they believed it

was an effective exam preparation strategy in the EAP context.

The second overarching theme concerned how different formative assessment providers were perceived by the participants in relation to their use of formative feedback to improve their learning. The analysis of Interview #4 indicated that the 12 participants shared some tendencies in their views about specific formative assessment providers. Specifically, regardless of their EAP course levels, participants were more inclined to appreciate formative assessment (i.e., feedback) from teachers than that from their peers, due to their beliefs in feedback as an authoritative power over students. They seemed to require emotional and cognitive readiness to incorporate peer feedback into their learning. In Interview #5, participants' beliefs in specific feedback providers remained the same overall. Yet, from Interview #5 came the new information that participants continued to develop higher expectations towards teachers' feedback quality, and assignments played an important role as LOA tools in the participants' learning. Regarding peer feedback, the data showed that some tactfully-designed tasks indeed facilitated participants' engagement in peer feedback; in particular, the teachers' presence and guidance seemed to have a significant impact on participants' successful engagement with peer feedback activities.

The third and last overarching theme dealt with the individual differences among the 12 participants in terms of their assessment use. The results of Interview #4 suggested that two types of learning behaviour emerged as the main themes: active use of assessment, and non-use of assessment. Such learning behaviours were connected to the presence of self-regulation (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000) in participants or the lack thereof. This notion was further associated with the LOA characteristics developed by Turner and Purpura (2016, 2018). Interview #5 then further explored this theme by focusing on participants' exam preparation. It was found that there were some changes in terms of active use of assessment this time, because some

participants self-regulated their learning to be prepared for the post-EAP phase, rather than for the EAP final exam, even though the data were collected before the final exam. Regarding the cases of non-use of assessment, a lack of knowledge of the use of LOA characteristics, and with poor self-regulation, emerged as common patterns. The evidence showed that test anxiety was observed in participants who were emotionally and cognitively affected by the exam, and it seemed to cause these participants' self-regulation and their use of assessment to deteriorate.

## **6.8 Mini Discussion of Phase II**

Phase II was designed to continue investigating the 12 participants' use of classroom assessment in relation to their learning progress during the second EAP term. In this phase, a clear transformation in the participants' perspectives and/or learning strategies was evident. Moreover, individual differences in their use of assessment became significantly prominent, not only within classrooms but also in their personal lives. In keeping with the discussion format of Chapter 5, this mini-discussion section focuses on findings that are relevant to the RQs for Phase II. Other major findings are integrated and discussed together in the data integration chapter (i.e., Chapter 9). Thus, the following RQs lead this discussion section:

RQ1. What changes in learning-oriented EAP classrooms do the group of CHC students experience over a few months?

RQ2. What individual differences are there among the CHC students in relation to their use of assessment to prepare for the final exam?

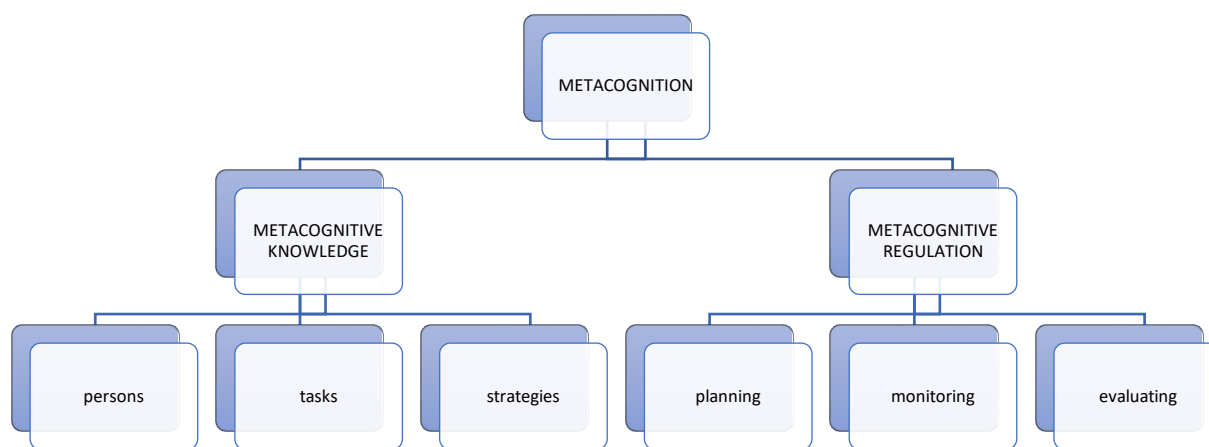
### ***6.8.1 Conceptual Overview of Metacognition***

As presented in this chapter, the research findings of Phase II were explained and supported by metacognitive learning theories that serve to describe the intricate learning process of individual learners (Brown, 1987; Flavell, 1976, 1979; Zimmerman, 1989). Thus, the mini

discussion for Phase II starts with a brief introduction to metacognitive theories and incorporates the concepts into the actual discussions of the abovementioned two RQs. Figure 6.6 provides a conceptual framework for frequently identified components of metacognition.

**Figure 6.6**

*Conceptual Framework of Metacognition Based on Brown (1987) and Flavell (1979)*



Metacognition is frequently given the definition, “thinking about thinking” or “cognition about cognition.” The concept was initially conceived by Flavell in 1971 as *metamemory*, and it was further analyzed and introduced as metacognition in 1976 to refer to an individual’s awareness of thinking and learning. The analysis was continued and expanded by Brown (1987), who highlighted two main components: knowledge about cognition and regulation of cognition.

*Metacognitive knowledge* is defined as “knowledge about knowledge” (Flavell, 1979), which refers to the awareness of what we know about ourselves as a cognitive processor. It comprises learners’ knowledge of persons, of tasks, and of strategies. *Metacognitive regulation* is how we control our thinking to facilitate our learning through any activities that help regulate our learning. Typically, it involves three main activities: planning how to approach learning



tasks, monitoring comprehension, and evaluation of the process (Brown, 1987; Flavell, 1979). In order to enhance learning outcomes, not only a change of metacognitive knowledge, but also follow-up actions (i.e., exercise of self-regulation) should be exercised accordingly (Flavell, 1979). That is, metacognitive regulation—planning, monitoring and evaluating one’s own learning—is needed to facilitate learning (Zimmerman, 1995). These theoretical concepts have been applied across a wide variety of domains such as general education and educational measurement research.

### ***6.8.2 First Research Question: Changes in Learner Beliefs***

The findings revealed that the most salient change in this regard was seen in the participants’ beliefs in roles that people played in their language learning. Considering change as a product of new situational experiences, the research findings will be examined and discussed in relation to metacognitive learning theories. Originally suggested by Flavell (1979), beliefs about learning are known as a component of metacognitive knowledge. In particular, knowledge of persons refers to what learners know/believe about their own abilities and learning. Underpinned by the theory, Cotterall (1995) states that language learners hold beliefs about teachers and their roles, and about themselves as learners. Thus, *learner beliefs* are seen as a variable that affects both the process and outcomes of language learning (Ellis, 2008; Horwitz, 1988; Wenden, 1999). In other words, these beliefs can affect learners’ receptiveness to the ideas and activities presented in language assessment as well.

William and Thompson (2008) define the main stakeholders of formative assessment as teacher, learner, and peer. As LOA frameworks have been informed by the body of work advocating Assessment for Learning approaches, the concept of *stakeholders* can be applied to the current research context as well. In fact, findings of the current research provided empirical

support for factors underlying CHC students' beliefs about the roles of teachers, themselves, and their peers in their use of assessment. Thus, this section discusses such changes in the following order: (1) role of teachers; (2) role of language learners; and (3) role of peers. In addition, after discussing the changes of learner beliefs about these three types of stakeholders, the section presents a model of metacognitive knowledge about classroom assessment.

**6.8.2.1 Roles of Teachers.** The teacher factor was found as the most salient theme affecting students' active engagement with assessment, and it was deeply reflected in the changes of their metacognitive knowledge. Table 6.7 summarizes the teacher roles in the participants' past EFL classrooms and in the EAP classrooms that were described by the interview participants in Phases I and II.

**Table 6.7**

*Roles of Language Teachers in Two Assessment Cultures*

English language classrooms in past learning contexts	EAP classrooms with LOA approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● summative feedback provider</li> <li>● content knowledge expert</li> <li>● authoritarian and distant mentor</li> <li>● discipline model</li> <li>● exam preparation strategist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● formative feedback provider</li> <li>● linguistic, cultural and social model</li> <li>● facilitator of peer feedback and self-assessment activities</li> <li>● designer of cognitively engaging homework/tasks</li> <li>● resource to further advance learning</li> </ul>

In Phase II, participants' reflections on their past learning experience were captured with more frequency and in more details than in the previous phase. As seen in Table 6.9, the roles of teachers described by the participants in relation to their use of assessment were: summative feedback provider, content knowledge expert, authoritarian and distant mentor, discipline model,

and exam preparation strategist. This finding aligns well with the reports from other English language learning studies with CHC student participants (e.g., Jing Jing, 2017; Le Gal & I-Chou, 2015; Ma, 2018). Ma (2018), for example, found that CHC students in Hong Kong showed a tendency in which teachers were regarded as authoritative figures who impart knowledge to students. Le Gal and I-Chou (2015), investigating a Taiwanese context, reported that Taiwanese learners of English, due to their belief in teacher-centeredness, expected their teachers to be a strict assessors of mistakes students make in the classroom. Jing Jing (2017) investigated a formative assessment practice in Hong Kong and suggested that students seemed to rely overly on the teacher to promote their self-regulative capacities, rather than self-directing formative assessment practice.

Based on the findings of the present study, it seems that as they became increasingly familiar with the new assessment culture in the EAP classrooms, participants formed new learner beliefs about teachers as listed in Table 6.9. The teachers were perceived as formative feedback providers, linguistic, cultural and social models, facilitators of peer feedback and self-assessment activities, designers of cognitively engaging homework/tasks, and resources to further advance learning. As reported, the most salient role of the EAP teachers for the participants was as formative feedback providers. From the very beginning of their EAP learning in Phase I, this role seemed to be the main characteristic teachers played in participants' learning, which is in line with the essential role teachers need to play in a LOA framework (Carless, 2011; Hamp-Lyons, 2017; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). The participants also perceived their teachers as not only a linguistic model but also as a representative of the culture and of the Canadian society (e.g., teacher feedback on a North American way of organizing ideas). Additionally, as they became more aware of the different teaching style and classroom dynamics of the EAP classrooms, the

teachers' roles as classroom activity facilitators and designers of cognitively engaging tasks were added to the descriptions. Such roles indicate that a wide range of assessments were used in the EAP classrooms in order to elicit student performance. Such a language elicitation aspect for assessment is an important component of LOA (Turner & Purpura, 2016).

Moreover, the data from Interview #5 showed that participants expected their new EAP teachers to play these listed roles and expressed strong frustration with those who did not display such characteristics. As discussed in learner belief studies, "a mismatch between learner and teacher beliefs can lead to problems in class" (Peacock, 1998, p. 234). The present study documented such a phenomenon as well. The last role—teacher as a resource to further advance learning—was evident in Interview #5 and was also one of the unique findings of this study. Especially for the participants whose self-regulation was directed to be ready for the post-EAP phase in advance, interactions with teachers were generally reported as a student-initiated and future-focused assessment conversation, rather than as the students passively receiving guidance from the teacher.

Thanh-Pham (2010) describes teachers in CHC education as authority figures, stating that "the teacher should be treated with the highest respect because the teacher is always seen as having much better knowledge than students" (p.31). In the present study, however, in conjunction with the change of interview participants' views on the role of EAP teachers, participant interactions with EAP teachers became increasingly student-initiated and even critical. The finding here echoes the concept of learner beliefs in the area of metacognitive knowledge. Wenden (1999), for instance, refers to the fluidity of this knowledge as follows: "a stable body of knowledge, though, of course, it may change over time" (p. 436).

**6.8.2.2 Roles of Language Learners.** The second stakeholders of the participants' learning experience are the learners themselves (William & Thompson, 2008). The findings of the current study observed the changes in learner beliefs about the participants themselves. Wenden (1999) defines thinking about themselves as learners as a metacognitive knowledge process that plays an important role in language learning. In the current study, such self-reflection was captured through the interviews. The change of learner beliefs about themselves emerged through the data. Table 6.8 presents a summary of the two contrasting student roles from the data, as reported by interview participants.

**Table 6.8**

*Roles of Language Learners in Two Assessment Cultures*

English language classrooms in past learning contexts	LOA classrooms in EAP program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• receivers of assessment</li> <li>• quiet and passive learners</li> <li>• strategic test takers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• user of assessments</li> <li>• responsible learners who inform teachers about learning progress and expectations</li> <li>• self-directed and autonomous learners</li> </ul>

Interview participants described the main roles of students in their past learning contexts as receivers of assessment, quiet and passive learners, and strategic test takers, as presented on the left column of Table 6.8. These participants associated the notion of “receivers of assessment” and “strategic test takers” with the test-oriented culture where summative assessment is dominant and prioritized. The characteristic of “quiet and passive learners” was considered as an ideal student behaviour in the participants' past learning settings, which was paired with the authoritarian and distant teacher figure in the CHC education. This role echoes the literature on the learning styles of CHC students (e.g., Loh & Teo, 2017).

In the LOA classrooms of the EAP program, as listed on the right side of the table, different roles were bestowed upon language learners themselves. The analysis of Phase II suggested that this transformation of learner beliefs concerning learners themselves was triggered by the different assessment culture of the learning-oriented EAP program. The first role, “users of assessment” became one of the major themes of the current research, as this role was frequently highlighted in the data and contrasted with the role of “receiver of assessment” in the CHC learning context. This metacognitive awareness reflects the fact that the classroom assessment functioned with an LOA approach in which learners are supposed to be fully engaged with assessment for furthering learning (Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018).

The next role, “responsible learners who inform learning progress and expectations” emerged as a new identity as well, which similarly reflects the interactive nature of the LOA approach. As reported earlier, learning progress and expectations were delivered to EAP teachers. This became frequent and detailed in Phase II. In this research context, classroom assessments, in particular assignments, were often designed as cognitively-heavy, complex tasks, which required a different approach for the participants from their past learning experiences. Consequently, participants had to confirm, clarify, and consolidate their learning through assessment-driven communication with their teachers and peers. Moreover, when the teacher’s assessment practice did not match a participant’s expectations, this information tended to be conveyed by the participant to the teacher as a learner responsibility. Such a student behaviour was different from the view of CHC students as passive and obedient to their teachers that have been frequently reported in the literature (e.g., Arumugam, et. al., 2013; Ho, 2016).

The last role that emerged was “self-directed and autonomous learners” which particularly appeared among participants who strongly displayed an active use of assessment, as

became increasingly evident through Phase II. This point is congruent with LOA concepts that aim at helping students become independent in their learning with timely support and guidance from the teacher. It should be highlighted that in the current study, however, the learning focus of some participants was directed towards the post-EAP phase, in which their language learning would be continued in full autonomy where they would plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning all by themselves, using self-regulation. In other words, such a state is similar to Dickinson's (1993, 1994) notion of learner autonomy, which she defined as the "situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his or her learning and the implementation of those decisions" (Dickinson, 1987, p. 11). In this sense, this empirical evidence from Phase II may support the further development of LOA frameworks to discuss the relationship between learner autonomy and an LOA approach.

**6.8.2.3 Roles of Peers.** The final stakeholders in the participants' learning experience were peers (William & Thompson, 2008). It has to be reiterated that, in the current study, learner beliefs concerning peer feedback showed the least change in the data. In LOA, active collaboration with peers is one of the key elements to enhance students' learning (Carless, 2007; Hamp-Lyons, 2017; Turner & Purpura, 2016).

It should be underscored that in both assessment cultures, participants reported that peers were actually given the role of collaborative learners. The definition of such learning practice varied in each learning context, however, because learning is a situation-dependent activity (Wenger, 1998). Table 6.9 presents a summary of the two contrasting student roles of peers in the two different assessment cultures, based on the findings of the current research.

**Table 6.9***Roles of Peers in Two Assessment Cultures*

English language classrooms in past learning contexts	LOA classrooms in EAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaborative learners to prepare for summative assessment</li> <li>• formative feedback providers in private in L1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaborative learners to support each other's learning by creating supportive environment</li> <li>• formative feedback providers in classrooms in L2</li> </ul>

As indicated in the left column of the table above, interview participants reported that the common roles peers played in the classrooms of their past learning contexts were as collaborative learners, to prepare for summative assessment and for being formative feedback providers in private in their L1. As seen in the findings section, this role was indeed brought into the EAP context. Summative assessment opportunities, such as quizzes and the final exams, generated organic and collaborative learning among EAP students. The next role of peers—formative feedback providers in private and in their common L1—was related to the cultural values as well; that is, formative feedback for peers should be delivered in a tactful way—in private and in their first language— and such feedback should deal with questions that have only one correct answer and expect to be rewarded for accuracy, which is in line with the common CHC student characteristics in language classroom research (e.g., Hofstede, 2001). This point was strongly emphasized by the interview participants of the present study in conjunction with their learner beliefs about feedback as an authoritative power which only the teacher should hold. This finding agrees with many previous studies that investigated the difficulty of implementing formative assessment in CHC contexts (e.g., Chen et al., 2014 in China; Ma, 2018 in Hong Kong; Ruegg, 2015 in Japan; Thanh-Pham & Renshaw, 2015, in Vietnam). For example, Chen et al. (2014) and Ruegg (2015) found that CHC university students were quite hesitant to accept



peer feedback, instead relying strongly on the teacher as the ultimate authority. Indeed, Thanh-Pham and Renshaw (2015) found the CHC students refused to participate in the types of assessment that required group members to assess each other's products and contributions.

In the current study, however, different learner beliefs from the traditional CHC views were observed through the data of Phase II, as presented in the right side of Table 6.9. Indeed, these descriptions about the new roles of peers are compatible with the theoretical bases of peer cooperation in LOA (e.g., Carless, 2011; Hamp-Lyons, 2017). The most prominent role of peers reported by participants in Phase II was that peers were responsible for creating a supportive environment to facilitate group work in language classrooms. The second new role of peers—providers of formative feedback in classrooms in English—is different from the traditional view of peer roles in CHC language classrooms (e.g., Ma, 2018). As reported earlier, this new learner belief emerged over the course of time and was observed in the data of some active users of assessment. There were large individual differences in this regard. However, those who did develop the belief expressed the feeling of responsibility for providing meaningful formative feedback as peers. The problem with establishing new peer roles in the EAP classroom context was the strong pushback from students who believed that only teachers should provide critical feedback. Such beliefs in CHC contexts are reported in the literature. For instance, Ma (2018) reports that CHC students were negative about practices that required them to play a more active and confident role in monitoring and evaluating their own learning (i.e., peer and self-feedback), even though they acknowledged the benefits.

**6.8.2.4 Changes in Metacognitive Knowledge.** In short, based on the findings from Phase II of the present study, the most salient change in learning-oriented EAP classrooms the participants experienced was a change in learners' metacognitive knowledge—learner beliefs—

about the stakeholders. Although this did not mean that all the new roles in the EAP classrooms were equally observed in the data of the 12 participants, the emerging pattern suggests clear learner belief changes in metacognitive knowledge about their learning agents. As Wenden (1999) states, metacognitive knowledge changes over time and through experience, due to the highly situated nature of such knowledge. This concept seems applicable to the findings of the current research. Since the participants became more familiar with the nature of tasks and strategies through the two EAP terms, their metacognitive knowledge of persons (i.e., roles of stakeholders in language learning) were also shaped in the way described to match the practice of the new learning context.

It is worthy of note that the findings of the present study suggested that such changes did not seem to happen in a linear manner, but in an iterative manner, meaning that one participant might hold two contradictory views at the same time. Furthermore, even though a participant might have developed new learner beliefs, the knowledge was not necessarily transferred to the cognitive level immediately. This point needs to be further investigated by the research community to understand how assessment can be utilized to help students develop new learner beliefs.

### ***6.8.3 Second Research Question: Individual Differences and Self-regulation***

The second RQ for Phase II inquired about individual differences among the participants concerning their use of assessment to improve their EAP skills. The role of self-regulation emerged from the data as an important factor that seemed to enhance their learning. Thus, in this section, individual differences in the use of assessment are discussed focusing on self-regulation skills (refer to Section 6.7.1, above, for an overview of this theoretical concept).

**6.8.4.1 Self-regulation and LOA Characteristics.** As presented in the findings, behaviours in some participants were aligned with changes in their metacognitive knowledge (e.g., learner beliefs). The follow-up action—what they did according to what they knew—seemed to be one of the major determiners of their success in their EAP learning journey. In particular, the data revealed that their use of self-regulation and LOA characteristics (Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018) highlighted the existence of behavioural differences among individuals. Table 6.10 summarizes the differences that emerged from the findings of Phase II. In the following section, this table is explained by reiterating the research findings and relating them to self-regulation theories.

**Table 6.10**

*Individual Differences of Use of Assessment in LOA context in Phase II*

	active use of assessment	non-use of assessment
self-regulation	high	low
learning-goals	short-term and long-term	short-term
practice	regularly done; and completed before the exam	latent; and suddenly visible before the exam
feedback & other assistance	accepted from diverse knowledge sources; and concurrently developing self- assessment skills	dismissing formative feedback; and no initiation of help seeking
performance evaluation	understood as a crucial learning opportunity; and contingent information of performance	understood as a judgement opportunity; and absolute information of performance

**6.8.4.2 Active Use of Assessment.** As reported in this chapter, the findings from Phase II indicate that the active use of assessment appeared to be profoundly related to the exercise of self-regulation. Participants' learning behaviours were well-aligned with common principles of

LOA, such as learner engagement in the assessment process, the significance of feedback to improve learning, and the centrality of learning. As shown in Table 6.10, when learners' self-regulation—utilization of cognition, metacognition, and motivation to achieve learning goals—was high, their use of information from assessment appeared active. Henceforward, this will be labeled “self-regulated use of assessment.” This result aligns well with the current direction of educational assessment research that incorporates learning theories from self-regulation studies (e.g., Andrade, 2010; Bailey & Heritage, 2018; Turner & Purpura, 2016).

For instance, when the information of classroom assessment was properly received and used by participants, clear learning goals were set in both short- and long-term ways. According to Printrich (2000), such a trait is associated with successful students who self-regulate their own learning. Thus, in Interview #5, reaching the end of the EAP courses, long-term goals beyond the EAP course objectives became more central, and those new goals functioned as motivational prompts to prepare the participants to be autonomous language learners (Dickinson, 1993).

Classroom assessment also triggered practice in some participants who valued the information to advance their learning. Cognitive strategies were regularly used to incorporate practice into both in- and out-of-classroom lives. Functioning as LOA for those participants, the assessment information helped them see the learning gap and prompted them to take follow-up action. In other words, the classroom assessment was implemented as a feed-forward principle of LOA (Carless, 2013; Hamp-Lyons & Green, 2014). Once practice for the final exam was considered completed by those individuals, their practice focus was directed towards new learning goals of the post-EAP phase. This decision making of when to practice a certain skill and when to move forward to other skills indicates their use of metacognitive strategy skills of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning (Flavell, 1979).

In addition to teacher feedback, feedback from diverse sources besides the EAP community (e.g., the Writing Centre, classmates in academic courses, online resources, and the learners themselves) were actively incorporated into participant learning not only as cognitive but also as metacognitive and motivational prompts. This reflects the principle of LOA that promotes learner-centred assessment (Hamp-Lyons & Green, 2014, Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). In Interview #5, the development of self-feedback skills (i.e., metacognition) became the locus of participants' interests as the end of the term approached. These behaviours are highly congruent with the attitudes of LOA-minded learners who take responsibility for their own learning (Carless, 2011; Turner & Purpura, 2016).

Lastly, as presented in Table 6.10, regarding performance evaluation, the findings revealed that participants who used assessment to inform their learning perceived evaluation opportunities as crucial learning opportunities and as "learning-focused tasks," rather than "judgement-based tasks" (Hamp-Lyons, 2017). Not only the summative information, but also the formative information of an assessment was important to such participants in order to obtain the holistic picture of their own performance. The quality of formative information mattered a great deal to them. Moreover, by Interview #5, the participants understood performance evaluation as a contingent activity. They therefore used it as additional information to make decisions on their own, and not as absolute judgement. This finding also implies the strong presence of self-regulation in relation to the participants' use of assessment. Cognitive capacity is necessary to understand the nature of a performance evaluation, such as its purpose, methods, and assessment criteria. These participants demonstrated their use of metacognition in their self-directed learning by incorporating both summative and formative information from the assessment.

**6.8.4.3 Non-Use of Assessment.** In the current study, it was found that the learning struggles experienced by some participants were connected to their non-use of assessment in an LOA context, as summarized in the right column of Table 6.10. The analysis implies that if participants failed in EAP courses due to a lack of self-regulatory learning ability, they might exhibit insufficiency in their engagement with the LOA characteristics (e.g., goal setting, control of practice, feedback utilization, help seeking, or understanding the value of performance evaluation).

For instance, when the information from classroom assessment, especially formative information, was not actively used by participants, learning goals were not set in a timely manner due to the lack of metacognitive stimuli from the information. As the final exam approached, these participants reported using short-term learning goals that would enable them to master the least-needed skills to pass the course. Their non-use of assessment in relation to goal setting was associated with insufficient deployment of motivational self-regulatory skills. This echoes findings from the study of Safdari and Maftoon (2016), in which low-achievers in an EFL context displayed a lack of long-term vision in their learning.

In addition, the dearth/delay of practice in some individuals was connected to their non-use of assessment. As mentioned, information from assessment functions as a metacognitive stimulus for learners to change their metacognitive knowledge and strategies. In the findings of the current study, however, due to the dismissal of assessment information, some participants did not take actions for improvement (i.e., practice). So as the final exam approached, it drove these participants to only review only the learning materials, including classroom assessment.

The next point of Table 6.10—non-use of feedback and other assistance—is one of the most salient findings in Phase II. Although there is solid research literature on formative

assessment and its potential to support students' self-regulated learning (Andrade, 2010; Hawe & Dixon, 2017), the analyses conducted for the current study elucidates that the cause and effect between the formative assessment and students' self-regulated learning is not a simple matter. For example, even when formative assessment (i.e., teacher feedback) was delivered in a timely and creative manner, some participants dismissed the information, thus, missing the opportunity for it to enhance their learning. Moreover, this non-use of feedback was also associated with the absence of help-seeking strategies in those individuals. Seeking help has been identified as an important self-regulated learning strategy, because it requires self-regulation skills to realize and accept the fact that assistance is necessary (Newman, 1994, 2008; Pintrich, 2002; Zimmerman, 2001). Thus, feedback as a help-seeking agent must be properly accepted in order for it to serve self-regulated learning.

The last example of non-use of assessment presented in Table 6.10 was performance evaluation understood as a judgement opportunity, and the absolute nature of information on performance. The problem stemmed from the metacognitive knowledge of tasks held by those participants who perceived such events as a form of absolute judgement of their capability, rather than as learning-focused tasks. For these participants, this particular knowledge about performance evaluation was linked to test anxiety (Schutz & Davis, 2000) and negative washback effects (Messick, 1996; Watanabe, 2004). Schutz and Davis (2000), examining self-regulation and test anxiety theories, state that when test-takers know less about the nature of the exam because of incorrect knowledge in preparing for the specific transaction, they are prone to being affected by the exam emotionally and cognitively.

Similar to the analysis of learner beliefs about stakeholders, it should be reiterated that the listed traits, which divide participants' use of assessment into two binary categories, seemed

to be developed in an iterative manner. This point may be closely related to Zimmerman's (2000) idea that self-regulation is an individual characteristic that everyone possesses, although its mastery is not evenly distributed across learners. Moreover, as a unique finding of the current research, non-use of assessment by some participants happened not just due to their lack of awareness of the benefits of assessment information to improve their learning, but also as a result of multiple intentional actions on their part. This implies that even if new metacognitive knowledge (i.e., learner beliefs) is developed in a learner through LOA, it takes metacognitive regulation to translate the knowledge to the cognitive level to facilitate actual learning (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000).

**6.8.4.4 Individual Differences and Self-regulation.** In summary, the analysis of Phase II suggests that the individual differences lay in the participant's self-regulation skills and how they used assessment for exam preparation. Immersed in an LOA approach, some participants were able to develop their readiness for autonomous learning as they changed their learning approach to match the student-centred, learning-oriented paradigm. Such behaviour—using the knowledge about oneself and actively planning to act or not act upon it—meets the characteristics of self-regulated learners (Zimmerman, 1995). On the other hand, there were some cases in which self-regulation did not function properly to utilize LOA to support their learning. Language learning can be facilitated through an LOA approach as seen in many research reports (e.g., Beikmohammadi, et al., 2020; Kim & Kim, 2017; Navaie, 2018). The current research revealed that LOA characteristics can be used to analyze whether students' learning is self-regulated or not.



## 6.9 Summary of Chapter 6

This chapter reported the second qualitative part (i.e., Phase II) of this mixed methods study that investigating learning experiences of international undergraduate students in an EAP program at a Canadian University. Building on the findings from Phase I, Phase II investigated the participants' experiences in the EAP courses, and explored individual differences in their use of assessment to advance their EAP learning. The data were collected twice from each participant (Interviews #4 and #5) during the November Term.

Regarding the 12 participants' learning journey as a group of international students from CHC backgrounds, their metacognitive knowledge showed some major changes in terms of how they perceived and engaged with particular persons, tasks, and strategies. Such changes were associated with their learning-oriented EAP classroom experiences. For example, the 12 participants shared some tendencies in their views on specific formative assessment providers. This result underscores the difficulties of changing the metacognitive knowledge of learners in a short period of time. Knowledge from the past learning contexts may affect the efficacy of LOA.

Moreover, learners' self-regulation—utilization of cognition, metacognition, and motivation to achieve learning goals—was found to be profoundly connected to their individual differences in the use and understanding of information from assessment. Two types of learning behaviour emerged as the main themes: active use of assessment; and non-use of assessment. This notion was further associated with the LOA characteristics developed by Turner and Purpura (2018) in order to explain and define participants' individual differences in the use of assessment. The individual differences in LOA and ways to support students' self-regulated use of assessment are further discussed in Chapter 9.

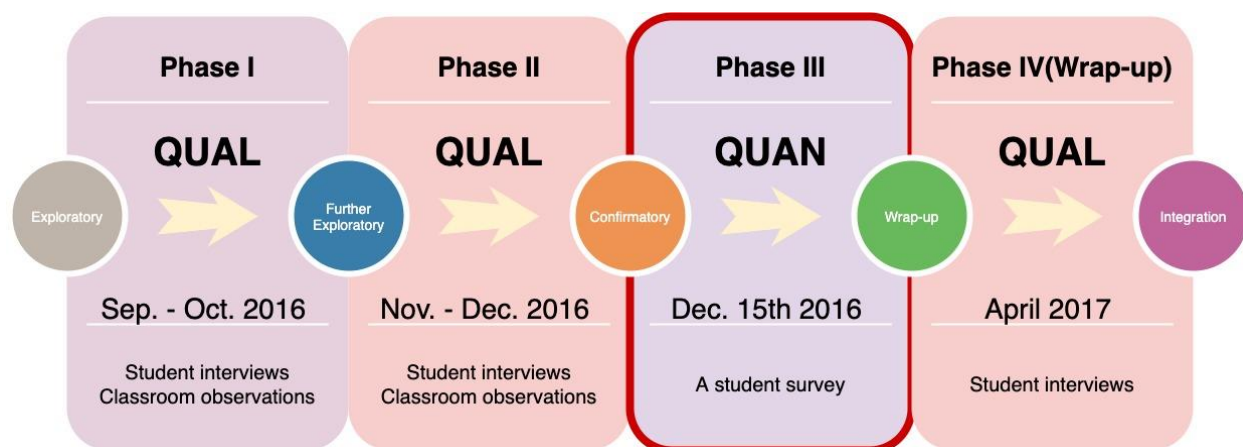
## Chapter 7 Phase III

### 7.1 Introduction to Chapter 7

Phase III was a quantitative phase of the MMR study with a student survey ( $n = 354$ ), informed by and developed from the exploratory qualitative phases (Phases I and II; see Chapter 4 for a full explanation of the data collection methods and analysis procedures). Figure 7.1 summarizes the flow of all the phases to contextualize the present phase within the larger MMR study.

**Figure 7.1**

*Sequence of MMR study with Wrap-up Phase: Phase III*



The data analyses from the preceding qualitative phases (Phases I and II) revealed key themes that seemed to affect interview participants' learning process and outcomes. Three overarching categories were created for the student survey, based on the themes that emerged: (1) student demographic information and past learning experiences; (2) CHC students' learner beliefs; and (3) EAP teachers' LOA practices. For the third category, one variable—teacher factor—was used to test the hypothesis that student learning experiences in terms of EAP teachers' assessment practices were different depending on a teacher/section.

Chapter 7 begins with the research questions (RQs) for Phase III and the rationale for the development of the RQs. Then, it presents the findings from a student survey that was collected from 354 students studying in EAP courses at the same university. The main part of Chapter 7 is dedicated to reporting the results of the survey. Chapter 7 ends with a mini discussion of findings that are particularly unique to Phase III.

## **7.2 Research Questions of Phase III**

The themes that emerged from the qualitative data in Phases I and II served as the content in the construction of the study survey for Phase III. They represent the key findings that affected interview participants' learning processes and outcomes as reported by the 12 participants. For instance, in Phase I, past language learning experiences of the participants and their beliefs about language teaching and learning emerged strongly as factors that influenced their learning in the EAP context. Moreover, based on the analysis of Phase II, use of classroom assessment in EAP courses emerged as a major factor that affected participants' learning. In addition, there seemed to be differences among sections/teachers in terms of how assessment was utilized for student learning. Although individual differences of understanding and use of assessment were also a significantly salient finding in Phase II, this factor was eliminated from the student survey because the following wrap-up phase (Phase IV) was dedicated to focus on this particular factor through a qualitative approach. Three RQs were developed for the quantitative phase as follows:

RQ1. What is the demographic information on the CHC students studying in the English for Academic Purposes courses at a Canadian university? Are they a homogeneous group in terms of their past English language learning experience?

RQ2. What values and beliefs do CHC students in the EAP courses hold regarding language learning practice?

RQ3. To what extent did the EAP courses provide a LOA experience to the students? Are there any differences among teachers in terms of how students experienced LOA practice?

Each RQ was used to develop a category of the student survey items (see Appendix E).

### **7.3 Research Methodology**

As presented in Figure 7.1, the current study was conducted using an exploratory sequential MMR design, where a quantitative phase is informed by the findings from qualitative data collected in the preceding phase(s) (Creswell, 2015). Phase III—the quantitative phase—aimed to test the hypotheses that were generated from the findings of the previous two qualitative phases (Phases I and II). The student survey was used as the main data source. These were collected and analyzed quantitatively (see Chapter 4 for the information about data collection methods and analysis procedures).

### **7.4 Introduction to Results of Phase III**

The student survey revealed that the emerging themes from the qualitative phases used to construct the student survey were relevant to the larger population. The total number of valid data after data cleaning (e.g., elimination of incomplete surveys) was 387, and 354 students identified themselves as CHC students. This means that the majority of the students (91.47%) were from CHC backgrounds. The data from non-CHC students were excluded from the analysis for the purpose of this dissertation focusing on a specific cultural group.

The survey was organized around three categories: (1) CHC student demographic information and English learning backgrounds; (2) CHC students' learner beliefs; and (3) EAP teachers' LOA practices. Table 7.1 shows the organization of the survey. For each of the three categories, it explains the number of question items, the overarching categories, and the

corresponding sub-category. In addition, one variable—teacher factor—was used for the data analysis of Category 3. The rationale for using this variable will be explained in the result report of Category 3 with the definition of “teacher factor.” These categories and the variable will be used to describe the result reporting as well as the mini discussion of Phase III.

**Table 7.1**

*Survey Organization: Category, Included Items, Overarching Category, Main Sub-category, and Variable*

category	item	overarching category	main sub-category	variable
Category 1 (RQ1)	5	demographics and past learning experiences	(a) student demographics; and (b) past English learning backgrounds	n/a
Category 2 (RQ2)	5	CHC students' learner beliefs	(a) classroom practice; and (b) error correction and roles people play in process	n/a
Category 3 (RQ3)	8	EAP teachers' LOA practices	(a) classroom management; (b) feedback interactions with teacher and peers; and (c) assignments as LOA tool	teacher factor

## 7.5 Results of Category 1: Demographics and English Learning Backgrounds

The first category of the survey (Category 1) was developed to investigate demographic information from the student participants and their past educational backgrounds. It consisted of five survey items (see Table 7.1, above, and Appendix E).

### 7.5.1 CHC Student Demographics

Out of the 354 students who identified themselves as CHC students, 178 were male, 175 were female and one did not disclose gender. Table 7.2 shows the information of the participants' age and countries of origin. The majority of the CHC students in the EAP courses

came from China (93.0%), followed by Japan (2.5%), Korea (2.0%), and Vietnam (1.7%). Two students in the last option, “other,” were from Chinese-speaking countries or regions (i.e., Hong Kong and Taiwan). Most participants were between the ages of 17-19 (62.1%), followed by 20-22 (31.9%), 23-25 (2.8%), above 26 (2.8%) and one that did not answer (0.3%).

**Table 7.2**

*Demographic Information from CHC Students in EAP courses: Age and Country of Origin*

age (Item 2)	<i>n</i>	%	country (Item 3)	<i>n</i>	%
17 - 19	220	62.1	China	329	93.0
20 - 22	113	31.9	Japan	9	2.5
23 - 25	10	2.8	Korea	7	2.0
over 26	10	2.8	Vietnam	6	1.7
not specified	1	0.3	other	3	0.8
total	354	100.0		354	100.0

A question on “length of stay in Canada” was included in order to add more context to the demographic data, as presented in Table 7.3, below. As assumed from the interviews and fieldwork in Phases I and II, the large majority (72.9%) had lived in Canada for less than six months, which corresponds to the age categories described above. The great majority of this population came directly to Canada to enroll in this program after graduating from high school.

The second option of 6-12 months (7.1%) mainly included students who could not complete the EAP coursework within the standard timeframe of four to six months and took the same EAP course more than one time. Then, 14.4% of the participants (1-3 years) and 5.1% (more than 3 years), in total approximately 20% of the population, answered that they had been in Canada for an extended period of time. This finding was congruent with the field notes taken

during Phases I and II, and with research findings that describe the international mobility of Chinese students in North American higher education. Li (2019), for instance, reports that Chinese parents increasingly send children to Canada for secondary school studies prior to university. These data help explain the results of the survey presented in the following section.

**Table 7.3**

*Demographic Information from CHC Students in EAP Courses: Length of Stay in Canada*

length of stay in Canada (Item 4)	n	%
less than 6 months	258	72.9
6 - 12 months	25	7.1
1 - 3 years	51	14.4
more than 3 years	18	5.1
not specified	2	0.6
Total	354	100

### **7.5.2 English Learning Background**

The second main sub-category of Category 1 concerned the English learning background of the CHC student participants. It is worth noting that the data collection took place on the last day of the November Term, which means that all the students, having spent at least two months (one EAP term duration) or longer in the program, had already been familiarized with the EAP classrooms. One question was posed concerning their previous English learning experience as compared to the current EAP learning environment (see Item 1, Table 7.4, below).

As presented in Table 7.4, over half of the respondents answered that their previous language classes had a different approach compared to the EAP classrooms (“slightly disagree”

31.1%, and “completely disagree” 26.8%). Based on the findings from the student interviews in Phases I and II, it was highly likely that those students who answered “completely disagree” were from academically-oriented, public schools with traditional CHC education values where English was taught as a subject. By contrast, 4.5% of respondents answered “completely agree,” likely meaning they had attended schools where student-centred, English-medium teaching was deeply incorporated, such as English-focused international schools or secondary schools in an English-speaking country.

**Table 7.4**

*Descriptive Statistics: English-learning backgrounds*

item	question	options	n	%	cumulative %
5	The EAP course is similar to how I learned English in my high school (senior/middle school)	completely agree	16	4.5	4.5
		slightly agree	126	35.6	40.1
		slightly disagree	117	33.1	73.2
		completely disagree	95	26.8	100.0

## 7.6 Results of Category 2: CHC Student Learner Beliefs

The results of Category 2 addressed the beliefs that students from CHC backgrounds held towards language learning. It consisted of five survey items as presented in Table 7.1, above.

The term *learner beliefs*, as described in Chapter 6 to report findings from Phase II, refers to the conceptions that language learners hold about language learning and teaching, such as roles of teachers and themselves as learners (Cotterall, 1995; Ellis, 2008; Horwitz, 1988). The findings from Phase II revealed that the most salient change in the interview participants was observed in their beliefs in roles that people played in language learning. Moreover, such beliefs were seen as a factor that affected the learning process, including their use of classroom assessment. Two



main sub-categories were developed for the survey, based on the preliminary analysis of Phases I and II, to focus on key findings related to CHC student learner beliefs: (a) classroom practice and (b) error correction and roles people play in the process (see Table 7.1, above).

### ***7.6.1 Learner Beliefs about Classroom Practice***

Learner beliefs about classroom practice were addressed in Item 6, 7, and 8 of the survey (see Table 7.5). Such beliefs are known as an influential factor for language learners to make choices regarding learning strategies (Wenden, 1987). Item 6 stated: “The pure lecture format is the best way to learn English.” It should be noted that during the data collection, participants asked for a definition of a “pure lecture format.” It was verbally explained that it was a teacher-centred setting where the learning content was mostly delivered through lectures and the students were recipients of the information. The result shows that 68.3% of the respondents expressed agreement with the statement (“completely agree,” 15.5% and “slightly agree,” 52.8%). In other words, the large majority of the students thought that teacher-centered, pure lecture styles were the most effective language learning structure for them.

In contrast, the following question generated a different result. Item 7 stated: “The group work format (e.g., discussions) is the best way to learn English.” This example (discussions) was used as the most common element of a student-centred approach (Thanh-Pham, 2010). The result showed that 90.7% of the respondents considered such collaborative learning as an effective approach for language learning. Only 1.4% expressed their complete disagreement with this statement.

Item 8 stated: “Quizzes and exams are very important to improve my English skills.” This survey item was formulated to investigate values that CHC students held about summative assessment, informed by one of the most salient themes from the CHC literature and from

findings from Phases I and II. The result of Item 8 supported the information: 76.9% of the respondents (“completely agree,” 31.1%, and “slightly agree,” 45.8%) answered that quizzes and exams were very important for their L2 development. This could stem from the traditional value placed on exams, and/or the fact that this EAP program put emphasis on the high stakes of the final exam. This result was in line with the finding from Phases I and II in which performance evaluation was generally perceived by interview participants as an important opportunity to enhance learning. However, it should be noted that 23.2% of the survey respondents, about a quarter, questioned the value of summative assessment for their learning. This point might be related to the data from Phase II in which some interview participants with strong LOA awareness asserted that summative assessment became far less impactful on their learning, especially on motivation, due to their confidence in their self-assessment skills.

**Table 7.5**

*Descriptive Statistics: Learner Beliefs about Classroom Practice*

item #	questions	options	n	%	cumulative %
6	The pure lecture format is the best way to learn English	completely agree	55	15.5	15.5
		slightly agree	187	52.8	68.3
		slightly disagree	88	24.9	93.2
		completely disagree	24	6.8	100.0
7	The group work format (e.g., discussions) is the best way to learn English	completely agree	139	39.3	39.3
		slightly agree	182	51.4	90.7
		slightly disagree	28	7.9	98.6
		completely disagree	5	1.4	100.0
8	Quizzes and exams are very important to improve my English skills	completely agree	110	31.1	31.1
		slightly agree	162	45.8	76.8
		slightly disagree	63	17.8	94.6
		completely disagree	19	5.4	100.0

### 7.6.2 Learner Beliefs about Error Correction and Roles People Play in Process

To address CHC students' belief about corrective feedback from peers, two survey items—Item 9 and Item 10—were created by incorporating key findings from the analysis of student interviews in Phases I and II. The qualitative data indicated that some CHC students changed their learner beliefs about how and by whom their grammatical errors should be corrected over the four-month data collection period. Initially, it was mainly considered as a teacher role, and as the EAP learning progressed, interview participants by and large developed a positive attitude towards peer correction and self-correction, although some participants did not. Table 7.6 presents these data.

**Table 7.6**

*Descriptive Statistics: Learner Beliefs about Error Correction*

Item	questions	options	<i>n</i>	%	cumulative %
9	Only the teacher should correct students' mistakes	completely agree	33	9.3	9.3
		slightly agree	73	20.6	29.9
		slightly disagree	142	40.1	70.0
		completely disagree	106	30.0	100.0
10	Students cannot find mistakes by themselves	completely agree	15	4.2	4.2
		slightly agree	81	22.9	27.1
		slightly disagree	131	37.0	64.1
		completely disagree	127	35.9	100.0

Item 9 aimed to examine learner beliefs about corrective feedback, framed in the following manner: Only the teacher should correct students' mistakes. The result showed that 70.1% of the respondents expressed disagreement with the statement ("slightly disagree," 40.1%, and "completely disagree," 30.0%). In other words, the large majority of the survey respondents

thought peers could play the role of corrective feedback providers. This result could be related to the abovementioned finding from the preceding qualitative phases. On the other hand, 29.9% of the respondents (“completely agree,” 9.3%, and “slightly agree,” 20.6%) agreed with the statement, suggesting that they believed only the teacher should play the role of feedback provider.

Item 10 also investigated the respondents’ perceptions of corrective feedback provision with the following statement: Students cannot find mistakes by themselves. Item 10 yielded a similar result to that of Item 9, showing that 72.9% of the respondents (“slightly disagree,” 37.0%, and “completely disagree,” 35.9%) did not agree with the statement. In other words, the majority of respondents thought their peers or they themselves were capable of identifying mistakes on their own. Yet, 27.1% of them seemed to doubt such assessment capability in students themselves (“completely agree,” 4.2%, and “slightly agree,” 22.9%). These results were also aligned with the findings of Phases I and II in which most of the interview participants developed more confidence in the use of self-assessment skills over the course of time, but such a change did not seem to happen to every participant at the same time and in the same manner. In short, the results of Category 2—CHC students’ learner beliefs—were largely confirmatory with findings from the preceding qualitative phases (Phases I and II).

### **7.7 Results of Category 3: EAP Teachers’ LOA Practices**

Category 3 of the survey was developed to investigate EAP teachers’ LOA practices that seemingly affected interview participants’ active engagement with assessment, and consequently improved their learning outcomes, based on Phases I and II. Turner and Purpura’s LOA framework (2016, 2018) encompasses various key factors of assessment that affect learning and teaching, such as contexts, elicitation, L2 proficiency, learning theories, instructions,

interactions, and emotions and beliefs. All of these factors are indispensable and mutually influential for learner engagement with assessment. Guided by their framework and based on the findings of Phases I and II, the following three main sub-categories were developed under the overarching category as key LOA practices in the researched context: (1) classroom management; (2) feedback interactions with teacher and peers; (3) assignments as LOA tool. In this survey, eight survey items were included to examine the extent to which students experienced such practices through EAP coursework, and whether student experiences were different depending on their class sections. See Table 7.1, above, showing the structure of the survey.

***Teacher Factor.*** Unlike Categories 1 and 2, one variable to investigate was added to Category 3. This variable—teacher factor—was used to test a hypothesis that student experience of LOA factors was different depending on the teacher/section. As discussed in the literature review of this dissertation, the importance of teacher roles in language classrooms to enhance student learning has been well documented by language assessment researchers (Rea-Dickins, 2004; Turner, 2009). In the current study, the teacher factor was a profoundly salient theme in Phases I and II when described in relation to students' positive engagement with classroom assessment. The analysis of Phases I and II showed that teachers used different approaches for engaging students with classroom assessment, such as organization of group discussions, the quality and quantity of teacher feedback, and the instructions for self- and peer assessment. It was thus logical to conjecture that there might be differences across sections/teachers and to pursue statistical analysis accordingly.

Therefore, after obtaining descriptive frequency and percentage statistics, a one-way ANOVA test was performed to examine the relationship between sections/teachers and student

learning experiences. All section names were analyzed with a numerical code as shown in Table 7.7 (to preserve confidentiality, detailed information about each course will not be presented in this dissertation; refer to Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3 for a description of each course level). Based on the statistical analysis, the results did indicate that the students had a different LOA experience depending on their class section. In fact, six out of eight question items showed statistical differences between sections/teachers. The Category 3 results present both descriptive statistics for items and one-way ANOVA tests for section comparisons.

**Table 7.7**

*Section Code for Each Section/Teacher*

course levels	sections in each course level	section codes for statistical analysis
EAP-0	1	Section-1
EAP-1	8	Section-2 ~ Section-9
EAP-2	16	Section-10 ~ Section-25
Total	25	

### **7.7.1 Classroom Management**

The first main sub-category investigated in Category 3 was *classroom management*, which addressed whether the class was managed in a learning-oriented and student-centred manner. Three survey items were included, and the descriptive results are summarized in Table 7.8. One item (Item 13) showed statistical significance indicating that there was a difference between sections/teachers.

**Table 7.8***Descriptive: Classroom Management*

item #	questions	options	n	%	cumulative %
11	In the EAP class, we spend a lot of class time listening to the teacher and taking notes	completely agree	56	15.8	15.8
		slightly agree	157	44.4	60.2
		slightly disagree	114	32.2	92.4
		completely disagree	26	7.3	99.7
		missing	1	0.3	100.0
12	In the EAP class, we spend a lot of class time talking and thinking together in a group	completely agree	147	41.5	41.5
		slightly agree	179	50.6	92.1
		slightly disagree	25	7.1	99.2
		completely disagree	3	0.8	100.0
13	In the EAP class, I enjoy working in a group to practice my English	completely agree	163	46.0	46.0
		slightly agree	132	37.3	88.3
		slightly disagree	56	15.8	99.1
		completely disagree	3	0.9	100.0

Item 11 explored whether the respondents found the class to be teacher-centred, lecture style (see Table 7.8). The descriptive data indicated that as most of the responses fell in the middle of the range, the respondents found it moderate in general. Subsequently, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were any differences between the groups (i.e., 25 sections), and the result showed that there was no difference between the sections at the  $p < .05$  level for the 25 sections;  $F(24, 329) = 1.53, p = .06$ . These statistical data suggested that students in all sections had a similar experience in terms of moderate amount of teacher-centred, lecture style practice.

Item 12 was also intended to examine classroom management, but from a different angle (see Table 7.8). The result of descriptive data showed that 92.1% of the respondents agreed (“completely agree,” 41.5%, and “slightly agree,” 50.6%) with the statement. This particular result was a statistical confirmation of the findings from Phases I and II, in which the interviews

and fieldwork suggested that the student-centred, collaborative learning approach that the ESL school adopted was incorporated in classroom activities. In terms of differences between teachers, the ANOVA showed no statistical differences at the  $p < .05$  level for the 25 sections;  $F(24, 329) = 1.22, p = .22$ . These results indicated that, no matter which class students were in, they were engaged with group activities that provided opportunities to interact with each other.

Item 13 stated: “In the EAP class, I enjoyed working in a group to practice my English.” The results provided a different insight into classroom management. Item 13 was developed based on qualitative data from Phase II that suggested student experience on group activities differed depending on how such activities were implemented by the teacher. Based on the descriptive data, the large majority (i.e., 88.3%) were favorable toward their collaborative learning experiences. However, when looking at specific class sections, the results suggest that students in some sections felt less positive about the experience than students in other sections. This was found by the ANOVA showing a statistical difference for the 25 sections with a medium effect size (see Table 7.9);  $F(24, 329) = 1.63, p = .03, \eta^2 = .11$ . In addition, post-hoc comparisons revealed that the mean score for Section-22 ( $M = 2.62, SD = .96$ ) was rated significantly lower than the other 24 sections (Total  $M = 3.29, SD = .76$ ). For reference, the highest section mean was 3.63 ( $SD = .50$ ). Item 13 results revealed that the student experience through group activities varied significantly across different sections, and that some sections/teachers provided more satisfactory group learning opportunities than others. These results aligned well with the qualitative data from Phase II.

In short, the statistical analysis of classroom management suggested that all sections were similarly organized in a student-centred manner by providing many group work opportunities.



Nonetheless, the quality of student experiences in such collaborative language learning varied across sections. These results were congruent with the qualitative data reported earlier.

**Table 7.9**

*Results of One-way ANOVA: Classroom Management by Sections/Teachers*

source			<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Item 13	In the EAP class, I enjoy working in a group to practice my English	Between	24	21.50	.90	1.63	.03	.11
		Within	329	180.69	.55			
		Total	353	202.18				

### **7.7.2 Feedback Interactions with Teachers and Peers**

The second main sub-category investigated in Category 3 was intended to examine student experiences of *feedback-related interactions with the teacher and peers*. This theme emerged repeatedly throughout Phases I and II student interviews, both positively and negatively, indicating that specific types of teacher-student, and student-student interactions in the classroom seemed to have an influence on students' application of LOA to their learning. Four survey items were created for this second sub-category. Item 14, 15, and 16 addressed interactions with teachers, and Item 18 addressed interactions with peers. Item 17 was a decoy item, designed to distract the subject's attention from the intended use of the information; thus, it was not analyzed for purposes of this dissertation. Statistical significance was found for all four items, implying that student experience of feedback interactions with teachers and peers were different across sections/teachers.

**Interactions with Teachers.** The three survey items were on feedback interactions with teachers, focused on: positive student-teacher relationships, frequent written feedback on

students' work, and timely verbal feedback and support during group activities. The descriptive data is presented in Table 7.10, below. The first question (Item 14) addressed one of the most salient themes from the interview data from Phase I in relation to students' active use of LOA: positive student-teacher relationships. It stated: "When I am confused, my EAP teacher knows how to help me". This item was formulated by incorporating actual quotes from the student interviews that described their active use of formative assessment. The descriptive data suggested that student-teacher relationships were largely positive, showing that 94.3% of the respondents agreed with the statement ("completely agree," 61.0%, and "slightly agree," 33.3%).

**Table 7.10**

*Descriptive Statistics: Feedback Interactions with Teachers*

item#	questions	options	n	%	cumulative %
14	When I am confused, my EAP teacher knows how to help me	completely agree	216	61.0	61.0
		slightly agree	118	33.3	94.3
		slightly disagree	17	4.8	99.1
		completely disagree	3	.9	100.0
15	My EAP teacher writes comments on my work (not just a check mark ✓)	always	250	70.6	70.6
		often	80	22.6	93.2
		sometimes	21	5.9	99.1
		almost never	3	.9	100.0
16	When we have group discussions, my EAP teacher checks on us and gives us advice	always	216	61.0	61.0
		often	102	28.8	89.8
		sometimes	32	9.0	98.8
		almost never	4	1.1	100.0

However, the one-way ANOVA (see Table 7.11, below) revealed that the degree of agreement differed significantly among the sections with a large effect size;  $F(24, 329) = 2.66$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .16$ . In fact, post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for one section, Section-8 ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ), was rated significantly lower than the top

five highly rated sections for this item (Total  $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = .63$ ). The highest section mean was 3.93 ( $SD = .27$ ). It could be inferred from this result that the students in Section-8 had a different, perhaps less positive, relationship with their EAP teacher, as compared to the other five highly rated sections.

**Table 7.11**

*Results of One-Way ANOVA: Feedback Interactions with Teachers by Sections*

Source			<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Item 14	When I am confused, my EAP teacher knows how to help me	Between	24	22.73	.95	2.66	.00	.16
		Within	329	117.04	.36			
		Total	353	139.78				
Item 15	My EAP teacher writes comments on my work (not just a check mark ✓)	Between	24	16.75	.70	1.83	.01	.12
		Within	329	125.78	.38			
		Total	353	142.52				
Item 16	When we have group discussions, my EAP teacher checks on us and gives us advice	Between	24	22.82	1.68	2.04	.00	.13
		Within	329	153.67	.59			
		Total	353	176.50				

Subsequently, Item 15 was included to investigate teacher feedback on student work, and whether there were any differences across sections. In Turner and Purpura's LOA framework (2018), "feedback or other assistance" (slide 30) was considered as a key characteristic of LOA practice. In fact, the interview data from Phases I and II of the current study showed a significant impact of written feedback from teachers on student work as an important teacher-student interaction to enhance their LOA use. Hence, Item 15 was worded as follows: "My EAP teacher writes comments on my work (not just a check mark ✓)." The descriptive results showed that 94.3% of the respondents acknowledged the frequent feedback from their teachers ("always," 70.6%, and "often," 22.6%). Yet, the results of the ANOVA analysis presented in Table 7.11

indicated that the students' engagement opportunities with teacher feedback were significantly different across sections with a medium effect size;  $F(24, 329) = 1.83, p = .01, \eta^2 = .12$ . The highest section (Section-23), received a mean of 3.93 with an *SD* of .27, whereas the lowest section (Section-4) was rated with a mean of 3.13 and an *SD* of .83. This result suggested that the amount of written feedback that students received on their work from the teacher differed significantly depending on the section.

Item 16 also focused on teacher-student interaction, specifically on verbal feedback and support during group activities. Based on overall fieldwork as well as on Phases I and II interviews specifically, there were marked differences across class sections in the implementation of group activities such as discussions, and these differences affected student engagement. When learning during a group activity was monitored, guided and supported by the teacher, students' use of LOA was positively reported by interview participants. Carless (2007), summarizing his LOA conceptual bases, highlighted that feedback should be timely and forward-looking in order to support current and future student learning. Therefore, the following statement was included as Item 16: When we have group discussions, my EAP teacher checks on us and gives us advice. The descriptive data (see Table 7. 10) showed that 89.8% of the respondents answered that their teachers provided timely feedback and guidance during group discussions ("always," 61.0%, and "often," 28.8%).

However, the ANOVA result of this item showed a statistical difference across sections with a medium effect size, as presented in Table 7.11, above;  $F(24, 329) = 2.04, p = .00, \eta^2 = .13$ . Additionally, a Tukey HSD test revealed that the mean score for Section-14 ( $M = 2.88, SD = 1.09$ ), was significantly lower than the top four sections (Total  $M = 3.50, SD = .71$ ), including two respondents who answered "never" to this item. The highest section yielded a mean of 3.93

with an *SD* of .27, which indicates that almost all the students in that section agreed that they received teacher feedback and felt supported in their learning during the activities. These statistical results confirmed that student experiences with teacher feedback, specifically on verbal feedback and support during group activities, significantly differed across sections, as was also reported in the qualitative phases.

Overall, as shown by the descriptive data of the second sub-category, the large majority of the respondents expressed that their experience with their EAP teachers regarding the LOA practice was very positive. Nonetheless, all three items were found to differ significantly across sections. These statistical results confirmed the qualitative findings from Phases I and II that LOA-related interactions with the teacher differed significantly across sections.

**Interactions with Peers.** The second stakeholders of the sub-category were peers. The qualitative data from Phases I and II showed that different teachers had different approaches to incorporating peer feedback in their classroom practice. In particular, corrective peer feedback seemed to be implemented differently across sections. As reported by interview participants in Phases I and II, some teachers did not allow students to point out each other's grammatical errors at all. In contrast, some interview participants shared their experience of providing corrective feedback to peers as part of a classroom activity, which seemingly fostered more positive attitudes towards assessing peers and being assessed by peers. Thus, in the student survey, Item 18 was added to investigate how often explicit error correction peer feedback opportunities were given to the students and whether there were any differences across the sections.

The results of Item 18 revealed that the student experience of peer feedback was significantly different depending on which section they were in. The descriptive data, as seen in Table 7.12, showed that 31.9% of the students had such interactions for learning with peers in

every class, and 39.5% stated that they received these opportunities, not always, but frequently. However, 26.6% said that such activities were occasional, and 2% expressed that they hardly had any corrective peer feedback opportunities.

**Table 7.12**

*Descriptive Statistics: Feedback Interactions with Peers*

item#	questions	options	n	%	cumulative %
18	In the EAP course, I have opportunities to correct my classmates' English mistakes	always	113	31.9	31.9
		often	140	39.5	71.4
		sometimes	94	26.6	98.0
		almost never	7	2.0	100.0

The results of the ANOVA shown in Table 7.13, below, indicated that peer feedback opportunities differed significantly across the sections with a large effect size;  $F(24, 329) = 2.83$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ . A Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for Section-9 ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = .63$ ) was rated significantly lower than the top four sections. All students in Section-9 fell on the negative side (i.e., “sometimes” or “almost never”). Taken together, the results of Item 18 suggested that peer feedback opportunities were not consistently given to the students across the 25 sections. This result confirmed the findings from Phases I and II in terms of the different frequency of peer assessment opportunities given to students in different sections.

**Table 7.13**

*Results of One-way ANOVA: Feedback Interactions with Peers by Sections/Teachers*

source			<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Item 18	In the EAP course, I have opportunities to correct my classmates' English mistakes	Between	24	40.21	1.68	2.83	.00	.17
		Within	329	194.72	.59			
		Total	353	234.93				

### ***7.7.3 Assignments as an LOA Tool***

The third main sub-category regarding EAP teachers' LOA practices in Category 3 examined the degree of student engagement with assignments. Studies examining classroom assignments have demonstrated that information on the quality of assignments can complement information about the quality of classroom interaction (Joyce et al., 2018). This became a salient theme in Phases I and II. The interview participants' satisfaction with the course experience was strongly associated with assignments that were designed to compel students to think, reflect, and be interactive. In addition, the time-consuming nature of these tasks repeatedly emerged in the data. In fact, the school policy of the EAP courses stated that teachers were required to assign two hours' worth of assignments per class for students to meet the full-time student requirement. Therefore, Item 19 was created to investigate the time-consuming nature of these assignments: "I spend more than 2 hours on homework for the EAP course".

The descriptive data from Item 19, shown in Table 7.14, below, indicates that the large majority of the respondents agreed that they were given two hours' worth of assignments per class. To be precise, 36.2% answered "often" which meant they spent more than two hours on assignments four to five times a week. Because the EAP courses had five classes per week, this result indicates that the workload met the school policy. Nearly one fourth of respondents (24.6%) answered "always." This means that these respondents spent more than two hours on assignments more than five times a week. However, 39.3% of the respondents ("sometimes," 37.3%, and "almost never," 2%) answered that the number of assignments was lighter than the school policy required. For instance, 37.3% selected "sometimes," meaning they spent more than two hours on assignments one to three times a week.

**Table 7.14***Descriptive Statistics: Assignment as a Tool of LOA*

item#	question	options	n	%	cumulative %
19	I spend more than 2 hours on homework for the EAP course	always (> 5 times a wk)	87	24.6	24.6
		often (4 ~ 5 times a wk)	128	36.2	60.8
		sometimes (1 ~ 3 times)	132	37.3	98.1
		almost never	7	2.0	100.0

The results of the ANOVA, presented in Table 7.15, below, confirmed that there was a significant difference between sections with a large effect size:  $F(24, 329) = 3.80, p = .00, \eta^2 = .22$ . The total mean of all the respondents was 2.83 with an  $SD$  of .82. A Tukey post-hoc test confirmed that in some sections students had a much lighter workload than in other sections. For example, the lowest mean was found in Section-22 ( $M = 2.08, SD = .64$ ), and the highest mean was seen in Section-7 ( $M = 3.50, SD = .73$ ). Moreover, the test showed that the amount of time students spent on assignments in Section-22 was significantly lower than all other sections. Specifically, in Section-7, 93% of respondents worked on their assignments more than two hours after each class whereas only 15% did in Section-22. Based on the statistical results, the students in Section-22 seemed to be given fewer assignments than the school policy required, which might be connected to the quality of classroom interactions (Joyce et al., 2018).

**Table 7.15***Results of One-Way ANOVA: Assignments as a Tool of LOA by Sections/Teachers*

source			df	SS	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
Item 19	I spend more than 2 hours on homework for the EAP course	Between	24	51.45	2.14	3.80	.00	.22
		Within	329	185.72	.56			
		Total	353	237.17				



Overall, the results of Item 18 revealed that student experience on assignments was significantly different depending on the section, which confirmed the findings from Phases I and II. Because the survey did not include items examining whether the amount of homework was correlated with the quality of feedback interactions or with learning outcomes, the impact of assignment workload on student learning remains unknown. Yet, based on the interview data and classroom assignment literature, it is likely that intellectually demanding assignments tended to be time-consuming.

### **7.8 Overall Results of Student Survey**

In Phase III, a student survey was conducted for this study with volunteer EAP students along with the course evaluation. The survey was composed of three categories: (1) student demographic information and past learning experiences; (2) CHC students' learner beliefs; and (3) EAP teachers' LOA practices. Regarding Category 1—the demographics of the survey respondents—91.47% of the entire EAP population of the ESL school was from CHC countries ( $n = 354$ ), mostly from China, which reflected the current trend of educational migration in higher education (Tsushima & Guardado, 2015). However, the language learning backgrounds of this CHC student group were not homogenous. For instance, while the majority of the respondents had been in Canada for less than 12 months, there were students who had lived 3 years or longer in Canada. The results showed that the student population was a mixture of students with different past learning experiences, although they have often been categorized as one cultural group in education research.

The results of Category 2, which investigated CHC students' learner beliefs, showed that student beliefs in language learning were generally aligned with the learning-oriented, student-centred approach of the ESL school curriculum. The majority of the respondents answered that

teachers were not the only ones with the knowledge needed to help students find mistakes, and that collaborative learning, such as group discussions, was also an effective approach for language learning. Yet, CHC students were also found to have a strong preference for teachers playing the central role in the classroom learning. Moreover, as frequently reported in the literature (e.g., Watanabe, 2004), the survey results showed the strong impact of summative assessment on CHC students even in the EAP setting.

Category 3 of the survey results concerned EAP teachers' LOA practices. This category was developed by incorporating influential factors on interview participants' active use of assessment to enhance their learning process and outcomes in Phases I and II. Three main sub-categories were chosen, as follows: classroom management, feedback interactions with the teacher and peers, and assignments as an LOA tool. To analyze Category 3, additional statistical analyses were conducted by using teacher/section as a variable factor. Overall, the descriptive data implies that the large majority of the respondents expressed that their experiences regarding the LOA practice were highly positive. For example, the analysis of classroom management suggested that all sections were similarly organized in a student-centred manner by providing many group work opportunities and teacher support. It was also found that students were provided frequent opportunities for teacher-student interactions and student-student interactions, such as receiving teacher feedback and providing peer feedback. In addition, the respondents were generally given an appropriate number of assignments which met the school policy. However, further statistical tests revealed that the student experience of those LOA-related sub-categories were different across sections, which suggested that students experienced LOA practices differently depending on the teacher.

## 7.9 Mini Discussion of Phase III

This mini discussion focuses on the interpretation and discussion of the statistical findings of Phase III by incorporating key findings from Phases I and II in relation to the relevant literature. There were three RQs for Phase III. See Table 7.1, above, to understand the relationship between each RQ and the corresponding overarching category and main sub-categories.

### 7.9.1 First Research Question: Demographics and Diversity of Learning Backgrounds

Category 1 of the survey sought to investigate the demographic information of CHC students in the context researched, as well as their previous language learning backgrounds, since such factors might affect their learning experiences. As shown in Table 7.16, below, which presents the organization of the RQ1 discussion, two main sub-categories were used to organize the contextual information of the EAP students from CHC backgrounds: (a) CHC student demographics; and (b) diversity of CHC student learning backgrounds.

**Table 7.16**

*Organization of Mini Discussion: First Research Question*

RQ and survey category	overarching category	main sub-category	variable
RQ1 (Category 1)	demographics and diversity of learning experiences	(a) CHC student demographics; and (b) diversity of CHC student learning backgrounds	n/a

**CHC Student Demographics.** The survey results started by reporting demographic information from CHC students in the EAP program, which was the first main sub-category for RQ1. The trends in international student mobility (Li, 2019; CBIE, 2019) were reflected in the population of this ESL school, as over 90% of the EAP students identified themselves as CHC

students. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2019), in 2018, about 35% of international students studying in Canada at all levels were from CHC countries, such as China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. This was the largest group from non-English speaking cultures. In particular, it has been reported that students from mainland China form the largest group of international students worldwide, and are also the top source of international students in North America (Heng, 2017; UNESCO 2016). The results of the student survey aligned with this student mobility trend, showing that 93% of the CHC students enrolled in the EAP courses were from mainland China, followed by Japan (2.5%), Korea (2%), Vietnam (1.7%), and other Chinese-speaking regions (0.8%; see Table 7.2, above, for the details).

**Diversity of CHC Student Learning Backgrounds.** The second main sub-theme for RQ1 concerned the past learning experiences of the student participants. The results also revealed that the CHC student group in the EAP context were not homogenous in terms of their age, time spent in Canada, or previous language learning experiences. In fact, not all the students shared the same traditional, teacher-centered CHC classroom experiences, based on the results of Item 5. While the majority (59.9%) of the survey respondents did not agree that the current EAP course that employed a student-centred, learning-oriented approach was similar to their previous L2 learning settings, the rest (40.1%) of the survey respondents answered that their previous learning experience was similar to the current EAP classrooms.

Moreover, in terms of length of stay in Canada (see Table 7.3), 19.5% of the survey respondents answered that they had been in Canada for more than a year, and 5.1% answered that they had spent more than three years in Canada. This finding was aligned well with the data collected in Phases I and II, in which it was found that the CHC student population was not homogenous in terms of their past educational backgrounds. As reported in Phase I, there were

mainly three types of past educational backgrounds: (a) directly from the traditional CHC classrooms; (b) graduated or transferred from schools offering westernized curricula and school environments in their home country; and (c) attended a local school in Canada before their EAP enrollment. The results of the student survey confirmed the complexity of CHC student backgrounds in a higher education context. Such diversity in one cultural group needs to be further discussed in relation to student language learning.

This finding concerning CHC students' educational backgrounds was congruent with the phenomenon reported in the literature; that is, there is a trend for CHC parents, mostly researched in Chinese contexts, to enroll their children in local international high schools where curriculum and instruction are structured similarly to those of Western secondary schools (Liu, 2016; Young, 2018), or in high schools in Canada prior to their tertiary education (Deschambault, 2018; Li, 2019). Working from a language socialization perspective, Deschambault (2018) reported that the increasing number of international students who were mostly from CHC countries had a socializing impact on English as an additional language education in British Columbia's public schools.

In short, the survey results indicated that the group of CHC students was not homogenous in terms of their past learning experiences, in line with the findings from Phases I and II. This complexity of one cultural group should be acknowledged and further researched, given that student backgrounds and academic preparation conditions impact how students perceive the process of learning, the reasons for the problems they face, and their experiences in the classroom. Those in charge of English language programs would benefit from knowing current trends in international students' migration in higher education, as well as the students' background diversity associated with these realities.

### 7.9.2 Second Research Question: CHC Students' Learner Beliefs

The second part of the discussion is dedicated to RQ2/Category 2, which concerned the beliefs of CHC students as language learners. Two main sub-categories were developed to focus on key findings related to CHC student learner beliefs: (a) classroom practice and (b) error correction and roles people play in the process, as presented in Table 7.17, below.

**Table 7.17**

*Organization of Mini Discussion: Second Research Question*

RQ and survey category	overarching category	main sub-category	variable
Q2 (Category 2)	CHC students' learner beliefs	(a) classroom practice; and (b) error correction and roles people play in process	n/a

**Learner Beliefs about Classroom Practice.** The first main sub-category for RQ2 concerned *learner beliefs regarding classroom practices*, and three items were included in the survey. As discussed earlier in this chapter, beliefs that language learners hold profoundly affect their learning process and outcomes. Items 6 and 7 were asked in a paired manner to examine their preferred learning format (Item 6: Teacher-centred, lecture format; and Item 7: Student-centred, group work format). Item 8 investigated CHC student learner beliefs about summative assessment.

It is often reported in the literature on CHC classroom practice that a hierarchical relationship between the teacher and students is traditionally established and not easily changed (Hofstead, 2001). Such a learner belief among CHC students was also reported by Carless (2011), based on his assessment reform work in Hong Kong. Teachers are seen as authority figures that impart knowledge to students, and the student role is to absorb information from

teachers in traditional CHC classrooms (Carless, 2011). The current research, based on the findings from Phases I, II and III (Item 6), also found that CHC students perceived the teacher role as an authority in the classroom.

In the current study, how the CHC students perceived student-centred instructional methods was examined (Item 7). The survey result revealed that the great majority of the respondents (90.7%) agreed that a student-centred learning format might be the best way to improve their English skills. This statistical result provided an interesting window to understand the dynamic and complex nature of learner beliefs, as it aligned well with the qualitative findings from the very early stage (i.e., Interview #1 in Phase I) in which group work, especially discussions, was repeatedly referred to as the most enjoyable activity by the interview participants. Thanh-Pham (2010), analyzing learner beliefs that prevented the implementation of student-centred approaches in language classrooms in Vietnam, posited that such a change in learner beliefs is possible in CHC students when both school infrastructures and teachers deeply embrace the concept into classroom practice. The result of the current study adds another form of evidence to argue that CHC students do accept a student-centred approach when it is deeply established in the pedagogy of the classroom.

The importance of summative assessment in CHC education systems, often reported in the literature on exam-driven societies (Carless, 2010; Watanabe, 2004), is another crucial factor to discuss as impacting learner beliefs because such beliefs influence the choice of learning strategies (Wenden, 1987). In the current study, the survey result (Item 8) showed that the majority of respondents (76.8%) agreed that summative assessments were important for their learning. Given that their success in the EAP courses was heavily determined by the term-end, paper-based final exam, it was logical that those respondents continued to adhere to the

traditional values from their home culture. However, it should be highlighted that approximately a quarter of the respondents (23.2%) disagreed with the statement. A relevant finding is that of Zhong (2012) on Chinese ESL learners' beliefs and strategy use in a New Zealand context. Zhong reported that Chinese students changed their beliefs about exams as a learning goal and developed a new learner belief about the importance of skill mastery over the course of time. In the current study, similarly, such learner belief changes were observed in Phase II, especially among some interview participants with higher LOA awareness.

Overall, the results of the first main sub-category confirmed the findings from Phases I and II that indicated interview participants held traditional learning values from their previous learning experiences while developing new values in the new context. It seemed difficult to change learner beliefs that were still applicable to their current learning context, such as seeing teachers as the classroom authority and bestowing a value on summative assessment as an important part of their learning. At the same time, the results of the survey showed that some areas of the student-centred approach, such as group activities, were accepted as meaningful by the CHC students.

**Learner beliefs about Error Correction and Roles People Play in the Process.** The second main sub-category for RQ2 focused on error correction and the roles that people play in the process. Two items (i.e., Item 9 and Item 10) were created in a paired manner to investigate this theme, and the results revealed an interesting view regarding CHC students' learner beliefs about feedback provision roles. On Item 9, the majority of the respondents (69.9%) agreed that the teacher should not be the only one correcting errors in the classroom. On Item 10, the large majority (72.9%) disagreed with the idea that students were not capable of identifying their own



mistakes. These results implied that they held the belief that peers and learners themselves could be a resource for learning by correcting each other's mistakes.

A well-developed literature base exists and continues to grow on the topic of CHC student beliefs about feedback, in particular error correction. In the 1990s, Zhang (1995) found ESL students' significantly strong preference for teacher feedback over peer feedback in terms of error correction. Other studies on formative assessment also point to CHC students' strong tendency to regard teachers as the assessment experts, and to respect feedback from teachers much more than that from others such as peers (e.g., Chen et al., 2014; Guardado & Shi, 2007; Jing Jing, 2017; Thanh-Pham, 2010, 2013, 2016; Ruegg, 2015; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al., 2006). In other words, the survey results of the present study might appear to contradict the above-mentioned literature on learner beliefs about error correction in CHC classrooms.

However, some of the aforementioned studies also point out that even in cultures in which authority is given to the teacher, there is a role for peer feedback and self-correction. Tsui and Ng (2000), for instance, report that secondary school students in Hong Kong preferred teacher feedback for writing revision purposes, but they also valued comments from their peers. The mixed methods research of Yang et al. (2006), similarly, revealed that Chinese university students used teacher and peer feedback to improve their writing but that teacher feedback had more impact on their revision and led to greater improvement in the writing; however, peer feedback was associated with a greater degree of student autonomy. These findings from literature are relevant to the present study that, as seen in Phases I and II, found that interview participants were more open to accept peer feedback in out-of-classroom settings. The survey results are in line with the qualitative findings and add insights to the literature to understand the complexity of CHC student learner beliefs.

### 7.9.3 Third Research Question: EAP Teachers' LOA Practices

The third RQ concerned EAP teachers' LOA practices, which was investigated through Category 3 of the survey. Table 7.18, below, shows how this discussion section is organized. Under the overarching category, there were three main sub-categories: (a) classroom management; (b) feedback interactions with the teacher and peers; and (c) assignments as an LOA tool. In addition, using teacher/section as a variable, ANOVA tests were conducted to confirm the results from Phases I and II.

**Table 7.18**

*Organization of Mini Discussion: Third Research Question*

RQ and survey category	overarching category	main sub-category	variable
Q3 (Category 3)	EAP Teachers' LOA practices	(a) classroom management; (b) feedback interactions with teacher and peers; and (c) assignments as LOA tool	teacher factor

Overall, the statistical analyses suggested that learning-oriented approaches were taken in the classroom by the EAP teachers, at least in some areas of classroom practice. The ANOVA results revealed that student experience of LOA practice was contingent upon the teacher/section. In this section, the three main sub-categories are discussed first. A discussion of the teacher factor variable follows.

**Classroom Management.** The first main sub-category for RQ3 was entitled *classroom management*, which examined whether the class had a learning-oriented, student-centred structure. Three survey items (i.e., Items 11, 12, and 13) examined an instructional dimension of teachers' LOA practice. Item 11 examined to what extent students experienced teacher-centred classroom instruction. Item 12 was formulated to examine how much the teacher provided

student-centred, interactive learning opportunities to the class, and Item 13 investigated how CHC students felt about student-centred approach in the classrooms. As reported earlier, the survey results suggested that the student-centred pedagogy was largely incorporated in classrooms. It seemed that the class provided opportunities for students to work collaboratively (i.e., group work). This result was a statistical confirmation of the qualitative data from Phases I and II.

Item 13 examined how respondents felt about the student-centred approach, typically implemented through group activities. It is often reported in the literature that CHC students tend to be less engaged with communicative language learning activities with peers, due to cultural barriers (Aubrey et al., 2015; Thanh-Pham, 2010, 2016; Wicking, 2020). However, the result of the current survey showed that such collaborative learning experiences were positively perceived by the large majority (88.3%), which was also in line with the data from Phases I and II. Thanh-Pham (2010, 2016) states that students from CHC backgrounds can adopt a student-centred approach when it is delivered by trained teachers and through structured curricula. The result of the present study might be an indication that the EAP curriculum was implemented in such a manner as to facilitate CHC students' acceptance of the new learning approach.

**Feedback Interactions with Teacher and Peers.** The second main sub-category for RQ3 examined EAP teachers' LOA practices regarding feedback-related interactions in the classrooms (Items 14, 15, 16, and 18). Overall, the results of the survey suggested that students were provided with frequent opportunities to interact with the teacher and with peers in the classrooms.

Item 14 addressed the question of how learners' socio-psychological predispositions may "affect success in learning and play an important role in assessment" (Turner & Purpura,

2016, p.268). The result of Item 14 revealed that student-teacher relationships were strongly positive (94.3%). This result was connected to the findings from Phases I and II where participants expressed appreciation of feedback-related interactions were provided by the teachers. Item 15 addressed the frequency of written feedback provision on student work. The descriptive results indicated the high frequency of teacher feedback provision to the respondents, which confirmed the interview data from Phases I and II. Item 16 focused on teachers' dynamic assistance embedded in the classroom assessment, such as verbal feedback and support during assessment activities. The result showed that 89.8% of the respondents answered that their teachers provided timely feedback and guidance during the activities.

Item 18 measured EAP teachers' LOA practices in terms of guiding peer feedback interactions, focusing on error correction between peers. The results suggested that in general, students had frequent peer feedback provision opportunities. Overall, the survey results indicated that EAP teachers practiced some key aspects of LOA, which aligns with the qualitative phases of this study. In Turner and Purpura's LOA framework (2018), feedback or other assistance was considered as a key characteristic of LOA practice. In fact, in the current study, the finding of positive student-teacher relationships was one of the most salient themes from the findings of Phases I and II in relation to interview participants' active use of LOA. Lee and Schallert (2008), subscribing to Noddings' (1984) notion of the classroom relation between the one caring-for (teacher) and the cared-for (student), examined the efficacy of teacher feedback in a CHC context. They found that students' level of trust in the teacher's English ability, teaching practices, and feedback played a major role in students' active engagement with teacher feedback. Regarding teacher feedback on writing, LOA researchers in second language education acknowledge that written feedback from teachers on students' writing can enhance

their learning outcomes (Kim & Kim, 2018; D. Lam, 2021; Yang, 2020). Investigated specifically from an LOA scope, the current study could add a relevant argument to the literature.

**Assignments as an LOA Tool.** The third main sub-category related to EAP teachers' LOA practices was using *assessment as an LOA tool*. Item 19 was used to estimate the degree of student engagement with assignments. Interview participants in Phases I and II reported that assignments played a crucial role in interactive opportunities that facilitated teacher-student and student-student feedback exchanges. The results of Phase III showed that the survey respondents were generally given an appropriate amount of homework that met the school policy (i.e., 2 hours per class). This finding is relevant to the studies on formative assessment, which argue that “formative assessment provided in assignments is of highest value in student learning” (Heinrich et al., 2009, p. 76). Carless (2007), in his work on theorizing as an LOA practice, also refers to the usefulness of assignments, stating that assignments can “push students to engage actively with the required standards and to self-monitor their own work” (p. 63). Although the current survey result does not imply that all time-consuming assignments can be effective and learning-conducive, utilizing assignments as an LOA tool needs to be further researched as a useful element of instruction to enhance student learning.

**Teacher Factor.** Finally, the teacher factor was used as a variable to analyze data from Category 3 to examine any statistical differences between sections/teachers (see Table 7.18, above, to understand the structure of Category 3). As reported above, the survey results revealed that there were significantly different areas across sections/teachers in some areas of classroom practice. This finding is in line with Turner's (2009) statement that highlights the importance of the teacher role in classroom-based assessment. Echoing this statement, this section argues that

the introduction of the LOA approach into language classrooms should be accompanied by teacher training and evaluation in order to align actual classroom practice properly with pedagogy.

For instance, regarding *classroom management*, the statistical results of Item 13 revealed that the student experience of group activities differed depending on how such activities were implemented by the teacher, which confirmed the student interview data from Phase II. Creating a positive environment that affects student learning is an essential teaching skill in any classroom setting (Noddings, 1984). In particular, when the students are not familiar with activities that require a complex set of both cognitive and social skills (Topping, 2009), such as assessing peers or being assessed by peers, the teacher role in navigating student learning is essential.

In addition, the survey results of the second main sub-category (Items 14, 15, 16, and 18)—*feedback interactions with teachers and peers*—were also confirmatory with the findings from Phases I and II: that is, different teachers had different approaches to incorporating feedback interactions into their LOA practices even though they were trained to deliver a learning-oriented curriculum. Providing detailed, relevant and timely feedback is one of the most important teacher responsibilities to enhance students' current and future learning (Carless, 2007, 2011), and when such crucial information is not provided, or is delivered in an inadequate manner, it is likely to impair the teacher-student relationship, student learning process and outcomes (Cauley & McMillan, 2010).

Moreover, such a statistical difference across sections/teachers was found in the third sub-category: *student engagement with assignments* (Item 19). As reported earlier, there were significant differences across sections/teachers in terms of hours of assignment workload the students were given. As argued in the assessment literature, assignment tasks can facilitate

student autonomous learning when they are tightly aligned with the learning objectives and assessment criteria (e.g., Carless, 2007, Gibbs, 2006, Heinrich et al., 2009). Moreover, in an LOA approach, all elements of classroom practice need to be utilized as assessment opportunities to generate information that can help the teacher and students fill the gap between the desired outcomes and the current state. Thus, at a minimum, it is important to establish the consistency of assignment design, implementation, and assessment criteria across sections/teachers in a program. More research on assignment tasks as an LOA tool will be beneficial to better understand the efficacy of such tasks on student learning.

In short, these statistical results of the teacher factor confirmed the qualitative findings from Phases I and II that EAP teachers' assessment practices differed significantly across sections. Even though the descriptive data suggested highly positive LOA practices in general in the EAP courses, student experiences with those LOA-related themes were significantly different across the 24 sections/teachers. This suggests that to a certain extent, students experienced LOA practices differently depending on the teacher.

## **7.10 Summary of Chapter 7**

Chapter 7 was dedicated to Phase III of the MMR study, which was a survey administered at the end of the second EAP term. As the quantitative part of the exploratory sequential MMR study (Creswell, 2015), Phase III was developed to confirm key findings that emerged from the qualitative phases (i.e., Phases I and II) in a quantitative manner, with a larger population. The survey comprised three categories: (1) student demographic information and past learning experiences; (2) CHC students' learner beliefs; and (3) EAP teachers' LOA practices. The survey results validated the data obtained from the findings from Phases I and II.

First, the great majority of the students in the EAP courses were from CHC countries as

predicted. Their backgrounds, however, were not homogenous in terms of their age, length of stay in Canada, and past formal English language learning experiences. These results implied that the target population was a mixture of students with different past learning experiences, although they are often categorized as one cultural group in educational research. The diversity of CHC students in terms of their English learning experiences needs to be addressed, in order to gain a better understanding of the complexity of their learning behaviours.

The results of the second category showed that student beliefs in language learning were generally aligned with the learning-oriented, student-centred approach that the ESL school implemented through the curriculum. However, there was a preference for teacher playing the central role in classroom learning, which was congruent with the interview data from Phases I and II. Moreover, as frequently reported in the literature (e.g., Watanabe, 2004), the survey results showed the strong impact of summative assessment on CHC students in this context as well.

The third category concerned EAP teachers' LOA practices, which was developed by incorporating findings from Phases I and II, and the LOA literature. The descriptive data implied that the large majority of the respondents answered that their learning experiences in the learning-oriented EAP classrooms were highly positive. Further statistical analyses, however, indicated that the students had different learning experiences depending on each section/teacher. Further research is necessary to probe into the relationship between student learning outcomes and teacher assessment practices. The findings from Phase III will be further discussed in the data integration chapter (Chapter 9) in relation to the findings from other phases (Phases I, II, and IV).



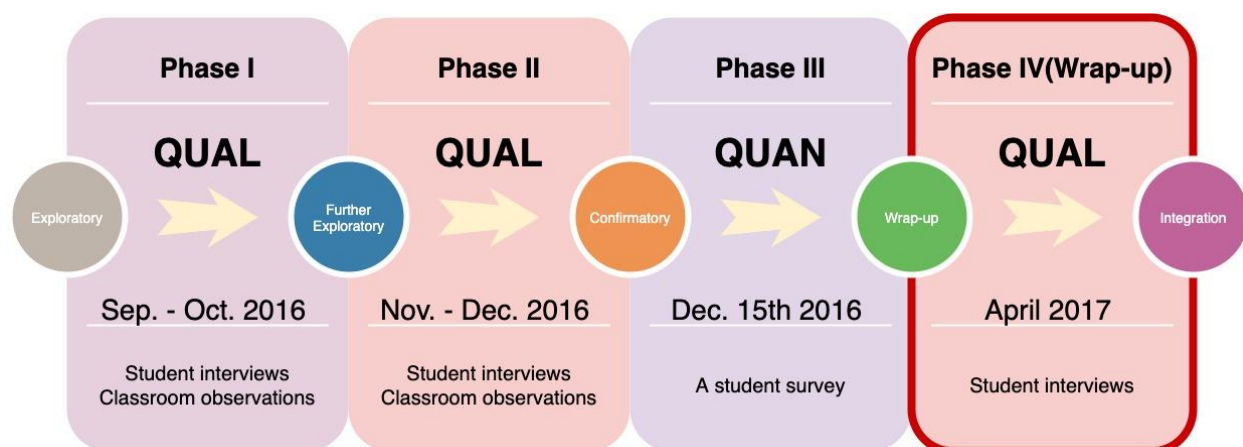
## Chapter 8 Phase IV

### 8.1 Introduction to Chapter 8

Chapter 8 reports on Phase IV of the MMR study, in which a final set of individual student interviews (Interview #6) were conducted to generate the main data source of this qualitative phase. Figure 8.1 illustrates, once again, the sequence of this MMR study. This phase took place once all 12 participants completed their EAP experience. The main objectives were twofold: (a) to document participants' reflections on cultural adjustment to the learning-oriented EAP classrooms; and (b) to identify individual differences in relation to the use of assessment and to learning outcomes.

**Figure 8.1**

*Sequence of MMR Study with Wrap-up Phase: Phase IV*



Chapter 8 starts with the presentation of the RQs for Phase IV and their relationship with the entire MMR study. This chapter focuses on the findings of Interview #6 with the 12 focal student participants from CHC backgrounds. It captures the participants' reflective thoughts on their own learning behaviours in relation to the purposes of classroom assessment to improve

students' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) in the EAP context. Drawing from the findings that are unique to the qualitative data, this chapter ends with a mini-discussion.

## **8.2 Research Questions for Phase IV**

Phase IV aimed to further investigate data investigate: (a) CHC students' overall reflections on the learning-oriented, student-centred EAP classroom practice; and (b) individual differences in their use of assessment and learning outcomes. This time it was at the end of their EAP trajectory. These overarching themes were used to formulate research questions for Phase IV as follows:

Q1. What were the overall reflections of the interview participants on their learning journey in the learning-oriented, student-centred EAP classroom practice?

Q2. What individual differences were there among the CHC students in relation to their use of assessment to improve their EAP skills? In what aspects of student learning are such individual differences found?

## **8.3 Research Methodology**

Phase IV aimed to collect data that could solidify the findings from the preceding phases, and to obtain specific data that could help finalize the whole analysis. Phase IV employed the same methodology and data analysis procedure as for the preceding qualitative phases (see Chapter 4 for the details).

### ***8.3.1 Profiles of Interview Participants at the Time of Phase IV***

It is important to provide contextual information about the participants at the moment of Phase IV. This section reports how their paths diverged after the previous interview (Interview #5). Table 8.1 shows the learning trajectories of the interview participants from Phase I to Phase

IV. EAP-1 is highlighted in blue and EAP-2 is in yellow, to indicate how many times each participant was in each EAP course.

**Table 8.1**

*EAP Course Results of 12 Interview Participants from Phase I to Phase IV*

ESL school term	2016 September Term (Phase I)	2016 November Term (Phase II)	2017 January Term	2017 March Term (Phase IV)
data collection	Interview #1, #2, #3	Interview #4, #5		Interview #6
Barry	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed		
Dez	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed		
Eeali	EAP-1: Failed	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed	
Jericho	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed		
Lucy	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed		
Neal	EAP-1: Failed	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Failed	EAP-2: Passed
Marshmallow	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed		
Panda	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Failed	EAP-2: Passed	
Rachel	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed		
Sky	EAP-1: Failed	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed	
Sunny	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed		
Watson	EAP-1: Passed	EAP-2: Passed		

A few days after Interview #5 of Phase II, the results of the EAP final exams of the November Term were announced. The three EAP-1 repeaters (i.e., Eeali, Neal and Sky) were able to pass the course the second time, and moved on to EAP-2. Among the nine participants who were in EAP-2 in Phase II, Panda failed the course and the other eight participants passed it and started their full-time undergraduate programs at the Canadian University. Therefore, four out of the 12 students (Eeali, Neal, Panda, and Sky) needed to continue with EAP courses and

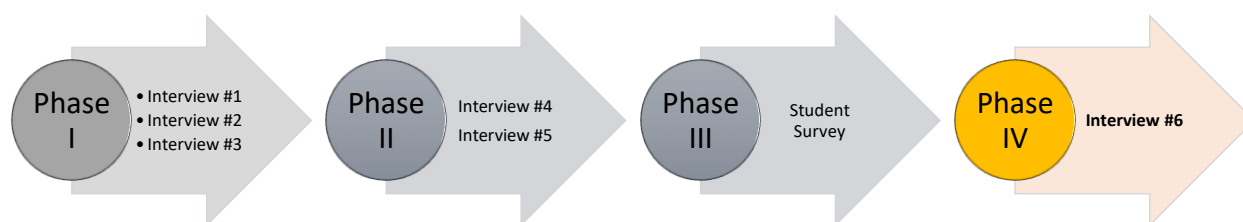
were enrolled in EAP-2 in the January Term. The rest completed the EAP learning phase and were admitted into regular undergraduate programs full time. The experiences of failing an EAP course cost the four students financially and emotionally and affected their graduation timeline plans. In addition, Neal did not pass EAP-2 in the January Term and had to retake the course in the March Term. In the end, he spent eight months in the EAP without taking any credit academic courses. Therefore, in order to capture the participants' entire journey of their EAP learning, a follow-up interview (Interview #6) was conducted with the aim of eliciting their reflections on their learning experience in relation to their use of assessment. Such differences in the learning paths of the interview participants were highly relevant in analyzing the data.

#### 8.4 Introduction to Results of Interview #6

The last set of interviews with the 12 focal participants was conducted in April 2017, when all the participants had completed the EAP learning phase. The guiding questions for Interview #6 incorporated the findings from the proceeding phases and were developed to explore the participants' learning experiences after their EAP trajectory. The guiding questions are in Appendix C. Figure 8.2, below, illustrates the sequence of the MMR study and shows where Interview #6 was located in relation to the entire data collection process.

**Figure 8.2**

*Sequence of MMR Study: Phase IV*



### 8.4.1 Summary of Results: Interview #6

Overall, the main findings of Phase IV were congruent with the key findings of the preceding qualitative phases (I and II). As a unique finding of Phase IV, the analysis indicated that participants' success in EAP courses was associated with their self-regulated use of assessment, not only within the classrooms but also in their private activities. Table 8.2 presents themes that emerged from Interview #6. These themes are further illustrated in the following sections through extracts from the data.

**Table 8.2**

*Emergent Themes from Phase III, Interview #6*

overarching theme	main theme	sub-theme
reflections on learning-oriented, student-centred EAP classroom practice	cultural adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• roles of learners and teachers</li> <li>• different assessment cultures</li> </ul>
individual differences in use of assessment and learning outcomes	self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active use of assessment</li> <li>• non-use of assessment</li> </ul>

Note. This table was created based on the code occurrence and the code co-occurrence analysis generated in Dedoose software Version 8.0.35.

The first overarching theme addressed the interview participants' reflections on the EAP courses, in particular to the learning-oriented, student-centred classrooms. One main theme emerged strongly from the analysis, which was the participants' reflective thoughts on cultural adjustments in learning. This main theme was supported by two sub-themes in the following order: (a) roles of teachers and learners; and (b) different assessment cultures, both of which repeatedly emerged as key themes throughout the present study. In Interview #6, the changes in

learner beliefs that the participants experienced were documented in a reflective manner. Overall, the interview participants seemed to have adjusted their perceptions of roles that learners and teachers play in classrooms in order to meet classroom expectations of the learning-oriented EAP courses. In addition, the awareness of cultural differences in different assessment practices was reported by participants, and their learning behaviours seemed to be adjusted accordingly to meet the assessment standards of EAP classrooms.

The second overarching theme concerned participants' individual differences in their use of assessment and learning outcomes. The findings of Phase II (Interview #4 and #5) suggested that self-regulation (Boekaerts, 1999; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001) emerged as an important factor that seemed to determine such individual differences. When learning was self-regulated, the presence of LOA characteristics (Turner & Purpura, 2018) was observed in participants' use of assessment. Interview #6 of Phase IV delved further into individual differences among the participants concerning how self-regulation was linked to their use of assessment, and most importantly, their learning outcomes from a reflective point of view. As a result, two types of learning behaviour, which repeatedly emerged in the interview data of the current study, resurfaced as individual differences among the participants: (a) active use of assessment; and (b) non-use of assessment.

The analysis of active use of assessment suggested that participants' success in EAP courses could be associated with their self-regulated use of assessment in their private activities outside of the classroom, including in their network-building actions. In contrast, the interview data from participants with unsuccessful EAP experiences revealed that their non-use of assessment was linked to the absence of self-regulation in their lives outside the classroom. The participants' latent self-regulation was evidenced by their reporting of a lack of commitment to

the EAP learning, locus of control over their lives, and help-seeking behaviour.

#### **8.4.2 First Overarching Theme: Reflections on learning-oriented EAP classrooms**

The first overarching theme addressed the interview participants' reflections on the EAP environment, in particular to the learning-oriented, student-centred classrooms. One theme strongly emerged from the analysis, which was the participants' reflective thoughts on *cultural adjustments in learning* necessary to be successful in the new learning environment.

**8.4.2.1 Cultural adjustments in learning.** This main theme was supported by two sub-themes, in the following order: (a) roles of teachers and learners; and (b) different assessment cultures, both of which repeatedly emerged as key themes throughout the current study. These two sub-themes strongly suggested that the cultural adjustments that participants made were closely connected to how they understood and used assessment to advance their learning.

***Learner Beliefs about Teacher and Learner Roles.*** The first sub-theme of the participant reflections on their cultural adjustment in EAP classrooms concerned how they changed their perceptions of the roles teachers and learners themselves played in learning. As described in Chapter 6, *learner beliefs about teacher and learner roles* have been reported in the second language learning literature as a crucial variable that affects both the process and outcomes of language learning (Ellis, 2008; Horwitz, 1988) because such beliefs are deeply connected to learners' metacognitive knowledge (Cotterall, 1995; Wenden, 1999). In the present study, this concept became an important thread throughout the qualitative phases, and through Interview #6 of Phase IV, participants' reflections on such a change in their learner beliefs were collected and analyzed to obtain a longitudinal picture of their trajectory.

It has often been reported that teachers are authority figures in CHC classrooms (e.g., Thanh-Pham, 2010). In the present study, however, the interview participants developed

different views of the roles that teachers play in assessment. For instance, the quote from Lucy's interview exemplified such comments:

I miss my EAP teachers a lot. Nadia was kind and encouraging. Talia had higher requirement, and she wanted us to learn a lot in a short time. They were both responsible teachers. In China, teachers talk a lot and students just listen. Here, teachers and students are engaged together. I felt like we spoke almost equal in our classroom, and it is encouraging. I like that (Lucy)

Considering the fact that in Phases I and II, Lucy had commented that teachers should be the central figure in classrooms, this particular statement was insightful, as it showed that her learner beliefs had changed from the traditional CHC student values over the course of time. Exactly how and when such a change occurred seemed to differ individually. For some participants, the awareness seemed to have appeared at a very early stage of their EAP learning. Rachel, for instance, recalled and articulated a particular incident that prompted the cultural adjustment of learner beliefs about teacher and learner roles as follows:

I remember this. Bill [an EAP teacher] in the EAP orientation said, "You paid the tuition. So, use us! Be curious, and don't be shy. Ask teachers" [laugh] So, yeah. I am shy, but I asked lots of questions to my teachers. I changed myself. EAP was a good training for me because now I am not so afraid of asking questions to teachers. In Canada, you are independent and you need to know how to use teachers (Rachel)

In her case, these explicit words from Rachel's teacher on the very first day of her study in Canada became a catalyst to change not only her metacognitive knowledge of teacher and learner roles, but also her cognitive strategies (e.g., seeking teacher feedback and assistance). According to Rachel, changing herself to be an independent learner was an essential step as a cultural adjustment. This statement suggests the potential impact of such explicit guidance on CHC students' learner beliefs.

Reflections from some participants who experienced failing an EAP course similarly suggested that they also developed learner beliefs about independent learners. In the following



excerpt, Eeali, who experienced failing EAP-1 in Phase I, described in retrospect how she felt about her own role in learning.

[In EAP] They are all nice, nice teachers. Arthur was the best English teacher, actually. Even though I did not pass his course, I don't complain. I mean...it's not his fault, right? [laugh] I did not work hard enough to pass, so I know. Arthur was really helpful, but... I think, how can I say? I think we need to be responsible to learn English. I did not think so in China, or in EAP-1. But now I think so (Eeali)

In this reflective comment, Eeali's view of her role in learning became increasingly centralized after the failing experience, and accordingly the teacher roles were perceived as "helpful" supporters of the process. The change in her learner beliefs was evident in this statement although the process was slower for her than for the other participants who did not fail.

Likewise, Sky, who also experienced retaking EAP-1 resonated with the failing experience in a positive manner in this interview, which was different from how she described it in Phases I and II. In the following statement, Sky's gradual transition from a disengaged learner to an active participant of her own learning was articulated:

I thought I'd pass the course [EAP-1] easily. I should've more engaged, now I think. In EAP-1, Edona's class, I took the academic course. I did not want to be late from other students. I think I was rushed. Now I regret. I shouldn't. I should focused on my English.

EAP-2, I think I took it more seriously. You know, like, I was failed already, so I had to! I paid more attention to teacher's instructions and feedback, to do more work, ask more questions... yeah, more participation. I tried to pay more attention to what teacher wants me to do. Not only feedback on my writing, even homework. I took it more seriously. But, um, in EAP-1, I was like, "Oh well. I will pass, you know." I was not a terrible English student, but I was... yeah, OK. So, overconfidence? (Sky)

As Sky reports, the change in her learner beliefs seemed to have had an immediate impact on her learning behaviours. These descriptions of herself as a self-regulated learner were aligned with the characteristics of active use of assessment which were discussed in Chapter 6 (Phase II). In addition, the disengaged learner characteristics she mentioned were connected to her overconfidence in her own English skills and with her lack of ability to deal effectively with

academic setbacks, stress, and study pressure. Overall, the analysis of Interview #6 suggested that the interview participants had adjusted their perceptions of the roles that learners and teachers play in classrooms to meet classroom expectations of the learning-oriented EAP courses.

***Different Assessment Cultures.*** Regarding the participants' reflections on learning-oriented EAP classrooms, *different assessment cultures* emerged as the second salient sub-theme. Participants shared their reflections on how they adjusted their views and behaviours in an attempt to be successful in the EAP classrooms in which they found that the assessment practice was different from that of their home culture. Such differences were described in relation to exam preparation, purposes and goals, and impacts of assessment. EAP assessment practice was described as learning-oriented by the participants, which was aligned to the fact that the EAP curricula were developed and implemented in a learning-oriented paradigm.

For some participants, especially those who were from private schools with less rigorous academic standards than public schools with traditional CHC education values, understanding the EAP assessment culture turned out to be a challenge. Eeali, who graduated from a Canadian off-shore private school in China and repeated EAP-1 twice, reflected on her cultural adjustment experience as follows:

I was fine in China. Um, I don't think assessment in my school was so serious. When my final was bad, still I passed the course. But, you really need to be serious to pass EAP. I did not learn how to write, so I could not pass [EAP]1. And you need to be careful. Review your homework and quizzes. And you have to listen teachers to pass EAP.

When I was repeating EAP-1, I felt stressed. Yes. Because the teacher told me that I had too much grammar mistakes. So, I had to write a lot. I fixed my essay many times. But I understood how it works, what I need to do to pass the program (Eeali)

This statement implied that the development of Eeali's awareness of the necessity of cultural adjustment to EAP assessment practice, and her learning strategies, consequently, were also

changed. In the second part of her quote, her understanding of the EAP assessment criteria was captured.

Having graduated from a public, academic-oriented high school in China, Marshmallow's experience with the cultural adjustment to EAP assessment practice was different from Eeali's. In his opinion, the preparation process for EAP exams was different from how he prepared for exams in his schools in China. Marshmallow reflected on his experiences as follows:

But in China, we need to memorize things to get good points. Even if you don't know what it really means, but you know how to choose the right answer, it's okay. If you know how to pass the exam, you are an excellent student. You can be a student in a very prestigious university. But in EAP, it was different. Why we prepare, how we prepare for EAP exams were different. You can't pass EAP if you don't learn. Um, and I think, goal was different too. EAP is for help us in real courses [academic courses], but not for Gaokao (Marshmallow)

This statement also indicated participants' awareness of different assessment cultures and the need to modify their learning behaviours to meet the EAP assessment standards. Moreover, Marshmallow's reflection suggested his new-found awareness of the differences of purposes and goals of exams in each culture. According to him, the purpose of exams in China was mainly to prepare students for Gaokao—the national university entrance exam in China—but that of EAP was to help students function better in academic courses.

In addition, the different impact of different assessment cultures was mentioned by participants. Describing different paths to be accepted by the university, Rachel shared her thoughts on the consequential impact of EAP assessment on her current study in the computing science program as follows:

There are different ways to come here. Some students come to Canada from high school. Their English is good, but academic skills... not so much. Then, some people come here with their IELTS score. Their academic skill is good, and they are good at exams. Um, but, they are not so good in speaking. Or writing, actually. They don't know how to cite or summarize long articles. Then, like us. EAP students. We have good academic skills, and we had the English training. We learned about Canadian culture, like what Canadian professors wanna see in our papers. If you pass EAP, it means you learned English skills for academic courses (Rachel)

In her opinion, students who took the path with a standardized test score that enabled direct admission into a university program—the IELTS path—did not seem to have strong EAP skills, but in taking the EAP path, EAP graduates were better equipped with necessary English skills for university students. In summary, awareness of cultural differences in assessment practices was reported by the participants, and their learning behaviours seemed to be adjusted accordingly to meet the assessment standards of EAP classrooms.

#### ***8.4.3 Second Overarching Theme: Individual Differences in Use of Assessment and Learning Outcomes***

The second overarching theme concerned participants' *individual differences in their use of assessment and learning outcomes* (see Table 8.2, above). The analysis of Phase II (Interviews #4 and #5) suggested that individual differences were salient in how and why participants did or did not utilize the information from assessment for their learning. *Use of assessment* in this dissertation is defined as learner engagement with assessment activities and information generated from such activities to improve their learning. As defined and discussed in Chapter 6, the learner's *active use of assessment* was demonstrated in their learning, which was associated with the existence of LOA characteristics (Turner & Purpura, 2018), such as clear goal setting, frequent practice, feedback reception, help seeking, and understanding the criteria of performance evaluation. The analysis of Phase II revealed that participants' individual personal factors were reflected in their ability to self-regulate (Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001) their use of assessment. Thus, building onto the findings from Phase II, Interview #6 of Phase IV delved deeper into individual differences among the participants concerning how self-regulation was linked to their use of assessment, and most importantly, their learning outcomes.

**8.4.3.1 Self-regulation.** The analysis of Phase II (Interview #4 and #5) suggested that the role of self-regulation emerged as an important factor that seemed to enhance student use of assessment to improve their KSAs in the EAP courses. For example, in Phase II (see Chapter 6), the analysis implied that when active uses of assessment were observed in participants (e.g., appropriate goal setting, control of practice, feedback utilization, timely help seeking, and understanding the criteria of performance evaluation), these actions were associated with their self-regulatory learning ability. Chapter 2 provides more definition of self-regulation, and Chapter 6 describes how this concept emerged as a dominant theme through Phase II.

Interview #6 of Phase IV further explored the relationships between participants' use of assessment for EAP learning and for self-regulation. The data showed the same pattern as in Phase II: two types of learning behaviour emerged, associated with individual differences among the participants as follows: (a) active use of assessment; and (b) non-use of assessment. These two different assessment use types appeared previously, in the findings from Interview #3 (Phase I), Interview #4, and Interview #5 (Phase II), which were consequently used as sub-themes. Interview #6 then confirmed that these different assessment use practices seemed to be highly associated with the learners' self-regulation skills.

***Active Use of Assessment.*** This was the first sub-theme that emerged from participants' reflective thoughts on their success in EAP courses. The analysis suggested that self-regulation was evident in controlling their own use of assessment not only *in*, but also *out* of the classroom to improve their KSAs in the EAP context. Some specific aspects of student learning emerged to indicate individual student differences in relation to their LOA practice and were used as sub-themes: (1) commitment to EAP learning; (2) locus of control over their student lives; and (3) help-seeking/community forming.

In relation to their successful completion of the EAP learning, several participants connected it to assessment that helped them develop cognitive strategies (Boekaerts, 1999). Such behaviours were described as their strong commitment to the learning. Jericho, for example, referred to the development of his new learning strategies to be successful in the EAP courses. See the excerpt below:

I needed to write well to pass EAP. I worked hard to pass the courses, and my teachers gave me tips, how to write good essays. EAP helped me to write well. Essays are hard, and I need to work hard, to go to the library, and read articles. I learned how to use help. I talked to my teachers to ask questions, such a thing, I didn't do in China. And I learned to use the Writing Center to get my writing checked (Jericho)

In this example, the change of cognitive strategies in response to EAP assessment was described. His active use of assessment aligned well with LOA characteristics (Turner & Purpura, 2018), such as presence of learning goals, practice, incorporating teacher feedback, and using assistance.

Moreover, in retrospect, some participants associated their successful learning with self-control over their lives, which they had developed while studying in the EAP courses. With the aim of passing the EAP courses, they set their own goals, planned appropriate strategies, and monitored and evaluated their own learning behaviours even after the class, which indicated the development of self-regulated learning competence (Boekaerts, 1999; Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). The data excerpts below are some of the examples that suggest the deep engagement with LOA characteristics as a facilitating factor of such a lifestyle:

I went to the [EAP] class, and after that... first, checking email from my teacher and classmates, reading feedback on my homework, reviewed materials. I sent Edona [EAP-1 teacher] many, many emails and she always replied very quickly. I had to spend like two to three hours to do homework, yeah, every day. Then, I did some exercise. Then, I studied more sometimes (Barry)

In the afternoon, I went back to the dorm, had food, and did my homework. Yes, we had a lot of homework in EAP, every day. And because the class was small, not like the academic course, so teachers had more time to take care of our homework. We had to do our best to submit our homework. I checked my homework several times to submit (Marshmallow)

[After failing EAP-1 once] I changed it a lot. In EAP-2, we were lucky, we did not have lots of homework. So, I had many free time. I read the reading textbook. Also eClass [an online course platform]. There are so many articles there. He [the teacher] said to me, “to write good essay, you need to read more.” So I used eClass to read more articles when I had free time (Eeali)

Self-regulation was exercised in the form of autonomous learning (Zimmerman, 1995), and LOA characteristics were present in the description of participants’ lives as EAP students. In other words, being actively engaged with classroom assessment, these participants seemed to build autonomous learning competence that helped them regulate behaviours and activities, which may have played an effective role in their success and performance in the EAP final exams.

In addition, self-regulating social networking behaviours were reported by some participants. In order to achieve their learning goals, these participants perceived social interactions as part of their EAP learning. As reported throughout the study, the role of peers in EAP learning appeared more frequently in participants’ private interactions with friends, rather than in classrooms. This was a pattern previously seen in Phase II, and it became even more salient in Phase IV. Out-of-classroom interactions with classmates, friends and acquaintances, were reported, and can be interpreted through a *community of practice* perspective (Wenger, 1998) that provided opportunities to practice active use of assessment with peers. An example of such self-regulated approach in a friendship was reported by Watson (a Japanese L1 speaker) as follows:

I only spoke English in EAP. I had a Japanese friend, as you know, but we used English only because we knew we need to practice more. And we were motivated to pass the course (Watson)

In her case, by sharing the same learning goal, the friendship facilitated their practice and peer feedback outside the classroom. In contrast, some other participants revealed that forming a supportive community with students from the same culture was a strategy for them to effectively achieve their learning goals. Rachel, for instance, provided a detailed description of her community forming strategy in the following quote:

In EAP, my friends from China helped me to understand it [new concept or terms]. Explained it in Chinese, so I was able to understand well. We also practiced writing essays together. They know the assessment criteria, so we discussed in Chinese.

Actually, I made friends through social media. QQ, and WeChat. It's like... um, a community. We find friends there. It's only for Chinese. Because we don't know anyone here... we don't speak English well... so we go to community to find information. We help each other. Also, we have CSSA (Chinese Students and Scholars Association). It's for only Chinese students. We have an orientation, lots of information. I learned a lot from them, how to prepare for exams (Rachel)

In this example, Rachel's social networking behaviours were self-regulated to control her effective use of available learning time and resources (Boekaerts, 1999). Although such interactions happened in her L1, not in the target language as in the Watson example, the active use of assessment, such as peer feedback exchanges and understanding the assessment criteria, was present in this case as well.

Overall, Interview #6 suggested that the participants' metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural active participation in their own learning process (Zimmerman, 1986, 1990, 1995) was reflected in their use of assessment. Their active engagement with assessment was reported as a commitment to their own learning. Moreover, the data suggested that their success in EAP courses might be closely linked to their self-regulated use of assessment in their activities outside of the classroom, including in their network-building actions.

***Non-Use of Assessment.*** In a paired manner, non-use of assessment emerged as the second sub-theme of the participants' individual differences in their use of assessment and learning outcomes (see Table 8.2, above). The data of Interview #6 revealed that the participants' use of assessment to advance EAP learning varied significantly depending on individual participants, and the participants with unsuccessful EAP experiences displayed tendencies to dismiss information from assessment. For analysis, this was labeled as non-use of assessment.

For instance, in the following excerpt, Eeali shared a candid opinion about a lack of self-regulation in her own learning behaviours during the first EAP term in which she failed to pass:



Quizzes and exams, I think they are good. I know I work hard for them. But homework? Um, you know, sometimes I can copy. Or, I don't need to read everything, but just ask my friends, and he can tell. I know some people do that. They cheat. Actually, everyone cheat. Instructors may not know that. But quizzes and exams? We need to work hard. It tells the instructor that I am working hard. It's fair, fair for students. That's what I thought in EAP-1, but now, no. I know I have to do both, exams and homework to, to be a strong student (Eeali)

Before she failed EAP-1, Eeali had considered summative assessment as a more legitimate assessment method than formative assessment like homework, and because of that, she had not self-regulated to maximize the formative assessment opportunities. In retrospect, the lack of self-regulation in her learning behaviour was associated with a reason for the unsuccessful experience. Similarly, Sky, who also repeated EAP-1 once, shared her reflection on the non-use of assessment as the result of self-regulation failure.

I was not a bad student, but, you know, I thought I was, like, much better than other EAP students. And I did not like studying English. Although Edona [EAP-1 teacher] said, like, "you need to be careful with grammar" kinda thing, but I did not care. 'Coz I thought I will pass EAP no matter what. So, it was, like, "whatever." And, I was, you know, taking the academic course in Fall, that was more important for me, so. I didn't focus on my English. My mistake (Sky)

In this statement, Sky described her decision-making process around her non-use of assessment.

In addition to her overconfidence in her English skills, she directed her limited time and cognitive resources only to the credit academic course, which, combined, turned her into a typical case of non-use of assessment. Both the above-mentioned examples suggest that a lack of commitment to their own learning (Zimmerman, 1995) was reflected in these examples of non-use of assessment.

Moreover, in contrast with the finding of active use of assessment, there was a lack of self-control over these participants' out-of-the-classroom lives. In Neal's case, in particular, there were two course failing experiences: once in EAP-1 (the September Term) and again in EAP-2 (the March Term). His interview data indicated that unsuccessful learning might have been associated with a dearth of self-regulation in his overall life. See the excerpt below:

- Tsushima: Can you tell me how you felt after the EAP-1 final? In December.
- Neal: I passed EAP-1, but barely. Just barely. I was burnt out for a while after the final. I didn't do anything. Just slept a lot, and didn't eat much. Really tired after the final.
- Tsushima: How was the EAP-2? You said, you failed once. The course was difficult?
- Neal: I was stressed. I couldn't focus, so I failed.
- Tsushima: I see. Did you not enjoy the class? How was your life in winter?
- Neal: I just didn't like to go to the class, actually. I woke up at noon, just before my EAP class. I didn't have time to eat lunch, just go. And when I come back, I was very tired and want to sleep, so I took a nap, long nap, actually.
- Tsushima: I see. So, when did you do your homework? After the nap?
- Neal: No. I don't like doing homework at night. Usually, I play games and chat with my friends [in China]. So, I just quickly do my homework before the class.

The disengagement with the classroom assessment (i.e., homework) was reported in relation to his lack of self-regulation. The learner belief about the final exam as the absolute assessment, which was reported in Phases I and II, seemed to be continuously dominant in Neal's learning.

Furthermore, the data identified a lack of help-seeking behaviour in situations where it would have been beneficial to ask for support. Help-seeking is considered a learning strategy in self-regulation theories (Newman, 2008; Puustinen, 1998). The learners engage in monitoring and assessing their own learning (Zimmerman, 1986). Panda's data (Interview #6), for instance, strongly suggested a connection between non-use of assessment and a lack of help-seeking behaviours. To provide some context: Panda's motivation level during the November Term had been low and interactions with others including his friends were limited due to some personal conflict with his girlfriend, Lucy. When asked if he had any formative interactions with the teacher or his peers to prepare for the final exam, his response was as follows:

[I did] Not feel like. I did not need to talk to anyone. No. I did not. Exam, it's depend on you. Not others. You prepare for exam by yourself (Panda)

Interactions with others as a means of exam preparation was seen rather as a sign of dependence in his case; thus, there was no help-seeking behaviour to obtain formative information that would be able to support his learning. Such a lack of help-seeking behaviour was observed in other participants' data as well in relation to their non-use of assessment.

In short, the interview data from participants with unsuccessful EAP experiences revealed that their non-use of assessment was strongly linked to the absence of self-regulation, especially in their lives outside the classroom. In relation to a lack of self-regulatory learning ability, some factors emerged as a sign of disengagement with their learning, such as a lack of commitment to EAP learning, locus of control over their lives, and help-seeking behaviour.

## **8.5 Mini Discussion of Phase IV**

This chapter focuses on the key findings of Phase IV. The major findings will be further discussed in Chapter 9, which integrates the results of all four sequential phases.

### **8.5.1 First RQ: Reflections on Learning-oriented EAP Classrooms**

The first research question of Phase IV addressed the interview participants' overall reflections on the learning-oriented, student-centred EAP classrooms. Based on the analysis of Interview #6, the answer to RQ1 was *cultural adjustments in learning* as it emerged as the main theme of the first overarching theme. In other words, the reflective comments of the 12 participants on their experiences in the EAP classrooms were largely focused on themes around cultural adjustments to the new learning environment. This echoes studies on acculturation in the field of second language acquisition/education that point out the significance of the relationship between language learning and the acculturation process (Schumann, 1986; Cheng & Fox, 2008). In the present study, it was found that the cultural adjustments participants made corresponded to their use of assessment to enhance their language learning.

Two particular themes were saliently associated with the participants' cultural adjustment experiences in the EAP learning journey. Thus, this discussion section of RQ1 unpacks the two focused themes of student acculturation that were found in the context researched: (a) learner

beliefs about teacher and learner roles; and (2) different assessment cultures. The findings are discussed below, drawing upon concepts and theories from the relevant literature.

***Learner Beliefs about Teacher and Learner Roles.*** This was one of the key themes that emerged from participants' reflections on their cultural adjustment in EAP classrooms. As one of the central themes that repeatedly emerged from Phase I, the concept of learner beliefs in relation to metacognitive knowledge is defined and explained in Chapter 6. Based on the analysis of Interview #6 of Phase IV, the participants' learner beliefs exhibited increasing changes over the course of time so as to meet classroom expectations of the learning-oriented, student-centred EAP courses where the students played the primary role and the teachers played the secondary role.

Such a change in learner beliefs and its impact on student learning has been widely reported in research on study-abroad experiences (e.g., Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Suzuki, 2014; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). The present study adds to the existing literature finding that the study-abroad experience in the EAP courses had cognitive and metacognitive impacts on participants' learning and contributed to the change in their learner beliefs. From the perspective of language assessment, however, the literature that focuses on investigating a relationship between international students' cultural adjustment in learner beliefs and classroom assessment is sparse. However, there are studies on learner beliefs that claim that the assessment approach is a crucial factor that affects students' beliefs about language learning. For instance, in Peng's (2011) investigation into the changes in one first-year college student's beliefs about English teaching and learning since his enrollment, a formative assessment approach is linked to the participant's practical language use and positive learner beliefs. Moreover, language assessment studies on the development of learner autonomy through an assessment approach (e.g., formative assessment

and assessment for learning) provide relevant insights into students' metacognitive knowledge development (Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2009; Lamb, 2010). The findings of the present study confirm that learner autonomy can be enhanced and developed by an assessment approach that is conceptualized and implemented with the aim of enhancing the quality of student learning process and outcomes (Purpura, 2013; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018).

***Different Assessment Cultures.*** This was another key theme found in the current study. The reflective comments from the participants suggested that understanding the implemented assessment approach in the learning context was essential for their successful learning. Participants reported that they realized that a different assessment culture required a different learning approach. This change in learner beliefs was a part of the cultural adjustments they had to make to meet the specific assessment criteria of the EAP assessment culture. Similar to the above-mentioned theme of learner beliefs, this theme can be discussed in relation to learners' metacognitive knowledge (Cotterall, 1995; Wenden, 1999) because the change involves knowledge of the task and strategies.

One of the core features of LOA is learners' active engagement with their learning and performance through assessment activities to enhance learning outcomes (Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). For learners' active participation in assessment activities, cultural adjustment of their metacognitive knowledge of assessment can be an important step for international students who are from a different assessment culture, such as a test-driven cultures. As a unique finding of the current study, it was revealed that some participants from private high schools in China experienced difficult transition periods to change their metacognitive knowledge of assessment because of the relatively lenient academic standards of their previous English courses compared to the EAP standards. While this finding needs to be confirmed by further investigation, it would

be reasonable to state that students from CHC backgrounds are able to make the cultural adjustment so as to align their knowledge of assessment with the new assessment culture.

### ***8.5.2 Second RQ: Individual Differences in Use of Assessment and Learning Outcomes***

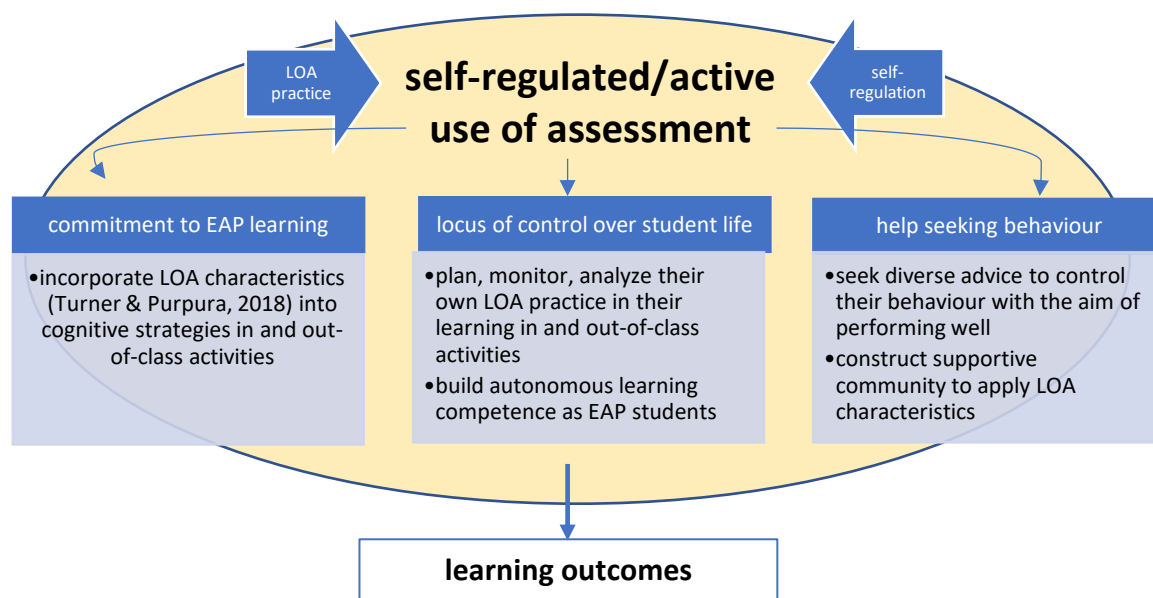
The second research question concerned individual differences in the use of assessment and participants' learning outcomes. The question was posed to delve deeper into the key findings from Phases I and II in which individual differences in the participants' use of assessment emerged as a strong indicator of their learning success. The answer to the first sub-question of RQ2 was that individual differences were found in the participants' use of assessment, which were categorized into two types: (a) active use of assessment; and (b) non-use of assessment. Moreover, the analysis suggested that self-regulation skills (Boekaerts, 1999; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001) played a crucial role in these learning behaviours. This finding from Phase IV was congruent with the preceding phases, suggesting that a participant's success in the EAP courses seemed to be related to how they self-regulated their use of assessment.

Furthermore, self-regulated/active use of assessment seemed to occur in participants' learning, not only in the classroom but also beyond the classroom, as reported in Interview #6. Participants' individual differences were seen to be salient mainly in three specific areas of student learning as reported: (1) commitment to EAP learning; (2) locus of control over their student lives; and (3) help-seeking behaviour. Figure 8.3 illustrates how self-regulated use of assessment in different aspects of participants' EAP learning was described. Assessment practice in the EAP classrooms and self-regulation were two major influential factors on participants' use of assessment, which was congruent with the findings from Phase II. When both of the two factors worked synergistically in student learning, they produced better learning outcomes (i.e.,

passing EAP courses). The three aspects of student learning emerged as the focused domains that reflected participants' self-regulated use of assessment. A discussion of these aspects of student learning follows to help understand individual student differences in an LOA context.

**Figure 8.3**

*Findings of Phase IV: Self-regulated/Active Use of Assessment in Aspects of Student Learning*



***Commitment to EAP learning.*** From the data of Interview #6 data, this first aspect of student learning was the most saliently connected to the participants' active use of assessment in and out of class activities. Specifically, the participants' efforts to meet the EAP standards were described in their application of LOA characteristics (Turner & Purpura, 2018) into their cognitive strategies, for example practicing and rewriting an essay, understanding feedback, and asking questions to the teacher for clarification. According to Boekaerts (1999), the capacity to use and to regulate one's cognitive processes is a core ability to produce learning outcomes. The theory has been supported by empirical studies, including from the perspective of English

language education (e.g., Saks & Lejien, 2018). In other words, in an LOA approach, classroom activities that train students to use cognitive strategies from different angles—both summative and formative, inside and outside the classroom—should be planned and implemented to enhance student learning.

***Locus of Control over Student Lives.*** Shown in the middle in Figure 8.3, the data revealed that the deep engagement with LOA characteristics (Turner & Purpura, 2018) was highlighted as a facilitating factor for participants to develop a locus of control over their lives. The successful participants used metacognitive monitoring as a means of achieving successful self-regulation even outside the classroom (Boekaerts, 1999; Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). The common examples that emerged through the data were actions such as participants organizing their schedule to prioritize EAP learning, adjusting their learning behaviours to fit the learning-oriented classroom culture, and developing new learning habits that fit their own learning styles.

Development of learner autonomy has been a major area of interest in language assessment research as an integral aspect of becoming a successful language learner (e.g., Black & William, 2009; Clark, 2012; Nicola & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Carless (2011) discusses the topic in the area of LOA, stating that classroom assessment has the potential to help students become self-regulated learners when both formative and summative assessment work in synergy. Even though the current study does not provide evidence to argue whether a direct causal relationship between learning outcomes and locus of control over student lives exists, it may well be that such learner autonomy prompted by the LOA practice had a strong impact on participants success in EAP learning.

***Help-seeking Behaviour.*** Shown on the right in Figure 8.3, the presence of help-seeking behaviours was another key finding that showed the difference between successful participants



and those who experienced failure. From the data of Interview #6, active help-seeking behaviours were observed in the reflections of the successful participants, mostly reported as a form of advice-seeking from diverse people. For instance, communication with teachers for feedback or clarification, referring to student services (libraries and the Writing Centre), and getting cognitive and emotional support from peers were captured as common help-seeking behaviours. These behaviours were prompted by classroom assessment, but self-regulation appeared to be a crucial factor for these participants to take the corresponding actions. This point relates to Zimmerman's (1990) statement regarding help-seeking behaviour: "self-regulated students proactively seek out information when needed and take the necessary steps to master it" (p. 4). This has been attested as an important self-regulated learning strategy because it requires self-regulation skills to realize and accept the fact that assistance is necessary (Newman, 1994, 2008; Pintrich, 2002; Zimmerman, 2001). In the literature of formative assessment and assessment for learning, help-seeking that allows formative interactions has been an important theme to understand student self-regulated learning processes (e.g., Fletcher, 2018; Steed & Poskitt, 2010).

Moreover, in the current study, participants' help-seeking behaviours were observed in their learning beyond the classrooms, such as the formation of social networks which provided them with opportunities to utilize and apply LOA characteristics in an informal fashion. Such behaviours—selecting a community to join and making efforts to use it as a learning resource—can be considered as the exercise of metacognitive regulation (Boekaerts, 1999; Flavell, 1979). From the perspective of second language socialization (Duff, 1995, 2010), the notion of individual networks of practice (INoP) proposed by Zappa-Hollman and Duff (2015) is highly relevant to the observed phenomena in the present study. The concept of INoP is developed to

capture “the multifaceted social dimensions and relationships that underpin learning that combines an analysis of individual competence and resourcefulness and the larger social system in which the individual is embedded” (p. 339). The concept can be utilized to analyze how an LOA approach influences individual student learning through the lens of second language socialization theories.

## **8.6 Summary of Chapter 8**

With the aim of capturing the 12 participants’ entire journey in the EAP program, Phase IV was conducted as a wrap-up phase to elicit their reflections on the learning experiences in relation to their use of assessment to improve their EAP skills. Based on the key findings from the preceding phases of the MMR study, two overarching themes were created to navigate this wrap-up phase as follows: (1) reflections on learning-oriented, student-centred EAP classroom practice; and (2) individual differences in use of assessment and learning outcomes.

The main findings of Phase IV not only aligned well with the key findings of the preceding phases (I and II), but were also insightful to understand how second language learners from CHC backgrounds experienced the acculturation process through the learning-oriented, student-centred EAP classrooms. Moreover, it was found that participants’ success in EAP courses was related to their self-regulated use of assessment, not only within the classrooms, but also in their private activities, such as the formation of supportive communities.

In the discussion section, some suggestions for further research are made. In terms of findings of the first overarching theme, learner beliefs that appeared to influence student engagement with assessment became one of the central themes throughout the present study. Larger studies that explore the complex nature of international students’ learner beliefs from the perspective of language assessment will be beneficial. In relation to the acculturation of

international students, further research is needed to delve deeper into the understanding of what factors can facilitate learners' acculturation of metacognitive knowledge of assessment so as to meet the standards of a new learning context.

Regarding the second overarching theme, Phase IV in the current research provided empirical data to argue for the mechanism of how learning occurs in relation to self-regulated use of assessment. The analysis suggested that participants' success in the EAP courses seemed related to how and in what aspects of their student lives they self-regulated their use of assessment. Further investigations on the relationship between learners' self-regulated learning skills and their learning outcomes in an LOA context will contribute to the comprehensive understanding of how assessment can support and promote teaching and learning.

## **Chapter 9 Integration and Discussion**

### **9.1 Introduction to Chapter 9**

In Chapter 9, the main results of this complete MMR study are integrated and discussed. By analyzing data across the three qualitative phases (i.e., Phase I, II, and IV), synthesizing the results and making connections to the quantitative data collected in Phase III, this chapter aims to provide further insight into the learning experiences of EAP students from CHC backgrounds in learning-oriented classrooms at a Canadian university. The focus of this chapter is to discuss how the use of classroom assessment promoted student language learning. Chapter 9 starts by revisiting the overarching RQs for this exploratory sequential MMR study with wrap-up phase (Creswell, 2015). The integrated results are presented in relation to the research questions, followed by a discussion that links the results obtained from the study to other literature.

### **9.2 Revisiting Overarching Research Questions of this MMR Study**

This MMR study investigated students' learning experiences in learning-oriented, student-centred EAP courses by focusing on their use of assessment to enhance their learning. *Use of assessment* in this dissertation is defined as learners' engagement or disengagement with assessment activities, and with information generated from such activities, to improve their learning. The population was international students from East Asian countries with CHC education values (Biggs, 1996; Nguyen et al., 2006) who came to Canada and enrolled in EAP courses so that they could be admitted into a Canadian university as full-time undergraduate students. The current study also aimed to identify factors that affect CHC students' use of assessment, in particular, classroom assessment, in order to improve their EAP skills. LOA was used as a conceptual framework to help investigate and analyze how classroom assessment can help enhance student learning processes and outcomes. The following overarching RQs were

formulated to guide the four-phased MMR study:

RQ1. What are the experiences of CHC students in learning-oriented, student-centred EAP courses? How does their cultural background affect their learning, specifically their use of classroom assessment?

RQ2. Is there a relationship between CHC students' engagement with assessment and learning outcomes in the EAP courses? What is the most salient factor that affects student use of assessment to improve their learning?

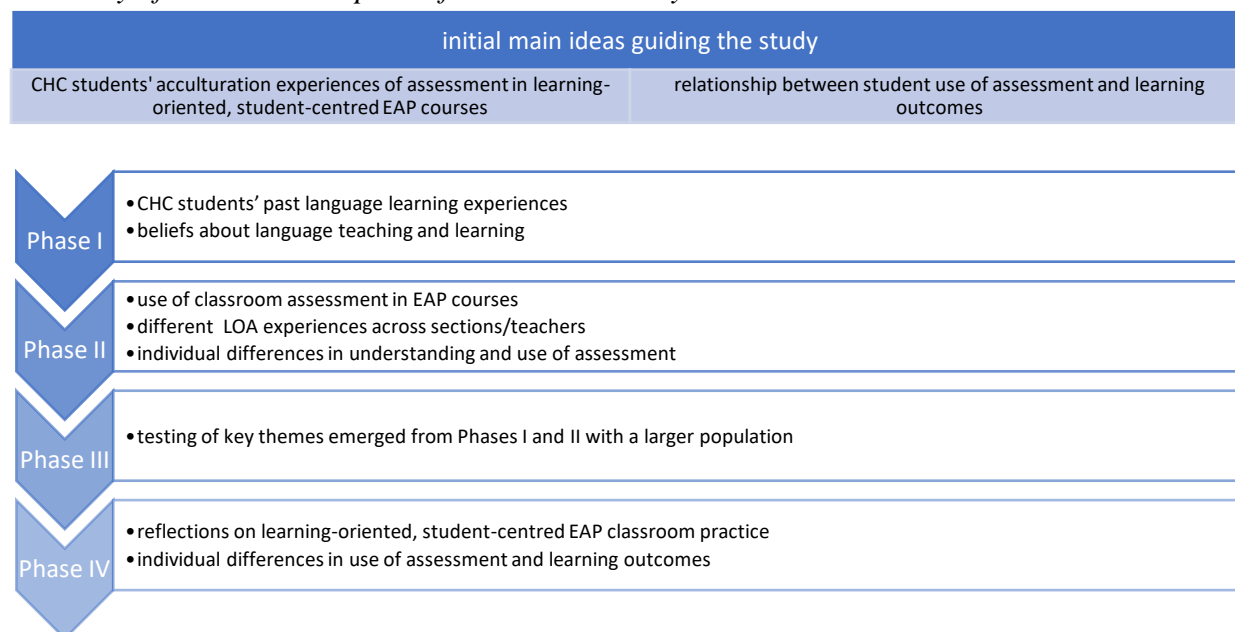
The main idea of each RQ was used to guide the entire study as follows:

1. CHC students' acculturation experiences of assessment in learning-oriented, student-centred EAP courses
2. The relationship between use of assessment and learning outcomes

Figure 9.1 shows a summary of the present study in which the two initial ideas are placed above the four phases as the guiding threads through the entire investigation.

**Figure 9.1**

*Summary of Theme Development for the MMR Study*



### 9.3 Integrated Results

Guided by the two overarching RQs presented above, this section presents integrated results of the four-phased MMR study.

#### ***9.3.1 First RQ: CHC students' Acculturation Experiences of Assessment in Learning-oriented, Student-centred EAP courses***

Based on the results of the qualitative phases (Phase I, II and IV), the participants' acculturation experiences were captured in changes of metacognitive knowledge—knowledge about one's cognitive processes to change one's own behaviour (Boekaerts, 1999; Flavell, 1979; Wenden, 1999)—in terms of how they perceived and engaged with particular persons, tasks, and strategies of assessment to enhance their learning. The notion of *learner beliefs*—a subset of metacognitive knowledge (Flavell, 1979; Wenden, 1998)—was used as a theoretical concept to explain and understand the student acculturation process in this context. Chapter 6 provides the definition of the concept used in this dissertation.

In this research setting, students from CHC backgrounds, most of who were from Mainland China, were the dominant majority population (i.e., 91.47%), and their values and beliefs in language learning appeared to affect practices and interactions in their classrooms. In Phase I, which documented the first two months (i.e., the September Term), it was found that the 12 interview participants initially associated different values with the two different types of assessment (summative and formative). In addition, there was some background diversity among the participants in terms of their schooling experience. Participants from international schools offering westernized curricula and school environments (Young, 2018) initially assumed that there was no need for them to adjust their learning behaviours in this new learning context; however, they soon realized that there was a profound difference in student responsibility for

assessment use in the EAP courses. EAP teachers played crucial roles in terms of student assessment acculturation through assessment interactions, such as teachers' formative feedback. In addition, the strong impact of summative assessment on the participants, in terms of how they perceived the value of the final exam, was evident in Phase I. Such learner beliefs about summative assessment were also investigated in the second part of the student survey (Phase III). The statistical analysis with the larger population ( $n = 354$ ) aligned with the qualitative results.

Phase II, conducted during the second EAP term (i.e., the November Term), further reported some common patterns across the interview participants in their experiences of specific feedback providers, such as rejection of peer feedback and a strong preference for teacher feedback. This finding aligned with the statistical analysis from Phase III, which revealed that the participants' preference for teachers playing the central role in classroom learning. At the same time, Phase II indicated that participant learner beliefs increasingly showed some major changes in terms of how they perceived different aspects of classroom assessment. For instance, several participants emphasized that summative assessment should not be centralized in their learning as the absolute learning goal. Moreover, in conjunction with the change in learner beliefs, student interactions with EAP teachers became increasingly student-initiated and even critical. Individual differences in the development of new learner beliefs, however, became evident among the 12 participants. Some participants adjusted their use of assessment to align with learning-oriented EAP practice, while others maintained the summative assessment-driven learning style of their previous language classrooms in CHC contexts.

Towards the end of Phase II, participant perceptions of teacher and learner roles in classroom assessment quickly evolved to meet the EAP standards. Interview participants, especially those who developed higher LOA awareness, became more aware of their own

responsibility to utilize formative information from classroom assessment. They began to expect and even demand detailed, frequent, personalized and formative teacher feedback, and expressed respect for the EAP teachers who rigorously practiced an LOA approach. Their learner beliefs about peer roles in classrooms, however, remained largely congruent with the traditional CHC value (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Thanh-Pham, 2013), except for some participants who developed a strong awareness concerning the effectiveness of peer formative feedback. The development of new learner beliefs relating to peer roles as an important feedback provider showed the most individual differences. This development seemed to be influenced by the different instructions for collaborative assessment tasks (e.g., group discussions) across different EAP sections/teachers. Based on this qualitative finding, the student survey in Phase III investigated EAP teachers' assessment practices. Comparing 25 sections/teachers, statistical tests revealed that the student experience of LOA-related themes were different across sections, which suggested that students experienced different assessment practices depending on the teacher.

Phase IV, which was the last qualitative phase, provided a conclusive view of the interview participants' acculturation through the EAP courses. The final data were collected from the 12 focal participants after the completion of their EAP courses to obtain a retrospective view of their learning experiences. In general, participant learning behaviours appeared to adjust over the course of time to meet the assessment standards of EAP classrooms. Moreover, participants reported their realization that a different assessment culture required a different learning approach, and cultural adjustments in their learning had to be made to function well in the LOA culture.

### ***9.3.2 Second RQ: Relationship between student use of assessment and learning outcomes***

Based on the three qualitative phases (I, II, and IV), two types of learning behaviours



emerged in a paired manner as the common pattern of use of assessment as follows: (a) active use of assessment; and (b) non-use of assessment. Successful participants showed similar characteristics in terms of their ways of using the information obtained from classroom assessment to plan, monitor, and analyze their own learning behaviours, such as clear goal setting, frequent practice, feedback reception, help-seeking, and understanding the criteria of performance evaluation. These traits of active use of assessment aligned well with Turner & Purpura's (2016, 2018) description of LOA characteristics, as presented in the following quote:

An LOA approach highlights learning goals, practice, feedback or other assistance, performance evaluation and the role they play in developing individual learning (Turner & Purpura, 2018, slide 30).

Conversely, unsuccessful participants shared common traits of dismissing assessment information and were disengaged from assessment-related activities. Even though they self-assessed their performance as higher than the EAP standards, those who showed non-use of assessment failed the final exam. Moreover, it was found that participants' use of assessment became increasingly complex and individually different as their EAP learning progressed.

For instance, in Phase I when all participants started their first EAP term, their use of assessment was largely focused on the reception of teacher formative feedback and practice of EAP skills through and for summative assessment (e.g., quizzes and the final exam). However, the data of Phase II showed more varied examples of active use of assessment. Participants purposefully elicited more formative information from others, rather than only receiving assessment information that was provided to them. Teachers were used as the main source of formative assessment information, and peers played the role of supportive study companions, especially outside the classroom. In Phase II, the LOA characteristics became saliently complex in examples of active use of assessment, such as learning goals set beyond the EAP courses,

frequent practice incorporated into daily routine, eliciting feedback from diverse people, using a variety of assistance services, and forming supportive communities. At the same time, in the data of some specific participants, such LOA characteristics were not present. Learner self-regulation—utilization of cognition, metacognition, and motivation to achieve learning goals—was found to be profoundly connected to individual differences in how and why participants did or did not utilize the information from assessment for their learning.

In addition, Phase IV, examining individual differences from a reflective point of view by the participants, further suggested that interview participants' success in EAP courses was contingent upon how they self-regulated their use of assessment in their private activities aside from the classroom learning. Self-regulation was evident in controlling their own use of assessment not only *in*, but also *out* of the classroom to improve their KSAs. For instance, commitment to EAP learning, locus of control over their student lives, and help-seeking behaviour were found as the most crucial aspects of student learning in which successful participants self-regulated their own learning behaviours. On the other hand, the interview data from the participants with unsuccessful EAP experiences revealed that self-regulated use of assessment was not present in those key aspects of student lives.

Lastly, as mentioned above, the results of Phase III (the student survey) confirmed that there were statistical differences in terms of teachers' assessment practices across sections/teachers. Although there was no evident relationship between EAP teachers' assessment practices and participants' learning outcomes in this study, interview participants repeatedly reported in the qualitative phases that their first EAP-1 teachers had a strong influence on the development of their awareness of the benefits of active use of assessment.

## 9.4 Introduction to Discussion

Based on the empirical findings and the mini-discussions presented in the previous chapters, this discussion section further analyzes and discusses how assessment can support student learning and enhance learning outcomes, in light of the relevant literature. As presented in the previous chapters, the findings of the present study were explained and supported by metacognitive learning theories that serve to describe the intricate learning processes of individuals (see above, Chapter 6, Section 6.8.1, for a brief overview of metacognitive theories). The central argument of the final discussion is that when assessment is oriented for learning, student learning can be enhanced by improving the level of metacognitive learning skills. This helps students to think more about their own learning processes (Boekaerts, 1999; Flavell, 1979; Zimmerman, 1989). This research provides empirical support for factors underlying students' learner beliefs in language assessment. The two overarching RQs continue to guide this discussion section.

## 9.5 Discussion of RQ1: Acculturation to the Learning-oriented, Student-centred EAP

Based on the results of the first overarching RQ, CHC students' acculturation experiences were captured mainly in the following themes: (1) roles of learners, teachers, and peers, and (2) awareness towards different assessment cultures. Such cultural adjustment processes were reflected in the development of the participants' *metacognitive knowledge* to meet the standards of the new learning context, and this concept was used to analyze the results of RQ1. Building on Flavell's (1979) metacognition theory, Wenden (2001) defined metacognitive knowledge, from the scope of language education, as "the part of long-term memory that contains what learners know about learning" (p. 45), which is comprised of three different but closely linked components: persons, tasks, and strategies. In second or foreign language education research, the

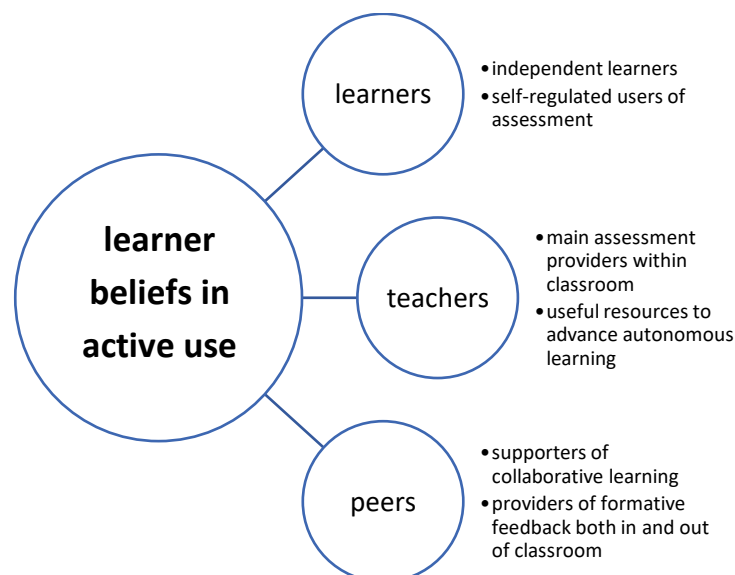
term, *learner beliefs*, has become an alternate term for metacognitive knowledge (Cotterall, 1995; Wenden, 1999). A substantial body of literature in SLA (e.g., Ellis, 2008; Horwitz, 1988) has demonstrated that language learners come to the classroom with a variety of beliefs about persons, about the nature of tasks, about the functions of strategies, and about how these variables influence their learning.

### 9.5.1 Roles of Learners, Teachers, and Peers

Figure 9.2 presents a summary of the emergent learner beliefs in the LOA context researched. The findings of the present study reveal that the most salient change was seen in participants' learner beliefs about roles that people played in their language learning. These beliefs were reflected in their assessment engagement. Moreover, changes in learner beliefs about persons were linked to the changes of their beliefs about tasks (e.g., assessment activities and criteria), about strategies (e.g., exam preparation strategies), and about how these variables functioned together in an assessment culture.

**Figure 9.2**

*Summary of Learner Beliefs that Emerged in LOA Context of the MMR Study*



With a particular focus on the impact of a classroom assessment approach on CHC students' learner beliefs/metacognitive knowledge and their language development, the results of the current research provide empirical support for factors underlying CHC students' beliefs about the roles of teachers, themselves, and their peers in their assessment engagement. The results of the current study suggested that such changes in learner metacognitive knowledge about stakeholders did not occur in a linear manner but through an iterative mechanism.

**Learners.** The new learner beliefs about persons emerged from the analysis of interview participants' active/self-regulated use of assessment. The main roles that learners played were similar to the characteristics of autonomous learners who "take some significant responsibility for their own learning over and above responding to instruction" (Boud, 1988, p. 23 cited in Cotterall, 1995, p. 219). This sense of learner responsibility was reflected in participants' self-regulated use of assessment in the researched context.

**Teachers.** Even though teachers were perceived as the main assessment providers in the classroom throughout the data collection period, new teacher roles that were unique to the LOA context emerged over time. For instance, the teachers were perceived as useful resources to support student autonomous language learning. This new learner belief about teacher roles is in line with the essential role that teachers need to play in a LOA framework (Carless, 2011; Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018).

**Peers.** Learner beliefs about peers remained stable for the longest time. They were seen as supportive colleagues of collaborative activities, but not as a trustworthy resource for formative assessment. This finding aligns with previous research on CHC students' learning practices which reported the difficulty of implementing formative assessment in CHC contexts (e.g., Chen et al., 2014; Ruegg, 2015; Thanh-Pham, 2010, 2013). Thanh-Pham (2013) analyzed

cultural barriers preventing CHC students from adopting student-centred, cooperative learning, and stated that “CHC students have a tendency to establish a harmonious relationship and try to avoid conflicts as much as they can” (p. 180). One unique finding of the current research was that, along with the acculturation process, some participants developed new learner beliefs in which peers were providers of formative feedback both in and outside the classroom. LOA facilitated CHC students’ formation of individual networks of practice (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015) which helped CHC students obtain and provide more assessment-related peer support, as reported in Phase IV. These descriptions about new roles of peers are compatible with the theoretical bases of peer cooperation in LOA (e.g., Carless, 2011; Hamp-Lyons, 2017). While the traditional CHC value of harmony, consensus, and equality can be an obstacle to the implementation of peer-involved classroom assessment (Thanh-Pham & Renshaw, 2015), the current study provides evidence that student collaborative learning through assessment can take place in a multi-layered manner.

Overall, the results of the present study echo second/foreign language education studies that investigated EFL/ESL students’ learner beliefs in an English-speaking context, and documented how such learner beliefs evolved and changed over time in a complex and even self-contradictory manner (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). These studies also reported that some beliefs remained more stable and tenacious than other beliefs (Peacock, 1998), as reported in the current study.

### ***9.5.2 Awareness towards Different Assessment Cultures***

Accompanied with the changes in learner beliefs, *awareness towards different assessment cultures* emerged as a theme, especially through the reflection of interview participants in Phase IV. Understanding of the assessment approach implemented in the EAP

context was essential for their successful learning, and such awareness was reported in conjunction with their new learner beliefs about persons, tasks, and strategies. The finding of the current study can also be discussed from the perspective of language learners' metacognitive knowledge (Cotterall, 1995; Wenden, 1999) because the change involves learners' thinking about how an assessment framework is constructed and supportive to their learning.

In the area of language assessment, although not necessarily supported by metacognitive theories, many empirical studies have explored EFL/ESL learner perceptions of assessment through qualitative research approaches (e.g., Polish secondary school learners' perceptions of performance-oriented assessment, Czura, 2017; high school students' perceptions of AfL in Hong Kong, Carless & Lam, 2014; Finnish test-takers' perceptions of a high-stakes language test, Huhta et al., 2006; Korean university students' perceptions on learning oriented assessment, Kim & Kim, 2017). These studies claimed that an assessment framework can affect how students perceive and modify their learning, which is congruent with Wenden's (1999) concept of metacognitive knowledge. In the current study, it was found that both summative and formative assessment worked in synergy to facilitate interview participants' language development, and participants with higher LOA awareness became more successful than those without the new metacognitive knowledge about the EAP assessment culture.

This finding can also be relevant to the notion of student assessment literacy (O'Donovan, et al., 2004; Smith, et al., 2013; Stiggins, 1991) that conceptualizes students' capacity to understand the academic achievement standards as well as the rules surrounding assessment in their learning context. Although the literature on this concept is limited, it has been pointed out that students need to understand the purpose of assessment in order to self-regulate their learning (Smith, et al., 2013). The current study contributes to this argument by providing

empirical evidence that CHC students accepted the assessment culture of the EAP classrooms by becoming aware of the pedagogical benefits of the different framework.

## **9.6 Discussion of RQ2: Relationship between Use of Assessment and Learning Outcomes**

The key results of the second overarching RQ were two-fold: (1) the role of self-regulation in LOA; and (2) individual differences in use of assessment. The notion of self-regulation (Boekaerts, 1999; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001) emerged through the qualitative phases as an important factor in relation to participants' individual differences. In this section, the results of RQ2 are first discussed in relation to self-regulation due to its important role in the individual differences of the current study. Then, the two types of use of assessment that determined individual differences—active use of assessment and non-use of assessment—are discussed in the light of the relevant literature with an aim to provide a reference case for future studies on classroom assessment.

### ***9.6.1 Role of Self-regulation in LOA***

Metacognitive regulation is how we control our thinking to facilitate our learning through any activities that help monitor our learning. In order to enhance learning outcomes, not only changing metacognitive knowledge, students need to take follow-up actions (Flavell, 1979). These involve planning, monitoring and evaluating one's own learning. Zimmerman (1995) referred to this process as self-regulated learning. The integrated results of the current study pointed out that an LOA approach facilitated self-regulated learning by fostering students' awareness in the need for active engagement with assessment as a key to enhancing their learning outcomes. The concept of self-regulation has been widely applied in educational assessment research, and it has been argued that students' capacity to become successful self-regulated learners can be affected by various aspects of the assessment process (Andrade, 2010;



Bailey & Heritage, 2018; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam, 2011). In language assessment, specifically, the relationship between L2 development and self-regulation has been discussed in recent years by studies that focused on various frameworks of classroom assessment (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998: assessment for learning; Goto-Bulter & Lee, 2010: alternative assessment; R. Lam, 2015, Mak & Wong, 2018: portfolio assessment; Xiao & Yang, 2019: formative assessment). Despite the different terms used to define classroom assessment, these studies make the case that assessment can support the self-regulation of learning in classroom settings.

The results of the present study also show the evident role of self-regulation in relation to students' active engagement with assessment, and suggest that it is a crucial factor that could link assessment to learning outcomes. Experiencing an LOA approach, successful interview participants developed new metacognitive knowledge, which was applied to plan, monitor, and analyze their own learning progress. Such behaviour—using knowledge about oneself and the task, and planning to act or not act upon it—meets the characteristics of self-regulated learners (Zimmerman, 1990). This finding is in line with the conceptual framework of LOA, which emphasizes the importance of enhancing learning outcomes with the effective use of assessment, and includes self-regulation as a key element of LOA (Turner & Purpura, 2016). The LOA characteristics (e.g., goal setting, control of practice, feedback utilization, help seeking, or understanding the value of performance evaluation) can be used to help teachers and students monitor and analyze the degree of student engagement with their own learning.

### ***9.6.2 Individual Differences in Use of Assessment***

In the present study, individual differences in the use of assessment between successful individuals and those who failed were evident, and became one of the central themes throughout the MMR study. Why did some students benefit more from classroom assessment than others?

The findings strongly suggest that individual learner factors played a crucial role in their improvement. Kim and Kim (2017), conducting an LOA investigation on the effectiveness of teacher feedback for reading-to-write tasks in an EAP context in Korea, found that individual EAP learners' attitudes toward teacher feedback and their efforts to improve their KSAs varied, and that the LOA approach did not benefit all participants equally. The results of the present study add to the literature by sharing empirical data on individual differences in student use of assessment and the factors in such a process. Before discussing the two different types of assessment use, it should be reiterated that the two learning behaviours identified, which divide participants' use of assessment into two binary categories, seemed to develop in an iterative manner.

**Active Use of Assessment.** In this dissertation, the term *active use of assessment* is defined as learning behaviours which fit the purposes of classroom assessment to improve students' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) in the LOA context provided. Adopting Turner and Purpura's LOA characteristics (2016, 2018) as a conceptual framework, the analysis of interview participants' active use of assessment indicate that their learning behaviours covered the three main components of the self-regulation model: cognition, metacognition, and motivation (e.g., Schraw et al. 2006; Zimmerman, 1995). Based on the findings, the present study suggest that self-regulation was a critical aspect of participants' use of assessment in order for them to be successful in their EAP courses. Their learning took place when assessment was used in conjunction with self-regulation; thus, this can also be called *self-regulated use of assessment*.

One unique finding of the present study was the nonlinear nature of the development of students' active use of assessment. While some interview participants employed active use of

assessment from the earlier stage of their EAP learning, others took more time to develop the skill. It also appeared that some areas of LOA awareness were not developed as fast or as strongly as other areas (e.g., engagement with peer assessment in the classroom), even though the learning outcome was still produced. As peer involvement in assessment is one of the key aspects of LOA, this apparent tenacious nature of learner beliefs in CHC students about peer assessment and their impact on student learning needs to be further investigated through the lens of LOA.

In addition, some participants with LOA awareness showed critical attitudes towards assessment processes, such as teacher assessment and their own self-assessment practices. Such active use of metacognition was more evident in some cases than in other successful participants. Although it remains unknown in this study to what extent the LOA approach helped participants develop meta assessment skills (McDonald, 2010), the results suggest that those who showed such a critical disposition toward their own self-assessment were the highly successful cases. Overall, the current study supports the notion that LOA helps students achieve their intended learning goals by assisting their development of self-regulation, and that this development tends to be captured in students' active use of assessment.

**Non-Use of Assessment.** Non-use of assessment was created in this dissertation to identify certain learning behaviours that did not match the purposes of classroom assessment to improve students' KSAs in the EAP context. This term refers to the condition where participants were primarily disengaged or not engaged with assessment information. As opposed to the previous theme (i.e., active use of assessment), this theme emerged from categories concerning the participants' latent use of information from assessment in relation to their learning. Insufficiency in engagement with the LOA characteristics (e.g., goal setting, control of practice,

feedback utilization, help seeking, or understanding the value of performance evaluation) was strongly associated with the interview data from the unsuccessful participants. Zimmerman (2000) stated that self-regulation is an individual characteristic that everyone possesses, although its mastery is not evenly distributed across learners. This point appears applicable to discuss the results of the current study.

One salient characteristic observed in unsuccessful cases was the presence of overly confident attitudes in conjunction with non-use of assessment. This finding provides further evidence to support the argument of the Dunning-Kruger effect (Kruger & Dunning, 1999) in second/foreign language research, which has examined individual factors in self-assessment (Cox & Dewy, 2020; Gaffney, 2018; Saito et al., 2020; Trofimovich et al., 2016). The Dunning-Kruger effect (Kruger & Dunning, 1999) refers to the situation where people at a lower level of ability tend to overestimate their performance to a much greater extent than the extent to which high-performing people, in contrast, *underestimate* their performance. Kruger and Dunning (1999) associated this effect with the mediational role of metacognitive skills, arguing that “less competent individuals overestimate their abilities because they lack the metacognitive skills to recognize the error of their own decisions” (p. 20). Applying this theory to their study on the relationship between self- and other-assessment of accentedness and comprehensibility in second language speech, Trofimovich et al. (2016) have argued that language learners with lower proficiency tend to misjudge their own performance. This result aligns with the findings of the present study in which those who were unsuccessful self-assessed their performance overconfidently and did not calibrate their performance to the course standards.

The current study, taking an ethnographic approach, captured some key influential factors of such inaccurate self-assessment. Unsuccessful interview participants shared their struggles in

life that were reflected in the lack of self-regulated use of assessment. The life-related issues reported by the unsuccessful participants were common problems of international students that were previously documented in other empirical studies, such as culture shock in a new academic environment (Mori, 2000), feelings of homesickness and stress around language fluency while pursuing their studies (Chalungsooth & Schneller, 2011). These participants' lack of focus on EAP learning appeared to negatively affect their self-assessment skills, impairing their ability to internalize the information they received through classroom assessment. Moreover, and most importantly, old learner beliefs about assessment from previous language learning experiences were found to be a significant factor that influenced the unsuccessful participants' self-assessment.

As one of the key areas of LOA, it is important for students to develop self-regulated learning skills that help them overcome difficulties in learning. The findings of the current research indicate that a systematic way of monitoring students' self-regulated use of assessment (e.g., use of LOA characteristics) could be beneficial, especially for those who struggle in learning. In addition, when introducing students into an LOA-based classroom that is established in a Western manner, such cultural differences in assessment practice need to be explicitly discussed with international students, with classroom teachers, and among the students themselves.

## **9.7 Summary of Chapter 9**

Chapter 9 is dedicated to presenting the integrated results from the exploratory sequential MMR study with wrap-up phase, and to further discussing emergent issues in relation to the literature. The results related to the first overarching RQ indicate that the LOA practice in the EAP courses helped participants develop new learner beliefs to make a cultural transition. The

development of new learner beliefs about roles people play in learning were associated with participants' acculturation to the new learning environment. In addition, developing the awareness that a different assessment culture called for a substantial adjustment of learning behaviours was found as another key result to discuss CHC students' acculturation process.

The results related to the second overarching RQ suggest that there was a close relationship between how assessment information was used by learners and their learning outcomes. Self-regulation (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000) emerged as an important factor which appeared to determine such individual differences. When learning was self-regulated, the presence of LOA characteristics (Turner & Purpura, 2018) was observed in interview participants' use of assessment.

The discussion of this chapter was an expansion of the mini-discussions presented in the findings chapters (Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8), focusing on the two overarching RQs to conclude the entire MMR study. Concerning the first overarching RQ, the importance of development of new learner beliefs is highlighted, as such beliefs can affect student engagement with assessment and consequently their learning outcomes. The discussion of the second overarching RQ focuses on the importance of enhancing learning outcomes with the effective use of assessment, which includes self-regulation as a key element of LOA (Turner & Purpura, 2016).

## Chapter 10 Conclusions

“Every truth has four corners: as a teacher, I give you one corner, and it is for you to find the other three”  
(Confucius).

### 10.1 Introduction to Chapter 10

It has been argued that classroom assessment can facilitate student learning outcomes by being woven into instruction to support language learning (e.g., Carless, 2011; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). Drawing on LOA theories, previous studies have expounded on student use of feedback and its effectiveness on L2 learning (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2017; Yang, 2020). However, there is a dearth of empirical studies holistically examining how LOA can serve to enhance learning outcomes over an extended period of time. Aiming to fill this gap, based on data from a MMR study conducted in an EAP program at a Canadian university, this dissertation reported on the L2 learning experiences of CHC students in relation to their use of assessment within an LOA classroom context. Chapter 10 presents the conclusions of the present study, including a summary of the findings, the implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research, as well as the contribution of this study to the field.

### 10.2 Summary of Findings and Discussions

Phase I (Chapter 5) depicted the initial acculturation stage of CHC students who enrolled in a learning-oriented EAP program in relation to their use of classroom assessment to advance their language learning, focusing on the first two months of their learning journey. Phase I was the first qualitative phase of the four-phased MMR study with 12 international undergraduate students as the focal interview participants. The participants from the English-focused and westernized schooling systems (i.e., private international schools) took more time to realize the different expectations in the EAP program from their previous schools. Over the course of time, similar characteristics among participants in terms of participants' use of the information

obtained from classroom assessment became more notable, such as eliciting more formative feedback from others and monitoring their own understanding of assessment criteria. At the same time, it was found that some participants who failed also shared common tendencies among themselves, such as dismissing teacher formative feedback. Additionally, while participants were skeptical about the effectiveness of peer feedback when it was planned as a classroom activity, organic peer interactions in their L1 were observed through preparation for the final exam.

Chapter 6 reported the second qualitative phase (Phase II), which was conducted during the November Term of the EAP program. It highlighted the difficulties of changing metacognitive knowledge about particular persons, tasks, and strategies that learners held, and highlighted also that such perceived knowledge from past learning contexts affected the process of participants' acculturation to the new assessment culture. Moreover, participants' self-regulation was found to be profoundly connected to their individual differences in the use and understanding of information from assessment. In this regard, two types of learning behaviour emerged as the main themes: active use of assessment; and non-use of assessment. This notion was further associated with the LOA characteristics (Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018) in order to explain and define participants' individual differences in the use of assessment.

Chapter 7 was dedicated to Phase III, which consisted of a student survey administered at the end of the November Term. The survey was developed from the main findings of the preceding qualitative phases (Phases I and II) with the aim of examining and confirming key qualitative findings with all CHC students registered in the EAP program ( $n = 354$ ). The survey results were congruent with the findings from the qualitative phases, suggesting that this group of students from CHC countries brought diverse backgrounds into the classroom, including length of stay in Canada and past formal English language learning experiences. In addition, it



was found that their learner beliefs in language learning were generally aligned with the learning-oriented, student-centred approach that the ESL school implemented through the curriculum. Yet, there was a preference for teachers playing the central role in classroom learning. The survey results also suggested that the student experiences regarding the assessment practice were rated positively. Further statistical analysis, however, indicated that the students had different assessment experiences depending on each section/teacher, which might have affected EAP students' LOA awareness development.

Chapter 8 reported Phase IV, which was conducted as a wrap-up phase with the goal of eliciting the 12 interview participants' reflections on their learning experiences. The main findings of Phase IV were insightful for understanding of how second language learners from CHC backgrounds experienced the acculturation process through the learning-oriented, student-centred EAP classrooms. Moreover, it was found that the participants' success in EAP courses appeared contingent upon their self-regulated use of assessment, not only within the classrooms but also in their private activities, such as the formation of supportive communities.

Guided by the overarching RQs for the entire MMR study, Chapter 9 presented the integrated results from the four phases and further discussions in order to prepare solid recommendations for practical application. The integrated results related to the first RQ suggest that the LOA practice in the EAP courses helped CHC students develop new learner beliefs that matched the new learning environment. These new beliefs were associated with CHC students' active engagement with assessment. The most salient new belief developed over the course of time was the perception of participants' own new role as independent learners. The results related to the second RQ imply a close relationship between how assessment information was used by learners and their learning outcomes. When learning was self-regulated, the presence of

LOA characteristics (Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018) was observed in participants' use of assessment.

Chapter 9 also discussed the importance of development of new learner beliefs through an LOA approach, as such beliefs can affect student engagement with assessment and consequently their learning outcomes. The chapter also suggests that the effective use of assessment includes self-regulation as a key element of LOA (Turner & Purpura, 2016) which can in turn enhance student learning outcomes.

### **10.3 Research Contributions**

This section focuses on the contributions of this dissertation. The section is divided into two sub-sections addressing contributions to both theory and methodology.

#### ***10.3.1 Theoretical Contributions***

Both theory and empirical findings contribute to our understanding of the interplay between classroom assessment and language learning from the perspective of CHC international students in higher education. The concept of LOA that connects assessment to learning (Carless, 2007; Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018) has become increasingly widespread and discussed in classroom assessment research in the last decade. However, there has still been a gap between the theories and the scientific evidence which supports and explains the efficacy of LOA on student learning, especially from a student perspective. Thus, this study provides empirical evidence to further our understanding of the role of assessment on student learning by analyzing student language learning experiences in a longitudinal manner.

Although some research studies have been conducted on how LOA contributes to student L2 development in EAP contexts (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2017; Yang, 2020), very little has been done to document which factors affect student EAP learning processes and how individual differences

affect such learning in relation to LOA. The current study found that CHC students can experience a smooth transitional phase in terms of becoming independent, self-regulated language learners (Zimmerman, 1995) through the LOA approach, which is a crucial goal of LOA (Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). This study also provided deep insights into less successful cases, in which students struggled to meet the learning outcomes in the EAP courses. Through an ethnographic approach, this dissertation described their successes and challenges both in and outside of the classroom in relation to their use of assessment, which is a rare focus in the LOA research community. Further investigations of the relationship between student self-regulated learning skills and learning outcomes in an LOA context will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how assessment can support and promote teaching and learning.

Furthermore, while previous LOA studies investigated student learning within the classroom context, not including the impact of social factors on learning (Bandura, 1993, 2001), this dissertation presents participants' learning processes as a journey from the very beginning of their EAP enrollment to the completion of the program. Owing to this thorough documentation of student learning progress, the current study was able to capture how particular classroom factors influenced CHC students' engagement with assessment in and out of classroom contexts. The analysis of active use of assessment suggested that participants' successes in EAP courses were associated with their self-regulated use of assessment in their private/social life, such as their network-building actions. This finding provides a new perspective on the role of assessment tasks in student learning.

In addition, this research documented one of the most significant factors related to student learning behaviours, namely, cultural values in learning (Biggs, 1996), and how such a factor affected CHC student use of assessment in the LOA context. As learning is a situated

process (Wenger, 1998), when a new pedagogical approach is investigated for its efficacy, the culture and realities of the local classroom context including the backgrounds of students must be taken into consideration. The current study contributes to our understanding of the question of how students from a culture with a strong emphasis on summative assessment (Carless, 2011; Cheng, 2005; Watanabe, 2004) have adapted and responded to learning-oriented, student-centred classroom practices. Considering the fact that higher education globally welcomes migrant students (UNESCO, 2016) and thus needs to understand and support their acculturation issues and characteristics, the findings of this dissertation provide insight into how these previous learning experiences can affect their acculturation process in the classroom. This dissertation, in conclusion, can hopefully enhance and promote our understanding of different domains of the relationship between learning and assessment.

### ***10.3.2 Methodological Contributions***

The main methodological contribution of the research has been the unique combination and application of an ethnographic study coupled with a survey. Drawing from a pragmatist epistemology, this MMR study was designed to obtain the best possible data that would provide in-depth insight into how students define and account for particular situations and circumstances regarding their use of classroom assessment (Turner, 2013). While this research paradigm has become a well-established methodology in language assessment research (Turner, 2013), the unique approach of this dissertation adds another MMR design to the existing body of research.

Examining student learning from the lens of social cognitivist theories (Bandura, 1989, 1993, 2001), an ethnographic approach was used to gather qualitative data for Phases I, II and IV. The qualitative phases were utilized in order to provide a richer, more socially contextualized understanding of the influence of learning-oriented, student-centred EAP classrooms on CHC

students' learning trajectories. In addition to the collected qualitative data (i.e., student interviews and classroom observations), the researcher's experience of working as a teacher and as a program evaluator for the ESL school also played an important role in the study design and data analysis.

Regarding the quantitative component (Phase III), the survey items were created based on the key findings from Phases I and II. Even though there were some restrictions applied to the survey design, described below, it still provided the necessary data because it was developed by strictly following sequential MMR design principles (Creswell, 2015). In other words, the questions of the survey were selected by drawing solely on saliently emerging themes from the qualitative data. Owing to the precise application of the sequential design, the quantitative phase was able to provide a broader view of the LOA experience. The survey items can be potentially used with and/or adapted to other studies that investigate a similar question.

Another methodological contribution lies in the experience gained by alternating the MMR design from the original version (as described in Creswell, 2015). As a general framework, the sequential exploratory MMR design ends with the quantitative phase and the entire data sets are integrated for the final analysis (Creswell, 2015). In the current study, however, one final qualitative phase was added as a wrap-up phase to elicit more reflective information from the focal interview participants. This decision was made in order to: (1) answer the overarching research questions in more depth; and (2) obtain reliable data in the most timely and practical manner. To fully depict the CHC students' LOA experiences, it was deemed necessary to continue qualitative data collection until all the interview participants had completed the EAP learning. Hence, Phase IV—the wrap-up phase—was added to the sequence. Owing to the addition of a wrap-up phase, this study captured a full, extensive picture of

participants' use of assessment in an LOA context from beginning to completion, which provided insightful data for an understanding of multifaceted nature of student learning processes.

The interpretive approach applied to this dissertation shows the flexibility and enormous possibility of MMR designs. They can be adapted and customized for different research contexts and questions. Especially with classroom-based research that is inherently complex and difficult to conduct, this experience may be useful for other studies that require the flexible tailoring of data collection methods. In the end, the optimal goal for MMR researchers is to obtain the most sound and compelling data to answer the research questions.

#### **10.4 Limitations of Study and Implications for Further Research**

There are four main limitations of this study that have implications for further research work. The first limitation is related to the fact that all the interviews were done in English, which was not the L1 of any of the students. There was one student (Watson) whose L1 was Japanese, and it was possible to communicate with her in Japanese as this is also the L1 of the researcher; however, given the options, she chose to be interviewed in English in order to develop her English competency. As Polkinghorne (2005) pointed out, language expression and comprehension can be fundamental for in-depth qualitative interviews; therefore, the importance of using participants' L1 in the qualitative data collection should also be acknowledged. However, considering the level of English proficiency of the interview participants in the present study (i.e., approaching university level according to standardized test scores), it is unlikely that using English as the communication language reduced the credibility of the data. In addition, conducting all the interviews in English (the participants' L2) was an important decision for establishing the trustworthiness of the data obtained from the participants. It allowed the

researcher to communicate with all 12 participants in the same way, since they were placed at the same proficiency level.

The second limitation lies in the survey design, which had to be simplistic and succinct due to administrative restrictions. The time allocated to the survey was ten minutes, including the consent process. Moreover, considering the English skills of students in the lowest level course (EAP-0), the question items had to be written in the simplest possible manner, which restricted the elicitation of more complex information. Owing to these restrictions, some question items that may have been confusing or that required a clarification were eliminated from the survey. It might have been more insightful to include more specific question items about students' previous schooling experiences (e.g., private schools in their home country, public schools in the home country, local schools in Canada, international schools in Canada, and so forth), for instance.

The third limitation was the lack of large data to examine how and to what extent teachers' LOA practices had a direct effect on student success or failure in an EAP course. In the current study, the available information about student learning outcomes was collected from the 12 participants who voluntarily shared their assessment results (e.g., quizzes, essays, and final exams). Although this achieved the objectives of the current study, what would be interesting for further research is to collect quantitative data about student learning outcomes, such as passing rates of class sections, from an entire program, in order to examine whether the data are aligned with the teachers' LOA practices. As learning outcomes need to be present to claim assessment as learning-oriented, this kind of future study will be a major contribution to the present body of research.

The fourth limitation might be the validity of the EAP final exams used in this study as the most important measurement tool of student learning progress. The EAP final exams were

validated by assessment experts and accepted as the language requirement for admission at the university when students passed the EAP-2. In order to document the EAP students' learning trajectory in this specific context, the final exams were the most appropriate measurement to monitor student learning progress. Therefore, this dissertation did not use other measurements to test student language development. Having said that, for future research, testing learner language development with additional means will add to a more rigorous investigation of an LOA approach.

### **10.5 Implications for Educational Practice and Further Research**

Assessment practice needs to be discussed in terms of the sociocultural context of each classroom, the content of the curriculum, and the context of the school itself. Yet, it is still worthwhile to discuss some of the implications for educational practice that emerged throughout the present study. It is hoped the insights from this dissertation can be used by language education researchers and practitioners to: (1) further develop LOA frameworks to discuss the relationship between learner autonomy and an LOA approach; (2) delve deeper into the complex nature of learners' metacognition in relation to their use of assessment; (3) continue to build the necessary knowledge for the successful implementation of an LOA approach in the classroom; (4) gain an understanding of the academic acculturation process of international students; and (5) purposefully engage with the idiosyncrasies, as well as the diverse educational backgrounds, of one particular cultural student group in relation to their language learning needs and challenges.

#### ***10.5.1 Development of LOA Frameworks***

The empirical evidence from the current study may support the further development of LOA frameworks to discuss the relationship between learner autonomy and an LOA approach.



LOA concepts aim at helping students become autonomous in their learning with timely support and guidance from the teacher through assessment processes. The current study found that self-regulation was a key to participants' success in the EAP learning, as it affected their active use of assessment. This echoes the LOA literature that posits the importance of self-regulation in learning (e.g., Turner & Purpura, 2016, 2018). Participants with successful EAP experiences reported using LOA characteristics (e.g., goal setting, control of practice, feedback utilization, help seeking, or understanding the value of performance evaluation) with the intention of improving their EAP skills both in and outside the classroom as autonomous learners. Therefore, it would be beneficial to further investigate how LOA characteristics can help teachers and students monitor and analyze the degree of student engagement with their own learning. For instance, the results from this dissertation may be used to develop a self-evaluation tool for students to self-regulate and reflect on their own use of LOA characteristics in their learning.

### ***10.5.2 Understanding Learners' Metacognition in Use of Assessment***

In the current study, the development of new metacognitive knowledge (i.e., changing learner beliefs about assessment tasks, strategies, and agents/stakeholders) emerged as an important theme. Interview participants developed the new knowledge to be successful in the learning-oriented EAP classrooms differently, and this point was associated with the individual differences among the participants. An implication for future study is to delve further into the complex nature of language learners' use of assessment by incorporating metacognitive theories.

Findings of the present study suggest that the metacognitive knowledge of an adult language learner does not change in a linear manner, but rather through an iterative mechanism, meaning that there may be two contradictory viewpoints in one person at the same time. In addition, when a learner develops new metacognitive knowledge influenced by a different

learning culture, the knowledge is not necessarily used to regulate thought and learning (Brown, 1987; Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). For instance, although participants were aware that peer assessment was one of the key aspects of the EAP courses, the old learner beliefs about “power in feedback” prevented the participants from active engagement with peer assessment activities. This point—the relationship between metacognitive knowledge about assessment and metacognitive regulation—should be further explored through the lens of LOA. As the understanding of metacognition helps explain how learning occurs (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000), more studies on how assessment can help students’ development of metacognition will be beneficial to the field of language assessment.

### ***10.5.3 Supporting Implementation of LOA Approach***

As seen in the findings of the current research, EAP teachers played a significant role in the development of students’ new learning behaviours through their assessment practices. However, it was found that student LOA experiences significantly varied across teachers, which appeared to have influenced some students’ use of assessment. Therefore, there is an implication for future practice to investigate classroom-level elements of the LOA approach, such as teacher training and teacher beliefs. In particular, how assignments were designed and implemented by different teachers affected differently participants’ use of assessment. Research on how and for what goals teachers design LOA tasks, such as assignments, will be beneficial to better understand the efficacy of such tasks on student learning.

Development of teacher assessment literacy to implement an LOA approach is essential to ensure the efficacy of the approach (Fulcher, 2021; Hamp-Lyons, 2017). When a language program integrates an LOA approach, it is important to consider whether the concepts and components of LOA are appropriately present and, if so, how effectively they are operating to

support student learning. In the research site of the present study, even though the ESL school embraced the learning-oriented paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995), and its assessment approach reflected the pedagogical philosophy, there was no specific assessment framework to guide teacher assessment practices. Adaptation of well-constructed theoretical LOA frameworks that are oriented towards practical classroom application (e.g., Turner and Purpura, 2016, 2018) will help educators to incorporate the concept into their daily teaching.

#### ***10.5.4 Exploration of Academic Acculturation through Assessment***

The results of the current research suggest an implication for further research on how an LOA approach influences individual student learning from the perspective of a second language socialization paradigm. Although the importance of the relationship between language learning and the acculturation process has been acknowledged in the field of second language acquisition/education (Cheng & Fox, 2008; Duff et al., 2019), the ways classroom assessment can be used to facilitate the student acculturation process has not yet been understood. In the current research, some participants who were successful in EAP reported their active use of assessment not only in but also outside the classroom, such as selecting a community to join and putting forward efforts to use it as a learning resource. Metacognitive knowledge (e.g., learner beliefs about assessment tasks, strategies, and agents/stakeholders) were found to be an influential factor in these participants' active engagement with assessment in their acculturation process. Thus, there is an implication for future research to further explore what factors of assessment can facilitate learners' metacognitive changes in relation to their acculturation process.

#### ***10.5.5 Discussion of Diversity in CHC Students***

The results of the current study indicate the complexity of CHC student backgrounds in a

higher education context. The group of CHC students was not homogenous in terms of their past language education, having experienced different assessment practices in their previous classrooms. Such diversity of one cultural group needs to be further discussed in relation to student language learning. In particular, the research on CHC undergraduate students coming from non-traditional schooling paths, such as private international high schools or international education programs in Canada (e.g., Chinese offshore high schools in British Columbia), has to date come from the fields of education and sociology (Liu, 2016; Schulte, 2018; Young, 2018). In language education, the literature has just begun to address the emergence of this phenomenon (Deschambault, 2018). Thus, this complexity of one cultural group should be acknowledged and further researched by language education scholars, given that student backgrounds and academic preparation conditions impact how students perceive the process of learning, the reasons for the problems they face, and their experiences in the classroom. Those in charge of English language programs would benefit from knowing current trends of international students' migration in higher education, as well as the students' background diversity associated with their learning challenges.

## **10.6 Conclusion of Study**

This dissertation, based on data from an exploratory sequential MMR study with a wrap-up phase conducted in an EAP program at a Canadian university, explored CHC students' learning experiences in relation to their use of classroom assessment to advance their language learning through a longitudinal research design. It reported how CHC students perceived, responded to, and adapted different types of assessment formats, assessment providers, and assessment practices. Taking an ethnographic research approach, this dissertation provided a thick description of cultural and social aspects of student learning.

As the concept of LOA (Carless, 2011; Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2016) gains attention, the current study adds further empirical evidence to the growing understanding of the mechanism of student learning supported by assessment. Given the increasing number of international students studying in English-medium higher education institutions, this study represents pedagogically useful and theoretically meaningful data and analyses for both educators and researchers to enhance the quality of language classroom practice. Finally, this dissertation's research questions drove the methodological decisions; therefore, it is hoped that other researchers will be encouraged to consider unconventional methodological perspectives and approaches in their studies.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Guiding Interview Questions [Phase I]

Note: The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A, B, and C) presented guiding questions only, and the specific phrasing of the questions and order in which they were asked varied to follow the flow of the conversation.

#### Interview #1

*overarching theme 1: cultural adjustment in terms of learning*

Q. How many years did you study English in your country? Tell me about how you learned English back in your country.

Q. What is your impression on studying English in the current classroom? Is there any difference from your previous learning experiences? For example?

*overarching theme 2: general EAP coursework and classroom assessment*

Q. It's been a week since you started taking the course. Did you find anything you like about studying English in your current classroom?

Q. Is there anything you find challenging or difficult? Why did you find it difficult?

Q. What kind of activities, including homework, you had this week helped you the most to improve your English? Why?

Q. There has been a lot of group discussions in the course. How do you feel about them?

#### Interview #2

*overarching theme 1: engagement with classroom assessment*

Q. It's been three weeks since you started taking the course. What do you think about your progress so far? Any examples?

Q. Are there any activities, comments, or incidents that made you think about or reflect on your progress?

Q. What kind of activities, including homework, do you think so far the most helpful for your learning?

Q. Have you found anything challenging or difficult in the course this week?

Q. What kind of homework have you had this week? How did you feel about the homework? (time management, the level of difficulty, contents, assessment)

Q. Think of feedback you received from the teacher on your returned homework. Was it clear? What did you do after receiving the feedback? Why?

Q. In EAP-1, you have the rubric for writing. How often do you check it? Why?

Q. You have had quizzes, such as the vocabulary test, regularly in EAP. What do you think about them? Do you think they are helpful? When you got them returned, what did you do?

Q. Did your teacher talk about the results in the class? What did he/she say? What did you think about it?

Q. Did you talk about these quizzes with your classmates? Why?

*overarching theme 2: perspectives on roles in classroom*

Q. Think of group/pair activities you had in this week, classmates' feedback. When you have a group/pair activities, do you correct your peer's English? Why?

Q. What kind of feedback/comment did you provide to your classmates? Why do you think it was helpful for them?

*overarching theme 3: preparation for the final exam*

Q. Have you started any preparation for the final exam? Why?

Q. Do you talk about how to prepare for it with anyone? When and who do you share the thoughts (teacher, classmates or friends)?

Q. How did you prepared for exams before? Is there any differences?



### Interview #3

#### *overarching theme 1: results of EAP final exam*

Q. You just had the final exam. How do you feel about it?

Q. The final exam is worth 50% of your grade. What do you think about it?

Q. How was the essay writing? Did you have enough time?

Q. Did you talk to your classmates about the final exam? What did you say?

Q. What was the most challenging or difficult thing in relation to the final exam?

Q. Do you think the EAP exam was different from the common final exams you had in [your country]?

#### *overarching theme 2: exam preparation strategies*

Q. How did you prepare for the final? What did you do? Do you think you were prepared well for the exam?

Q. In EAP, you have the rubric for writing. Do you think it helped you to write a better essay for the final exam?

Q. You had the practice exam in the class. How was it? Do you think it was helpful?

Q. After the practice exam, did you ask questions to your teacher or classmates?

Q. Did your teacher talk about the results in the class? What did he/she say? What did you think about it?

Q. Did you talk about the practice exam with your classmates? Why?

Q. What was the most helpful thing for you to prepare for the final exam? For example, homework or quizzes?

Q. Think of feedback you received from the teacher on your work. Was it clear? What did you do after receiving the feedback? Why?

Q. What kind of feedback/comment did you provide to your classmates? Why do you think it was helpful for them?

## Appendix B: Guiding Interview Questions [Phase II]

### Interview #4

*overarching theme 1: EAP experience at beginning of November term*

Q. What do you think about the new course/class? Do you think it is different from the previous class?

Q. What do you like about the new course/class?

Q. What is the challenging or difficult thing in this course/class so far? Compared to the previous course/class?

Q. Do you think the homework is too difficult for you? Or too time-consuming?

Q. What is your learning goals you want to accomplish during this term?

*overarching theme 2: different formative assessment providers*

Q. Think of feedback you received from the teacher on your returned homework. What did you do after receiving the feedback? Why?

Q. Think of group/pair activities you had this week. What did you like about these activities? Or is there anything you did not like in the activities?

Q. When you have a group/pair activities, do you correct your peer's English? Why?

Q. What kind of feedback/comments did you provide to your classmates? Why do you think it was helpful for them?

Q. When you receive feedback/comments from your peers, what do you do? Why?

*overarching theme 3: individual differences in use of LOA*

Q. What aspects do you think EAP-1 helped you to study at the EAP-2 level?

Q. What EAP skills do you think you need to improve the most? Why?

Q. What is the most helpful thing (person, classroom activity, learning material, communication, etc.) for you to achieve the goal? Why? How often do you use the help?

## Interview #5

*overarching theme 1: CHC students' perceptions on second EAP final exam*

Q. What do think about the upcoming final exam? Is that different from the previous final exam?

Q. What has your teacher said about the final exam? Do you talk about the final exam in the class?

Q. Do you talk about the final exam with your classmates or friends? When and why?

*overarching theme 2: different formative assessment providers*

Q. Tell me about one activity you liked the most in the current class. What kind of feedback did you receive after this activity? What did you do afterwards?

Q. Tell me about one activity that you did not like that much. What kind of feedback did you receive after this activity? What did you do afterwards?

Q. You received feedback from the teacher on your homework/essay/quizzes. Was the feedback clear? What did you do after receiving the feedback? Why?

Q. Did you need to provide feedback to your classmates? What kind of feedback/comments did you provide to your classmates? Why did you think the feedback was helpful?

Q. Did you have an opportunity to correct your classmates English mistakes? Or did your classmates correct your mistakes by any chance?

*overarching theme 3: individual differences in preparation for EAP final exam*

Q. Have you started preparing for the final? Describe your steps for studying for your exams.

Q. Is there anything you are doing now but you did not do in the previous course? Why?

## Appendix C: Guiding Interview Questions [Phase IV]

### Interview #6

*overarching theme 1: reflections on learning-oriented, student-centred EAP classroom practice*

- Q. In retrospect, how was your learning experience of the EAP courses?
- Q. What was the most enjoyable thing (activity, topic, event, etc.) in the EAP courses?
- Q. What was the most challenging thing in the EAP courses? How did you cope with it?
- Q. What do you think is the main difference in English teaching and learning between Canada and [your country]?

*overarching theme 2: individual differences in use of assessment and learning outcomes*

- Q. How did you manage your study time while taking the EAP courses?
- Q. What did you do when you needed a help during the coursework? Why did you choose the person/service/method?
- Q. Did you make any friends in EAP? Did you study together before the final exam?
- Q. What do you think you did well to pass the course?
- Q. What was the most helpful thing for you to pass the course? (teacher feedback, homework, quizzes, peers, etc.)
- Q. What motivated you the most to pass the course?

## Appendix D: Classroom Observation Guide [Phases I and II]

### Classroom Observation Guide

<b>School:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Observer:</b>
<b>Teacher:</b>	<b>Time:</b>	<b>Number of students:</b>
<b>Course:</b>	<b>Class length:</b>	

Materials (textbooks, handouts, workbooks, visual aids, etc.)
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event #	time	description of task types & goals	participation organization codes 1. class 2. class - individual 3. group/pair 4. individual	teacher talk and behavior	student talk and behavior	assessment type	field notes
						1. self-assessment 2. peer-assessment 3. teacher-student assessment 4. teacher-group assessment 5. teacher-class assessment 6. other	

\*Adopted from Turner's (2000) and Colby-Kelly & Turner's (2007) Classroom observation guides

## Appendix E: Student Survey [Phase III]

### EAP November Term Student Survey

This is NOT an exam. Do not write down your name. You can use a dictionary if you like. If there are any questions you do not want to answer, you can simply skip them

#### Category 1. demographics and past learning experiences

Choose the answer that is the closest to a description of you.

- |                              |                       |                  |                |                      |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. Gender                    | A. Male               | B. Female        |                |                      |
| 2. Age                       | A. 17 ~ 19            | B. 20 ~ 22       | C. 23 ~ 25     | D. Over 26           |
| 3. Country of origin         | A. China              | B. Japan         | C. Brazil      | D. Saudi Arabia      |
|                              | E. Korea              | F. Vietnam       | G. Other [     | ]                    |
| 4. Number of years in Canada | A. Less than 6 months | B. 6 ~ 12 months | C. 1 ~ 3 years | D. More than 3 years |

Do you agree with the following statements? Please choose one answer.

5. The EAP course is very similar to how I learned English in my high school (senior school).
  - a. Completely Agree
  - b. Slightly Agree
  - c. Slightly Disagree
  - d. Completely Disagree

#### Category 2. CHC students' learner beliefs

Do you agree with the following statements? Please choose one answer.

6. The pure lecture format is the best way to learn English.
  - a. Completely agree
  - b. Slightly Agree
  - c. Slightly disagree
  - d. Completely disagree
7. The group work format (e.g., discussions) is the best way to learn English.
  - a. Completely agree
  - b. Slightly Agree
  - c. Slightly disagree
  - d. Completely disagree

8. Quizzes and exams are very important to improve my English skills.
  - a. Completely agree
  - b. Slightly Agree
  - c. Slightly disagree
  - d. Completely disagree
9. Only the teacher should correct students' mistakes.
  - a. Completely agree
  - b. Slightly Agree
  - c. Slightly disagree
  - d. Completely disagree
10. Students cannot find mistakes by themselves.
  - a. Completely agree
  - b. Slightly Agree
  - c. Slightly disagree
  - d. Completely disagree

### **Category 3. EAP teachers' LOA practices**

Please read the following statements and choose one answer.

11. In the EAP class, we spend a lot of class time listening to the teacher and taking notes.
  - a. Completely Agree
  - b. Slightly Agree
  - c. Slightly Disagree
  - d. Completely Disagree
12. In the EAP class, we spend a lot of class time talking and thinking together in a group.
  - a. Completely agree
  - b. Slightly Agree
  - c. Slightly disagree
  - d. Completely disagree
13. In the EAP class, I enjoy working in a group to practice my English.
  - a. Always
  - b. Often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Almost never
14. When I am confused, my EAP teacher knows how to help me.
  - a. Completely Agree
  - b. Slightly Agree
  - c. Slightly Disagree

- d. Completely Disagree
15. My EAP teacher writes comments on my work (not just a check mark ✓).
- a. Always
  - b. Often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Almost never
16. When we have group discussions, my EAP teacher always checks on us and gives us advice.
- a. Always
  - b. Often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Almost never
  - e. We never have had a group discussions
17. I always read EAP teacher's feedback on my work carefully.
- a. Always
  - b. Often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Almost never
18. In the EAP course, I have opportunities to correct my classmates' English mistakes.
- a. Always
  - b. Often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Almost never
19. I spend more than 2 hours on homework for the EAP course.
- a. Always (more than 5 times a week)
  - b. Often (4 ~ 5 times a week)
  - c. Sometimes (1 ~ 3 times a week)
  - d. Almost never
20. I always know how my work (e.g., presentations, essays, homework) will be assessed.
- a. Always
  - b. Often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Almost never

-----End of Survey-----

Thank you for your time.