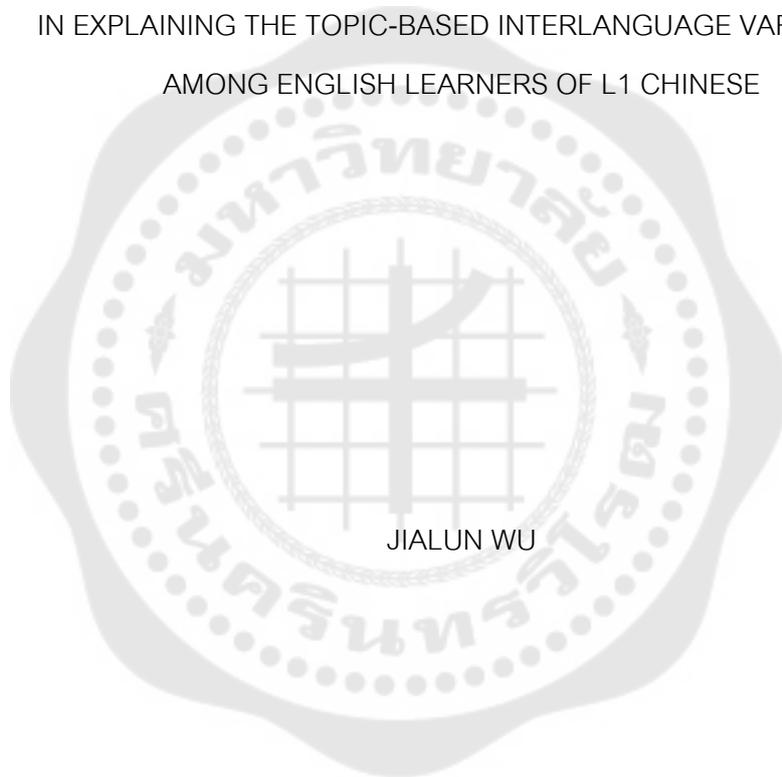AN ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE DOMAIN HYPOTHESIS AND ITS ADEQUACY

IN EXPLAINING THE TOPIC-BASED INTERLANGUAGE VARIATION

AMONG ENGLISH LEARNERS OF L1 CHINESE

JIALUN WU

Graduate School Srinakharinwirot University

2024

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JIALUN WU

An Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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BY

JIALUN WU

HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN PH.D. (LANGUAGE AND GLOBAL COMMUNICATION) AT SRINAKHARINWIROT UNIVERSITY

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The phenomenon of topic-based interlanguage variation among second language learners leads to the proposal of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis. However, theoretically, the core concept 'discourse domain' is ill-defined and the statement fails to meet the standard criteria for good theory construction. Therefore, it has been suggested that the term 'discourse domain' be abandoned. Empirically, interview data from ten participants' on two random topics were analysed. No significant topic-based interlanguage variation was found in terms of complexity, accuracy or fluency considering factors such as life experience of residing in English-speaking countries, content control, frequent practice and emotional investment. This suggests that the hypothesis may not adequately explain the phenomenon. Comparatively speaking, such life experience, particularly in relation to the frequency of practice and the exposure to the target language, may play a greater role in determining interlanguage variation than other factors.

Keyword : interlanguage variation, Discourse Domain Hypothesis, second language acquisition

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AS-unit	Analysis of Speech unit
AWL	Academic Word List
CAF	complexity-accuracy-fluency
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Language
EAP	English for Academic Purpose
GSL	General Service List
IL	interlanguage
L1	first language
L2	second language
LAD	language acquisition device
LSP	Language for Specific Purpose
NL	native language
NNS	non-native speaker
NS	native speaker
SLA	second language acquisition
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TL	target language
TTR	type-token ratio
UG	Universal Grammar

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

As an English learner since the age of five, I had not realised my own variable oral performance in English until I became a university student majoring in English. I may have been able to make a speech with complex sentence structures and correct grammar if I was given plenty of time to prepare and practise frequently, but when it came to spontaneous conversations about daily topics, especially with foreigners, I became less confident and even stuttered.

When I went to the United Kingdom for postgraduate study, the situation changed interestingly. Since I had to speak English all the time, in class or out of class, I became more fluent and more precise in my expression. I was able to not only discuss academic issues but also deal with daily problems like shopping or having my shoes repaired. Such bullet-biting situations forced me to polish my language and gradually increased my confidence in speaking. Sometimes I discovered that English was used among Chinese groups especially when we talked about academic topics, but such case seldom occurred in daily life topics. For example, when discussing the movies we watched lately or somebody's new haircut, we would use some random English words rather than a complete sentence.

After I came back to China and became an English teacher, my ability of varying IL according to contexts seemed to fade away. Due to the repetition of certain knowledge when giving lectures, I was still capable of expressing my ideas of textbook topics and explaining linguistic issues to the students in English, but I rarely used it in chit-chat in daily life. So, when I met foreign teachers on campus, I could only answer 'Fine' to their 'How are you?', instead of talking about recent events as I used to do.

Such change reminded me of past experience with my high school classmates. Even though I grew up in a city with a lot of local dialects, my mother tongue is Cantonese and none of my immediate family speaks other dialects. Nevertheless, when I came to a class with classmates speaking different dialects, it was never a problem for me to change my language flexibly in conversations with them. I could make a precise judgement on whether I needed to speak Cantonese or Mandarin Chinese, the language that all of us learn and use in school. Even though I knew that some of them were able to understand Cantonese, I still felt more comfortable to accommodate to the common language. Such switch of language is a piece of cake to all of us for these languages or dialects were very familiar to us with everyday practice and total immersion in the environment, but English, as a third language, seemed to be different.

Generally speaking, English is not systematically learned until Grade Three in primary schools in China. According to the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg,

1967), eight-year-old students are still in a favourable period of learning a foreign language, but most of them mainly get in touch with English in class. There is no need for them to deal with any people or events with English after school. That is why a lot of Chinese students could handle an English test well but are weak in real-world conversations.

Such circumstance was also observed among my students. Most of them grew up in a similar language environment as me – dialects spoken at home while Mandarin Chinese at school. Even though English is a compulsory course from primary schools to universities, their performance and proficiency differed mainly due to their learning interest, motivation and language aptitudes. The lack of opportunities to practise oral English in real-life contexts weakened their ability to deal with daily topics, in spite of the fact that most of them were able to write cohesive essays and discussed academic issues in English. Some students even thought that they barely have the chance to get in touch with any foreigners, so English was regarded more as a tool to help them get high marks at school or enjoy foreign entertainment after graduation rather than an important or necessary skill for survival. They were satisfied with their language proficiency and thus did not have great incentive to improve. Polarisation in performance in different contexts was common among them.

When I learned more about this phenomenon and tried to improve my own and my students' English proficiency in a more balanced manner in order to deal with

all kinds of problems in life, the concept of interlanguage (IL) and the related Discourse Domain Hypothesis intrigued me.

Analogised to the way native speakers (NSs) learn their mother tongues, Selinker (1972) puts forward that when learners learn a second language (L2), they need to activate a certain cognitive system in their brains to convey meanings in expression. Such 'incomplete' and 'defective' language system is the learner's IL which tends to be different from L2 norms and is influenced by several psycholinguistic factors, so only about 5% L2 learners are expected to possess native-like proficiency whereas the rest may keep improving but never be total success.

The proposal of IL has resulted in heated discussion in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). The majority of the studies focus on the description of L2 learners' variability in IL performance and its psycholinguistic causes (Gass & Selinker, 1992; Han & Tarone, 2014; Selinker, 1992) because Selinker defines it as a linguistic system which is more of a cognitive concept. It has gradually been realised that sociolinguistic factors also have a great impact on IL (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Tarone, 2000, 2007). Some researchers try to adopt other theories to explain variability. For example, enough attention and planning time allows learners to perform better in certain kinds of tasks (Gass & Crookes, 1993; Levelt, 1999; Skehan, 2009; Skehan & Foster, 2005; Tarone, 1988). Speech accommodation theory can account for the effect of interlocutors on learners' performance (Beebe & Zuengler, 1983; Beebe & Giles, 1984; Smith et al., 1991; Varonis & Gass, 1985).

The Discourse Domain Hypothesis is another attempt at interpreting IL variability. Selinker and Douglas are the first ones to use a new term 'discourse domain' to refer to one's 'internally created contexts' (1985, p. 190) or 'slice of one's life' (1986, October 10-11, p. 468) based on which their ILs develop. Later, on the basis of the schema theory, Whyte defines it as 'a topic area' parallel to one's schemata (1994a, p. 293). Taking the interactive contexts into account, Douglas further regards it as 'a cognitive construct' (2004, p. 34). It is hypothesised that L2 learners' ILs develop and their performance varies dependent on their discourse domains (more details in Chapter 2). No matter how the concept is interpreted, three main factors, viz. *content control*, *frequent use* and *personal importance*, are determined to be critical in shaping learner language in different communicative situations.

This is generally supported by a great amount of empirical work (Chiu, 2011; Cornu & Delahaye, 1987; Ebsworth & Starbuck, 1989; Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Smith, 1989; Whyte, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Woken & Swales, 1989; Zuengler, 1989, 1993a, 1993b; Zuengler & Bent, 1991). The existing research mainly investigated groups of university students whose ILs were believed to be advanced enough to deal with rich contexts. Oral interaction or presentation data were analysed because speech was more suitable to reflect one's authentic and spontaneous language use than writing which could be revised until perfection. To compare how learners' ILs developed across personal discourse domains, different

topics were discussed, for instance, academic research versus life story, major versus food, etc. Most of them took the form of interviews, especially between NSs and non-native speakers (NNSs). One of the interesting examples was the comparison between a Polish linguist's linguistics lecture and his story-telling about Poland after drinking (mentioned in (Makoni, 1992). Both qualitative data (e.g. discourse organisation, communicative strategies, rhetorical devices) and quantitative data (e.g. grammatical accuracy, amount of speech, lexical variety) were measured. In most of the research, advanced performance could be discovered under the impact of the aforementioned three main factors.

However, some of the findings were not totally convincing because, theoretically, they appear to be based on a loose and inconsistent understanding of the concept 'discourse domain' and the related hypothesis; methodologically, the research was restricted by the scope of participants, settings, topics, etc. (more details in Chapter 2).

Therefore, the current study tries to deal with both theoretical and empirical issues relating to the Discourse Domain Hypothesis, aiming to propose a better revision of the original statement so as to gain a consistent, intersubjective interpretation and to design a more feasible and constructive empirical research taking more influential elements into consideration.

1.2 Significance and Aims

The Discourse Domain Hypothesis seems to be adequate to explain my own learning experience and my students' situations. Our IL production in the academic topics tends to be better than that in the daily topics, probably because we contain more expertise, practise more in class and care more about the results.

Selinker (1992) assumes that ILs are discovered from only three epistemological sources:

1) Experiential evidence: those data derived from an individual experience with language learning, which empirically may take the form of a diary study.

2) Observational evidence: those data derived from observing learners in action, which empirically may take the form of a classroom log of events.

3) Empirical evidence: those data derived from a carefully planned and well-executed study, qualitative/case study, quantitative/experimental or a mixture. (p. 215)

It appears that all of the three data sources have already been found. Even though studies of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis were more popular a decade ago and some scholars may think it insignificant to review it any more, in my opinion, as long as the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation still exists, the necessity of exploration is self-evident. Since one's discourse domains are related to life experience which is extremely, perhaps infinitely, varied, I believe that there are more influential factors to be discovered.

In addition, ever since Selinker and Douglas put forward the idea, only a few researchers have made effort to improve the theory to make it more systematic in expression and more explicit in interpretation. The Discourse Domain Hypothesis is not perfect on its own. The concept of the term 'discourse domain' has not been understood or accepted consistently by SLA researchers, and sometimes it is mixed with other concepts like 'genre', 'context', 'topic', etc. in use. The statement of the hypothesis is thus not clear enough to facilitate researchers to make reasonable predictions. Even though the related empirical research has come to fruitful findings on this topic, it is dependent on a rather loose and controversial theory, which tends to weaken the confidence in the results.

Therefore, this study is considered significant in analysing the current Discourse Domain Hypothesis and proposing an alternative theory that could overcome the existing problems and adequately provide explanation for the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation.

In light of the above, the aims of this study include:

1) Theoretical:

A. Analyse and evaluate the current Discourse Domain Hypothesis based on social science criteria for and SLA guidelines on theory construction (cf. (Jordan, 2004; Reynolds, 2016);

B. Propose a revised hypothesis that could overcome the formal problems of the current theory, explain the phenomenon of intra-personal topic-based

IL variation in a more explicit manner and help in making novel and testable predictions.

2) Empirical:

A.Summarise and assess the existing empirical methods and data dealing with the phenomenon;

B.Conduct research on the phenomenon among English speakers of first language (L1) Chinese based on the following research questions:

a.Does Chinese adult learners' intra-personal IL performance in English differ when talking about different topics?

b.Is the life experience of residing in English-speaking countries a significant influential factor of their intra-personal IL performance?

1.3 Definition of Terms

Interlanguage (IL): a language system that is believed to be produced in a language learner's brain, possessing the features of both their L1 and the language being learned.

Topic-based IL variation: a linguistic phenomenon where the IL performance of a language learner changes when speaking or writing about different topics.

Discourse Domain Hypothesis: a hypothesis which assumes that a language learner tends to construct different 'discourse domains' to deal with different language

needs, which would change with their life experience and facilitate the development of their ILs.

More definitions of and further explanations for these terms could be found in Chapter 2, especially those of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis which will be examined and discussed systematically.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis includes five chapters which will be outlined briefly.

The first chapter (introduction) introduces the background and rationale of the study, the phenomenon it aims to describe and explain, and its importance to the field of SLA.

The second chapter (literature review) first provides an overview of basic principles and guidelines of theory construction in social science and SLA studies, which are used to evaluate and review various works related to the Discourse Domain Hypothesis from both theoretical and methodological perspectives. It is followed by the comparison of several synonymous concepts for 'discourse domain' in the SLA literature in preparation for the construction of a revised Discourse Domain Hypothesis and the discussion of the measures of learner language used by existing research that help to decide on the measures adopted by this study.

The third chapter (methodology) restates the research questions and hypotheses of the study and describes both the empirical and theoretical methods employed in perusing them. The former outlines the research design, data collection

procedure and data processing method, while the latter demonstrates the steps of conceptual and logical analysis.

The fourth chapter (results and analysis) presents and analyses the primary empirical data, comparing with those from the existing secondary research. The quantitative results of complexity, accuracy and fluency of the participants' IL performance are calculated, followed by detailed elaboration of the qualitative data on individual basis.

The fifth chapter (conclusion) summarises the main findings of the research, states the possibility of a revised theory and discusses the empirical and theoretical implications for further studies.
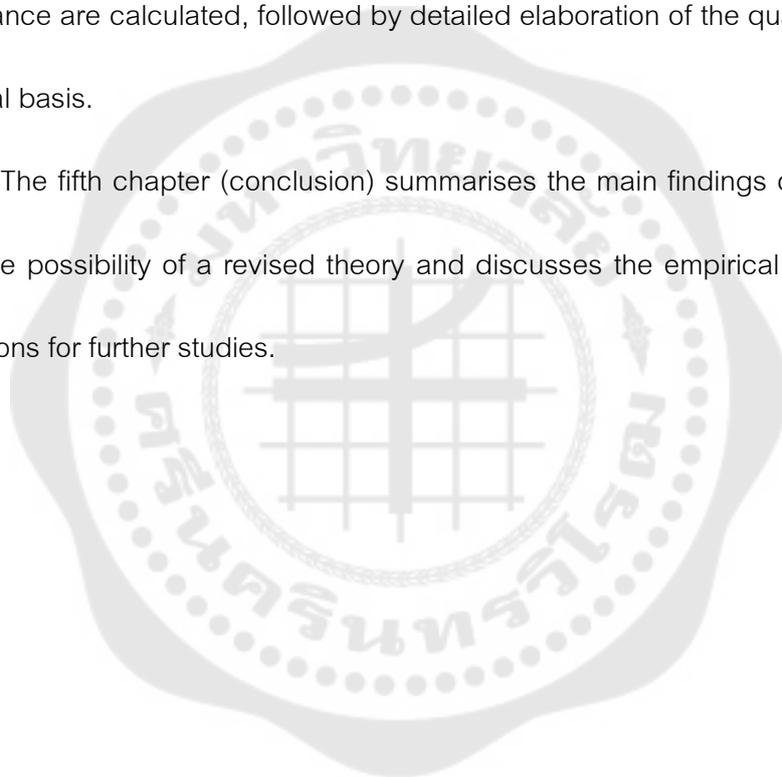
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to fulfill the aforementioned aims, by reviewing the existing SLA literature, this chapter, firstly, provides guidelines of theoretical construction in social sciences and SLA studies for evaluating the Discourse Domain Hypothesis proposed by Selinker and Douglas (1985) and revised by Whyte (1994a) and Douglas (2004). Secondly, the design of current empirical research is discussed, which is beneficial to the summary of a reasonable and feasible means to conduct this study. Thirdly, different synonymous concepts for 'discourse domain' are compared and contrasted in order to look for a more precise statement for the theory-to-be.

2.1 Overview of Theory Construction in Social Science

To decide a body of knowledge to be scientific and to distinguish it from the unscientific, four goals are expected to be fulfilled (Reynolds, 2016, pp. 2-7).

1) It should provide a certain type of typology to organise and categorise the relevant items so as to avoid ambiguity in the framework of concepts. For example, books could be classified by language, author, genre, content, length, etc. Individuals can be sorted by nationality, age, colour, personality, etc. For a concept to be interpreted and acknowledged within the field, which items are involved and which are excluded should be explicit. Three main principles: *exhausitiveness*, *mutual exclusiveness* and *consistency*, need to be guaranteed. For instance, if fiction is classified by length, all kinds of fictions like novels, novellas and short stories should

be considered without omission when explaining the concept, and no one fiction would be categorised as both a novel and a novella because these items are mutually exclusive according to relevant literary criteria; a single book cannot be both. Such classification is also expected to hold true across all scientific theories so that the concept gains uniform and consistent understanding among scholars.

2) It could help to make predictions of future events.

3) It could provide explanations of past events. (2) and (3) actually serve the same purpose — to allow the scientific knowledge to be immune to the spatiotemporal restrictions, so whenever and wherever other researchers observe the phenomena, they are expected to come to similar conclusions. For example, the statement of the lever principle in physics: 'To keep the lever in balance, the magnitude of the two forces acting on both ends of the lever, i.e. the power point and the resistance point, is inversely proportional to the length of their force arms', contains such a logical form that to achieve a purpose (i.e. to keep the lever in balance), under a certain condition (i.e. the power point and the power arm are constant/the resistance point and the resistance arm are constant), the change in one variable (i.e. the resistance increases/the power increases) would lead to the change in another variable (i.e. the resistance arm shortens/the power arm shortens). Therefore, it could be used to explain the daily use of chopsticks, bottle openers, fishing rods as well as to inspire Archimedes to make the famous 'prediction' that 'Give me a fulcrum, and I

can move the whole earth.' This principle is always in effect and not spatiotemporally

restricted.

4) It should provide a sense of understanding which attaches great

importance on causal mechanisms. A rational and elaborate theory needs to explain

the phenomena with a description of causal relationships between concepts involved

so that more proper and logical predictions could derive from it. The statement of the

lever principle stands because it follows the causal process based on geometric

calculation. Assuming that the lever does not dissipate or store energy, the input

power of the lever must be equal to the output power. When the lever rotates around

the fulcrum at a uniform angular speed, the farther the point is from the fulcrum, the

faster its moving speed will be; the closer the point is to the fulcrum, the slower its

moving speed will be. Because the power is equal to the force times the speed, the

farther the point is from the fulcrum, the smaller its force will be; the closer the point is

to the fulcrum, the greater its force will be. This logical process provides a sense of

understanding of the causal mechanisms at play explicitly and thus people could find

the way to balance a lever or lift heavy objects following the principle.

By taking these four goals into account, a scientific theory could be produced

to explain any observed phenomena as well as guide future work.

A body of knowledge without theory cannot lead us to anywhere, while a

theory without basis on scientific knowledge remains dubious and doubtful. That is

why researchers aim at theorising knowledge, in either set-of-laws form, i.e. 'a set of

well-supported empirical generalizations or "laws"', or in axiomatic form, i.e. 'an interrelated set of definitions, axioms, and propositions' (Reynolds, 2016, p. 8). Then they try to prove its usefulness in terms of science by making the idea consistent with the results of empirical research. If it gains acceptance from other researchers about the meaning of the statement as a part of scientific knowledge and about the empirical effectiveness by comparing the findings of replicated research, it could be viewed as a scientific theory. If the idea is contradicted by empirical data, the theory needs to be under serious scrutinisation. The problem may probably lie on either the part of theory or that of research design.

The former problem is displayed in some existing theories which only introduce and illustrate concepts without discussing the relationship between them (Reynolds, 2016). Definitions or conceptualisation only provide a way of reasonable typology, but they cannot explain, predict or provide a sense of understanding. That is why an integrated theory also includes the presentation of some kind of logical system.

In addition, the following characteristics are used to determine the scientific nature of a theory as well (Reynolds, 2016, pp. 12-16).

1) **Abstractness**: The concepts in a theory are supposed to be abstract in order to overcome the spaciotemporal limitations since they are used not only to explain what happened but also to predict what will happen. If a theory is restricted to only a certain period or location, we may need one theory for only one corresponding phenomenon, which is not efficient for the development of the body of science and

thus causes redundancy. For example, in the lever principle, 'lever' can be comprehended as an abstract concept to refer to any hard rods that rotate around a fulcrum, the point on which they turn or are supported. It does not specify the weight, length, materials, colour or any particular characteristics of the rod so that the theory stands with any kinds of rods if it could be regarded as a 'lever'. That is why Mozi in China's Spring and Autumn periods had already summarised the rule in his book *Mozi* and even earlier the ancient Egyptians had made use of the characteristics of force to build the pyramids, long before the lever principle has been proposed by Archimedes with a well-formed operational formula. Whoever observes the phenomenon at any time and in any place will come to the same conclusion. However, if it is too abstract, it may lead to confusion about its typology and even ontology. To determine whether a concept is too abstract or not, its operational definitions, i.e. a set of definitions of the abstract concepts which provide instructions and procedures to describe the activities that a researcher could conduct, could be examined. It is similar to the logical process from which the theory is derived, so as to help other researchers to make a judgement on the existence of the concept in a particular situation.

2) Intersubjectivity: There should be unambiguous, shared agreement about the meaning of the concepts in the statement of a theory, so their meaning needs to be explained in an explicit way in order to gain other researchers' understanding as well as their assessment on its usefulness. The definition of 'lever' mentioned above is easy to be interpreted by others without ambiguity and accepted

generally and thus intersubjectivity has been achieved. Besides this, agreement should also be reached about the relationships between concepts, if there are multiple concepts in the theory, so that appropriate explanations and predictions could be produced across researchers according to the theory's logical system. Returning, again, to the same example, the lever principle gains common acknowledgement logically since it is summarised and formed based on geometry with a clearly description of the process of calculation that facilitates understanding. Although there can be no absolutely perfect intersubjective agreement, with well-described operational definitions, subjective judgement depending on the sensory impressions may be mitigated to a large extent.

3) **Empirical relevance**: Observing and perceiving a phenomenon is an individual sensory experience which may not be reliable or objective. Hence, it needs to be compared to empirical research with presentation of the causal relationship in a logical and sensible way. If the operational definitions are provided clearly and the research design is described in detail, other researchers could examine the relationship between the theory and the data and even verify the results by independent replication, which increases the confidence in the scientific nature of the theory. The operational formula of the lever principle, $F_1 \cdot L_1 = F_2 \cdot L_2$, must be calculated and confirmed by a large number of scientists again and again with any kind of lever before it becomes a part of the accepted body of scientific knowledge taught to every student.

If the aforementioned conditions are fulfilled, it then comes to one final test — whether other researchers in the field consider the theory to be useful scientifically or not. In turn, it could be facilitated by taking the four goals, i.e. typology, explanation, prediction, a sense of understanding, into consideration. In this way, researchers could evaluate a theory for its own sake.

As for the problem of empirical research design, a detailed description of the method could give other researchers chances not only to make judgement on the validity of the results but also to repeat it in another circumstance to check its consistency. To increase the 'truth' in science needs rational scrutiny as well as empirical tests.

It should be noted that, there can never be 100% certainty in a theory since infinite observations and analysis would be needed to prove an abstract theory to be true. Nevertheless, only one inconsistency could make it false (Reynolds, 2016). Therefore, Karl Popper regards **falsifiability** as 'a hallmark of a scientific theory' (as cited in (Jordan, 2004, p. 31). Thus, it gives empirical research a different role — to challenge a theory instead of confirming it. A theory should be formulated in such a way as to allow as many empirical data as possible to try to contradict the explanations and/or predictions it extends. If it stands them, theoretical confidence may increase, but it is still open to more testing. If it is falsified, the theory should be reconsidered and revised. New rounds of examination are welcomed until it becomes a temporary explanation to a phenomenon or a tentative solution to a problem. The

lever principle fulfills this requirement because it is expressed in such a way that the

concept and the logic system stand up to challenges. If anyone could discover a hard

rod that does not fit the formula, or if under the condition that the power point and the

power arm are constant, the increase of resistance does not lead to the decrease of

the resistance arm, or if the lever could not keep a balance with the corresponding

force and force arms, the theory is definitely falsified. In brief, empirical research

design provides the researchers a practical way to scrutinise, and potentially falsify,

the theory.

Theory formulation and empirical research interact with each other. Abstract

concepts with a set of falsifiable operational definitions and explicit elaboration on

relationships in statements are expected to gain intersubjectivity and stand empirical

tests of time and place.

2.2 Guidelines of Theory Construction and Evaluation in SLA

SLA, as a vital body of scientific knowledge in linguistics, should attach great

importance to theoretical construction. In dealing with SLA issues, some researchers

conduct descriptive work, aiming at discovering, describing and analysing language

data; some emphasise the explanatory function, providing causal relationships to

explain data and phenomena. Some studies are 'pure' research on language

acquisition and solve linguistic problems, while some pursue its pedagogical

implications further and help improve language teaching and learning. Some regard

learners' psycholinguistic factors as the main cause of SLA issues while some criticise

their negligence of the influence of sociolinguistic contexts (Jordan, 2004). All these arguments will lead to variable choices in terms of theoretical formation as well as methodological design.

Since practice is guided by theory, how to construct a theory and evaluate its effectiveness is prioritised in this study. Apart from the aforementioned goals and characteristics of scientific theories in general, in the field of SLA, Jordan (2004) summarises a more detailed set of guidelines to scrutinise the existing SLA theories and to benefit the formation of new ones.

The following six points are epistemological assumptions that the researchers need to bear in mind during study (Jordan, 2004, pp. 115-116):

1) 'An external world exists independently of our perceptions of it.' Some researchers may hold a pessimistic view towards the objectivity of scientific studies, claiming that one cannot avoid bias. They may only focus on the 'important' and 'relevant' variables in order to prove or falsify a 'perceived' assumption. Nevertheless, it is still possible for a group in the field to observe and examine the phenomena from different perspectives and come to relatively meaningful and convincing conclusions gradually. This assumption is seen as a rejection of extreme relativist positions and an acceptance of rational empiricism.

2) 'Research is inseparable from theory.' Mere observation would not lead researchers anywhere. If they want to gain knowledge, theories need to be derived from empirical data, and in turn, empirical evidence would increase their confidence in

the original ideas, which shows the necessity of both theory formation as well as its empirical relevance mentioned above.

3) 'Theories attempt to explain phenomena.' Observation of phenomena urges researchers to design a study to look for patterns, analyse causes and effects, test hypotheses and assumptions, etc., and at last form theories which can be used to explain more phenomena. This is also emphasised by Reynolds (2016) as an important aspect of the identification of a body of science.

4) 'Research is fundamentally concerned with problem-solving.' The goal of doing research is to form theories whose main function is explaining existing phenomena and predicting future events. Hence SLA theories of descriptive nature are not enough. They should also contain explanations of the causal mechanism, which would help to reach the sense of understanding intersubjectively. Jordan (2004) further declares that a comparably better theory is not because it provides a more complete and more powerful elaboration of the situation, but because it 'suits the social conditions' (p. 52). SLA theories are meant to solve real problems, theoretically or practically.

5) 'We cannot formalise "the scientific method".' Generally, two methods are popular in organising scientific theory: research-then-theory and theory-then-research. Nevertheless, there is more than one path to science. The demarcation line between science and non-science may even be blurry. Therefore, a multi-method approach is preferred in SLA studies.

6) 'There is no need for paradigmatic theories.' If a theory is scrutinised strictly from its history and in its paradigm, it can hardly stand any test. Hence when we deal with young theories, it is better to be tolerant of them by taking into account the context of discovery and distinguishing it from the context of justification. Even so, a rational theory should still be open to all kinds of criticism.

The following five points are criteria for evaluation of the validity and reliability of a theory (Jordan, 2004, pp. 116-117).

1) 'Research, hypotheses, and theories should be coherent, cohesive, expressed in the clearest possible terms, and consistent.' To reduce the likelihood of being attacked, the expression of theories needs to be organised carefully. Especially the terms used to refer to main concepts should be abstract enough so that it allows the theory to work under any circumstances and to achieve intersubjective agreement in the field in order to gain a common sense of understanding. The relationship between concepts should not contradict each other (i.e. two ideas conflict with each other), nor be circular (i.e. an idea is used to prove a statement which is then used to prove the idea in turn).

2) 'Theories should have empirical content.' All theories should undergo and stand empirical tests designed to be 'observed, evaluated and replicated' (Jordan, 2004, p. 116) by other researchers. This is also stressed by Reynolds (2016) as one of the characteristics of science. Besides this, ad hoc hypotheses (i.e. revising

the theory every time it meets counterclaims instead of reconsidering it systematically)

should be avoided since they expose defects and lead to vulnerable conclusions.

3) 'Theories should be fruitful.' A rational theory could lead to bold

predictions, aiming at solving practical and persistent problems in the field. Whether a

theory is scientifically useful or not is a significant judging criterion (Reynolds, 2016),

so it needs to provide a reasonable account of the existing phenomena and a valuable

guide for future work, may it be in linguistics, pedagogy or society.

4) 'Theories should be broad in scope.' To fulfill this requirement, one of

the critical conditions is to guarantee that the concepts used are abstract enough, so

the theory could be interpreted by as many scholars in the field (or even laymen) as

possible. Otherwise, it is not able to provide satisfactory explanations or predictions

beyond the restriction of space and time.

5) 'Theories should be simple.' Out of the principle of economy, a theory is

expected to be expressed in its simplest form. On the premise that clear causal

relationship is guaranteed, limited number of abstract concepts are involved. It is

similar to Occam's Razor which discourages unnecessary complication. If there are

two or more ways to explain a certain phenomenon, the simpler one is preferrable, but

it still needs to be put in a form that is falsifiable.

Based on the principles and guidelines of theory construction and evaluation

in social science and SLA studies, the Discourse Domain Hypothesis which links the

phenomenon of L2 learners' IL variation to their personal 'discourse domains' seems to

be unsatisfactory. In the next section, different versions of the statements will be assessed in order to investigate whether the theory is scientific and meaningful or not.

2.3 Discourse Domain Hypothesis

The Discourse Domain Hypothesis is based on the IL study (Selinker, 1972, 1992; Tarone, 2006, 2013). IL is regarded as 'a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a TL [target language] norm' (Selinker, 1972, p. 214).

In the process of foreign language learning, it is hypothesized that learners make use of more general cognitive processes — 'the latent psychological structure' (Selinker, 1972, p. 212) — instead of the language acquisition device (LAD) (Chomsky, 1976) or the innate language-specific Universal Grammar (UG) called latent language structure (Lenneberg, 1967) which are believed to be the mechanism employed by NSs when acquiring their mother tongues. Such structure results in the development of the learner's IL. It could be viewed as an in-between language with personal grammar, separated from their native language (NL) and the TL. Some of the IL rules may even be created by the learners themselves who, however, could not describe or explain them clearly or overtly since IL is used unconsciously in the same way NL is used.

Selinker (1972) further states that

there is no genetic time table; there is no direct counterpart to any grammatical concept such as 'universal grammar'; there is no guarantee

that this latent structure will be activated at all; there is no guarantee that

the latent structure will be 'realized' into the actual structure of any natural

language (i.e. there is no guarantee that attempted learning will prove

successful), and there is every possibility that an overlapping exists

between this latent language acquisition structure and other intellectual

structures. (p. 212)

He points out one of the most remarkable characteristics of IL — variability.

Most L2 learners show great variation not only in certain linguistic forms but also in

SLA processes such as learning rate, developmental sequence, avoidance,

fossilisation, etc. Even so, certain systematicity can still been found, which allows

researchers to summarise the pattern.

At the beginning, the focus of related analysis lies on the psycholinguistic

factors, especially the five central processes — language transfer, transfer-of-training,

strategies of L2 learning, strategies of L2 communication and overgeneralization of TL

linguistic material (Selinker, 1972), because IL is supposed to develop dependent on

the psychological structure in the learner's brain.

With more observations of IL variation in different interactive contexts,

scholars began to pay attention to the possible sociolinguistic factors (Firth & Wagner,

1997; Tarone, 2000), and thus the Discourse Domain Hypothesis was proposed.

2.3.1 Selinker & Douglas (1985, 1986)

As the early scholars who focus on such issue, Selinker and Douglas (1985) first aim at giving an explanation to 'context' and name it a 'discourse domain':

We will look at context in IL studies in the following way: we propose that learners, as language users, in creating ILs, first create 'discourse domains', sometimes very personal ones, concerning various 'slices of life' that are important and/or necessary for these learners to talk and/or write about. Thus, discourse domains, for us, are internally-created contexts, within which, as a result, IL structures are created differentially. (p. 190)

Furthermore, they propose seven theoretical hypotheses related to the creation of discourse domains and the development of IL:

Hypothesis 1: In creating ILs, a learner creates discourse domains and uses them to develop his/her IL structure(s).

Hypothesis 2: The IL learner knows that language is syntactic, assuming that word order is meaningful if this is also true for his L1.

Hypothesis 3: Discourse domains influence the syntactic units of IL learning in terms of shape-constraints, placement-constraints, and choice-constraints.

Hypothesis 4: The normal (or unmarked) case for these constraints in IL learning is that they are global to a set of ILs. The marked case is that some of these constraints will be universal to all ILs.

Hypothesis 5: No IL learner is monostylistic. There exists the possibility of several styles within each discourse domain.

Hypothesis 6: The important processes in IL learning (fossilization, backsliding, language transfer, etc.) rarely occur across ILs, but occur primarily within discourse domains.

Hypothesis 7: Discourse domains are highly personal. However, some domains will overlap with those of other IL speakers, for example, specific-purpose domains and life-story domains. (pp. 199-200)

Accordingly, L2 learners are assumed to form discourse domains first which are highly personal and variable according to the degree of importance and/or necessity of use in one's daily life. One's ILs develop based on their domains (as in Hypothesis 1, 3). IL forms vary within (as in Hypothesis 5) as well as across domains (as in Hypothesis 1), as dynamic as is expected. Variation in SLA processes such as transfer, fossilization, avoidance, strategies, etc. (as in Hypothesis 6) within one's domains allow researchers to describe individual features, while IL performance in common domains (as in Hypothesis 7) offers opportunities for investigating group patterns.

In the following year, the definition of the concept is summarized more systematically:

A discourse domain is personally and internally constructed "slice" of one's life that has importance and over which the learner exercises content control. Importance is empirically shown by the fact that in interaction one repeatedly talks (or writes) about the area in question. Discourse domains are primarily dynamic and changing, and may become permanent parts of a learner's cognitive system. Some domains may be created temporarily for particular important purposes. The concept also has a discontinuous aspect to it in that a domain can be taken up, dropped, left dormant and revived. Such domains are usually thus not fixed for life but may change with one's life experience and often do. (Selinker & Douglas, 1986, October 10-11, pp. 468-469).

In the original explanation, 'importance' is the only influential factor being stressed, while in the new one, not only is it linked with the frequency of use but also the content control is added to it. These three elements are highly agreed upon by the subsequent researchers as critical variables that affect learners' IL performance. It is conjectured that one's ILs vary across one's discourse domains which can be distinguished by different degrees of their importance, expertise and repeated use.

Besides this, more characteristics of discourse domains are discussed, especially dynamicity and discontinuity. It undoubtedly brings a lot of difficulties in

research because it needs constant observation to find patterns of discourse domain and IL variation. Since discourse domains change with one's life experience, language data in a certain period has to be analysed with consideration of the learner's background information as well.

Meanwhile, Selinker and Douglas (1986, October 10-11) also propose criteria used for recognising a discourse domain:

> … importance to the learner, interactional salience, discontinuousness, control of content (in that the learner knows about the topic, but not necessarily the language to express it), and the fact that such domains are highly personal. An important additional feature of some domains is temporariness. (p. 469)

The criteria not only help learners to identify their own discourse domains but also help researchers to check the validity of their judgment.

In spite of individual differences, the 1986 study again mentions that there are shared 'prototypical' domains, for example, life story domain, work domain, culture defending domain, etc. The researchers hypothesise that learners tend to make more use of their IL competence in such discourse domains and thus guarantee a certain degree of intelligibility across interlocutors.

2.3.1.1 Discussion

Discourse Domain Hypothesis gives explanation to the phenomenon of IL variability by observing one's performance in domain topics and non-domain topics.

Daring predictions and testable hypotheses could be offered based on it because it presents a causal relationship between the variable of a learner's 'discourse domain' and their IL production, which helps to reach a sense of intersubjective understanding. In both studies, researchers suggest a multi-faceted method to assure the accurate judgement of the participants' personal domains and a clear distinction between IL forms by collecting two sets of data, which will be discussed more in 2.4.1.

However, according to the guidelines on theory construction presented in 2.2, the hypothesis shows obvious defects in point 7 and point 8.

To begin with, point 7 requires the hypothesis to use the clearest terms in expression, but the definition of the concept of a 'discourse domain' is rather confusing. It was first regarded as an 'internally-created context within which … IL structures are created differentially' (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, p. 190). The 1985 research aimed at filling the gap in IL variation related to contexts and claimed that the work could not be considered satisfactory until 'context' was interpreted within a feasible research framework, but obviously not only is 'context' unclearly defined but also it is used to explain the new concept 'discourse domains', which makes the definition of 'discourse domains' circular and vacuous. Later, the concept was used to refer to 'personally, and internally created "slice" of one's life' (Selinker & Douglas, 1986, October 10-11, p. 206). The researchers tried to use a more everyday expression to explain it. It sounded like 'life experience', but it was in a vague manner (Long, 2003; Young, 1999). Even though the logical system was easy to understand in

that the change of one variable (one's life experience/discourse domains) would cause the change of another variable (IL performance), accounting for the characteristics of dynamicity and discontinuity, the expression seems to contain an internal contradiction. If the 'slice' of one's life is viewed as the objective facts that happened in the past, how could it be 'personally and internally created' as a discourse domain? If such 'slice' is subjectively invented by the learners, how could we decide whether one's discourse domain was the result of their imaginary or real-life experience? Do they have the same impact?

As for point 8, even though the hypothesis has empirical content, the operational definition of a 'discourse domain' is not easy to determine. Since it is highly personal and dynamic, who could be the one to decide whether a context belongs to one's discourse domain or not? How do we validate the distinction between different discourse domains? How do we judge whether such context is a discourse domain at a certain point of time but being dropped, changed or regained at another point of time? Some researchers (Ellis, 1985, 1989; Preston, 1989; Skehan, 1987; Tarone, 1989) also suggested that in order to narrow the Hypothesis down to be more applicable to SLA studies, specific components need to be stated in the definition. Since there is too much uncertainty when dealing with IL variability, it is difficult to clearly explain the relevant concepts and, therefore, to replicate the research and hope for similar findings.

Last but not least, the hypothesis appears to be a fast solution to a complicated issue in SLA by simplifying variability. The notion of 'discourse domain' may explain all characteristics of one's IL performance, whereas the influence of such factors as L1 transfer, developmental stages, L2 input, motivation, attention, etc. are weakened. Even though point 10 in the guidelines suggests that a theory should be as broad in scope as possible, it may be too broad to be useful (Ellis, 1985; Preston, 1989; Skehan, 1987). It is intuitively appealing to believe that one's IL performance varies across discourse domains, but the problem of 'in what way' is not solved. There are too many discourse domains and too many aspects of ILs that could be tested and assessed. Such a hypothesis is broad in scope and allows for a great number of possibilities, but at the same time, it is hard to be falsified, which undermines its effectiveness.

2.3.2 Whyte (1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995)

Whyte (1992) is her first attempt to bring the concept of schemata to the interpretation of a discourse domain. In following studies, she makes critique of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis in Selinker and Douglas (1985, 1986) systematically from conceptual, methodological and theoretical perspectives (Whyte, 1994b, 1995).

First, the typology of a discourse domain was uncertain. It was hard to decide what belongs to a discourse domain, and it could not be explained by other established psycholinguistic or sociolinguistic constructs, which made it impossible to explain its effects on IL variation.

Second, there was a lack of criteria for identification of domain topics or classification of learner speech in these topics. Researchers may not know precisely when the learner was engaged in the domain topics.

Third, they did not make specific and falsifiable predictions to be tested empirically. The statement did not identify the language features affected nor specified the extent of impact. Therefore, the scope and the understanding of the Hypothesis may be inconsistent, which makes it hard to define or operationalise a discourse domain.

Hence Whyte (1994a, 1994b) aims at providing a revised version elaborating how one's ILs develop exactly based on their discourse domains.

She relates 'discourse domain' to the concept of 'schema' and uses the established schemata theory to be the theoretical basis. Schemata refer to one's developing patterns activated by past experience (Bartlett, 1932) or information of current discourse combined with past knowledge (Brown & Yule, 1983), which share similarity with the original description of a discourse domain which was related to one's life experience, affecting one's perception of information and being affected by these perceptions in turn. They are also dynamic but permanent in one's cognitive system. Compared with the schema which is the result of general knowledge dealing with everyday events (Whyte, 1994b), 'discourse domain' is regarded as a 'particularly well-developed schema, which is elaborated' (Whyte, 1994a, p. 292) because it is created out of specific conditions.

Based on the criteria for recognition of one's discourse domains (Selinker & Douglas, 1986, October 10-11), Whyte (1992) assumes that their development needs time. When a learner invests a topic with emotion (i.e. importance), they tend to increase the frequency of practice (i.e. interactional salience), which results in greater expertise (i.e. content control), and thus the topic becomes even more important to them. These features are summarised as the three parameters of discourse domains: 1) *content elaboration*: one contains more information within their discourse domains; 2) *stability*: discourse domains are less likely to change with new information in a single encounter; 3) *personal importance*: one's emotional investment facilitates the gradual development of discourse domains. Compared with one's schemata, a discourse domain seems to be more complex, more stable and more personally important, as displayed in Figure 1.
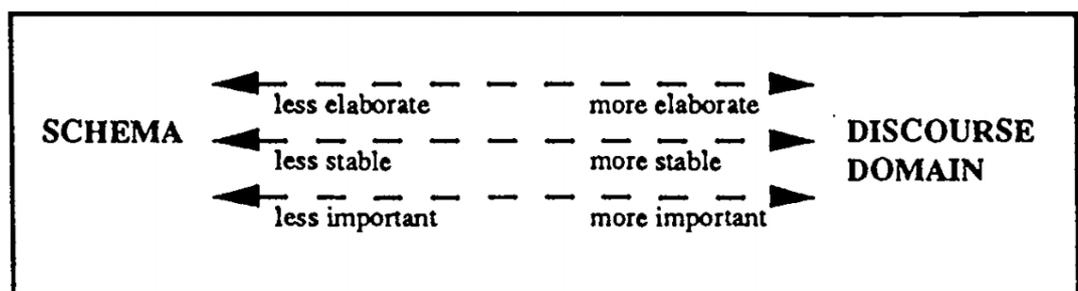
Figure 1 The Schema-domain Continuum

Source: Shona Whyte. (1992). Discourse Domains Revisited: Expertise and Investment in Conversation p. 83.

With research aiming at comparing these two concepts (more detailed information in 2.4.2), Whyte further describes their relationship as shown in Figure 2.

It reveals that a schema is 'a broad, loose structure' (Whyte, 1992, p. 99) where one's expertise is limited, ready to change and of little importance, but if it is activated and consolidated frequently in daily life, it may become a discourse domain with enhanced features. A discourse domain develops from one's schemata and is in the centre of one's network of schemata. People are exposed to certain topics and thus hold large amount of relevant information; they gain increasing interest in them and thus become more willing to get engaged in related interaction; then they practise them constantly in daily lives and thus become more confidence when dealing with them. Once all of these conditions are fulfilled, one will form their discourse domains gradually, based on which their ILs develop. The prototypical domains mentioned by Selinker and Douglas (1986, October 10-11) could be regarded as a particularly well-developed schema (Whyte, 1994b).
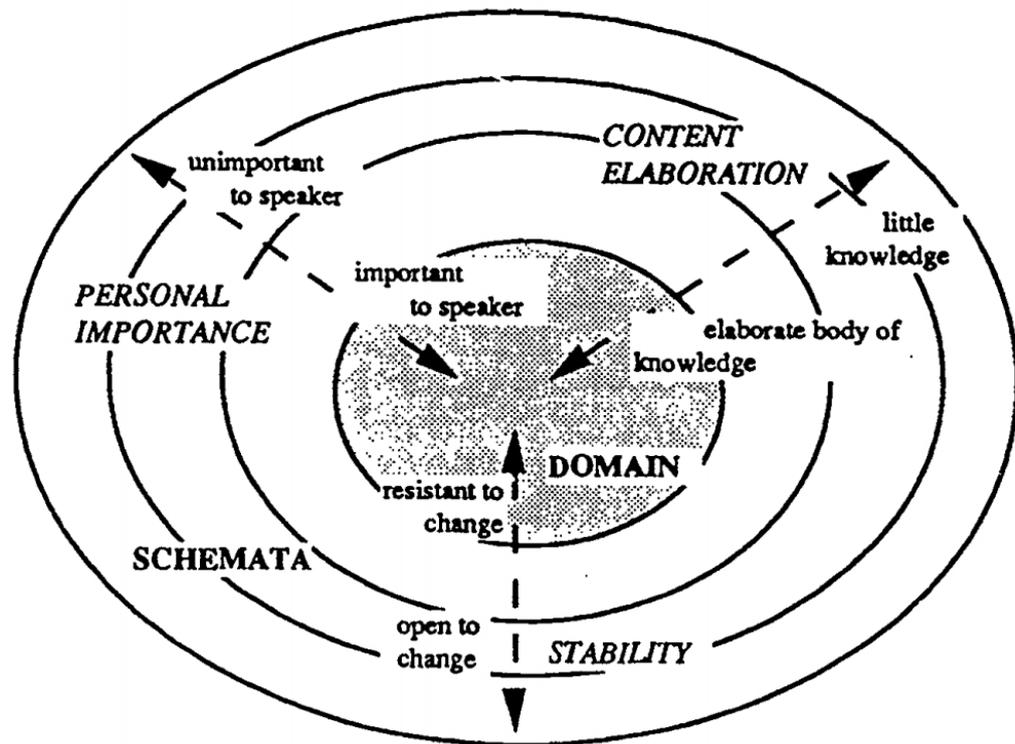
Figure 2 Domain Formation

Source: Shona Whyte. (1992). Discourse Domains Revisited: Expertise and Investment in Conversation p. 100.

As shown in Figure 3, a learner's schema and discourse domain are parallel constructs. The degree of expertise, practice and investment varies along the continua, linking the topic characteristics and speaker characteristics together.
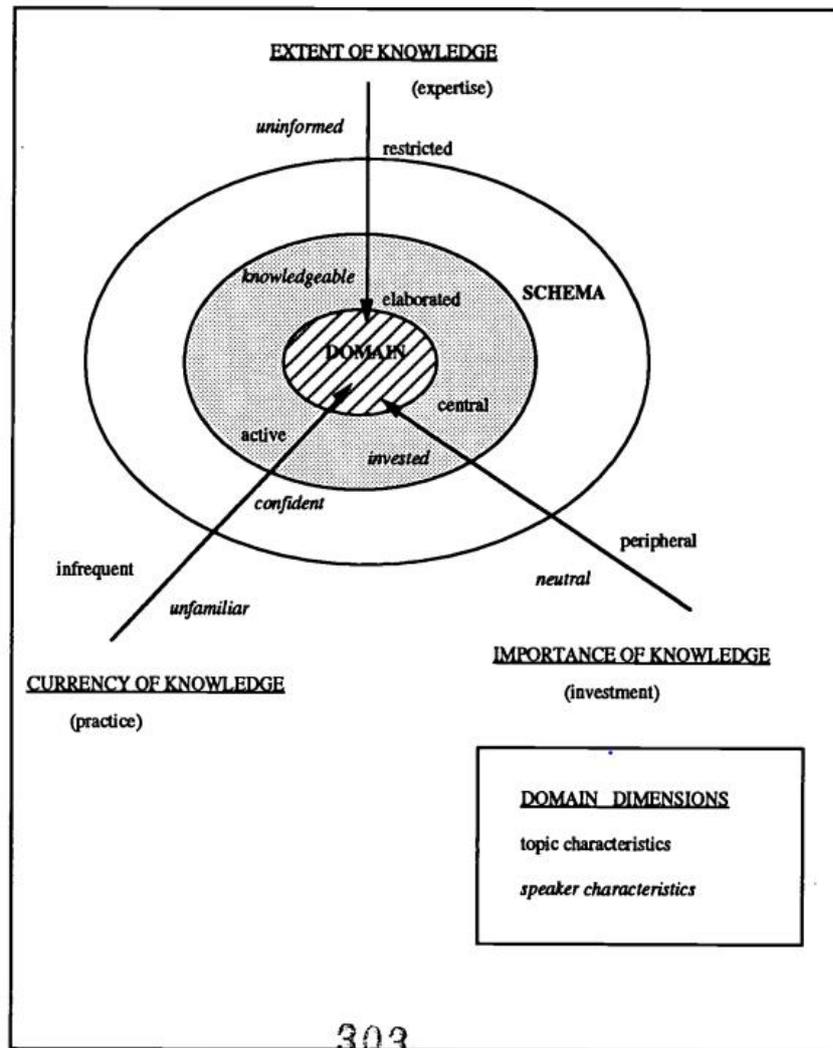
Figure 3 Domain Dimensions, with Topic and Speaker Characteristics

Source: Shona Whyte. (1994a). Acquisition in Context: The Discourse Domain

Hypothesis of Interlanguage Variation p. 292.

Therefore, the definition of a 'discourse domain' is formed as

a topic area which is characterized by extensive knowledge (for which

speakers possess an elaborated schema, and which they control

completely), by current knowledge (which speakers use frequently in interaction, and about which they are confident), and by important knowledge (which is central to speakers' networks of schemata, and in which they are invested). (Whyte, 1994a, p. 293)

Compared with Selinker and Douglas (1986, October 10-11), Whyte makes the concept clearer and easier to understand and details the impact of its three component features in a more systematic and more explicit way, especially the second one, i.e. current knowledge. The previous definition was ambiguous if not contradictory as in the expressions that 'one repeatedly talks (or writes) about the area' but 'the concept … has a discontinuous aspect to it in that a domain can be taken up, dropped, left dormant and revived' (Selinker & Douglas, 1986, October 10-11, p. 469).

The new definition provides the criteria for researchers to distinguish domain topics and non-domain topics and helps the identification of personal discourse domains. More explicit predictions can be made accordingly that better L2 performance which may be 'more complex, more independent, and more coherent' (Whyte, 1995, p. 160) could be discovered in domain topics because the learner has more expertise of, is more concerned about and practises more on such topics (Whyte, 1994a, 1994b, 1995).

More specifically, based on other research results (Whyte, 1992, 1994a, 1994b; Woken & Swales, 1989; Zuengler, 1989, 1993a, 1993b; Zuengler & Bent,

1991), learners are expected to participate more actively and more confidently in domain conversations in which they may plan more, take longer turns and their expression may be more independent and more complex. They may even be able to adjust their language flexibly to accommodate to their interlocutors who do not have as much content control as them (Whyte, 1995).

However, Whyte (1995) also warns us against the circularity that learners are posited to perform differently across topics and topics are classified based on this varied performance. She calls for more independent evidence for domain topics.

2.3.1.2 Discussion

Whyte's revised version of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis has solved some problems of Selinker and Douglas' ones as she mentioned. The foremost point is to base the Hypothesis on a theoretical framework – the schema theory. It seems to explain IL variation from a cognitive dimension in a more rational way. She defines the discourse domain as 'a topic area', which may be more explicit and accessible than a '"slice" of one's life', and thus facilitates the methodological design in empirical studies. Besides this, she summarises three main elements that help to build learners' personal discourse domains and have a great impact on their IL performance, i.e. expertise, practice and importance. It provides testable variables and helps make further predictions that could be falsified by any empirical results indicating that these elements have little effect. Last but not least, she adds a new causal relationship to the statement of the concept, i.e. one's ILs develop dependent

on their discourse domains which are created based on their schemata. It is explained in a clearer and more concrete way through the continua between two roles, speaker and topic.

Even so, the operational definition of each variable is still vague, which does not fulfill point 8 in the guidelines. Expertise may be easier to identify since it could be related to one's profession, while the other two elements are rather subjective and controversial. How could one distinguish the topics of importance and of unimportance? Whyte (1994a, 1994b, 1995) suggested that the participants were the subjects to make the judgement, but discourse domains are dynamic. A topic may be important in some point of time but not in the other. As for frequency of use, without quantitative approach like observation by researchers in natural settings, it may not be reliable enough to depend merely on learners' personal sensations. It is hypothesised that L2 learners share a prototype domain of life story (Selinker & Douglas, 1986), but, for instance, Chinese learners, as illustrated in my introductory story, seldom use other languages to discuss this topic in daily lives. Hence importance and practice may not be salient variables to most of them.

Moreover, even though Whyte based her framework on the schema theory and claimed that schemata and domains were parallel in one's cognitive system, in her definition of 'discourse domain', she referred it to 'a topic area'. The reason why she chose such a theoretical basis may be to make an analogy because both concepts are in the psychological dimension. It was expected for her to use the

concept of 'schema' to explain 'discourse domain' but she did not, which leads to the same problem as the one faced by Selinker and Douglas on point 7, i.e. the requirement of clearest terms. Furthermore, if the key concept could be understood in such a simple way as a 'topic', why don't we just use 'topic' directly to explain the phenomenon instead of resorting to a new name? I believe it is more acceptable among researchers because it is more concrete and easier to define operationally. If 'discourse domain' is not equal to 'topic', what are the differences between them?

Finally, according to their respective definitions, Selinker and Douglas only stated that one's IL performance and their discourse domains were related without specifying how they were related to each other, but Whyte speculated that enhanced performance was brought about by domain topics. Even though both hypotheses are easy to falsify, for example, the former one disproved by similar performance in different discourse domains while the latter one by worse language production in domain topics, it seems that Whyte's hypothesis is not as broad as the previous ones, because it is more directional and restricted, which does not satisfy Point 10. It is not conducive to interpretation of idiosyncratic IL data or elicitation of more predictions. Even her own data (which will be presented in 2.4.2) which showed great variability across learners could not provide solid support to this hypothesis.

2.3.3 Douglas (2004)

In 2004, Douglas reviews the collaborative 1985 study and agrees with Long (2003) that it is not appropriate to regard 'discourse domain' as 'context' in

cognitive dimension because it is ill-defined in SLA. Like Whyte, he also assumes that a 'discourse domain' is similar to a schema since both are frameworks in one's mind related to content control, affective importance and interactional involvement to varying degrees. However, Widdowson (2001) argues that the schema theory cannot explain all idiosyncratic IL performance. It is the 'interpretative procedures' (p. 40) that are at work to activate schematic knowledge and bring it to practical use.

Therefore, Douglas (2004) takes the interactional contexts into serious consideration. He assumes that different discourse domains develop in response to different 'situational and linguistic environment' (p. 28). Learners observe a communicative situation, activate the corresponding discourse domain, plan a response and take action (Douglas, 2000). Then some other problems occur. What kinds of situational elements are concerned in the interaction? How does the learner interpret the relevant contextualisation cues? How could the researcher know that the learner has identified the appropriate discourse domain in their minds?

Douglas gives credit to Whyte's definition of the concept for its inclusion of dimensions of cognition (as in extent of knowledge), affection (as in importance of knowledge) and interaction (as in currency of knowledge), but he criticizes that she did not pay special attention to the last element. Young (1999) attributes Whyte's lack of validity in the empirical results to her failure to consider the influence of interactional environments, especially that of the interlocutors.

Therefore, Douglas (2004) proposes a revised definition of 'discourse domain':

A discourse domain is a cognitive construct within which a language is developed and used. Discourse domains are developed in relation to context, as defined by setting, participants, purpose, content, tone, language, norms of interaction, and genre. They are created as part of communicative competence along three dimensions: the extent of content knowledge, its importance in the life of the user, and the currency of the knowledge in interaction. Discourse domains are dynamic and changing, and vary in strength depending on the amount and quality of experience associated with particular communicative situations. (p. 34)

It maintains his and Selinker's first opinion and explains the concept from a cognitive approach. Even though he still thinks that one's discourse domains develop in relation to contexts, the new version does not limit the context to topics but also other elements like setting, participants, purpose, etc. Besides this, he approves of Whyte's framework of the varying degrees of the three characteristics, i.e. expertise, importance, practice, but he emphasises the position of interaction between external communicative contexts and the internal discourse domains and adds the element of communication strategies to link them together in a two-way dimension, as shown in Figure 4. It means that the learner could refer to different discourse domains to deal

with different contexts, and the change of contexts could influence the way how the learner develops new discourse domains or alters the existing ones.

Because discourse domains are dynamic, it may become a barrier for research since it is hard to assure that the interactional contexts and the adopted discourse domains show a one-to-one correspondence. Douglas suggests that abundant contextualisation cues should be provided so that the learner could be prompted to interpret the contexts in a more confident way.
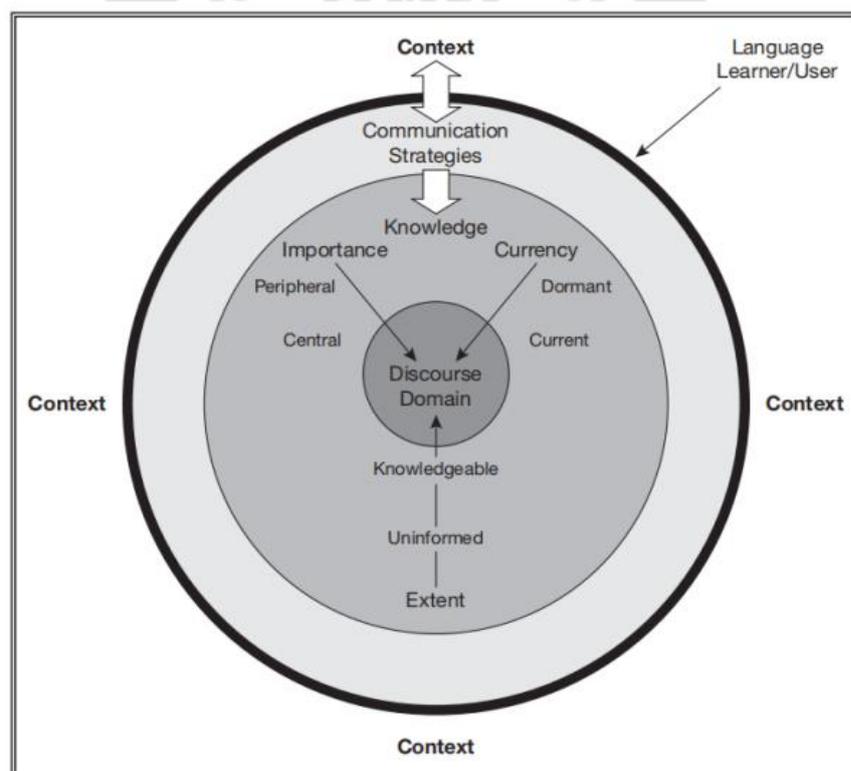
Figure 4 Revised Discourse Domains Formulation

Source: Dan Douglas (2004). Discourse Domain: The Cognitive Context of Speaking p. 35.

2.3.1.3 Discussion

Even though Douglas' new definition still views the discourse domain as a 'cognitive construct', it enlarges the scope of discussion and explains the IL variation in a more comprehensive way than he and Selinker's original thoughts because it takes all kinds of contextualisation elements into consideration. It includes more variables and causal relationships and thus produces more testable predictions. The addition of communication strategies as the mediation between external contexts and internal interpretation (i.e. discourse domains) describes clearly the way how the contexts influence the development of one's discourse domains and how one's discourse domains are activated to deal with the contexts, and thus emphasises the position of interactive processes. Generally speaking, it illustrates the cognitive, affective and interactive nature of a discourse domain more comprehensively.

However, some of the innovations also become its weaknesses. As per Whyte's criticism of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis in Selinker and Douglas (1985), the 'cognitive construct' lacked theoretical framework. This brings the problem to the original position. Since no intersubjective agreement has been made on a 'cognitive construct' which is used to define a 'discourse domain', there is no precise understanding of a 'discourse domain'. It seems to be a persistent issue.

The inclusion of more contextual elements could certainly explain more empirical data. For example, the roles of interlocutors, the change of settings, the scope of topics, etc. are all factors that may elicit IL variation. It results in too many

variables at work, so it is hard for researchers to figure out the leading influential factor(s) by taking other factors under control, not to speak of the individual differences nor the dynamic nature of discourse domains. Furthermore, if the researcher provides as many as the contextualisation cues as Douglas suggested to control some of the variables, the objectivity of the study may not be guaranteed since we tend to hold bias towards our hypothesis by merely focusing on the perceived contributing elements. Therefore, the predictions based on such a defective definition are hard to falsify and test in reality. Thus, point 8 in the guidelines is at risk.

In summary, since its inception, the Discourse Domain Hypothesis has undergone serious examination and cautious revisions. Even though it still contains theoretical problems including inconsistent definitions of 'discourse domain' and unclear expression of the statement, and leaves unanswered questions such as the specific effect of variables and the lack of common criteria of recognition, it has inspired many empirical works that give rise to interesting and valuable findings which I am going to turn to in the following section.

2.4 Empirical Research of Discourse Domain Hypothesis

Since the proposal of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis, a large amount of empirical research (Chiu, 2011; Cornu & Delahaye, 1987; Ebsworth & Starbuck, 1989; Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Smith, 1989; Whyte, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Woken & Swales, 1989; Zuengler, 1989, 1993a, 1993b; Zuengler & Bent, 1991) has tried to figure out such questions as whether various discourse domains

result in different IL performance, in which discourse domain learners' IL develop better, what kinds of factors influence the development of one's discourse domains as well as their ILs, etc. Most of the participants were university students, with several groups of international teachers, and the data mainly came from their oral interaction or oral presentation. Nevertheless, the discourse domains under investigation varied. Some focused on the element of content control by comparing expertise domains like academic, major domains, and life story domains like hobby, food, movie domains, while some required participants to choose their own domains of importance and unimportance, or of familiarity and unfamiliarity, to explore the influence of the other two elements, investment and practice. Different aspects of learners' IL performance were measured, for instance, communicative ability, fluency, accuracy of certain linguistic items, amount of speech, rhetorical devices, discourse organization, grammatical development, etc. In spite of some exceptions due to ill-designed procedures or individual differences, a majority of research supported the Discourse Domain Hypothesis in different degree, i.e. varying levels of advanced performance were found in the oral production related to certain domain topics. Apart from the three key elements mentioned, there were other influential factors including participants' interest, language proficiency, communicative strategies, L1 transfer, authoritative status, interlocutor's role, etc.

In this section, I will choose some empirical research to analyse their methods and procedures. Even though most of them were based on a problematic theoretical foundation, some research designs are believed to be rational and feasible.

2.4.1 Selinker & Douglas (1985, 1986)

Douglas and Selinker (1985) interviewed a university student coming from Mexico and staying in America for about a year, discussing his major, civil engineering, and his personal life focusing on food. It was found that he showed more confidence and determination and used less body language when talking about the technical domain because he thought he had more expertise than the interviewer and it was more important to him. He even corrected the interviewer's mistakes of technical knowledge without mitigation, in spite of his being a NNS with uncertainty on language precision as well as a student who was faced with a NS professor. On the contrary, in the other topic, he made more gestures and movement, behaved in a less aggressive and more relaxed way, and attempted to negotiate the language structures and boundaries with the interlocutor. However, when it came to the food related to his culture, after two mistakes made by the interlocutor, he became more serious and corrected the interviewer's mistakes with a strong attitude since it mattered to him. In addition, in both topics, he used the same rhetorical strategy in dealing with the conversational breakdown. He described the meaning and used synonyms to elicit the word from the interviewer and then used it in the following conversation. In the topic of his major, he persisted in attempting to speak English in spite of the linguistic

difficulties maybe in case he appeared unprofessional, but in the topic of 'food', he admitted his shortage of vocabulary by saying 'forget it' directly, hinting at help. Interestingly, when the interviewer offered the word 'mash', the informant did not use the word directly but added 'make' before it as in 'making mash the meat' (p. 196), which conformed to a common NNSs' lexical acquisition process, i.e. to move from a more general word to a more specific one to make the meaning more precise.

Selinker and Douglas (1986, October 10-11) investigated a group of teaching assistants of various technical subjects who failed in a spoken English proficiency test required by their university and thus needed to attend a Language for Specific Purpose (LSP) course involving peer teaching, student lectures and self-critique. Only one Chinese informant's data was presented perhaps due to limited space. He was a Ph. D student in mathematics and had been in America for about two years, but his pronunciation and fluency were not qualified. It was found that in both mathematical domain and life story domain, he expressed confusion about and frustration of his own use of personal pronouns, which seemed to matter to him, but in his performance, it turned out to be a problem only in his technical domain. Secondly, in terms of rhetorical structuring of information, his technical domain displayed linearity and logic, whereas the other one was more narrative and concentrated. He explained a math problem step by step in a clear and structured way following a problem-solution format, but when he mentioned his life, he first talked about his parents who were the centre of his life, then he moved on to his school and the educational system

which were more distant, and finally referred back to his own situation. Lastly, he showed advanced performance when he had content control. He encountered more vocabulary problems in the topic of life story without self-awareness.

In both studies, the results supported the hypothesis that IL processes, especially communicative strategies, vary within discourse domains rather than across ILs globally.

2.4.1.1 Discussion

Three main points related to research methods are worth noticing in Selinker and Douglas (1985, 1986, October 10-11):

1) SLA study is combined with LSP or English for Academic Purpose (EAP). As a cognitive construct, a discourse domain cannot be observed directly but needs inference from learners' performance. It is constructed by learners' interpretation of contexts; in turn, contexts have an impact on the activation of certain discourse domains. Therefore, when designing research, it is better to compare and contrast one's IL production in different contexts, or more specifically, different topics. For one thing, psycholinguistic processes such as fossilization, backsliding, avoidance, transfer, communicative strategies, etc. do not occur across global ILs but vary within different discourse domains (Selinker & Douglas, 1985). For another, a more coherent theory is expected to be formed by investigating NNSs' IL performance in LSP situations, in which EAP setting is chosen in these two studies because it is manageable and familiar to SLA researchers with its repeated occurrence in all

classroom teaching. By combining the methodology adopted by ethnography (i.e. analysing the settings of interactions) and that by LSP studies (i.e. describing the language use grammatically and rhetorically) together (Selinker & Douglas, 1985), a more comprehensive picture of learner language could be drawn, for some systematicity has been found in the appearance and reemergence of IL forms when switching subject matters (Selinker, 1972).

In the two research papers, similar discourse domains were adopted in investigation, one being the informants' academic majors while the other being their life stories. As hypothesised, not only IL forms but also other psycholinguistic processes differed across discourse domains, specifically the rhetorical or communicative strategies which were reflected by the informants' body language as well as the way how they organised information. Such variations related to not only content control but also emotional investment, while the impact of the frequency of use was not evident enough.

Even though replication is difficult in SLA studies since there are too many variables when it comes to issues related to learners, let alone the personal and dynamic discourse domain, large data sets are still possible (Selinker & Douglas, 1985), and one of the key points in the research design is to set up a comparative framework for analysis and attempt to find patterns from it.

2) NS-NNS interaction is emphasised.

In the 1985 research, there were two interviewers for the two sections of domain talks. The one about the technical domain was conducted by one of the researchers. He had learned some basic knowledge about engineering from a practising civil engineer/part-time professor who provided him with a highly valued written text to read and discuss. The other interview was done by a female graduate school research assistant who was the informant's friend, but they had not met in a while. The choice of the two interviewers was well-designed. Even though both were NSs, it was hypothesised that the researcher was treated inconsistently as an L2 'authority' but a 'layman' of the major, whereas with the assistant, the informant may act more like a negotiator of meaning and be more confident and certain of what was said.

In the 1986 research, the data were richer. Apart from the interview with one of the researchers, there were also lectures given by the informants and group discussions with other Chinese colleagues. Most of these interlocutors were NSs.

No matter what kinds of relationships were between the interlocutors, the primary data came from NS-NNS interactions because the researchers were more interested in drawing comparison in learners' IL performance as a whole across contexts instead of looking into the single linguistic items like phonology, morphology, syntax, etc. When speaking with NSs, NNSs tend to be motivated to be more precise

in expressing meanings by being pushed to be 'at the limit or the edge of their "IL capability"' (Tarone, 1983). A majority of current empirical research followed such design (Whyte, 1992, 1992, April, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Woken & Swales, 1989; Zuengler, 1989, 1993a, 1993b; Zuengler & Bent, 1991), but few studies explored NNS-NNS interactions which, in my opinion, may also be considered. L2 learners may perform differently in NS-NNS and NNS-NNS dyads. The latter can even be further distinguished between NNSs of shared L1 and those of various L1s.

However, one of the designs was worth noticing. In the 1985 research, in the technical domain interview, the interlocutors were seated face-to-face across a table, while in the other one with a friend, there were comfortable chairs with more intimate atmosphere. Such arrangements may elicit different task effects. With no further explanation, doubts would be raised on the researchers' intentions. If it had been reasonably hypothesised that one would be more relaxed and friendly when talking about casual topics like their daily lives than when they were involved in a more serious topic like their profession, such arrangement seemed to reinforce this tendency, which may lead to an issue related to theoretical construction that 'observation is theory-laden' (Jordan, 2004, p. 91). Researchers' unintentional behaviour may make a difference since they sometimes are eager to 'prove' their assumption.

3) There are two sets of data.

In both studies, the primary data was the video-taped interviews, while the secondary data included comments on the 'interesting, unusual, different or problematic' (Frankel & Beckman, 1982) as cited in (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, p. 470) points in the play-back session after interviews.

In the 1985 research, since the focus was on rhetorical strategies, the primary data were divided according to 'episodes' where the same strategies were used by the informant in two different contexts. The secondary data were provided by all of the interlocutors and the session was conducted by the researcher who was not involved in the interviews. Questions were asked to elicit more about the participants' thoughts and feelings in the process. After that, 'expert' reviewers were invited to watch the episodes condensed from the video in order to voice opinions from different perspectives related to the informant's performance such as body language, expressions, syntactic development, discourse organisation, etc.

In the 1986 research, more items were included in the primary data. There were the informant's 15-minute lecture on mathematics and Chinese music respectively, a group discussion with other Chinese teaching assistants on Chinese food, and a dialogue interview with one of the researchers about his life story. Similar to the 1985 one, the secondary data consisted of the comments made by the interlocutors as well as other experts.

Both studies emphasised the secondary data. This process could mitigate the uncertainty of analyst-based insights and examine the speakers' inner structuring of the production since discourse domains are internally created by individuals. Personal intentions and semantics are hard to be interpreted precisely from others' point of view. It was in this commentary section that the informant stated his concern on his use of pronouns (Selinker & Douglas, 1986, October 10-11), which implies his unawareness of his own discourse domains and shows the function of secondary data in the interpretation of the primary ones. Besides this, it is also a chance for NNSs to express their intentions, clarify their meanings and solve language problems, which reflects their evaluation of the interactive situation including the settings, interlocutors, genres, etc. and provides evidence for the explanation of their communicative behaviours like hesitation, silence, self-repairing, etc. For example, the informant expressed his uncertainty of the notion of 'home' in his life story and explained that he lived in a 'part' of an apartment instead of a 'house' (Selinker & Douglas, 1986, October 10-11).

Even so, it would not eradicate the necessity of the researcher's intuitive judgement of the comparative framework. For instance, they noticed sensitively that the informant did not make any mistakes in one episode, so they investigated the relevant issue of language transfer and cultural differences (Selinker & Douglas, 1986, October 10-11). Not only language features but also gestures, stress

and intonation, facial expressions, etc. that help the speaker organise information are

worth review.

Douglas (2004) summarises that, methodologically, for recognizing

and distinguishing discourse domains, the oral interactions need to be recorded with

special attention to certain contextual variables, especially participants and topics,

and then the informants are asked to review and comment on their own performance.

Generally speaking, most participants are able to identify their own discourse domains

in the play-back session, but sometimes researchers prefer to classify discourse

domains by themselves on the basis of observed rhetorical and/or grammatical

differences shown in the production. Nevertheless, I think that considering the initiative

of learners to activate discourse domains differently and make use of ILs accordingly,

self-recognition may be more reliable and valuable.

2.4.2 Whyte (1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995)

Whyte (1992) aimed at investigating the three parameters of a discourse

domain, i.e. content elaboration, stability and personal importance, compared with a

schema, in order to provide a more explicit explanation for the concept. She

hypothesised IL variation in the informant's production on different occasions. Data of

the research came from two NS-NNS dyads, the NSs being a British graduate of

geography and an American one of music while the NNS being a French graduate of

mathematics who had been in America for a year. The NNS was interviewed freely by

the NSs one after another lasting for 25 minutes in total. Surprisingly, the two dyads

talked about remarkably similar topics, mainly including the informant's life history, major, reasons/plans coming to America. According to Whyte's distinction between discourse domains and schemata, she regarded the informant's knowledge framework as discourse domains while his interlocutors' as schemata.

In terms of content elaboration, in the topic of 'major', the American interviewer asked the informant to explain a technical term, while the British interviewer discussed the reason of major choice with him. In the first occasion, the informant showed reluctance to go on with the topic with a layman and thus became more didactic for he occupied a 'higher' teaching status in the conversation. In the second one, since the interlocutor did not show knowledge of the major of mathematics, the content of the conversation seemed to fall into a general life story gradually. When it came to the topic of life story, both interviewers mentioned the military service in France, but the American clearly knew more about this because he had discussed it with other French recently, so he was more eager to get involved in the topic and elicited more information from the informant, whereas in the other interview, they came to this topic very early, so the informant was still in the stage of topic negotiation with the interlocutor and thus made it a shallow conversation. In both topics, the informant demonstrated more content control than his interlocutors, which accounted for more elaborated knowledge in a discourse domain than in a schema. Variation in the informant's performance was impacted to different extents by the interlocutors as well as the timing of discourse domain activation.

As for stability, in a sub-topic of the major about 'the application of mathematics', both interviewers talked about the relationship between applied mathematics and the real world, but the American put him and the informant in the same side while the British put them into the opposite position even though both of them commonly viewed the informant as doing 'pure' science instead of applied science. In both occasions, the informant was persistent in his own idea but used different ways of explanation to persuade his interlocutors. One of the reasons was that the American had shown certain extent of mathematical knowledge in the previous conversation whereas the British had not, which prompted the informant to alter his language behaviours to deal with different situations. It appeared, again, that the interlocutor was a significant factor in learners' performance. The American's schemata may be supplemented by the informant's explanation of the technical term and he became less certain about his opinions, which reflected that a discourse domain was more stable than a schema. The informant's ability of tailoring language also indicated that a discourse domain contained more complex knowledge and could be strengthened by repeated practice.

Concerning personal importance, the conversation between the informant and the British about the differences between Europe and America could be regarded as an important one because they spent the longest time on it. The turns in this topic were more evenly shared and less frequently interrupted. The British speaker did not take an interviewer role but became closer in style. It seemed that this topic was a

common discourse domain to both of them since there was no knowledge transfer from a discourse domain to a schema as shown in the other topics. Because the informant had been in America ten months longer than the British, his domain was more stable while the British speaker's was still developing, implied by his contribution in the conversation in which he displayed eagerness to talk compared with his initial role of keeping the interview going. Their behaviour may be brought about by the affective factor and the relevance of the topic to their lives, reflecting both speaker and topic characteristics. They tended to be more motivated to communicate and reach an agreement when they shared a discourse domain.

Therefore, the hypothesis that a domain was more elaborate, more stable and more important as shown in Figure 1 was evident in this case. The interlocutors' knowledge and engagement in the topic were critical influential factors of a speaker's variation in IL performance.

Whyte (1994a, 1994b) compared fluency, syntactic development and discourse organisation of eight advanced English learners with various L1 backgrounds on two kinds of topics, a domain topic about their major field from their assignment and a neutral topic chosen from their textbook. According to the pre-interview questionnaires on background information, four learners were labelled as invested speakers or the experimental group while the other four were uninvested speakers or the control group. A mixed method was adopted in data analysis. Quantitative data included time at talk and mean turn length as indicators of fluency,

and utterance complexity and number of errors as those of syntactic development. Qualitative data focused mainly on 'analogous rhetorical units' (Whyte, 1994a, p. 300)in both topics following Selinker and Douglas' (1985, 1986) design.

The results showed that the uninvested group showed no significant difference and no clear individual patterns in IL production across topics as hypothesised. However, only one participant in the invested group consistently performed better in the domain topic. Quantitatively, task effect, especially topic order, had an impact on fluency and accuracy for the rest of the invested group. The other main factor was learner proficiency. Lower-level informants' scores were generally lower than others, even though they had been pushed to their limits of competence. Qualitatively, the one in the invested group who exhibited domain effects produced more structured discourse, more complex sentences and took longer turns in the major field topic, which reflected the effect of daily planning and practice, while the other two showed no such variation across topics. The remaining one could not construct effective communication satisfactorily due to his poor proficiency, but in domain talks, he made greater effort in interaction and tried to use the interlocutor's contributions to facilitate his further expression, which implied that his discourse domain may still be developing.

Interestingly, one informant in the experimental group displayed greater emotional engagement in the non-domain topic by referring to his own case as example and mentioned his frequent discussion about the topic with both NSs and

NNSs, even though his performance did not illustrate remarkable enhancement. Such a switch from a designed non-domain topic to a personally interested domain topic failed to be accounted for in the post-interview questionnaire maybe because the informant did not realise the differences between topics with his parallel developed discourse domains.

It seemed that the Discourse Domain Hypothesis was partly supported by the result that IL variation was not found in the control group, but it seemed to lack explicit patterns among invested group, proving the complexity and idiosyncrasy of IL variability.

In 1995, Whyte further revised her research design and drew more conclusions. She interviewed a group of nine advanced university students on different topics. Based on the results of pre-interview questionnaires about background information, those whose educational qualifications, professional experience and career plans were related to their majors were labelled as the invested group, while the others worked as the control group. The invested group talked about a general topic in their textbooks and their academic major topics as their domain topics in which they were expected to possess more expert knowledge, be more familiar with and be more emotionally invested, whereas the control group talked about a general textbook topic and were then further divided by a non-major research paper topic that they had, or had not, written lately. After the interview, the informants were required to complete another questionnaire about their investment on the topic chosen so as to

obtain independent support for domain and non-domain distinction as Whyte's previous design (1994a, 1994b). Surprisingly, some subjects were ambivalent about their emotional investment on the topics as shown by their different attitudes towards the same topic in the pre- and post-interview questionnaires, and thus excluded from the analysis, which showed the similar tendency towards the participants in Whyte (1994a, 1994b) that some learners had not formed clear-cut discourse domains. The interview data were chiefly analysed in terms of turn-taking patterns which indicated the learner's independence of contribution, and episode structures which offered description of the coherence of talk and the content area covered.

The findings were rather interesting. As predicted, the invested group showed enhanced IL performance in terms of discourse organisation in domain topics. Longer time, more turns, greater coherence and more systematic problem-solution format could be found in their talk about the academic topics because they possessed both investment and expertise. Conversely, they tended to refer to personal anecdote and some even digressed from the theme on general topic talks. As for the control group who were not invested in the topics, two subgroups showed different results. For the expert group, there was no apparent diversity in IL production between topics. In spite of their professional knowledge on the topic, they were neither more independent in turn-taking nor more coherent in organisation, which may suggest that investment was a more influential factor than expertise in IL performance. For the non-expert group who lacked both investment and expertise in both topics, better

performance was found in the research topic because they had rehearsed it recently, which accidently proved the effect of current knowledge. Even though it was also regarded as one of the elements in Whyte's (1994a) framework, it was not the main target of investigation in this research since she thought that the 'dormant' topics were not worth attention due to the unresolved contradiction in Selinker and Douglas's (1986, October 10-11) definition of 'discourse domain' being both current and discontinuous. She further suggested that the three variables, i.e. expertise, investment and currency, could be examined separately to figure out their respective impact more clearly.

In summary, this study also partly supported the Discourse Domain Hypothesis, with the impact of all three characteristics in different degrees. It, again, implied that individual differences may be more remarkable than group pattern in the research on ones' discourse domains and IL variation. Besides this, Whyte proposed some directions for further studies, for example, a longitudinal study for investigating the development of discourse domains and ILs, LSP-oriented research to link contexts and language together, comparison of NSs' NL variation across topics, adoption of NNSs' NL to be the baseline data of meaning conveyance, the influence of other factors like interlocutors, settings, tasks, etc.

2.4.2.1 Discussion

Apart from what has been discussed in 2.4.1.1, Whyte raised another question about how to identify and distinguish one's discourse domains. She realised

that it may be wrong to take the non-domain topics as the default, assuming that it could always elicit neutral talk (Whyte, 1992, April). Hence it is suggested that the choice of topics under investigation need to be given to the participants, and their interpretation of the discourse domains selected should be checked again in order to ensure that the informants have noticed the differences across topics related to corresponding discourse domains in terms of expertise, practice and importance.

In Whyte(1994b), a participant's emotional investment was strengthened as the conversation went on, proven by his different levels of interest in pre- and post-interview questionnaires. It implies that investment may be a controversial variable, so, again, she suggested that a post-interview questionnaire about the participant's views on the topics is necessary to detect the possible domain topics based on implicit expertise and interest.

Therefore, in the design of her later research, the participants were given questionnaires not only before the interview to choose personalised topics but also after it to verify their distinction between the related discourse domains. The post-interview comment session in Selinker and Douglas (1985, 1986, October 10-11) also played a similar role. Considering the situation that some learners may still be in the process of discourse domain formation (Whyte, 1994b), it is necessary to know whether they are capable of telling the topics apart and thus adopt certain communicative strategies to deal with them unconsciously so that the pattern of one's IL performance across discourse domains could be clarified more clearly. Apart from

the experimental group's interviews on both domain and non-domain topics, a control

group needs to be engaged in conversations on different neutral topics as well.

Whyte's (1994a, 1994b, 1995) finding of control group's consistent IL performance

across topics rather than the unstable production in the experimental group turned out

to be the main support for the Discourse Domain Hypothesis.

In addition, she expressed her concern on other topic-related

variables that are worth considering in research design (Whyte, 1994b).

1) The cognitive load involved may vary.

Many related research tends to make comparison of IL performance

between work/major domain and daily life domain, but the latter seems to be more

cognitively manageable (Tapia, 1993) than the former, so it brings doubts about the

extent of effect of discourse domain on IL variation.

The questionnaires delivered in Whyte (1994b) succeeded in

distinguishing students who were experts and held investment in the major field topics

from those who had not enough professional experience. The informants of the control

group were required to do a multiple-choice questionnaire to test their content control,

frequency of practice and emotional investment on the four topics selected by the

researcher from their textbook, and the one of least interest was used as the interview

topic. Such design guarantees uniformity of cognitive complexity since all topics were

familiar to the informants, either from their own class assignment or discussion.

2) Different topics may elicit different speaking and thinking modes.

The informants may give a mini-lecture in work domain but a narration in life domain, or just an aimless and casual conversation on 'unimportant' topics, as is shown in Selinker and Douglas (1985, 1986, October 10-11) and Whyte (1992).

To deal with this variable, Whyte (1994b, 1995) designed a problem-solution format for both topics, and thus the informants tended to think about and talk about them following a similar pattern.

3) The interactional context matters.

As the revised Discourse Domain Hypothesis states, the informants would have an evaluation on the settings, interlocutors, purposes, etc. before they produce the 'appropriate' language.

In Whyte's (1992) research, some informants preferred to talk about work with a strange interviewer rather than about his private life, while some were unwilling to discuss technical topic with a non-professional and would rather have a chat on life, a more casual topic. Nevertheless, in Whyte's (1994b) study, all informants knew the researcher as a teacher in their university programme, so they might not consider it uncomfortable to discuss topics in their textbook with her in an interview.

Apart from these variables considered in the research design, compared with Selinker and Douglas' studies (1985, 1986, October 10-11) which mainly focused on qualitative data of rhetorical strategies that effect communication, Whyte (1994b, 1995) combines qualitative analysis of the discourse organisation and quantitative measures of communicative features, which tends to paint a more

complete picture of learner language across discourse domains. Even though quantification tends to be central in SLA studies (Selinker & Douglas, 1985), Whyte's (1994b, 1995) results show that the quantitative scores say little about learners' IL variation since discourse domains and ILs are idiosyncratic. Only by integration of both kinds of data set could we come to more powerful conclusions.

However, the settings of Whyte's studies were not as rich as Selinker and Douglas' (1986, October 10-11). They only conducted interviews which may bring task effect, for informants may give 'answers' that cater to researchers. The performance in more natural contexts like lectures and group discussions are also worth investigation and comparison.

Besides this, even though the research design took the aforementioned variables under control, it raised another problem: learners of lower proficiency tended to be less invested in the topic, which may contaminate the data, as their worse performance in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity of IL may be due to either discourse domain effect or proficiency effect.

Because individual variation is remarkable, it seems that case study is a better means to explore more features of one's highly personal and dynamic discourse domain development, in spite of the fact that limited data is not beneficial for observation of group patterns.

2.5 Measures of Learner Language

In the previous research related to the Discourse Domain Hypothesis, the selection of measures to analyse a speaker's language production depends on the researchers' interpretation of 'enhanced performance' predicted in the domain talk (Whyte, 1994a, 1994b). Different researchers seemed to have their own preference for measures based on their research aims.

For example, Selinker and Douglas (1985, 1986, October 10-11) only concentrated on the comparable *rhetorical characteristics* that the same informant showed across topics. Zuengler and Bent (1991) chose six measures to be the indicators of the speakers' conversational participation: 1) *amount of talk*; 2) *interruptions*; 3) *resisting interruptions*; 4) *pause fillers*; 5) *back-channels*; 6) *topic moves*. Zuengler (1993a) retained the measures of 1), 4), 5), 6) and added new ones including *clarification requests*, *confirmation checks* and *comprehension checks*. She assumed that these data could reflect the informants' capability of holding the interactive turns and keeping the conversation going. Whyte (1992) tried to discover *similarities and differences in language use* when the informant was interviewed by different interlocutors. Whyte (1994a, 1994b) combined both quantitative and qualitative data in three aspects: 1) *overall fluency* investigated by time at talk, mean turn length, the mean number of clauses per minute and the mean number of words per minute; 2) *syntactic development* including *grammatical complexity* measured by the number of clauses per t-unit and *accuracy* measured by the number of syntactic,

morphological and lexical-idiomatic errors per clause; 3) *discourse organization* with attention to any kinds of similar features shared in both topics. Whyte (1995) focused on two perspectives: 1) *turn-taking patterns* indicating the appropriateness and independence of the informants' production and measuring by their ability to maintain talk according to the number of procedural moves, transition questions, supportive moves, and linguistic moves; 2) *episode structure of conversations* indicating the coherence of talk and the content areas covered and measuring by the informants' duration of and pertinence to the topic on the basis of procedure moves and transition questions. Chiu (2011) paid specific attention to the *accuracy of verb use* in the aspects of tense, form, lexical choice and frame, linked to the level of the informants' familiarity with, interest in and frequent practice of the topics.

It could be seen that all kinds of measures gave rise to fruitful findings and allowed the researchers to discover more about the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation.

In recent decades, researchers of applied linguistics tend to quantify L2 learners' production. The complexity-accuracy-fluency (CAF) triad is one of the popular measures (Raish, 2017) since it provides a global view on one's proficiency, development, processing and actual use of an L2 (Housen & Kuiken, 2009; Purpura, 2016; Van Daele et al., 2007). It originates from the field of pedagogy in 1980s where an oral L2 class was likely to distinguish between the accuracy-oriented activities which attached importance on linguistic form and grammatical rules from the fluency-

oriented ones which aimed at stimulating spontaneous production (cf. (Brumfit, 1984).

In the 1990s, the dichotomous approach developed by adding a third dimension, complexity (cf. (Skehan, 1992, 1996), which expected the learners to use a wide range of vocabulary and syntactic structures in oral expressions. These three variables are often treated as interdependent in evaluating L2 learners' overall language attainment with varying manifestation impacted by individuality features (e.g. age, gender, educational experience, etc.), task types, learning contexts, etc. (Housen & Kuiken, 2009; Van Daele et al., 2007).

Even though there are opinions against the CAF construct such as variation between individual performance and group tendency (Larsen-Freeman, 2006), unclear functions of each notion (Van Daele et al., 2007), the lack of common criteria, etc., it is still a feasible and rational means to quantify learner language, based on which, L2 learners' production could be analysed through statistical approach objectively, which helps to achieve the main empirical goal of this study.

2.6 Summary

Firth and Wagner (1997) argued that SLA studies had paid too much attention to psycholinguistic perspectives and neglected the sociolinguistic approaches. Nevertheless, there is a long record of exploring the impact of social factors beginning from IL studies. One of the typical examples is the proposal of Discourse Domain Hypothesis in 1985 (Tarone, 2007). It focuses on IL variation developed within a learner's discourse domains which are supposed to change with their life experience.

The relevant studies combine the investigation of social elements such as interactive settings, interlocutors, topics, purposes, etc. with that of cognitive ones like L1 transfer, communicative strategies, developmental stages, overgeneralisation, etc. The previous two sections have discussed the pros and cons of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis from both theoretical and empirical perspectives.

Generally speaking, the rather loose definition of the main concept 'discourse domain' results in inconsistent criteria to follow in the attempt to discover the learner's discourse domains. At first, Selinker and Douglas (1985, 1986, October 10-11) describe it as one's 'slice of life' that keeps changing with experience. Whyte (1994a, 1994b) regards it as a 'topic area' paralleling one's schema and characterised by extensive, current and important knowledge. Douglas (2004) elaborates it as a 'cognitive construct' created as a kind of communicative competence in interaction with social contexts. They all agree that a learner's ILs develop dependent on their discourse domain formation and that discourse domains are highly personal and dynamic. As far as I know, later researchers barely put forward any different explanations for the concept as a theoretical construct, but some do hold negative or sceptical attitudes towards the existing ones.

Makoni (1992) mentions that there is a lack of consistent understanding of the concept of 'discourse domain'. It is sometimes used synonymously with 'topic' and 'genre'. However, Brown and Yule (1983) as cited in (Makoni, 1992) claim that 'topic' is controversial as well; nobody seems to know exactly the boundary of it. As for 'genre',

it is defined as the same type of speech events shared by the same speech community (Richards et al., 1985) as cited in (Makoni, 1992); only some of the 'discourse domains' in the existing research like culture, lecture, profession, etc. seems to fit this meaning. It appears that all of these concepts provide us with unclear or confusing typology, so the foundation for the other goals of theory construction, i.e. description, prediction and a sense of understanding, is not solid, according to Reynolds (2016). Cornu & Delhaye's study (1987) as cited in (Makoni, 1992) found that the participant's language use demonstrated similarities at the end of one subject matter and at the beginning of another one, so speaking time seemed to be a neutraliser between discourse domains, which prompted Makoni (1992) to suggest that a 'discourse domain' may also be interpreted as 'a stretch of talk' (p. 92). However, he did not continue to discuss more about this thought and ended this criticism hastily. In brief, he considers that the concept 'discourse domain' should be abandoned by applying the principle of Occam's Razor, and that the main issue lies in its vague definition which causes the problems for theory construction as well as experimental design.

Methodologically, Makoni (1992) attacks the contradiction between discourse domains as a learner-oriented concept and the research design in which the learners are not given the chance to choose the domain topics, which echoes Ellis's (1985) call for specific criteria of behaviours for determining discourse domain engagement and Tarone's (1988) suggestion that learners, rather than the researchers, should be the

decision-makers in the process of identifying discourse domains. This problem may be directed against Selinker and Douglas' original research (1985, 1986, October 10-11) which concentrated more on the collection of two sets of data, but it has been properly solved by Whyte's (1994a, 1994b, 1995) design which attempts to elicit discourse domains from the informants by allowing them to choose interview topics and checking the validity again through questionnaires about their own perception of these topics.

Even though the study on the Discourse Domain Hypothesis has not been as popular recently as in the period from the end of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, the phenomenon observed and described still prevails among L2 learners and the problems: what causes it, and how it does so, have not been solved satisfactorily yet. Therefore, the Hypothesis needs further revision. Before that, I will discuss some synonymous concepts for 'discourse domain' first so as to look for a better alternative or a clearer statement for my proposed theory.

2.7 Synonymous Concepts for 'Discourse Domain'

The term 'discourse domain' is proposed by Selinker and Douglas (1985) , but with various conceptual development and corresponding revision of the empirical design, a foundational problem has been discovered, i.e. the unclear and inconsistent definition of 'discourse domain' and its mixed use with other terms like 'genre', 'context', 'topic', etc. (Makoni, 1992). Abercrombie (1979) as cited in (Makoni, 1992) renders synonyms as wasteful, especially those of technical matters, so it is better to

unify the intersubjective understanding of the concept in the field so that it could be utilised to explain events and make predictions in a more precise way.

This section is going to discuss the general meanings of these 'synonymous' concepts in order to examine whether 'discourse domain' is an appropriate term to refer to the concept or whether other words could be better alternatives.

2.7.1 'Discourse' and 'Domain'

Apart from the aforementioned definitions of 'discourse domain' in SLA, the concept is also used in discourse semantics which refers to 'a cognitive space for the middle-term storage of the information conveyed by subsequent utterances' (Seuren, 2006). Even though it is also of cognitive essence, it is obviously different from the one being discussed. Hence the term is not used consistently in the broad field of linguistics and may cause confusion.

When we look at these two words 'discourse' and 'domain' separately, they may limit, or clarify, the scope of the concept to some extent.

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (Richards & Schmidt, 2013), 'discourse' is 'a general term for examples of language use, i.e. language which has been produced as the result of an act of communication' (p. 160). 'Discourse analysis' sometimes refers to 'the study of both written and spoken discourse (pp. 160-161). Even though none of the empirical studies aforementioned are about written discourse, they met the condition of focusing on the learner language in communication, either in interaction or in personal speech.

Besides this, compared to 'grammar', i.e. 'the rules a language uses to form grammatical units such as CLAUSE, PHRASE, and SENTENCE', 'discourse' normally deals with the 'larger units of language such as paragraphs, conversations, and interviews' (p. 160). Most of the data collected in the existing research (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Whyte, 1994a, 1994b; Woken & Swales, 1989; Zuengler, 1989, 1993a, 1993b; Zuengler & Bent, 1991) were concerned with the amount of speech, interactional pattern, discourse organisation, rhetorical units, etc., aiming at analysing the 'larger units of language' qualitatively and quantitatively. However, some research examined the accurate use of certain linguistic items like verb forms and tenses (Chiu, 2011; Ebsworth & Starbuck, 1989), lexical choice and frame (Chiu, 2011), which may be in the category of 'grammar' rather than 'discourse'.

In the introduction of discourse-based approaches in L2 teaching and learning, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) adopt the definition of 'discourse' as:

> … an instance of spoken or written language that has describable internal relationships of form and meaning that relate coherently to an external communicative function or purpose and a given audience/interlocutor. Furthermore, the external function or purpose can only be determined if one takes into account the context and participants (i.e. all the relevant situational, social, and cultural factors) in which the piece of discourse occurs. (p. 4)

It can be seen that 'discourse' is a combination of grammatical forms and social functions. The focus of discourse analysis develops from the former (cf. (Chomsky, 1957) to the latter (cf. (Halliday, 1994). No matter how it changes, it is based on a sentence-level paradigm in a coherent stretch of discourse from the pragmatic perspective rather than a semantic one (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2005). Even though some of the related discourse domain research merely took the grammatical accuracy into account, most of them were concerned with the influence of social factors on the conveyance of meaning, or more specifically, whether the learners' overall IL performance could fulfill certain communicative functions, which seems to conform to the features of 'discourse'.

In addition, discourse analysis deals with all kinds of human communication including oral, written, gestural and nonverbal data (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2005). Since speech is regarded as a more authentic reflection of one's language proficiency, few studies analysed written data, but non-verbal cues and body language like gestures, expressions, body movements, etc. were sometimes paid attention to (Selinker & Douglas, 1985). Such data could reflect the learners' attitudes towards a certain topic. For example, according to Whyte's (1994a) and Douglas's (2004) frameworks of a discourse domain, the degree of importance and practice of a topic could be gauged from the learners' seriousness and confidence in language production.

Therefore, the interpretation of 'discourse' in the Discourse Domain Hypothesis corresponds to the discourse analysis approach to a great extent.

As for the term 'domain', it is defined as 'an area of human activity in which one particular speech variety or a combination of several speech varieties is regularly used' (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, pp. 168-169). More specifically,

[a] domain can be considered as a group of related speech situations. For instance, situations in which the persons talking to one another are members of the family, e.g. mother and children, father and mother, elder sister and younger sister, would all belong to the Family Domain. … In BILINGUAL and MULTILINGUAL communities, one language may be used in some domains and another language in other domains. For example, Puerto Ricans in the USA may use Spanish in the Family Domain and English in the Employment Domain. (p. 169)

These examples take both interlocutors and the interactive situations into account when classifying domains. Some of the existing research considered the interlocutors as one of the main influential factors of IL variation. For instance, there were two interviewers in Selinker and Douglas (1985), a teacher (one of the researchers) and a friend. Whyte (1992) recruited two students from different countries as the interviewers. The majority of the rest did not distinguish the identities of the interlocutors, i.e. the informant interacted with the same person from beginning to end. Moreover, the 'situations' were not differentiated on purpose either since the most

common research tool was interview. Selinker and Douglas's (1986, October 10-11) design may be richer, including lectures, panel discussions and interviews, all of which were with different interlocutors and in different settings, but the concentration of the other studies was mainly on the variable of 'topic' like major, life-story, food, etc. without consideration of other spatiotemporal factors.

It cannot be denied that such research design also led to fruitful results as well as valuable predictions, but it seems to be a post hoc behaviour. It is not adequate if not completely unfit for the exploration of the concept 'domain' in this case.

2.7.2 'Genre'

'Genre' is used originally in literary texts, including poems, drama, novels, etc., the recognition of which is based on the stable and unique forms, content and expressions according to the conventions. When the concept is adopted in language studies, Bakhtin (2010) employs the term 'speech genres' to refer to the relatively stable ways of utterance, for example, daily dialogues, writing, business documents, political commentary, etc. They vary depending on the subject matters, situations, participants, etc. Based on the assumption that a genre shift does not always rely on lexico-grammatical forms explicitly (Hyland, 2013), systemic-functional linguists relate the language use to the social contexts, especially cultural contexts, attempting to explain why the text is spoken or written in this way and how it links to the contextual factors. A text in a certain genre is to fulfill a specific purpose and its generic structures help the distinction between genres (Halliday & Hasan, 1989).

In the process of organisation, the language users need to go through a sequence of stages or moves (cf. the move-analysis, (Swales, 1990), each of which facilitates the achievement of an intermediate goal, and their order matters in the overall pattern (Fairclough, 2006). Martin (1992) thus defines 'genre' as a 'staged, goal-oriented process' (p. 142). For example, when we want to ask directions, we generally follow the stages of 'greeting — request — gratitude'. A thesis is usually arranged in the order of 'introduction — literature review — methodology — results — conclusion'. Every kind of generic text is believed to contain a set of conventional and structured characteristics since the communicative situations tend to be 'formulaic and ritualised' in a certain culture (Kress, 1989, p. 19). That is why linguists could figure out the pattern of a genre by observing examples and breaking them down into purpose-driven stages. A genre-based teaching approach helps students to draw connections between language use, communicative purpose and social contexts, identify the stages or moves, and finally discover the construction of a genre in order to adapt to the socially preferred ways of getting things done (Hyland, 2013; Tardy, 2012).

However, some critics argue that such assumption is problematic because it could never be falsified. When an exception occurs, the model of the genre could be adapted and refined to accommodate to the new form. Hence the New Rhetoricians begin to regard 'genre' as negotiable social facts (Corbett, 2006) rather than unchangeable conventions. Bazerman (1988) believes that '[e]ach new text produced within a genre reinforces or remolds some aspect of the genre; each

reading of a text reshapes the social understanding' (p. 8). It inspires the applied

linguists to adopt an ethnographical approach and to identify 'discourse communities'

in which members are bonded together by a common set of communicative purposes

in spite of their genders, races, social classes, etc. (Corbett, 2006). Those belonging

to the same community have little difficulty in understanding or using the appropriate

genres in corresponding situations based on their repeated experiences (Hyland,

2013; Tardy, 2012). It can also be assumed that genres are created by a certain social

group to achieve common goals (Tardy, 2012) like the academic community, the

business community, etc. Swales (1990) thus defines 'genre' as goal-oriented

communicative events within a social group. Hence the linguists could check the

stages or moves of a genre against the language facts from a certain discourse

community in more scientific ways like observations and interviews rather than drawing

patterns merely based on intuitions and conventions.

It has gradually been posited that some discourse communities may

overlap and genre seems never to occur in isolation (Hyland, 2013) because a

speaker or a writer tends to convey complex purposes and/or implicit intentions in their

utterances (Bhatia, 1999). Barton (1994) takes such features into account and

reconsiders a discourse community as a fuzzy group, dynamic in terms of not only the

individual's identities but also their purposes in different situations. Bex (1996) further

contends that there is 'a complex interrelationship between social discourses,

discourse communities, text production, and text reception' which is 'entirely dynamic'

(p. 66). Such a change prevents genre analysis from being confined to a conventional text, spoken or written. Instead, it is a performance of a predictable action by a specific group.

To sum up, Corbett (2006) states that:

genre analysis can be conducted with reference to the individual's knowledge and expectations, the structure of the discourse communities in which he or she is situated, and the more-or-less conventional texts produced to serve those communities' communicative purposes. (p. 31)

Then the two concepts 'genre' and 'discourse domain' obviously do not refer to the same thing.

Firstly, the majority of the existing relevant research design was interview which could be viewed as the same 'genre' with formulaic language pattern, so it could not elicit the production of distinctive learner language or reflect the activation of different discourse domains. Perhaps Selinker and Douglas (1986, October 10-11) fitted more of 'genre analysis' since it gathered data from more settings like lectures and panel discussions. The informant was assumed to hold different communicative purposes in these situations, which may mould his ILs accordingly.

Secondly, except Selinker and Douglas' design (1985, 1986, October 10-11) which has explicit topics, interviews in most studies were basically unstructured. The differentiation of 'discourse domains' depended mainly on the researchers' personal recognition according to the episodes and topics they discussed, sometimes

confirmed by the participants' post-interview reflections. Hence, some informants did not have strong and predictable purposes in the process except the awareness that they were interviewed by someone. For example, in Whyte (1992), when the informant was asked to explain a technical term, his unwillingness to cooperate showed that he was clear that the interlocutor was not intending to learn it seriously and such thought was reinforced by the later change of subject matter. By contrast, genre analysis emphasises the mapping between a relatively formulaic linguistic pattern and a specific purpose in certain social contexts.

Therefore, 'genre' seems not to be a proper term to describe the relevant phenomenon and could not help to distinguish IL performance in the existing research framework.

Similar definitions of 'genre' could be found in dictionaries and encyclopaedias as follows:

Genres are types of SPOKEN AND WRITTEN DISCOURSE recognized by a discourse community. Examples are lectures, conversations, speeches, notices, advertisements, novels, diaries, shopping lists. Each genre has typical features. Some may be linguistic (particular grammatical or lexical choices), some paralinguistic (e.g. print size, gesture) and some contextual and pragmatic (e.g. setting, purpose). Some genres overlap (a joke may also be a story) and one can contain another (a joke can be a part of a story). (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, p. 140)

A 'genre' is a more or less stabilized and habitual linguistic way of acting and interacting, characterized by a distinctive linguistic form or structure, associated with specific communicative purposes, and with particular social or institutional contexts. (Fairclough, 2006, p. 32)

[Genre is] a type of discourse that occurs in a particular setting, that has distinctive and recognizable patterns and norms of organization and structure, and that has particular and distinctive communicative functions. For example: business reports, news broadcasts, speeches, letters, advertisements, etc. … Genres differ in that each has a different goal and employs different patterns of structure and organization to achieve its goals. (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 224)

There are also comparisons between discourse (analysis) and genre (analysis):

Genre can be seen as one of three main analytical categories in discourse analysis: a genre is a way of (inter)acting, a 'discourse' is a way of representing particular aspects of the world …, and a 'style' is a way of being, an identity … (Fairclough, 2006, p. 33)

Discourse analysis is a collection of methods for studying language in action, looking at texts in relation to the social contexts in which they are used. … giving more or less emphasis to concrete texts or to institutional

social practices, but generally tending to focus on language phenomena that occur above the level of the sentence. Genre analysis is a more specific form of discourse analysis that focuses on any element of recurrent language use, including grammar and lexis, that is relevant to the analyst's interests. Genres are the recurrent uses of more-or-less conventionalized forms through which individuals develop relationships, establish communities, and get things done using language. (Hyland, 2013, p. 2281)

Accordingly, the concept of 'discourse' entails the concept of 'genre'. They share some common features. For instance, their analytical object is a stretch of language or 'sequence material' (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 224)rather than an isolated sentence; the forms included can be diverse, linguistic and non-linguistic; they try to match the linguistic forms to the communicative functions and the social contexts. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, being a concept with narrower scope, 'genre' seems to be adopted when there is a specific interactive purpose, and it contains a more ritualised language pattern in terms of lexicon, rhetoric, register, style, etc. People of a certain genre community can understand and use the language to get things done properly and effectively because they get in touch with the genre and the corresponding contexts repeatedly. In writing, genres can even be seen as a 'tacit contract' between writers and readers (Hyland, 2013, p. 2282), based on which the writers organise the work and the readers possess knowledge and hold expectations.

From the perspective of SLA, learners need to identify their relevant schemata and then realise the purpose with language (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

Even though one's discourse domains are also impacted by frequent use and interactive contexts, it does not prescribe the way one organises language, so, again, 'genre' is not a proper alternative.

2.7.3 'Context'

The concept of 'context' is taken into consideration in the study of discourse and interaction because language is believed to be produced in a particular time and place with a specific purpose (Blommaert, 2005). Hence, an utterance is interpreted within the situations of production, i.e. the context. However, controversy is raised concerning the definition and the range of 'context'. Historically speaking, Malinowski (1947) first introduces the concept 'context of situation' to investigate the 'conditions under which a language is spoken' (p. 306). Then not only language but also non-linguistic and paralinguistic factors like intonation, gestures, facial expressions, etc. came to scholars' attention in the study of communication (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Goffman, 1964). Later, social contexts, especially cultural contexts, are considered in the interpretation of speech events (Gumperz, 1972). During 1980s and 1990s, the focus of attention has been limited to the immediate environment of the discourse (Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Kendon, 1992), for example, the actions being conducted, the current spaciotemporal situation, the topic under discussion, etc.

Because there is no consensus among the scope of 'context', it could be examined from either micro perspective like the intonation showing attitudes of the speakers or macro one like the social class of the speakers (De Saint-Georges, 2013). For example, Blommaert (2005) defines 'context' as 'the totality of conditions under which discourse is being produced, circulated and interpreted' (p. 251), while Jones (2004) regards 'context' as 'an individual's environment of communicative possibilities' (p. 25).

Besides this, various approaches are used to explore 'context' in different fields and thus derive more understanding of the concept. For instance, pragmatic linguistics assumes that it is 'built up utterance by utterance in the course of speaking' (Hanks, 2006, p. 115) (cf. Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962); Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1991). Psycholinguists take it as mental models and cognitive representations shared by participants that contribute to the situation appropriately (Hanks, 2006; Van Dijk, 2009) (cf. Conversation Analysis (Sacks et al., 1974). Historical and social linguists consider it to be a global and durable concept, explaining it from a broad scope influenced by complex interrelationship between language and ever-evolving society (Hanks, 2006) (cf. Critical Discourse Analysis (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000).

In regard to the other important issue related to 'context' — its 'ingredients' or 'parameters' (De Saint-Georges, 2013, p. 923), Hymes (1972) proposes a SPEAKING grid for the analysis of a speech event including the Setting, the Participants, the Ends (i.e. the goals), the Actions, the Key (i.e. the manner and

tone of speech), the Instrumentalities (i.e. the channels of communication), the social

and cultural Norms, the Genre. Fetzer (2004) distinguishes among linguistic context

(e.g. intonation, genre, preceding discourse), social context (e.g. interlocutors, time,

space), socio-cultural context (e.g. history, conventions, social class), and cognitive

context (e.g. prior knowledge, mental representations, logic and reasoning).

No matter what ingredients are taken into account in the study of 'context',

a common view has gradually been formed that it is dynamic. Language is not only

context-dependent but context-creating (De Saint-Georges, 2013; Hanks, 2006). The

speakers employ different repertoires and resources to facilitate interaction with the

change of their roles and goals in the conversation, their judgement on the situations,

etc. (Blommaert, 2005). As the communication goes on, the context also keeps

changing correspondingly.

Lately, new issues are raised in the field. For instance, are the context,

and even language, viewed with strong Western bias (Makoni, 2005)? Is there any

context taken for granted in the research (Blommaert, 2005)? What are the differences

in contexts between face-to-face interaction and man-machine dialogue (Jones,

2004)? In the exploration of the impact of contexts, which one has more weight than

others (Kell, 2009)? Some scholars even question the very concept of 'context' and

call for a better alternative (De Saint-Georges, 2013).

It can be seen that, however broad the scope of the study of 'context' is,

either limited within face-to-face interaction with consideration of local settings of

utterance or enlarged to the collective facts including social and historical impact, the focus is on the 'speech event'. Even though some researchers also use the term 'discourse', the context of writing is seemingly not the centre of investigation, perhaps because speech could reflect one's linguistic proficiency more authentically, which is in accord to the majority of current empirical research of discourse domain with the research object on oral English.

Even so, the concept 'context' is more like an influential factor of learner language instead of an alternative to the concept 'discourse domain'. As Hanks (2006) states,

[c]ontext is a theoretical concept, strictly based on relations. There is no 'context' that is not 'context of,' or 'context for.' How one treats it depends on how one construes other basic elements including language, discourse, utterance production and reception, social practice, and so on. (p. 117)

It helps shape the IL performance which identifies personal discourse domains and 'genre' as two important contextualisation cues (Fairclough, 2006) because the speaker may use different discourse strategies (Gumperz, 1992) and verbal or non-verbal means to convey as well as interpret meanings based on their judgement on the purposes, settings, interlocutors, etc. As the conversation goes on, the context is expected to change as well. The constant interplay may support the idea that 'speech practices are shaped by and help shape contexts at various level' (Hanks, 2006, pp. 116-117).

Therefore, 'context' is considered to be an important variable in the examination of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis as Douglas' (2004) definition states. Specific contextualisation cues can be used to investigate its integrated influence on learners' communicative strategies adopted and the corresponding IL performance.

2.7.4 'Topic'

There is not much controversy about the understanding of a 'topic'. Generally speaking, it is 'what is talked about or written about' (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 557). In language instruction, a topic-centred or topic-based approach requires that teaching content and activities are centred around topics or themes such as 'music', 'family', 'sports', etc. Other aspects like language skills, grammar, vocabulary, etc. are also linked to the core topics (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 558).

Most of the researchers working on IL variation tended to interview the participants about different topics or to segment conversational episodes by topics. For example, Whyte (1992) divided the content of the interview into several topics like 'life history', 'study', 'plans/reasons for coming to the US', etc. Chiu (2011) requested the informants to provide topics that they were familiar and unfamiliar with and to rate their interest and frequency of practice. Some of the informants' selections included 'food', 'academic major', 'economy', 'religion', etc. Selinker and Douglas (1985) interviewed the informant about two topics, 'technical area' and 'life', directly. Even though Selinker and Douglas (1986, October 10-11) included more settings apart from

interviews, they were still about particular topics, 'mathematic problem' and 'Chinese music' in two lectures and 'Chinese food' in panel discussion.

Clearly, the majority of data in the existing research came from topic-based conversations which were believed to imply different levels of development of the speakers' internal discourse domains. Due to the cognitive nature of discourse domain, it is impossible to observe directly whether it is activated or not or to what extent it has been activated, or even, whether it actually exists. There should be some explicit performance, therefore, to help researchers to postulate its existence and to describe its constitution and mechanism. 'Topic', and even 'genre' and 'context', helps to elicit linguistic phenomena that facilitates the conjecture of 'discourse domain'.

The Discourse Domain Hypothesis only explained what a 'discourse domain' was without the statement of its connection with a 'topic'. However, in the empirical design, researchers adopted 'topics' to be the main object of investigation in the explanation of IL variation between 'discourse domains'. Hence it is not convincing. From this perspective, Whyte's (1994a) revision of the definition may be better because she regards a 'discourse domain' as 'a topic area', which logically leads to the topic-based design.

2.7.5 Summary

Based on the above analysis, both 'genre' and 'context' are not proper alternatives to 'discourse domain'. The former can be regarded as a type of discourse in certain contexts with recurrent use. It focuses more on the conventional and

formulaic pattern of both lexico-grammatical and discourse level, usually including several stages or moves which help to fulfill the language users' communicative purposes. The majority of the exiting empirical research adopted interviews as the main means of data collection, which did not distinguish 'genres' in terms of these vital aspects, and thus may not be useful to investigate IL variation. The latter concept, 'context', generally refers to the conditions of utterances. Its scope could be as limited as the preceding and following language or as broad as the historical and cultural impact. Hence it is better to consider 'context' as a variable that influences a learner' IL performance. Linguistic factors like vocabulary, grammar, intonation, etc. and non-linguistic ones like body language, setting, interlocutor, educational background, etc. are all worth being taken into account when explaining learner language.

The original term, 'discourse domain' is seemingly fit for the Hypothesis to some extent. Firstly, the study of 'discourse' concentrates on the large unit of language rather than a single sentence. It tries to map the forms and meanings of speech and writing onto its corresponding contexts like purposes, audiences, functions, etc. These features have been reflected in both theoretical construction and empirical design, as the speakers tend to activate specific mental or cognitive structure (i.e. the discourse domains) to deal with different communicative needs. In addition, 'domain' refers to a group of speech situations or the human activities when speech varieties show. It is suitable to describe the phenomenon of IL variation under the impact of contexts, but some of the existing research did not differentiate the situations in their design with the

uniform tool of interview, so if the term is going to be used, the empirical method needs to be improved.

As for the term 'topic', it exposes a serious issue of the current Discourse Domain Hypothesis. In collecting data, most of the researchers tended to explore IL variation by eliciting learner language with different topics. It seems that 'topic' is one of the main influential factors that leads to the phenomenon. However, the concept is not mentioned or explained explicitly in the theoretical construct of the Hypothesis, except for Whyte's (1994a) definition, which may result in confusion and mismatch between the theory and the research.

Even though 'discourse domain' looks like a kind of linguistic phenomenon intuitively, it is actually a mental structure, according to the current Hypothesis. Such distinction needs to be emphasised because this study focuses on the description of the linguistic phenomenon of IL variation, based on which the understanding of 'discourse domain' is hoped to be formed.

Therefore, in order to propose a more reasonable hypothesis to illustrate IL variation, I think the term 'discourse domain' could be retained, but the statement needs to be reformulated to show the relationship between the theory and the corresponding empirical design in a better way.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter elaborates the research methodology of this study, including the empirical method and theoretical method. The former is designed to gain data to examine the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation among English learners of L1 Chinese, while the latter is for the sake of constructing a better theoretical statement for the current Discourse Domain Hypothesis so as to explain the phenomenon more clearly and precisely.

3.1 Empirical Method

3.1.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Empirically, this study aims at investigating Chinese adult learners' English performance when talking about different topics which may reflect the development of their personal discourse domains. The specific research questions are as follows.

1) Does Chinese adult learners' intra-personal IL performance in English differ when talking about different topics?

2) Is the life experience of residing in English-speaking countries a significant influential factor of their intra-personal IL performance?

According to the existing research findings, it is hypothesised that:

1) Chinese adult learners' IL intra-personal performance in English would differ when talking about different topics.

The phenomenon of IL variation across topics has been discovered among adult English learners of various L1s, for instance, a Mexican graduate (Selinker & Douglas, 1985), a Dutch undergraduate (Cornu & Delahaye, 1987), a French graduate (Whyte, 1992), a group of Chinese undergraduates (Chiu, 2011), to name but a few. Even though the IL performance of these participants showed inconsistency and dynamicity, there was a certain degree of diversity in their oral production when talking about different topics in most cases, so similar tendency would be expected among my participants as well. It is hoped to offer insights into the revision of the current Discourse Domain Hypothesis which tries to explain the relationship between the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation and learners' development of discourse domains.

1) The life experience of residing in English-speaking countries would be a significant influential factor of their intra-personal IL performance in different topics.

All of the three formal definitions of 'discourse domain' and the current Discourse Domain Hypothesis agree that one's discourse domains change with their life experience, especially in terms of expertise, practice and importance, based on which their IL develops. It is also verified by the majority of the empirical results, as shown in the participants' unstable communicative ability (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Zuengler, 1989), accuracy (Chiu, 2011; Ebsworth & Starbuck, 1989), fluency (Cornu & Delahaye, 1987; Whyte, 1994a), etc. in their IL performance

when discussing domain and non-domain topics. However, in some of these studies, the limited number and types of participants did not suffice to form a comparison framework of life experience. In order to examine its impact on the learner's development of discourse domains, this study is going to concentrate on the variable of the experience of residing in English-speaking countries while taking the participants' L1 background and formal English learning experience under control.

3.1.2 Data Collection

3.1.2.1 Participants

There were two groups in the research. Group 1 included five females who had never been to any English-speaking countries, while Group 2 were five females who had been residing in different native English-speaking countries in recent years.

There were findings that males and females performed different styles in conversations, especially when they had content expertise (Leet-Pellegrini, 1980). In some related empirical research, gender was also a variable under control, especially in quantitative analysis. For example, 90 females were included in Zuengler (1989), 90 males of high proficiency were in Zuengler and Bent (1991) and 90 males of low proficiency were in Zuengler (1993a). Hence only females were recruited in this study so as to exclude the gender effect.

Generally speaking, convenient sampling was adopted. The participants were drawn randomly from the acquaintances of the researcher. They

were basically of similar ages and were in different professions but shared the same L1 and similar formal English educational background, which allowed the main focus of attention on the impact of life experience of immersion in English-speaking environment on the development of their discourse domains and its knock-on effect on IL variation in different conversational topics. Even though the participants may be acquainted with the interviewer in different degrees, the main comparison was intra-personal IL performance in two topics. Since they were interviewed by the same person in the whole process, such situation may not affect their production. Their attitudes and responses were anticipated to alter more with topic change than with the interlocutor, different from Whyte (1992) who invited two interviewers in the design.

There were only ten participants in this research. Whyte (1994b) found that empirical research on the relative topics tended to suffer a great loss of participants in the screening stage. Since most of the researchers agreed that discourse domains were highly personal and dynamic, intra-distinction was worth more attention than inter-distinction. According to Whyte (1994a, 1994b, 1995), personal differences were remarkable but no conclusion of group pattern could be drawn directly and certainly. The majority of the existing research only recruited very few participants except Zuengler (1989, 1993a) and Zuengler and Bent (1991) which quantified the speech data. Nevertheless, a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analysis was adopted in this research as the guidelines (Jordan, 2004) suggest, so small sample was fitter for a deep exploration of individual performance.

3.1.2.2 Research Procedures and Instruments

Firstly, questionnaires (see Appendix A) were delivered to the participants in order to collect the information of the participants' personal background, including age, years of learning English, years of residing abroad, professions, etc.

Then they were asked to take a standard test on the online Cambridge English Language Assessment (general English) (https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/test-your- english/general-english/), which required them to answer 25 multiple-choice questions about daily conversation, basic grammar and common vocabulary. Test-takers' language proficiency levels were shown within the framework of Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) immediately, which was a satisfactory reference standard.

The questionnaires were meant to ensure that the participants were about the same age and thus had received similar formal English instruction from primary schools to universities in China, with the standard test as a secondary confirmation of their average language proficiency. Only those whose levels were upper-intermediate and advanced were recruited in order to guarantee their linguistic capability of taking the oral interviews.

Like the previous studies, interview was the main instrument to elicit learner language in this research. Each participant was interviewed by the researcher for ten minutes without strict structure. Even though Selinker and Douglas (1985, 1986,

October 10-11) emphasised the advantage of NS-NNS interaction in elicitation of better production since the speakers were pushed to their edge of IL ability (Tarone, 1983), it may make the participants nervous and uncomfortable, especially for those who had few chances to get in touch with the NSs. Interviews as a formal investigation tool had already brought tension and unnaturalness to their performance, so it was hoped that the mode of one-to-one 'free chat' could alleviate the negative effect to some extent and meanwhile guaranteed the amount of talk on the part of the participants with the guidance of the interviewer, avoiding the potential drawback of possibly uneven contribution in group discussion. Considering that the participants of Group 2 were residing in different countries, both groups were interviewed online in order to ensure that they were in similar settings. Following Selinker and Douglas' (1985, 1986, October 10-11) design, the whole processes were audiotaped and replayed to the participants to review the interesting and unusual points, allowing them to clarify their meanings and behaviours. Then the recordings were transcribed and formatted in the unit of the Analysis of Speech unit (AS-unit) (Foster et al., 2000). The transcriptions were partly checked by another researcher in the same field with an inter-rater reliability of 91%.

At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were required to choose two number from one to ten, each representing a topic (see Appendix B). According to the previous research (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11, 1989; Whyte, 1994b), there are three acknowledged domain topics, i.e. major/job, life

story and home culture. This research did not replicate the comparison between major/work and life story as most of the existing studies did. Instead, it allowed the participants to have a chance to talk about various topics and solved the problem that 'major/job' domain may exceed 'life story' domain in terms of cognitive load to some L2 speakers (Tapia, 1993). Besides this, 'life story' was actually a rather broad discourse domain. The majority of topics designed in this research could be classified into it, generally speaking, which may guarantee the probability of discussing topics of similar level of difficulty. Moreover, since the topics were not fixed, it may eliminate the concern about the influence of the order of topics or the task effect.

After the interviews, the participants were offered another questionnaire (see Appendix C) to investigate their distinction between the two topics selected in terms of the degree of expertise, practice, importance, perceived difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression (cf. (Whyte, 1994a, 1994b, 1995), which were assumed to be valuable in understanding their recognition and perception of personal discourse domains.

3.1.3 Data Analysis

3.1.3.1 Quantitative Data

Compared to other measures, the CAF construct was more appropriate to fulfill the empirical aims of this study. Complexity of language use reflected the participants' ability to manage advanced expressions, including the elaborate syntactic organisation and diverse lexical choice (Housen & Kuiken, 2009).

Accuracy showed their capability of avoiding deviations from the linguistic systems that a NS would produce in the same context (Raish, 2017). Fluency may be controversial in evaluating learner language (Raish, 2017) since a NS may also be unstable in their rate of speech when talking about different topics (Derwing et al., 2009), but it was still believed to be a referable indicator of easiness of information conveyance.

Even though scholars had their own definitions and criteria for the CAF construct (Housen & Kuiken, 2009; Norris & Ortega, 2009; Purpura, 2016; Raish, 2017; Robinson, 2005; Skehan & Foster, 2012; Van Daele et al., 2007), generally speaking, the characteristics of successful performance in task-based contexts basically included:

more advanced language, leading to complexity;

a concern to avoid error, leading to higher accuracy if this is achieved; and

the capacity to produce speech at normal rate and without interruption, resulting in greater fluency. (Skehan, 2009, p. 510)

As for the language unit of analysis, T-unit, a main clause and its dependent clauses, seemed to be prevalent in some of the relevant studies to act as the unit of analysis. Nonetheless, Foster et al. (2000) disapproved of it for its failure to deal with special features like false start, self-correction, repetition, etc. in oral data and thus proposed the AS-unit, 'a single speaker's utterance consisting of an

independent clause, or sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clause(s) associated with either' (p. 365). In an AS-unit, an independent clause refers to 'minimally a clause including a finite verb' (p. 365); an independent sub-clausal unit is 'either one or more phrases which can be elaborated to a full clause by means of recovery of ellipted elements from the context of the discourse or situation … or a minor utterance, which will be defined as one of the class of "Irregular sentences" or "Nonsentences"' (p. 366); a subordinate clause consists of 'a finite or non-finite Verb element plus at least one other clause element (Subject, Object, Complement or Adverbial)' (p. 366). The inclusion of the independent sub-clausal units is the main reason that makes AS-unit more proper in recording oral English than T-unit since incomplete sentences are supposed to occur frequently in speech. Considering that interview data were analysed in this research, AS-unit was assumed to be more feasible to be the linguistic unit.

With comparison and adaptation of the criteria from the existing empirical research adopting the CAF construct in collecting quantitative data of oral English (Chiu, 2011; Cornu & Delahaye, 1987; Ebsworth & Starbuck, 1989; Elder & Iwashita, 2005; Foster et al., 2000; Michel et al., 2007; Raish, 2017; Skehan, 2009; Skehan & Foster, 2005; West, 1953; Whyte, 1994a, 1995), the measures in this research were designed as Table 1 shows.

The complexity framework included two levels, structural complexity and lexical complexity.

The analysis of structural complexity began with the division of each participant's interview transcriptions into AS-units and clauses based on the definitions from Foster et al. (2000). Then the ratio of the number of clauses to the number of AS-units was calculated. The higher the ratio was, the more clauses per AS-unit was, which meant that the participant's utterances were formed with more complex structures such as subordination, infinitive, compound sentences, etc.

Table 1 Measures of Quantitative Data

Framework		Measures
Complexity	structural complexity	ratio of clauses to AS-units
	lexical complexity	lexical variety: ratio of word types to word tokens
		lexical sophistication: ratio of academic words to total words
Accuracy	correctness rate	ratio of error-free clauses to clauses
	error rate	ratio of errors to AS-units
Fluency	words per minute	ratio of words to minutes
	turns per minute	ratio of turns to minutes

Lexical complexity was distinguished between text-internal and text-external measures (Daller et al., 2003).

Text-internal measure focused on the text itself, indicated by lexical variety. Firstly, with the aid of Antconc, the word token, i.e. all words in the transcriptions, and the word type, i.e. all different words in the transcriptions, were counted. Then the lexical variety was evaluated through type-token ratio (TTR) by dividing the number of word types by the number of word tokens. The larger the ratio was, the more heterogeneous the lexical use was, which meant that the participant was able to use diversified words to express their ideas.

Text-external measure required external reference materials to make comparison. In this study, the Academic Word List (AWL) (Coxhead, 2000) was used to assess the lexical sophistication by calculating the ratio of the number of academic English words uttered (including their derivatives and inflected words) to the total number of words uttered. AWL lists 570 word families selected from corpus of written academic texts, mainly including the faculties of Arts, Commerce, Law and Science. Words in the list are outside the 2000 most frequent words from West's (1953) General Service List (GSL) which includes mainly everyday words. Moreover, AWL focuses on vocabularies not related to any particular subjects but of general essence such as 'require', 'issue', 'resource', etc. Hence AWL may be within the reach of most L2 learners due to their systematic TL learning experience but at the same time may occur at different frequencies in their utterances about daily topics. Since academic

words are more formal and unusual than the everyday words to some extent, higher

ratio may verify higher proficiency of English learners and more advanced use of

lexicon.

Accuracy referred to the deviation from the NSs' use of English, generally

assessed in two aspects, i.e. correctness rate and error rate. Error analysis was the

main method to do so.

The former targeted at the grammatically correct sentences. The rate was

calculated by dividing the number of error-free clauses to the total number of clauses.

The higher the ratio was, the more accurate the participant's production was.

The latter concentrated on the errors by dividing the number of errors

made by the number of AS-units. The more errors per AS-unit occurred, the less

accurate the speech was.

The assessment of participants' fluency was also two-fold.

The first one was words per minute by dividing the number of words by

the duration of speech in each topic. More words uttered within one minute reflected

the speaker's faster speaking speed and generally more fluent speech with fewer

hesitations than others.

The other measure was turns per minute calculated by dividing the

number of the speaker's turns by the duration of speech. A 'turn' here refers to the time

when a participant was speaking. If there were more turns within one minute, the

participants' speech was less fluent for they may not be able to produce continuous speech independently but rely on the interviewer's questions.

Such quantitative method was predicted to reveal a more complex, more accurate and more fluent performance in one of the topics in which the participants had more content control, more practice and more emotional investment. Besides this, qualitative analysis was also necessary to explore more on learner language on an individual as well as group basis.

3.1.3.2 Qualitative Data

Qualitatively, following the previous empirical research, the comparative framework was open to any features discovered in the participants' discourse organization (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Smith, 1989; Whyte, 1992, 1995; Woken & Swales, 1989), mainly intra-personally and perhaps inter-personally.

For example, the informant in Selinker and Douglas' (1985) research described his meaning in detail when he got stuck on words, and waited for the interlocutor to offer a word. The one in their 1986 study tended to show linear logic in one topic while a narrative style in the other. One of the interviewees in Whyte's (1995) study played a reactive role in both topics, waiting for the interviewer's encouragement and request to go on rather than volunteering an answer directly, but she was apparently attempting to organise complete and complex arguments instead of just offering simple replies in her domain topic.

In this research, by comparing and contrasting the participants' performance on a researcher-basis analysis, supplemented by their clarification in the play-back sessions, similarities and/or differences in terms of turn-taking, prosodic cues, errors, oral features, etc. between the two topics would be discussed.

Some of the existing research (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Whyte, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995) used 'episode' to form the unit of comparative analysis in which the informants' utterances tended to show some comparable rhetorical features. More specifically, it referred to 'sub-topics constituting a thematically linked cluster of turns … identified on the basis of both the internal consistency of each group of consecutive turns and the differentiation of this group from other episodes within the topic' (Whyte, 1995, p. 165). In the interviews, the interviewer changed the episode by 'procedural moves and transition questions' (Whyte, 1995, p. 165). In this research, I did not follow their use of 'episode' but resort to 'sub-topic' when divided the content of interviews into smaller analytical units since I regarded it as a simpler term to interpret. The number of sub-topics in the same topic that the participants selected mainly relied on the duration of each topic. Since each topic was interviewed for an average of five minutes, if the participants could not produce long and continuous speech independently, I would ask them further related questions to elicit more information. On the contrary, there were less sub-topics within the same topic when the participants had abundant output. The interviews were semi-structured, which meant that the sub-topics of the same topic may be generally

similar, but the specific questions asked would differ according to the participants' responses.

As aforementioned, a 'turn' refers to the participants' speaking time. Each turn was elicited by the interviewer's questions which would be classified into three categories, i.e. content questions, language questions and affect questions (cf. (Freeman, 2014). Even though such classification worked mainly for reading texts, it fitted the purpose of assessing the participants' level of fluency which based on their independence of answering the questions. More language questions asked in the interview may mean that the speaker had difficulties in understanding the questions and needed more linguistic help. Adapted from Freeman (2014), in this research, content questions were used to ask for specific information and details (see Example (1). Language questions referred to those aimed at solving linguistic problems and making further explanation (see Example (2). Affect questions elicited personal responses and evaluation (see Example (3).

Example (1):

Where did you receive your education?

What's your future plan?

Example (2):

You mean you prefer to go to a seaside city?

Travel to somewhere far away from the place you're living in.

Example (3):

What do you think of the public transport in the place you're living in?

Why do you like it best?

Since the interviews were done via phones, it was a pity that the participants' facial expressions and body languages could not be seen, which would definitely affect the interpretation of some implicit information that could not be detected linguistically. Nevertheless, such defects were anticipated to be remedied partially through the play-back sessions when the participants had a chance to clarify some unclear issues. In the circumstances, the change of emotions may reveal mainly by their intonation, speaking speed and other explicit features such as laughs, sighs, etc. The researcher's judgement would be combined with the participants' reflections in order to avoid any missing information conveyed through such prosodic cues.

Errors in the qualitative analysis mainly focused on the deviation from NSs' forms in similar contexts, as the same way how the quantitative analysis did. Nevertheless, in this section, they would not only be counted but also be classified in order to find out both commonalities and idiosyncrasies among all participants. Only grammatical errors would be summarised but not phonological or semantic ones. For one thing, the analysis of the participants' production was based on syntactic unit, i.e. AS-unit (Foster et al., 2000). For another, such results could be compared to the quantitative data in a more systematic way.

As for the oral features, four types were considered in this research (cf. (Foster et al., 2000). Self-repairs were made 'when the speaker identifies an error either during or immediately following production and stops and reformulates the speech', including 'an element of structural change' (p. 368). A false start was 'an utterance which is begun and then either abandoned altogether or reformulated in some way' (p. 368). Repetitions were 'where the speaker repeats previously produced speech' (p. 368). Pauses that lasted more than one second would be marked. Even though these dysfluency features may be caused by network in some cases, especially pauses, it was supposed that they could still show the participants' ability of producing continuous speech and their effort to do so. Furthermore, network delay may also bring about overlaps during the interviews, which would explain some incomplete sentences either on the interviewer's part or on the interviewee's part as Example (4) and Example (5) display. 'I' stands for 'interviewer'.

Example (4):

ZM: | er no |

I: And

ZM: | I don't have |

Example (5):

I: Um, buses or er yes

JF: | buses |

I: or like er public cars, shared cars or shared bikes

JF: | oh |

I: any any kinds of

JF: | okay |

The means of transcription in these aforementioned examples as well as in those in the qualitative analysis were as followed.

According to Foster et al. (2000), the boundaries between AS-units are marked by upright slashes (|…|). Example (6) are independent clauses. Example (7) are sub-clausal units. Example (8) are minor utterances. All of these sentence structures belong to an independent AS-unit.

Example (6):

| I agree with you |

| that's fine |

Example (7):

| mostly dogs and cats |

| er here um about five years |

Example (8):

| yes |

| you know |

The boundaries between clauses within the same AS-unit are marked by double colons (…::…). Example (9) shows clauses with finite verbs and Example

(10) shows clauses with non-finite verbs. Example (11) are coordinate clauses and

Example (12) are subordinate clauses.

Example (9):

| but I think :: I enjoy :: surfing or diving in the sea | (1 AS-unit, 3

clauses)

| if I travel for long distances :: I would take flight | (1 AS-unit, 2

clauses)

Example (10):

| er so do you want me :: to tell you some Chinese or some

American? | (1 AS-unit, 2 clauses)

| they used :: to run the business together | (1 AS-unit, 2 clauses)

Example (11):

| I have a sister :: and have a brother | (1 AS-unit, 2 clauses)

| so { they give } some of them cannot afford :: buying cars :: to

commute :: or maybe { to } er to go out :: or even take their kids to schools | (1 AS-unit,

5 clauses)|

Example (12):

| it's :: because the area :: I live in | (1 AS unit, 3 clauses)

| if you are into history :: if you are into cultures :: Europe would be

good | (1 AS-unit, 3 clauses)

Self-repairs, false starts, functionless repetitions are put inside curly brackets ({…}). Example (13), Example (14) and Example (15) illustrate these cases respectively.

Example (13):

| { this year } last year { I } I went back to Hubei in summer |

| and maybe { he will } she will { be a responsibili } er be responsible |

Example (14):

| { here is quite } here you can feel the fresh air |

| well to be honest :: I'm surprise at the distance :: { the } we have made |

Example (15):

| { I prefer } I prefer traveling maybe er er by airplanes, right? |

| maybe { in the } in the first ten years I will be here |

Pauses longer than one second are put inside round brackets with the exact second(s) marked, see the example below. 'S' is short for 'second(s)'.

Example (16):

| er (2s) I would :: choose the plane |

| er (5s) pardon? |

Based on guideline 6, i.e. 'there is no need for paradigmatic theories' (Jordan, 2004, p. 116), the research-then-theory method was adopted in this study.

The analysis was built on the actual objective observation rather than limiting the possibilities of communicative patterns with presupposed scope.

3.1.4 Ethical Consideration

This research was taken only on the basis of the participants' complete willingness and informed consent. They were given full instructions and were notified of their right of withdrawing themselves and their data at any stage in the research. Data collected through questionnaires and interviews were used in this research only. Anonymity of personal information and confidentiality of data were strictly assured.

3.2 Theoretical Method

The theoretical method followed standard conceptual and logical analysis.

Firstly, the Discourse Domain Hypothesis was scrutinised according to principles of theory construction in social sciences (Reynolds, 2016) and guidelines of constructing and evaluating theories in the field of SLA (Jordan, 2004), which had been done in Chapter 2. It turned out that the current Hypothesis showed defects in the aspects of conceptual consistency and internal logic.

Secondly, the current Hypothesis was adopted to account for the data collected in this empirical research since a theory is used to explain certain phenomenon, in this case being topic-based IL variation. If it fails to do so, the invalidity of the theory would be once again proved and thus an adjustment if not a total rejection becomes necessary.

Thirdly, due to the inadequacy of the current Hypothesis in terms of internal consistency and explanatory power, an alternative theory would be proposed, aiming at defining the concept and providing the causal mechanism between the argument and the data in a clearer way in order to gain intersubjective agreement. Meanwhile, Occam's Razor would be taken into consideration, i.e. to avoid any unnecessary complication in theory construction.

Following these steps, it is hoped that my potential theory would fix the existing problems. The concept would be defined in a precise, consistent and operationalisable way and the argument would be able to explain the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation and derive more relevant and meaningful predictions relying on rigorous causal reasoning. In brief, the theory would be formed by following the rules and principles of logic and formal theory construction.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter is going to present and analyse the quantitative and qualitative data from the empirical research in order to investigate the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation among English learners of L1 Chinese.

To begin with, the participants' background information and their selection of interview topics are introduced. Then the quantitative results are displayed in tables and figures, with the interview data in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency being compared between groups and between topics and linked to the questionnaire data of the extent of expertise, practice, importance, perceived difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression so as to explore the adequacy of Discourse Domain Hypothesis in explaining topic-based IL variation. After that, each participant's performance related to the discourse organisation will be analysed in detail so that more individual features and group tendency could be detected.

4.1 The Participants' Backgrounds and Selection of Topics

Two groups were recruited in this research. Group 1 were formed by five participants who had never been to any English-speaking countries. Group 2 included five participants who had been residing in different English-speaking countries for various years. All of them were females in order to exclude the gender effect. They were about the same age (Group 1: M=33.4; Group 2: M= 34.6) and had received

formal English education and instruction in China from primary schools to universities

(years of learning English: Group 1: M=13.4; Group 2: M=12.0), so to some extent their

English may be at similar level. Nevertheless, Groups 2 was hypothesised to be more

proficient generally than Group 1 since they were immersing in English-speaking

environment for years (M=9). They had more opportunities to interact with others in

English, especially with NSs, covering any topics in one's daily life. On the contrary,

participants in Group 1 may vary greatly in the experience of speaking English. One of

the possible influential factors was their jobs. Hence participants of different

occupations were chosen to guarantee the randomness of recruitment.

In order to take further control of their language proficiency, the participants

were requested to take a standard test on the online Cambridge English Language

Assessment (full scores: 25), and all of them were of upper-intermediate and

advanced level. Surprisingly, both the highest scores and the lowest ones belonged to

Group 1. JF, a university English teacher, got the highest scores. Even though she had

never been to any English-speaking countries, her occupation required her to practise

English on a daily basis. In contrast, ZM, who also worked in a university, got the

lowest scores, maybe because she mainly dealt with Chinese colleagues in her job.

The other lowest scores fell on LP, a physician. She worked in a municipal hospital and

had few opportunities to meet foreign patients, so there may be no real-life pressure

for her to improve English proficiency. In Group 2, LY, the one who stayed in a native

country of English for the longest time, got the lowest scores within group, perhaps

because in the last five years, she became a housewife and spoke more Chinese with her family. Another interesting information that may come into notice was that three participants in Group 2 (LY, YJ, YX) married to Chinese while the other two (ZR, LF) married to locals of the English-speaking countries, which may also be an influential factor to their daily use of English. More detailed information is shown in Table 2.

Before the interviews, the participants were asked to choose two numbers from one to ten. They could not see the list of topics in advance so that the selection of topics was totally random. The topics chosen were illustrated in Table 3. Since the topics were not fixed, Topic A and Topic B were named on the basis of the sequence number that they mentioned in the interview.

It turned out that all of the topics chosen belonged to the 'life story' domain, generally speaking. Even though 'job' was in the list of topic choice, no participants had drawn it, which meant that their IL production may derive from the shared discourse domain with similar level of cognitive load, and thus no one had an advantage over others. However, some participants like LP, ZR and YX had mentioned their jobs in the interviews spontaneously, similar to the case in Whyte (1992, April) and to the pilot study, which proved that 'major/job' domain, as another prototypical discourse domain (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11, 1989; Whyte, 1994b), may be highly developed to adult learners, despite Tapia (1993) claiming that it is less cognitively manageable. Besides this, 'job' was also an unavoidable aspect of one's life story.

Table 2 Participants' Background Information

Group	Name	Years of birth	Age of beginning learning English	Degree of education	Occupation	Scores in the standard test	Place of residence	Years of residence
1	YR	1990	9	bachelor	company operation specialist	20	China	N/A
	LP	1992	6	master	doctor	19	China	N/A
	ZM	1990	9	master	university staff	19	China	N/A
	JF	1990	9	master	university English teacher	23	China	N/A
	LD	1991	10	master	civil servant	20	China	N/A
2	LY	1989	12	bachelor	housewife	21	New Zealand	14
	YJ	1989	12	master	freelance	22	Canada	7
	ZR	1990	7	master	hotel director of revenue	22	US	10
	YX	1989	10	master	university admission advisor	22	Australia	5
	LF	1990	9	master	clinic project manager	22	US	9

Table 3 Topics Selected by the Participants

Group	Name	Topic A	Topic B
	YR	education	travel
	LP	future plan	travel
1	ZM	education	pet
	JF	environment	public transport
	LD	music	public transport
	LY	public transport	travel
	YJ	pet	travel
2	ZR	family	pet
	YX	environment	future plan
	LF	pet	public transport

Even though there were a lot of overlap among the selection of topics, the comparison of IL performance would not focus on the same topics chosen by different participants but between the two topics and between the two groups generally.

4.2 Quantitative Data

This section is going to present the data elicited from the interview transcriptions and analyse them quantitatively with the CAF construct shown in Table 1, including the measures of structural complexity, lexical variety, lexical

sophistication, correctness rate, error rate, words per minute and turns per minute. The topic choices from the post-interview questionnaires are used to compare with the interview data in order to find out the impact of the variables of residing in English-speaking countries, the three acknowledged influential factors, i.e. expertise, practice, importance, and the other two possible elements, self-perceived difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression, on the participants' IL variation in terms of CAF. The means of calculation and the results of each measure will be introduced first. A summary of the quantitative findings is at the end of the section.

4.2.1 Complexity

4.2.1.1 Measures

The measures of complexity contained structural complexity and lexical complexity.

Structural complexity was assessed according to the ratio of clauses to AS-units. The higher the ratio was, the more clauses per AS-unit included, indicating that there were more complex structures in the participants' utterances.

Lexical complexity was further analysed in terms of lexical variety and lexical sophistication.

The former focused on the ratio of word types to word tokens. The larger the ratio was, the more diversified the lexical use was, showing the participants' ability to express themselves with rich lexicon.

The latter was derived from the ratio of academic words to total words. Since academic words tend to be more formal and more uncommon than everyday words to some extent, higher ratio may demonstrate the participants' more complicated use of lexicon.

4.2.1.2 Results of Structural Complexity

The results of structural complexity of each participant's IL performance are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4 Structural Complexity of Each Participant's IL Performance Between Topics

Group	Name	Topic A			Topic B			Topic A – Topic B
		clauses	AS-units	ratio	clauses	AS-units	ratio	ratio
	YR	94	42	2.36	65	43	1.51	0.85
	LP	36	17	2.12	49	33	1.48	0.64
1	ZM	45	34	1.32	47	33	1.42	-0.1
	JF	90	43	2.09	84	48	1.75	0.34
	LD	75	46	1.63	70	27	2.59	-0.96
	LY	68	49	1.39	100	69	1.45	-0.06
	YJ	88	56	1.57	125	93	1.34	0.23
2	ZR	53	38	1.39	70	39	1.79	-0.4
	YX	125	85	1.47	94	60	1.57	-0.1
	LF	114	63	1.81	86	56	1.54	0.27

The number of clauses and that of AS-units were counted and the ratio was calculated respectively. Then the ratio of Topic A minus that of Topic B showed the topic with more complex sentence structures. If the result was positive, there were more clauses per AS-unit in Topic A than in Topic B. If it was negative, the sentences in Topic B were more complicated and diversified than those in Topic A. This result was not the focus of the analysis in this phase because the main aim of the current comparison was to make it clear that there were different levels of structural complexity between topics. Nevertheless, the difference values were necessary for the next phase of analysis. They were used as an indication of the impact of expertise, practice, importance, perceived difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression, which would be elaborated in 4.2.4.

These raw data were further analysed by independent-samples T test. To begin with, the ratio of clauses to AS-unit between Topic A and Topic B was compared in order to investigate whether there were significant differences in terms of structural complexity between the two topics, which was the focus of the first research question. The comparison was done generally first (see Table 5) and between two groups then (see Table 6).

Table 5 Comparison of Structural Complexity: Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	1.715	0.363	0.439	0.666
B	1.644	0.360		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference in structural complexity between Topic A and Topic B.

H_1 = There are differences in structural complexity between Topic A and Topic B.

$\because$ p = 0.666 > 0.05

$\therefore$ H_0 was not rejected.

Generally speaking, there was a 66.6% chance that structural complexity and topic variation were not related in the sample. More clauses per AS-units occurred in Topic A (M=1.715, SD=0.363) than in Topic B (M=1.644, SD=0.360).

Table 6 Comparison of Structural Complexity: Group 1 vs Group 2, Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	Group 1				Group 2			
	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	1.904	0.420	0.536	0.607	1.526	0.175	-0.111	0.914
B	1.750	0.486			1.538	0.167		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

With the same hypotheses adopted for each group, even though neither group was significantly strong in the relationship between structural complexity and topic variation (Group 1: t=0.536, p=0.607; Group 2: t=-0.111, p=0.914), the possibility of Group 1 was 60.7%, while that of Group 2 was 91.4%, being much higher. It meant that participants in Group 2 may be less sensitive to the topic change in this aspect, which could be confirmed by their closer mean number of clauses per AS-unit (Topic A: M=1.526, SD=0.175; Topic B: M=1.538, SD=0.167), compared with that of Group 1 (Topic A: M=1.904, SD=0.420; Topic B: M=1.750, SD=0.486).

Finally, the difference values (see the column 'Topic A – Topic B' in Table 4) of the two groups were compared to answer the second research question, i.e. whether the life experience of residing in English-speaking countries would deepen their IL variation (see Table 7).

Table 7 Comparison of Structural Complexity Variation: Group 1 vs Group 2

Group	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
1	0.578	0.357	2.143	0.083
2	0.212	0.137		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference of structural complexity variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

H_1 = There are differences of structural complexity variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

∵ p = 0.083 > 0.05

∴ H_0 was not rejected.

There is 8.3% possibility that no relationship was found between topic-based IL variation in terms of structural complexity and the factor of residing in English-speaking countries. Hence such life experience may have a critical if not statistically significant impact on the measure. Group 1 (M=0.578, SD=0.357) changed their sentence structures with the topics to a greater extent than Group 2 (M=0.212, SD=0.137) did.

In short, participants in Group 1 used more complex sentences in both topics and their sentence structures varied more between the topics. The life

experience of whether they had resided in English-speaking countries may explain such phenomenon. Group 1 had much fewer opportunities to discuss issues in English, so their ways of speaking may be persistent with what had been taught in English classes. They tended to use long and complex sentences, especially in writing examinations, in order to get higher marks. With time passed by, they may hold such an assumption that complex sentence structures were an indicator of higher language proficiency. On the contrary, Group 2 spoke English on a daily basis. Short and simple sentences may be more likely to facilitate everyday communication, which also led to their lack of variation in sentence structures.

Besides this, the higher mean of clauses per AS-unit in Topic A than that in Topic B may be influenced more by the performance of Group 1 who showed the same tendency. Since the topic interviewed were randomly chosen, there would not be any effect of topic order, but interview, as a rather formal survey tool, may bring about nervousness to the interviewees. Group 1, except JF as a university English teacher, seemed to lack experience of communication in English, so they may be more serious at the beginning. Once they calmed down, more simple sentences showed up. In contrast, participants in Group 2 tended to appear relaxed in the whole process, illustrated by their relatively stable speaking speed and composed intonation, so their performance in this aspect was more stable. The sentence structures that they produced became slightly more complex in Topic B than in Topic A, perhaps because they were freer and more eloquent with the interviews went on. Such tendency was in

accord with the informant in Whyte (1992) who also exhibited variation in attitudes and expressions at different stages of the interview.

Other measures hereafter followed the same way of analysis.

4.2.1.3 Results of Lexical Complexity

Firstly, lexical variety was assessed to investigate the use of diversied vocabulary. The results of TTR of each participant are shown in Table 8. Those of independent-samples T test are shown in Table 9, Table 10 and Table 11.

Table 8 Lexical Variety of Each Participant's IL Performance Between Topics

Group	Name	Topic A			Topic B			Topic A – Topic B
		type	token	TTR	type	token	TTR	TTR
	YR	155	583	0.27	138	341	0.40	-0.13
	LP	69	251	0.27	93	284	0.33	-0.06
1	ZM	103	325	0.32	105	317	0.33	-0.01
	JF	152	552	0.28	154	555	0.28	0
	LD	174	433	0.40	194	510	0.38	0.02

Table 8 (continued)

Group	Name	Topic A			Topic B			Topic A – Topic B
		type	token	TTR	type	token	TTR	TTR
	LY	127	311	0.41	167	454	0.37	0.04
	YJ	147	428	0.34	245	682	0.36	-0.02
2	ZR	119	292	0.41	162	412	0.39	0.02
	YX	181	613	0.30	184	550	0.33	-0.03
	LF	169	570	0.30	178	524	0.34	-0.04

Table 9 Comparison of Lexical Variety: Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	0.330	0.057	-0.983	0.339
B	0.351	0.036		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference in lexical variety between Topic A and Topic B.

H_1 = There are differences in lexical variety between Topic A and Topic B.

$\because$ p = 0.339 > 0.05

$\therefore$ H_0 was not rejected.

There was a 33.9% likelihood that lexical variety and topic were not related, the chance of which was less than that of structural complexity. It meant that the change of topic may still be possible to urge the participants to use different sets of vocabulary in their conveyance of information to some extent. More word types were uttered in Topic B (M=0.351, SD=0.036) than in Topic A (M=0.330, SD=0.057) in general. The same pattern occurred in both groups as Table 10 displays.

Table 10 Comparison of Lexical Variety: Group 1 vs Group 2, Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	Group 1				Group 2			
	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	0.308	0.055	-1.106	0.301	0.352	0.055	-0.222	0.832
B	0.344	0.047			0.358	0.024		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

Similar to structural complexity, there were insignificant differences between lexical variety and topic for both groups, with higher possibility in Group 2 (t=-0.222, p=0.832) than in Group 1 (t=-1.106, p=0.301), confirmed by its closer mean numbers of TTR between the two topics (Topic A: M=0.352, SD=0.055; Topic B:

M=0.358, SD=0.024), both of which were larger than those of Group 1 (Topic A:

M=0.308, SD=0.055; Topic B: M=0.344, SD=0.047). It means that Group 2 uttered

diversified words in the whole interviews to a greater extent than Group 1 did, perhaps

because their lexicon was larger.

Besides this, Group 2 showed consistent tendency in both structural

complexity and lexical variety with better performance in Topic B than that in Topic A,

but Group 1 showed opposite tendencies with better performance in Topic A for the

former measure but that in Topic B for the latter one. Since Group 1 produced more

complex sentences in Topic A, they may not be able to spare extra concentration for

diction. When they did not pay too much attention to structural complexity, higher

lexical variety may be achieved.

Table 11 Comparison of Lexical Variety Variation: Group 1 vs Group 2

Group	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
1	0.044	0.053	0.578	0.592
2	0.030	0.010		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference of lexical variety variation between Group 1

and Group 2.

H_1 = There are differences of lexical variety variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

∵ p = 0.592 > 0.05

∴ H_0 was not rejected.

A 59.2% chance existed that lexical variety was not impacted by the life experience under investigation. Group 1 (M=0.044, SD=0.053) seemed to win Group 2 (M=0.030, SD=0.010) slightly in that their word types changed more with topics, in accordance to the larger variation between the mean numbers of its TTR displayed in Table 10.

In short, participants in Group 2 seemed to possess a slightly richer oral lexicon than those in Group 1, but they tended to use similar sets of vocabulary to deal with different topics. It may be attributed to their habits of lexical use. Those who were residing in English-speaking countries may gain more sets of vocabulary in their communication with NSs, but they may be satisfied and comfortable with a stable list of lexica with which they could make a quick decision of words in daily conversations. On the contrary, participants in Group 1 spoke English in relatively limited situations, so it may be more likely that their lexicon was restricted. In order to show their language proficiency, they would like to use diversified sets of vocabulary and sentence structures. Moreover, some L2 learners memorised words classified by subject matters, so they were able to activate different sets of words to discuss different topics.

As for lexical sophistication, Table 12 lists the academic word families of the vocabularies uttered by each participant in the interviews. There were derivatives (e.g. LP in Topic A uttered 'promotion'), inflected words (e.g. JF in Topic A uttered 'authorities') and repetitions (e.g. YR in Topic A mentioned 'resource' for six times). However, such counting may lead to an issue that some words may be repeated for several times because they were related to the topic selected such as 'environment', 'transport', etc., which was a limitation of the design. Fortunately, such words made up only a small percentage of the list. Generally speaking, most of these academic words were uttered by the participants themselves.

Table 12 The Academic Word Families Included in Each Participant's Utterances

Group	Name	Topic A	Topic B
1	YR	economic[1], resource[2], job[4], percent[1]	schedule[8]
	LP	job[4], relax[9], promote[4]	licence[5], medical[5], traditional[2], culture[2]
	ZM	professional[4], environment[1], communication[4], perspective[5], job[4]	—
	JF	authority[1], aware[5], environment[1]	fee[6], transport[6], require[1], process[1]
	LD	relax[9], depression[10], classical[7],	transport[6], economic[1]

appreciation^8, adult^7, normal^2

	LY	transport^6, schedule^8, normal^2	approach^1, culture^2, flexibility^6, similar^1
	YJ	—	assume^1
2	ZR	professional^4, individual^1	require^1, commitment^4, environment^1, factor^1, overall^4
	YX	environment^1, core^3, normal^2, final^2	resident^2, focus^2, create^1, environment^1, job^4, relax^9, benefit^1
	LF	benefit^1, factor^1	transport^6, area^1, vehicle^8, normal^2, schedule^8, environment^1

^{n} shows the number of sub-list in AWL that the words belong to.

According to Coxhead (2000), there are ten sub-lists in AWL ranking in the order of frequency of use, with the highest frequency in sub-list 1 and the lowest in sub-list 10. The numbers of the sub-list that the words belong to are marked by the superscript number after each word in Table 12.

Generally speaking, Group 1 tended to use more diverse academic words with a lower frequency (here referring to those words belonging to sub-list 6 to sub-list 10) than Group 2 did, with ten and seven word types respectively. Even though YX produced the largest number of such words, only one of them in Topic B (i.e. relax^9) was of a lower frequency. However, there were five out of six academic

words were of that type in LD's utterances in Topic A. It may be related to the impact of formal TL training and instruction in Chinese context that L2 learners tended to practise written language more frequently than spoken language so as to prepare for the examinations. Hence they used more formal words even in speaking. On the contrary, participants in Group 2 may be already used to the oral environment in the English-speaking countries and thus such habit was changed to some extent.

Even though the frequency of occurrence of the AWL words vary in academic written text, all of them are out of the list of 2000 most frequent words from GSL (West, 1953). To avoid the complication of situation, this element was not considered nor distinguished in the calculation of lexical sophistication. In other words, all of the words from the participants' utterances that belonged to the AWL were counted regardless of their frequency of use.

Table 13 summarises the ratio of the number of academic words to that of total words in each transcription. Table 14 and Table 15 display the statistical results of topic-based comparison while Table 16 was those of group-based comparison.

Table 13 Lexical Sophistication of Each Participant's IL Performance Between Topics

Group	Name	Topic A			Topic B			Topic A – Topic B
		academic	total	ratio	academic	total	ratio	ratio
	YR	12	782	0.015	1	480	0.002	0.013
	LP	5	330	0.015	6	395	0.015	0
1	ZM	5	435	0.011	0	424	0	0.011
	JF	7	704	0.010	6	737	0.008	0.002
	LD	10	572	0.017	7	646	0.011	0.006
	LY	11	422	0.026	8	624	0.013	0.013
	YJ	0	601	0	2	959	0.002	-0.002
2	ZR	3	384	0.008	10	547	0.018	-0.01
	YX	6	860	0.007	11	744	0.015	-0.008
	LF	2	750	0.003	15	685	0.022	-0.019

Table 14 Comparison of Lexical Sophistication: Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	0.0112	0.00748	0.180	0.859
B	0.0106	0.00743		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference in lexical sophistication between Topic A and Topic B.

H_1 = There are differences in lexical sophistication between Topic A and Topic B.

∵ p = 0.859 > 0.05

∴ H_0 was not rejected.

The relationship between lexical sophistication and topic only existed with 14.1% possibility. There were a little bit more academic words uttered in Topic A (M=0.0112, SD=0.00748) than in Topic B (M=0.0106, SD=0.00743) in general.

Table 15 Comparison of Lexical Sophistication: Group 1 vs Group 2, Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	Group 1				Group 2			
	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	0.0136	0.003	2.076	0.072	0.0088	0.010	-0.922	0.384
B	0.0072	0.006			0.0140	0.008		

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

The probability of lack of relationship was greater in Group 2 (t=-0.922, p=0.384) than in Group 1 (t=2.076, p=0.072), which meant that topic change may be more likely to have an impact on the use of academic words to Group 1 than to Group 2. The mean number of the ratio of academic words to total words were close between Group 1 in Topic A (M=0.0136, SD=0.003) and Group 2 in Topic B (M=0.0140, SD=0.008) and between Group 1 in Topic B (M=0.0072, SD=0.006) and Group 2 in Topic A (M=0.0088, SD=0.010). Despite the factor of topics, Group 1 may be more nervous and more serious at the beginning of the interviews for they were not used to speaking English. They may use a greater number of formal words in Topic A than in Topic B. The situation may be opposite to participants in Group 2 who may become more attentive with the interviews going. They may regard the interviews as casual discussions as they did in daily lives, and thus they were more relaxed.

Table 16 Comparison of Lexical Sophistication Variation: Group 1 vs Group 2

Group	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
1	0.006	0.006	-1.064	0.318
2	0.010	0.006		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference of lexical sophistication variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

H_1 = There are differences of lexical sophistication variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

∵ p = 0.318 > 0.05

∴ H_0 was not rejected.

It was seemingly that there may be a certain degree of relationship between the life experience under investigation and lexical sophistication with a probability of 68.2%. Different from the previous two measures, Group 2 (M=0.010, SD=0.006) varied more in the use of academic words between the two topics than Group 1 (M=0.006, SD=0.006) did, which, as expected, proved themselves to be more flexible to cater for the needs of topic change.

Generally speaking, the participants did not use many academic English words, both word types (see Table 12) and numbers (see Table 13) being few.

ZM in Group 1 and YJ in Group 2 even used none in one of their topics. It may be because the topics tended to be of daily essence. Everyday words were enough for them to express their ideas clearly.

The other possible reason may be that they talked with the interviewer in a rather relaxed way. There were few threatening elements or sensitive questions in the process of the interviews. As L2 speakers, they spoke English with another L2 speaker, which mitigated the possible pressure of NS-NNS interaction. They did not need to worry about exposing their weaknesses in English but concentrated more on their idea conveyance. Those could be verified by frequent occurrence of features of spoken language such as incomplete sentences, ungrammatical structures, repetitions, self-repairs, etc., which were definitely not common in an academic style.

In brief, both structural complexity and lexical sophistication showed the same tendency that the participants performed better in Topic A than in Topic B, while the situation was opposite in the measure of lexical variety. For NSs, more demanding requirements for lexical choice would cause more complex syntactic structures, but for NNSs, the more sophisticated the lexicon is used, the simpler the sentences are organized (Skehan & Foster, 2008). According to the Trade-off Hypotheses, this is because their 'attentional capacity and working memory are limited' (Skehan, 2009). Therefore, it may be hard for L2 learners to have lexical variety and lexical sophistication promoted at the same time. When structural complexity was

taken into account, there would be an imbalance of attention affecting the allocation of cognitive resources (Schmidt, 1990). In this sample, lexical variety was sacrificed.

Besides this, intermediate learners and advanced learners tend to hold different judgement on grammaticality. The former attaches more importance on syntax while the latter on lexicon (Ard & Gass, 1987). It was fit for the situation in this sample that Group 1 produced more complex sentences than Group 2 did while Group 2 produced more academic words than Group 1 did, considering that the language proficiency of Group 1 is generally lower than that of Group 2, as illustrated by the average scores in the standard test. However, the lexical variety was, again, the special item.

4.2.2 Accuracy

4.2.2.1 Measures

Accuracy was assessed from two perspectives, i.e. correctness rate and error rate, but errors would not be classified further into different types like lexical errors, syntactic errors, etc. in this section.

Correctness rate targeted at the grammatically correct sentences by dividing the number of error-free clauses to the total number of clauses. The higher the ratio was, the more accurate the participant's production was.

Error rate concentrated on the errors made by dividing the number of errors by the number of AS-units. The more errors per AS-unit consisted, the less accurate the speech was.

4.2.2.2 Results

Table 17, Table 18, Table 19 and Table 20 are the raw data and the statistical results of the correctness rate respectively.

Table 17 Correctness Rate of Each Participant's IL Performance Between Topics

Group	Name	Topic A			Topic B			Topic A – Topic B
		error-free	total	ratio	error-free	total	ratio	ratio
1	YR	67	94	0.71	42	65	0.65	0.06
	LP	25	36	0.69	37	49	0.76	-0.07
	ZM	31	45	0.69	27	47	0.57	0.12
	JF	82	90	0.91	80	84	0.95	-0.04
	LD	52	75	0.69	48	70	0.69	0
2	LY	52	68	0.76	79	100	0.79	-0.03
	YJ	81	88	0.92	101	125	0.81	0.11
	ZR	47	53	0.89	61	70	0.87	0.02
	YX	98	125	0.78	65	94	0.69	0.09
	LF	99	114	0.87	63	86	0.73	0.14

Table 18 Comparison of Correctness Rate: Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	0.791	0.097	0.860	0.401
B	0.751	0.110		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference in correctness rate between Topic A and Topic B.

H_1 = There are differences in correctness rate between Topic A and Topic B.

∵ p = 0.401 > 0.05

∴ H_0 was not rejected.

There was a 40.1% likelihood that correctness rate was not related to topic. Not much difference occurred between the participants' performance in this measure on the two topics (Topic A: M=0.791, SD=0.097; Topic B: M=0.751, SD=0.110), indicating that topic may not be an influential factor to the accuracy of production.

Table 19 Comparison of Correctness Rate: Group 1 vs Group 2, Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	Group 1				Group 2			
	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	0.738	0.097	0.181	0.861	0.844	0.070	1.487	0.175
B	0.724	0.144			0.778	0.070		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

Different from the previous measures, in terms of correctness rate, Group 2 (t=1.487, p=0.175) was more affected by topic change than Group 1 (t=0.181, p=0.861). In both topics, the utterances of Group 2 (Topic A: M=0.844, SD=0.070; Topic B: M=0.778, SD=0.070) were more accurate than those of Group 1 (Topic A: M=0.738, SD=0.097; Topic B: M=0.724, SD=0.144), perhaps due to their general higher English proficiency proved by their scores in the standard English test and benefited by their more frequent use of the language in daily lives.

Table 20 Comparison of Correctness Rate Variation: Group 1 vs Group 2

Group	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
1	0.058	0.438	-0.660	0.528
2	0.078	0.517		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H$_0$ = There is no difference of correctness rate variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

H$_1$ = There are differences of correctness rate variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

∵ p = 0.528 > 0.05

∴ H$_0$ was not rejected.

There was about a 50-50 chance that the participants' IL variation in correctness rate was related to the life experience under investigation. The grammaticality of Group 2 (M=0.078, SD=0.517) varied slightly more than that of Group 1 (M=0.058, SD=0.438) between the two topics.

The following tables are about the error rates and the corresponding statistical comparison.

Table 21 Error Rate of Each Participant's IL Performance Between Topics

Group	Name	Topic A			Topic B			Topic A – Topic B
		errors	AS-units	ratio	errors	AS-units	ratio	ratio
	YR	34	42	0.81	25	43	0.58	0.23
	LP	11	17	0.65	13	33	0.39	0.26
1	ZM	18	34	0.53	21	33	0.64	-0.11
	JF	10	43	0.23	4	48	0.08	0.15
	LD	33	46	0.72	24	27	0.89	-0.17
	LY	17	49	0.35	22	69	0.32	0.03
	YJ	7	56	0.13	25	93	0.27	-0.14
2	ZR	9	38	0.24	11	39	0.28	-0.04
	YX	29	85	0.34	34	60	0.57	-0.23
	LF	17	63	0.27	24	56	0.43	-0.16

Table 22 Comparison of Error Rate: Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	0.427	0.234	-0.173	0.864
B	0.445	0.231		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference in error rate between Topic A and Topic B.

H_1 = There are differences in error rate between Topic A and Topic B.

$\because$ p = 0.864> 0.05

$\therefore$ H_0 was not rejected.

It seemed that the relationship between error rate and topic was rather weak (13.6%), different from that between correctness rate and topic as shown in Table 18. The errors made in Topic A (M=0.427, SD=0.234) was less than those made in Topic B (M=0.445, SD=0.231). Combining with the correctness rate which was higher in Topic A than in Topic B, in terms of accuracy, the participants performed better in Topic A than in Topic B.

Likewise, from Table 23, the error rate of Group 2 (t=-1.560, p=0.157) was more affected by the topics than Group 1 (t=0.427, p=0.680), and Group 1 (Topic A: M=0.588, SD=0.225; Topic B: M=0.516, SD=0.302) made more errors in both topics than Group 2 (Topic A: M=0.266, SD=0.089; Topic B: M=0.374, SD=0.127) did.

Table 23 Comparison of Error Rate: Group 1 vs Group 2, Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	Group 1				Group 2			
	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	0.588	0.225	0.427	0.680	0.266	0.089	-1.560	0.157
B	0.516	0.302			0.374	0.127		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

Table 24 Comparison of Error Rate Variation: Group 1 vs Group 2

Group	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
1	0.184	0.061	1.375	0.206
2	0.120	0.085		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference of error rate variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

H_1 = There are differences of error rate variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

$\because$ p = 0.206 > 0.05

$\therefore$ H_0 was not rejected.

It seemed that the life experience under investigation affected the error rate variation between the two topics with a 79.4% possibility, stronger than its impact on the correctness rate variation (see Table 20) which only showed 47.2% possibility. However, the situation turned opposite in that Group 1 (M=0.184, SD=0.061) varied more than Group 2 (M=0.120, SD=0.085) in making errors, perhaps because Group 1 made more errors in the same clause, generally speaking.

In short, the participants seemed to be more accurate in Topic A than in Topic B. It is claimed that when NNSs are faced with tasks, pressure appears on the Conceptualiser which is pushed for greater linguistic complexity. In order to retrieve appropriate lexicon and syntax, more errors and less fluency may occur (Levelt, 1999; Skehan, 2009). Nevertheless, the participants' performance in Topic A exceeded that in Topic B in the measures of structural complexity, lexical sophistication and accuracy, so there seemed to be a positive correlation between complexity and accuracy, even though the advantage was small and lexical variety did not follow such tendency. It may be linked to their state in the interviews. No matter what topics were they talking about, they may become more relaxed gradually. Since L2 learners used IL with consciousness (Selinker, 1972), the pressure may stimulate them to articulate in a cautious manner at the beginning. When they got used to the mode of interview, they produced simpler forms and made more errors since they switched their focus from language to content.

Normally, the higher the correctness rate is, the lower the error rate is. Two groups' overall performance followed this pattern (see Table 18 and Table 22), so was the mean ratio of Group 2 (see Table 19 and Table 23). However, for Group 1 (see Table 19 and Table 23), both correctness rate and error rate of Topic A was higher than those of Topic B, which may mean that there were more errors per clause in Topic A when they were still looking for the way of balancing their control of content and that of language. Both measures verified that the production of Group 2 was more accurate than that of Group 1. As might have been expected, participants in Group 2 had more chances to interact with NSs, and thus more likely to be influenced positively by the L2 norms.

Surprisingly, the highest correctness rate and the lowest error rate belonged to JF in Group 1. Even if she had never been to any English-speaking countries, her occupation as a university English teacher may bring her advantage of accuracy by frequent practice and conscious learning. Language teachers may set a higher goal for themselves because their language use would be a model to their students' language learning. Hence they attach importance to the accuracy of expression. The continuous learning and lecturing might win greater language development for JF than those in Group 2 in terms of grammar, especially those who were satisfied with their language proficiency once it met the requirements of daily communication and would not bother to improve.

4.2.3 Fluency

4.2.3.1 Measures

Fluency was evaluated by both words per minute and turns per minute.

The former was calculated by dividing the number of words by the duration of speech in each topic. The more the words were uttered within one minute, the faster the speaker's speaking speed was and the less unnecessary pauses they made, generally speaking.

The latter was measured by dividing the number of the speaker's turns by the duration of speech. Less turns per minute may indicate that the speaker was more independent in expression, being able to produce continuous utterances.

4.2.3.2 Results

In the interviews, the interviewer tried to control the duration for each topic to five minutes generally. However, some participants had more to say in one topic, which unavoidably impacted the time spent on the other one. Some paused a lot and thus wasted time. Some needed the interviewer to repeat or explain the questions and thus their speaking time was shortened. It turned out that the participants in Group 1 spent an average of 8.80 minutes on the interviews and Group 2 spent 7.82 minutes.

The results of words per minute of each participant in both topics are summarised in Table 25 and those of statistics are shown in Table 26, Table 27 and Table 28.

Table 25 Words per Minute of Each Participant's IL Performance Between Topics

Group	Name	Topic A			Topic B			Topic A – Topic B
		words	minutes	ratio	words	minutes	ratio	ratio
1	YR	782	6.1	128.20	480	3.9	123.08	5.12
	LP	330	3.5	94.29	395	3.9	101.28	-6.99
	ZM	435	5.2	83.65	424	3.7	114.59	-30.94
	JF	704	4.7	149.79	737	4.5	163.78	-13.99
	LD	572	4.1	139.51	646	4.4	146.82	-7.31
2	LY	422	2.7	156.30	624	4.8	130.00	26.30
	YJ	601	3.4	176.76	959	5.7	168.25	8.51
	ZR	384	3.0	128.00	547	3.7	147.84	-19.84
	YX	860	4.6	186.96	744	4.1	181.46	5.50
	LF	750	3.4	220.59	685	3.7	185.14	35.45

Table 26 Comparison of Words per Minute: Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	146.405	41.568	0.011	0.991
B	146.224	28.620		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference in words per minute between Topic A and Topic B.

H_1 = There are differences in words per minute between Topic A and Topic B.

∵ p = 0.991 > 0.05

∴ H_0 was not rejected.

The probability that these two variables were irrelevant was the highest (99.1%) among all measures. The participants spoke at almost the same speed in both topics (Topic A: M=146.405, SD=41.568; Topic B: M=146.224, SD=28.620). If topic change did not affect words per minute, there must be some other elements at work.

Table 27 Comparison of Words per Minute: Group 1 vs Group 2, Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	Group 1				Group 2			
	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	119.088	28.781	-0.633	0.544	173.722	34.551	0.600	0.565
B	129.910	25.170			162.538	23.325		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

Words per minute of both groups had about the same chance to be impacted by different topics, with that of Group 1 (t=-0.633, p=0.544) slightly higher than that of Group 2 (t=0.600, p=0.565). Group 2 (Topic A: M=173.722, SD=34.551; Topic B: M=162.538; SD=23.325) spoke much faster than Group 1 (Topic A: M=119.088, SD=28.781; Topic B: 129.910, SD=25.170) in both topics, as what had been expected, for the frequent practice with NSs made them more fluent.

Table 28 Comparison of Words per Minute Variation: Group 1 vs Group 2

Group	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
1	12.870	10.646	-0.854	0.418
2	19.120	12.418		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference of words per minute variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

H_1 = There are differences of words per minute variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

∵ p = 0.418 > 0.05

∴ H_0 was not rejected.

There may still be a chance (58.2%) that the life experience under investigation carried weight, even though the chance was the weakest among all measures. Group 2 (M=19.120, SD=12.418) varied more in the speaking speed than Group 1 (M=12.870, SD=10.646) did. Intra-personal variation between the two topics (see the column of 'Topic A – Topic B' in Table 25) displayed wide discrepancies. It ranged from the smallest number of 5.12 words per minute (YR) to the largest one of 35.45 words per minute (LF).

In spite of the fact that speaking speed varied from person to person, the participants in Group 2 were apparently more fluent than those in Group 1, as what had been hypothesised. A special pattern was discovered that Group 1, except YR, spoke more words per minute in Topic B, while Group 2, except ZR, spoke more words per minute in Topic A. Since the participants in Group 1 had never been to any English-speaking countries, they may feel more nervous and uneasy being interviewed in English. They may take longer to get used to it and thus performed better in Topic B. Nevertheless, participants in Group 2 may not be impacted by such factor and they were more relaxed in the whole processes. If topic change was not at work, it may be attributed to their better ability of varying speaking speed with their attitudes and emotions when conveying information and expressing ideas.

Speakers' turns may be influenced by the interlocutor more heavily than other measures. Sometimes the interviewer's back-channels, i.e. the signal of showing that they were listening, or supportive expressions like 'okay' or 'really?' may interrupt the participants' speeches, especially when the interviews were taken via Internet. Such interruptions were kept in the transcriptions, but those that did not affect the continuity of the speaker's utterances were deleted in order to simplify the calculation.

The results of the measure of turns per minute are shown in the following tables.

Table 29 Turns per Minute of Each Participant's IL Performance Between Topics

Group	Name	Topic A			Topic B			Topic A – Topic B
		turns	minutes	ratio	turns	minutes	ratio	ratio
	YR	11	6.1	1.80	17	3.9	4.36	-2.56
	LP	10	3.5	2.86	21	3.9	5.38	-2.52
1	ZM	15	5.2	2.88	15	3.7	4.05	-1.17
	JF	10	4.7	2.13	12	4.5	2.67	-0.54
	LD	15	4.1	3.66	9	4.4	2.05	1.61
	LY	16	2.7	5.93	16	4.8	3.33	2.6
	YJ	17	3.4	5.00	18	5.7	3.16	1.84
2	ZR	11	3.0	3.67	11	3.7	2.97	0.7
	YX	10	4.6	2.17	9	4.1	2.20	-0.03
	LF	12	3.4	3.53	15	3.7	4.05	-0.52

Table 30 Comparison of Turns per Minute: Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	3.363	1.306	-0.112	0.912
B	3.422	1.040		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference in turns per minute between Topic A and Topic B.

H_1 = There are differences in turns per minute between Topic A and Topic B.

∵ p = 0.912 > 0.05

∴ H_0 was not rejected.

A lack of relationship showed, with the second highest possibility (91.2%) compared to other measures. Participants tended to take slightly more turns in Topic B (M=3.422, SD=1.040) than in Topic A (M=3.363, SD=1.306).

Table 31 Comparison of Turns per Minute: Group 1 vs Group 2, Topic A vs Topic B

Topic	Group 1				Group 2			
	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
A	2.666	0.726	-1.522	0.167	4.060	1.448	1.288	0.234
B	3.702	1.338			3.142	0.667		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

Comparatively speaking, Group 1 (t=-1.522, p=0.167) was affected by topic change to a greater extent than Group 2 (t=1.288, p=0.234) did. Group 1 produced less turns in Topic A (M=2.666, SD=0.726) than in Topic B (M=3.702, SD=1.338), while the situation was opposite in Group 2 (Topic A: M=4.060, SD=1.448; Topic B: M=3.142, SD=0.667). It was supposed that Group 2 would be more independent in the interviews since their language proficiency was higher, but it turned out that the most turns per minute occurred in LY from Group 2 in Topic A and the least ones appeared in JF from Group 1 in Topic A.

Table 32 Comparison of Turns per Minute Variation: Group 1 vs Group 2

Group	M	SD	t	Sig. (two-tailed)
1	1.680	0.872	0.886	0.401
2	1.138	1.053		

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

H_0 = There is no difference of turns per minute variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

H_1 = There are differences of turns per minute variation between Group 1 and Group 2.

∵ p = 0.401> 0.05

∴ H_0 was not rejected.

A 59.9% probability indicated that turns per minute and residence may be related. The performance of Group 2 (M=1.138, SD=1.053) was more stable in this measure than that of Group 1 (M=1.680, SD=0.872).

Different from complexity and accuracy, fluency not only revealed the learner's speaking ability but also reflected their listening ability. Almost every participant in Group 1 needed the interviewer to repeat the questions, either because they did not catch them or because they did not understand them, whereas the frequency of such inquiries was much less in the other group. Some participants in

Group 1 paused a lot to think about their answers and organise their discourse, and thus there was not enough time for interaction. These would give rise to longer turns and fewer turns per minute.

They may also affect the speed that the participants got into the interview mode. Group 1 may be relatively slow for they were more nervous of speaking English. They tended to need more time to interpret the questions and prepare their answers at the beginning, so their turns were less in Topic A. As for Group 2, they may be a little bit reserved and answered the questions in a concise manner at first, but then they became more talkative with the interviews going. They were able to produce continuous speeches, so their turns were less in Topic B.

In brief, participants produced slightly faster speeches with slightly shorter turns in Topic A than in Topic B. It did not strictly correspond to the Trade-off Hypothesis (Skehan, 2009) and the Levelt model (Levelt, 1999) that more complexity leads to less accuracy and less fluency. In general, enhanced performance occurred in Topic A in terms of structural complexity, lexical sophistication, accuracy and words per minute, whereas that appeared in Topic B in the measures of lexical variety and turns per minute, which proved the variability of one's IL system.

Group 1 spoke slower with longer duration in Topic A, while Group 2 spoke faster with shorter duration in Topic A. It may be attributed to their language proficiency and state of interview. Participants in Group 1 spent more time on discourse organisation, so there were more silences, repetitions, self-repairs, etc. due

to their lower level of linguistic competence and slower speed of adaptation. Group 2 were more fluent and independent speakers who tended to utter in a concise way with simple and short sentences. Their performance in terms of fluency was steadier than that of Group 1 as well.

In summary, the statistically insignificant differences shown in the participants' CAF results between two topics and between two groups indicates that neither topic change nor the life experience of residing in English-speaking countries were main factors of their IL variation. As the Discourse Domain Hypothesis states, L2 learners may perform better if they have more content control, more frequent practice and more emotional investment. Therefore, the impact of these influential factors is going to be explored in the next section. The data were elicited from post-interview questionnaires.

4.2.4 The Possible Influential Factors and Topic-based IL Variation

The post-interview questionnaires (see Appendix C) included five questions, covering the participants' self-comparison of expertise, practice, importance, self-perceived difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression between the two topics. The participants were asked to choose the topic interviewed that fitted the descriptions more.

Question 1, Question 2 and Question 3 corresponded to the three elements in the Discourse Domain Hypothesis, i.e. expertise, practice and importance,

that were believed to be decisive in the participants' IL performance (Douglas, 2004; Whyte, 1994a).

Whyte (1994b) mentioned that a speaker's cognitive complexity differed with discourse domain. 'Life story' domain, compared to 'major/job' domain, may be more manageable cognitively (Tapia, 1993). In Robinson's (2001, 2005) triad of task complexity, condition and difficulty, task complexity is distinguished from task difficulty as they are of different essence. The former is impacted by the cognitive factor dependent on the resources provided in the tasks, while the latter is affected by learner factor including affective and ability variables. He proposes the Cognition Hypothesis, claiming that the increase of task complexity causes greater cognitive demand and more attention on forms, and thus leads to enhancement of lexical variety, accuracy and interaction, which at the same time brings out less fluent and less complex production because there are more confirmation and clarification on the hearer's part. As for the learner factor, when the learners perceive the tasks as more difficult, their stress increases and confidence decreases, but their interest and motivation remain.

In this research, since the topics interviewed were randomly chosen and belonged to the same discourse domain, it made no difference in terms of task complexity. Nevertheless, learner factor may still be at work. Speech production can be separated into conceptual and linguistic aspects. The cognitive pressure would result in more difficulties in language organization (Levelt, 1999). Therefore, apart from

the three elements, i.e. expertise, practice, importance, this research also intended to investigate the impact of participants' perceived difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression on their IL variation so as to take Whyte's (1994b) concern of imbalanced cognitive complexity into account.

Question 4 and Question 5 in the post-interview questionnaire asked them to assess the difficulty of these two aspects between the interview topics. It was hypothesised that when L2 learners did not need to pay special attention to their linguistic expression and when they assumed that they were effective in content conveyance, they were under less stress and thus their IL performance would be better. Such satisfaction and confidence may also result from their content control, frequent practice and even emotional investment as their IL performance did.

Theoretically speaking, the most ideal situation would be that the participants chose the same topic in all questions since these factors were assumed to help to enhance the participants' IL performance, but actually there were a lot of deviance of choice as Table 33 displays. The sign of minus ('-') was used to indicate the different choice. For example, JF chose only one 'A' among all questions, so her topic with better performance was shown as 'B-'. YX chose two 'A's, so hers would be 'B--'.

Among all participants, LD, LY and ZR chose the same topic in all questions consistently as the topic that they possessed more knowledge, practised more frequently, was more emotionally involved, suffered from less stress from both

linguistic and conceptual expression. LP, JF and YJ made one different choice in terms of 'practice' and YR's special choice was on 'conceptual expression'. ZM, YX and LF made two different choices.

Table 33 Participants' Self-Comparison of the Influential Factors Between Topics

Group	Name	Expertise	Practice	Importance	Linguistic expression	Conceptual expression	Topic with better performance (theoretically)
1	YR	A	A	A	A	B	A-[a]
	LP	B	B	A	B	B	B-
	ZM	A	A	A	B	B	A--[b]
	JF	B	B	A	B	B	B-
	LD	B	B	B	B	B	B[c]
2	LY	B	B	B	B	B	B
	YJ	B	B	A	B	B	B-
	ZR	A	A	A	A	A	A
	YX	B	A	A	B	B	B--
	LF	B	B	A	A	B	B--

[a]A/B- shows that there was one different choice of topic in the questions.

[b]A/B-- shows that there were two different choices of topic in the questions.

[c]A/B shows the consistency of choice of topic in all questions.

In the following sections, the relationship between each factor and the participants' IL performance in the CAF construct will be illustrated with the aid of tables and figures.

4.2.4.1 The Influential Factors and Complexity

Firstly, the participants' topic choices of each influential factor and the topic with better performance in each measure were under comparison in order to investigate the relationship between the influential factors and the IL performance.

Table 34 The Influential Factors & Structural Complexity

Group	Name	Expertise	Practice	Importance	Linguistic expression	Conceptual expression	Structural complexity
1	YR	A	A	A	A	B	A
	LP	B	B	A	B	B	A
	ZM	A	A	A	B	B	B
	JF	B	B	A	B	B	A
	LD	B	B	B	B	B	B
2	LY	B	B	B	B	B	B
	YJ	B	B	A	B	B	A
	ZR	A	A	A	A	A	B
	YX	B	A	A	B	B	B
	LF	B	B	A	A	B	A

From Table 34, only LD's and LY's cases corroborated the hypotheses since their topic choices of the influential factors and the topic with better performance in the measure of structural complexity were the same, which meant that her IL performance in this aspect was likely to be enhanced by the factors under investigation. In contrast, ZR's topic choices of the influential factors were consistently different from the topic with more complex sentence structures, indicating that there may be other elements affecting her IL performance.

Secondly, the number of participants whose IL performance was enhanced by each factor and whose was not would be shown in bar charts so that it could be interpreted visually and clearly about the contribution of each factor to the measure under investigation.
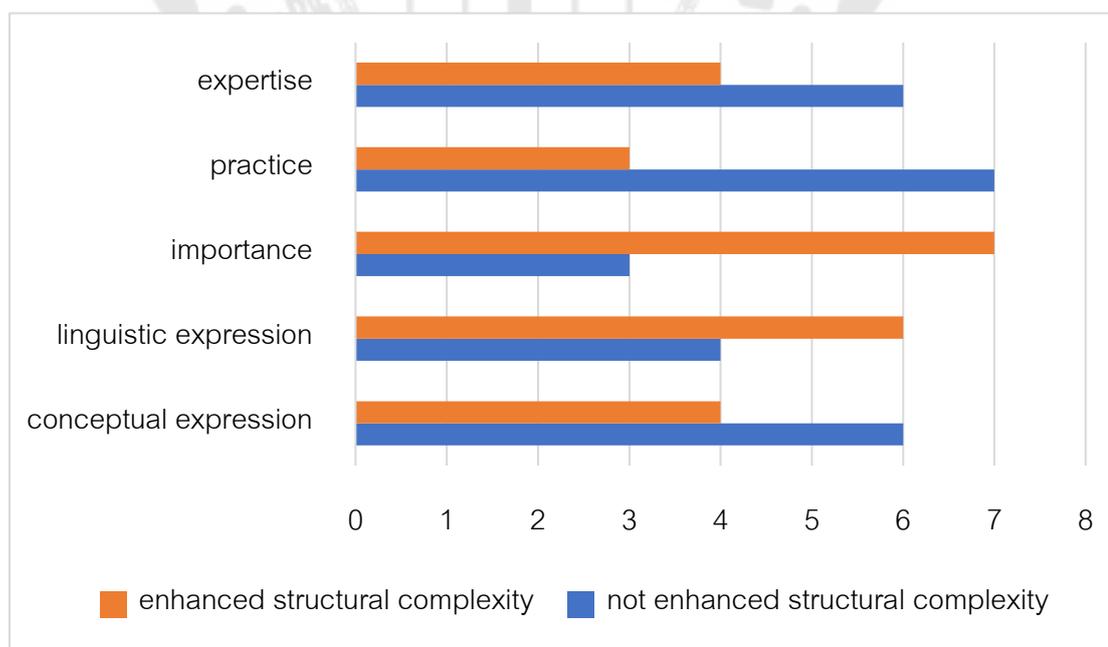
Figure 5 Structural Complexity: Enhancement vs Non-enhancement

Figure 5 displays the relationship between structural complexity and the influential factors. It can be seen that there were seven participants' structural complexity enhanced by importance and six by linguistic expression, which meant that in this sample, these two factors had the greatest effect on the measure. When the topic mattered to the participants, they may prefer to use long and complex sentences so as to present their points in detail. Such tendency may be reinforced if they were under less pressure brought by limited language skills.

The rest of the factors, expertise, practice and conceptual expression, affected structural complexity negatively. Even if the participants had more content control and more chances of discussion on the topic, it was not likely that they could utter the 'prefabricated' sentences every time. Besides this, their confidence in the precise delivery of information did not help them to produce complex sentences. Perhaps short and simple sentences may be more beneficial to oral expression.

Table 35 The Influential Factors & Lexical Variety

Group	Name	Expertise	Practice	Importance	Linguistic expression	Conceptual expression	Lexical variety
1	YR	A	A	A	A	B	B
	LP	B	B	A	B	B	B
	ZM	A	A	A	B	B	B
	JF	B	B	A	B	B	B
	LD	B	B	B	B	B	A
2	LY	B	B	B	B	B	A
	YJ	B	B	A	B	B	B
	ZR	A	A	A	A	A	A
	YX	B	A	A	B	B	B
	LF	B	B	A	A	B	B

Table 35 displays the topic choices of the influential factors and the topic with better performance in the measure of lexical variety and Figure 6 summarises the number of participants whose lexical variety was enhanced and whose was not enhanced by the factors.
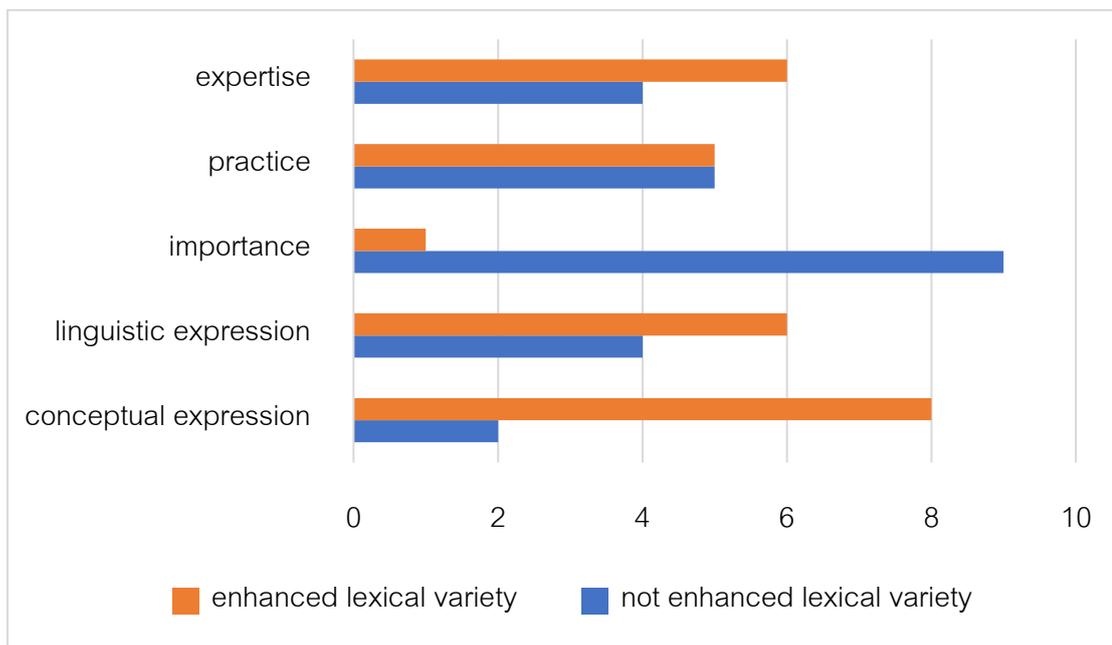
Figure 6 Lexical Variety: Enhancement vs Non-enhancement

Contrast to structural complexity, the participants' confidence on conceptual expression level turned out to be in accordance to their better performance in lexical variety to the greatest extent. Their instinct of precise expression was verified by rich sets of vocabulary uttered. Expertise and linguistic expression also gave credit to the measure. They may possess and be able to make use of a variety of lexicon in the topic that they had more content control.

However, frequent practice did not have any contribution to the measure, which meant that rehearsal in daily life did not help to enlarge the participants' lexicon produced in the topic. What was worse, the element of importance even had a heavy negative effect. When talking about the topic with stronger emotional investment, the participants may resort to the 'fixed' list of

vocabularies that they were already familiar with. Perhaps in this way they would feel

safer to avoid long pauses or make errors.

The relationship between the influential factors and the performance in

terms of lexical sophistication is illustrated in Table 36 and Figure 7.

Table 36 The Influential Factors & Lexical Sophistication

Group	Name	Expertise	Practice	Importance	Linguistic expression	Conceptual expression	Lexical sophistication
1	YR	A	A	A	A	B	A
	LP	B	B	A	B	B	B
	ZM	A	A	A	B	B	A
	JF	B	B	A	B	B	A
	LD	B	B	B	B	B	A
2	LY	B	B	B	B	B	A
	YJ	B	B	A	B	B	B
	ZR	A	A	A	A	A	B
	YX	B	A	A	B	B	B
	LF	B	B	A	A	B	B
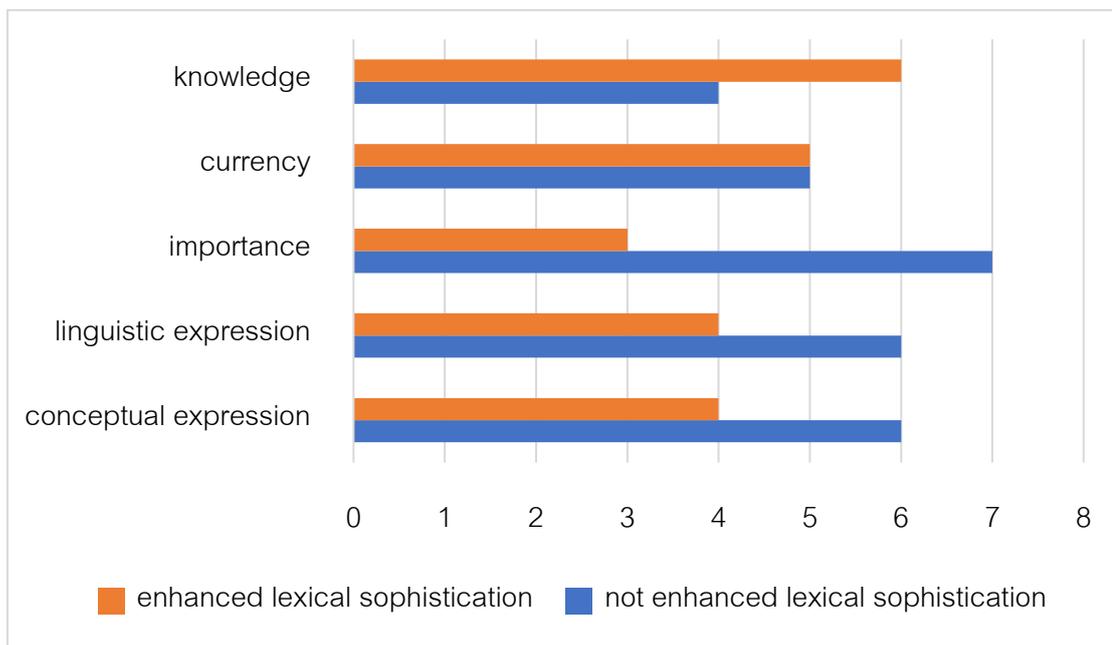
Figure 7 Lexical Sophistication: Enhancement vs Non-enhancement

Expertise turned out to be the only factor that had a positive impact on the measure, which was expected because the participants may use more formal words so as to show their professionalism on the topic.

Like the lexical variety, practice made no difference to lexical sophistication either. The rest of the elements affected the measure negatively, especially importance, since the participants may want to make themselves more interpretable by using high frequency words if the topic mattered to them.

4.2.4.2 The Influential Factors and Accuracy

Table 37 and Figure 8 are about the influential factors and their effect on correctness rate.

Table 37 The Influential Factors & Correctness Rate

Group	Name	Expertise	Practice	Importance	Linguistic expression	Conceptual expression	Correctness rate
	YR	A	A	A	A	B	A
	LP	B	B	A	B	B	B
1	ZM	A	A	A	B	B	A
	JF	B	B	A	B	B	B
	LD	B	B	B	B	B	A
	LY	B	B	B	B	B	B
	YJ	B	B	A	B	B	A
2	ZR	A	A	A	A	A	A
	YX	B	A	A	B	B	A
	LF	B	B	A	A	B	A

Figure 8 Correctness Rate: Enhancement vs Non-enhancement

Concerning correctness rate, the factors of practice and importance ranked first, followed by expertise and linguistic expression. Frequent practice in daily lives may provide the participants with the opportunities to repeat and revise the sentences until they become grammatically correct. High level of importance would urge them to do so.

Conceptual expression was the only negative factor. It meant that when the participants felt good about their own expression of ideas, there were more errors made. Due to the limited L2 proficiency, when they focused more on the effective conveyance of information, they may be unable to pay extra attention to the language used.

Error rate and the influential factors are presented in Table 38 and Figure 9.

Table 38 The Influential Factors & Error Rate

Group	Name	Expertise	Practice	Importance	Linguistic expression	Conceptual expression	Error rate
1	YR	A	A	A	A	B	B
	LP	B	B	A	B	B	B
	ZM	A	A	A	B	B	A
	JF	B	B	A	B	B	B
	LD	B	B	B	B	B	A
2	LY	B	B	B	B	B	B
	YJ	B	B	A	B	B	A
	ZR	A	A	A	A	A	A
	YX	B	A	A	B	B	A
	LF	B	B	A	A	B	A
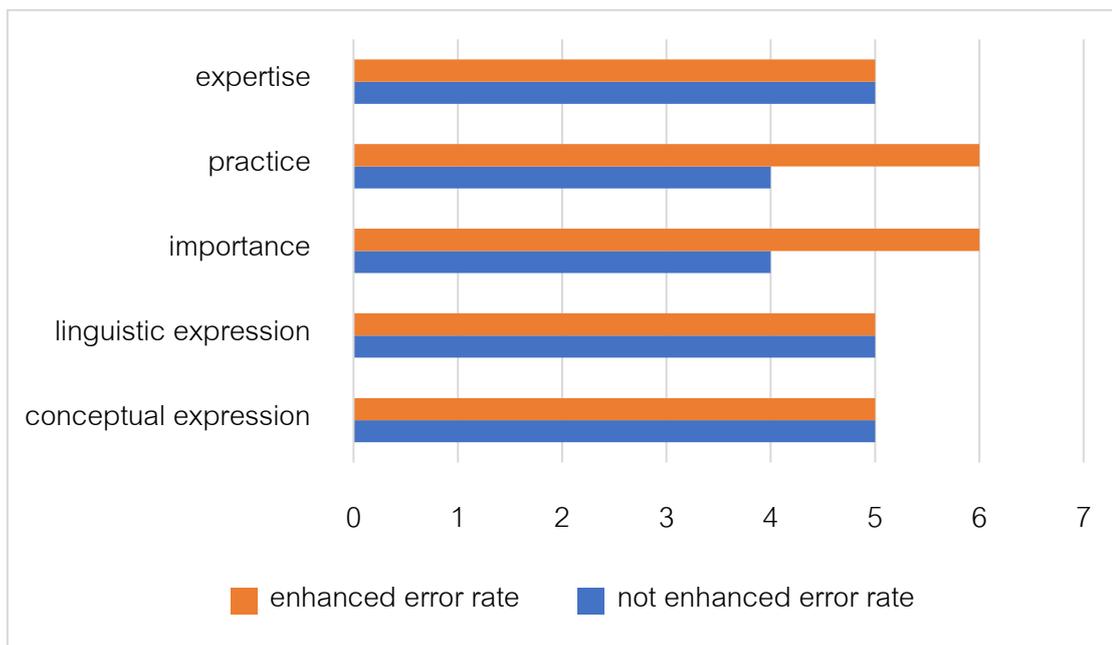
Figure 9 Error Rate: Enhancement vs Non-enhancement

Similar tendency occurred in the measure of error rate, practice and importance being the most critical factors.

In contrast, other factors seemed to have no contribution to the accuracy of the participants' performance. The loss of impact of expertise and linguistic expression in this measure may be due to different means of calculation. There may be more errors in one clause, so the mean number of the ratio of error-free clauses to clauses was different from that of errors to AS-unit.

4.2.4.3 The Influential Factors and Fluency

Table 39 and Figure 10 illustrate the relationship between the influential factors and words per minute.

Table 39 The Influential Factors & Words per Minute

Group	Name	Expertise	Practice	Importance	Linguistic expression	Conceptual expression	Words per minute
1	YR	A	A	A	A	B	A
	LP	B	B	A	B	B	B
	ZM	A	A	A	B	B	B
	JF	B	B	A	B	B	B
	LD	B	B	B	B	B	B
2	LY	B	B	B	B	B	A
	YJ	B	B	A	B	B	A
	ZR	A	A	A	A	A	B
	YX	B	A	A	B	B	A
	LF	B	B	A	A	B	A
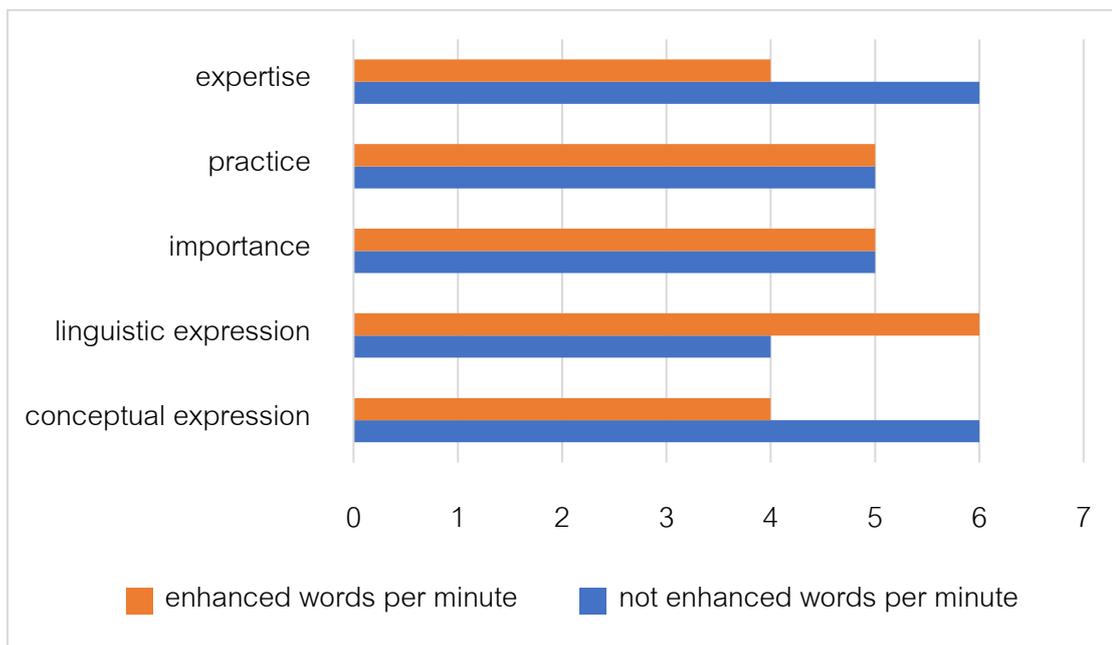
Figure 10 Words per Minute: Enhancement vs Non-enhancement

Linguistic expression was seemingly the only positive influential factor of words per minute, which was understandable because a speaker would speed up when the language was not a barrier.

Practice and importance did not work in this measure. Perhaps due to the special context of interview, the participants may be too nervous to speak fast within limited time in spite of daily rehearsal. Moreover, expertise and conceptual expression even made negative contributions. It meant that the participants tended to speak slower when they felt that they knew more about the topic because they may be more careful about what they said in case they would be regarded as unprofessional. In order to guarantee the precision of information delivered, they had to think about the content before saying it and thus affected their speaking speed.

Turns per minute and its related influential factors are shown in Table 40 and Figure 11.

Table 40 The Influential Factors & Turns per Minute

Group	Name	Expertise	Practice	Importance	Linguistic expression	Conceptual expression	Turns per minute
	YR	A	A	A	A	B	A
	LP	B	B	A	B	B	A
1	ZM	A	A	A	B	B	A
	JF	B	B	A	B	B	A
	LD	B	B	B	B	B	B
	LY	B	B	B	B	B	B
	YJ	B	B	A	B	B	B
2	ZR	A	A	A	A	A	B
	YX	B	A	A	B	B	A
	LF	B	B	A	A	B	A

Figure 11 Turns per Minute: Enhancement vs Non-enhancement

In terms of turns per minute, importance was the most decisive factor, followed by practice. When the participant laid stress on the topic, they tended to make long and continuous speech on their own in order to express as many opinions as possible. If they had chances to rehearse it repeatedly in daily lives, they would be more independent in doing so.

Expertise and linguistic expression did not help in extending speaking time and conceptual expression even brought about negative effect. The knowledge on the topic was not equal to the knowledge on the language, so it may not be a facilitator to the participants. In the interview, they may think that they had already produced a lot of speech and made themselves clear, but things did not turn out the way how they had expected.

Even though some tendencies were discovered from the data, as a matter of fact, the exact influence of the factors could not be interpreted separately because they were inclined to intertwine together. For example, some participants assumed that they expressed themselves clearly and precisely, but actually they made a lot of grammatical errors and they did not hold turns as long as they thought. Perhaps their knowledge on the topic gave them an illusion that they had done a good job linguistically as well. Their emotional investment urged them to talk more, but the speech may be concise thanks to their repeated 'rehearsal' and revision of expression in daily lives. Since these factors interfered with one another, their impact may not be summarized accurately as group patterns. In such circumstances, case studies on individual basis were necessary.

4.2.5 Summary of Quantitative Data

This section has presented the quantitative results, analysing the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation and its correlation with the influential factors among two groups of Chinese learners of English. The biggest difference between the two groups was that the five females in Group 1 had never been to any English-speaking countries while those in Group 2 had been residing in English-speaking countries for several years. According to the Discourse Domain Hypothesis, there should be variance in the speakers' IL performance across different topics, impacted by their life experience, content control, frequent or current practice and emotional investment.

In this research, firstly, the participants were recruited on the basis of their life experience of staying in English-speaking countries and their English proficiency (see Appendix A and Table 2). Then they were asked to choose two numbers from one to ten randomly. Each number corresponded to a topic (see Appendix B and Table 3). After that, they were interviewed for about ten minutes on the two topics selected. The interview data were transcribed and analysed based on the CAF construct (see Table 1). At last, they filled in questionnaires (see Appendix C and Table 33) about self-evaluation of their expertise, practice, importance, difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression between the two topics interviewed.

To begin with, the participants' IL performance in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency between the two topics was compared. According to the p-values (see Table 5, Table 9, Table 14, Table 18, Table 22, Table 26, Table 30), there was no significant relationship between topic and IL variation.

As Figure 12 displays, generally speaking, the link between topic and structural complexity, lexical sophistication, error rate, words per minute and turns per minute was not strong, but lexical variety and correctness rate may still be affected by topic to some extent.
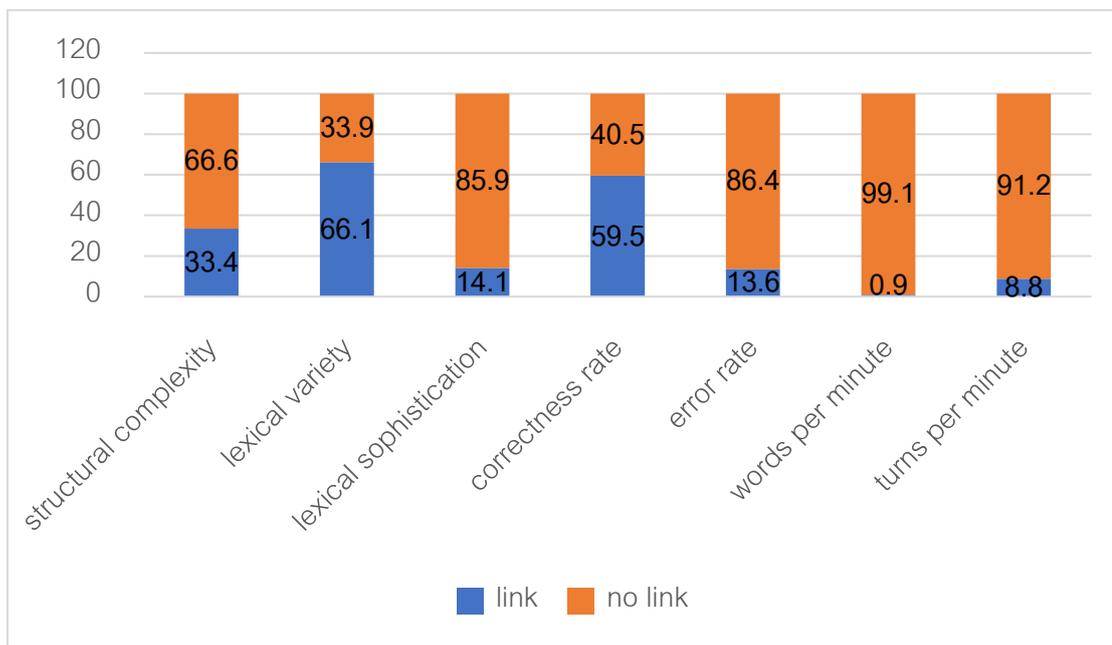
Figure 12 The Percentage of Link Between CAF and Topic

More specifically, Figure 13 and Figure 14 show the comparison of the participants' IL performance between two topics (see the mean numbers in Table 5, Table 9, Table 14, Table 18, Table 22, Table 26, Table 30) and Figure 15 and Figure 16 are about that between two groups (see Table 6, Table 10, Table 15, Table 19, Table 23, Table 27, Table 31). In general, the larger the number is, the better the performance is, but for error rate and turns per minute, the smaller the number is, the more accurate and more fluent the production is.

Since the data of words per minute were much larger than those of the other measures, the results of fluency were presented separately from those of complexity and accuracy.
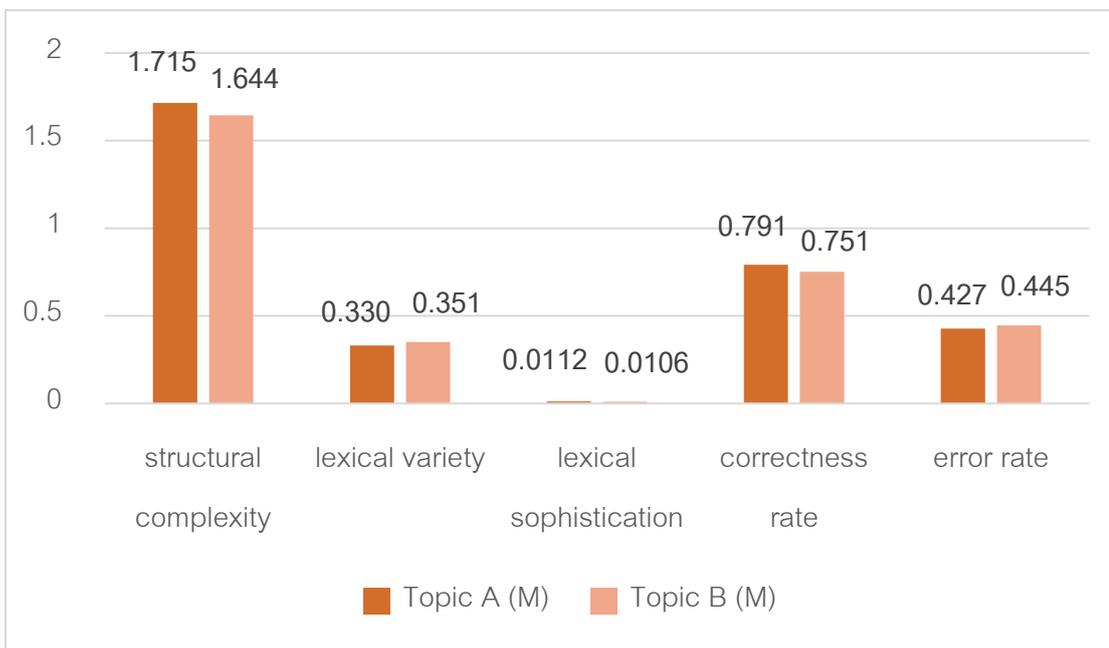
Figure 13 Comparison of CAF (Complexity & Accuracy): Topic A vs Topic B
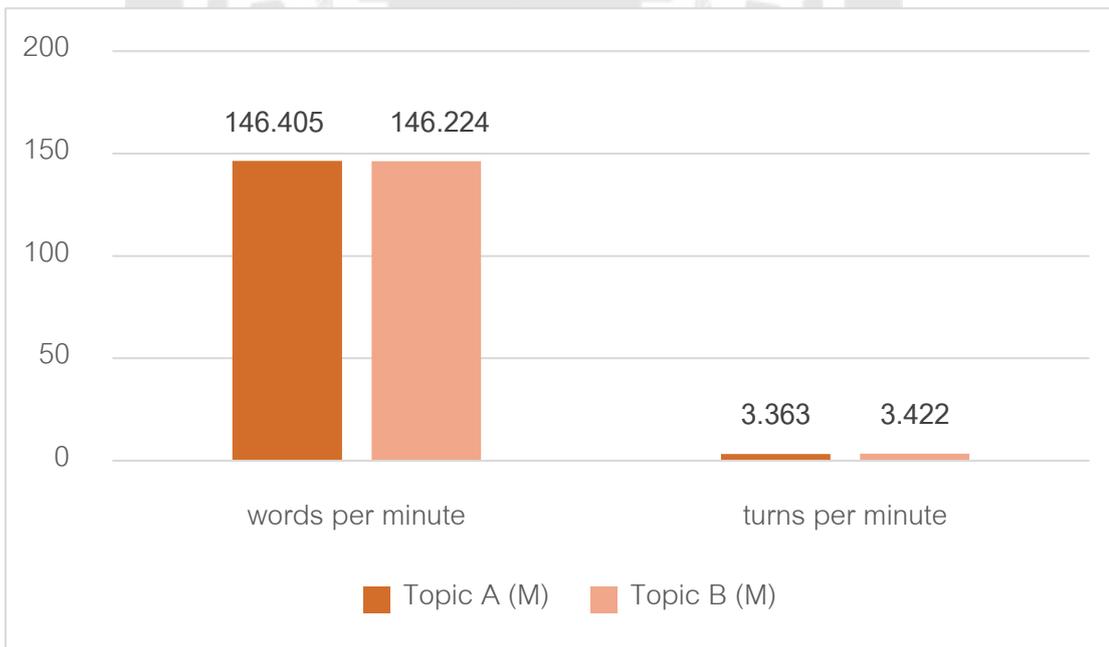
Figure 14 Comparison of CAF (Fluency): Topic A vs Topic B

Participants seemed to perform slightly better in Topic A than in Topic B in all measures except for lexical variety. It meant that their IL did not vary a lot with the change of topics, in accordance with the insignificant relationship aforementioned.
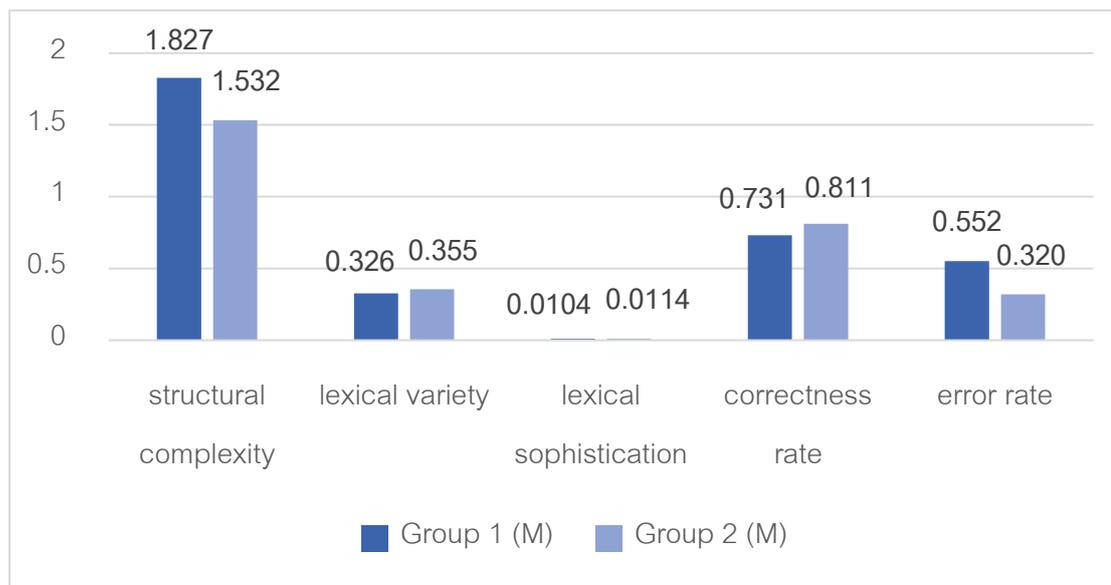
Figure 15 Comparison of CAF (Complexity & Accuracy): Group 1 vs Group 2
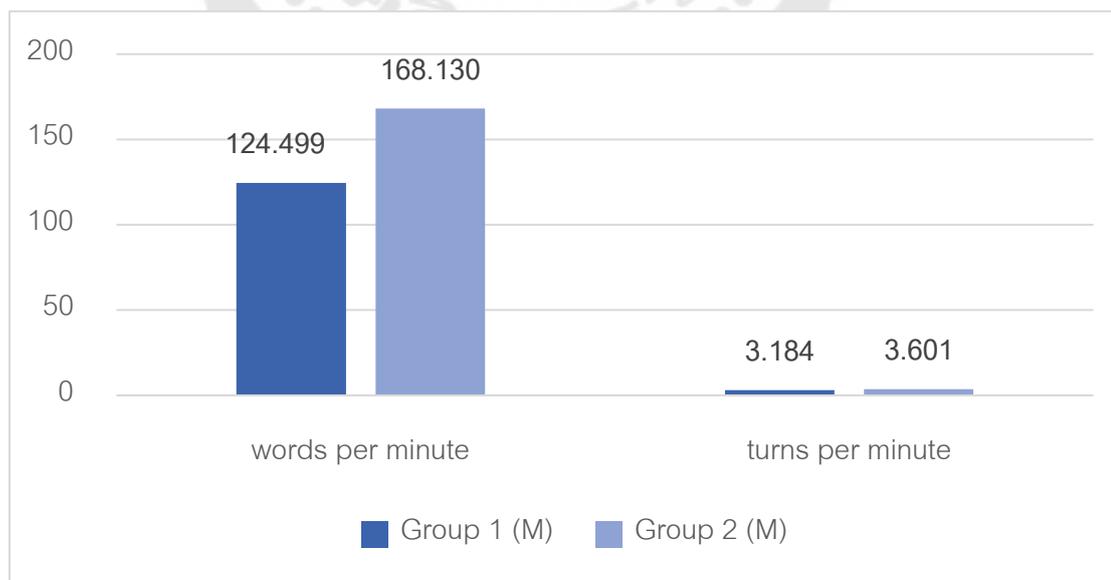
Figure 16 Comparison of CAF (Fluency): Group 1 vs Group 2

The data were the average of the ratios of the two topics in the same group. From the two figures, Group 1 exceeded Group 2 slightly only in the aspects of structural complexity and turns per minute. It may be related to the habits formed in the process of learning English as an L2. Learners may be accustomed to use long and complex sentences and talk as much as possible on their initiatives in order to show their language ability. The greatest differences between the two groups' performance lay on words per minute, indicating that the speaking speed of the participants in Group 2 was much faster than those in Group 1, which was consistent to the hypothesis since they were relatively more proficient in oral expression with years of communication in English in daily lives.

Such insignificant statistical results may be due to the following reasons.

To begin with, the topics were randomly set. Unlike the previous research which focused on the comparison of learners' IL performance between a domain topic and a non-domain topic (Cornu & Delahaye, 1987; Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Smith, 1989; Whyte, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Zuengler, 1989, 1993a, 1993b; Zuengler & Bent, 1991), this research did not distinguish the topics in this way. Because the aim of the study was to investigate the phenomenon of IL variation between topics, once there was difference, the hypothesis was verified.

Besides this, the statement of the current Discourse Domain Hypothesis was controversial in this point. It was said that a discourse domain was a 'topic area' (Whyte, 1994a, p. 293) or a 'cognitive construct' (Douglas, 2004, p. 34) that the

speaker had an advantage of expertise, practice and importance. Three prototypical discourse domains, major/job, life story, native culture, were revealed by the previous research (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11, 1989; Whyte, 1994b). If a discourse domain was treated as a personal and dynamic concept, there should not be any 'fixed' or 'uniform' discourse domains. Additionally, discourse domains were supposed to develop and change with one's life experience (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11) in the long run and with the communicative contexts (Douglas, 2004) in the moment. Therefore, it seemed to be unimportant to find out one's domain topics. When IL variation was identified among different topics, educational intervention could come into play to train L2 learners to be proficient in as many topics as possible so that they were able to deal with problems in daily lives more confidently.

The other reason was that the sample size may be too small. As Whyte (1994b) said, the subject mortality in the relevant study was quite high. Except for Zuengler and Bent (1991), Zuengler (1993a, 1993b) and Chiu (2011) which focused on the quantitative data mainly, little research of this kind investigated more than ten participants. Since discourse domain was a personal concept, group patterns may not be that apparent and important. Additionally, there will be qualitative analysis of each participant's performance in the next section, which was believed to be more suitable and meaningful to explore the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation. Due to limited space, it could be done more thoroughly with a small sample. Doubts would be raised

if only a part of the qualitative data were presented for there may be a risk that researchers only choose the cases that confirm to their hypotheses.

In terms of the second research question, whether the life experience of residing in English-speaking countries was a significant influential factor of the participants' IL variation, as Figure 17 shows, there may be a link between the factor and the measures of structural complexity, lexical sophistication, error rate, words per minute and turns per minute in different degrees, in spite of the insignificant statistical results (see the p-values in Table 7, Table 11, Table 16, Table 20, Table 24, Table 28, Table 32).
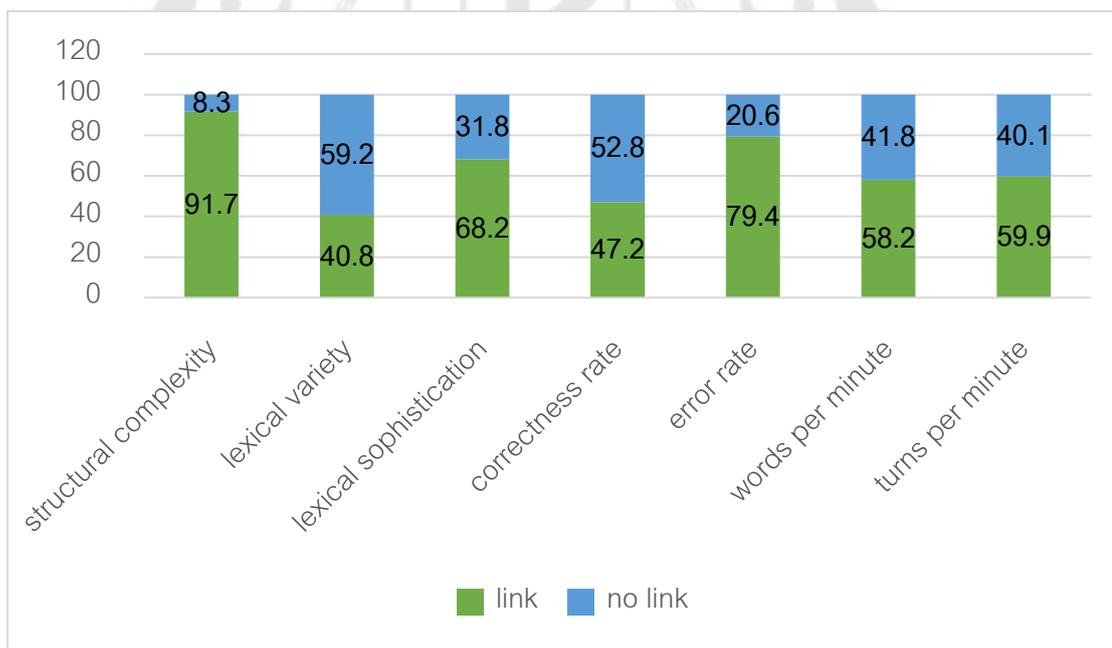
Figure 17 The Percentage of Link Between CAF and Life Experience

Structural complexity was impacted the greatest, which may be explained by the participants' different habits of using sentences. Group 1 tended to use long

and complex sentences to show their language proficiency while Group 2 preferred short and simple ones to satisfy the needs of daily conversations.

Figure 18 and Figure 19 display two groups' IL variation between topics (see the mean numbers in Table 7, Table 11, Table 16, Table 20, Table 24, Table 28, Table 32). The larger the number is, the more varied the group's IL performance is.
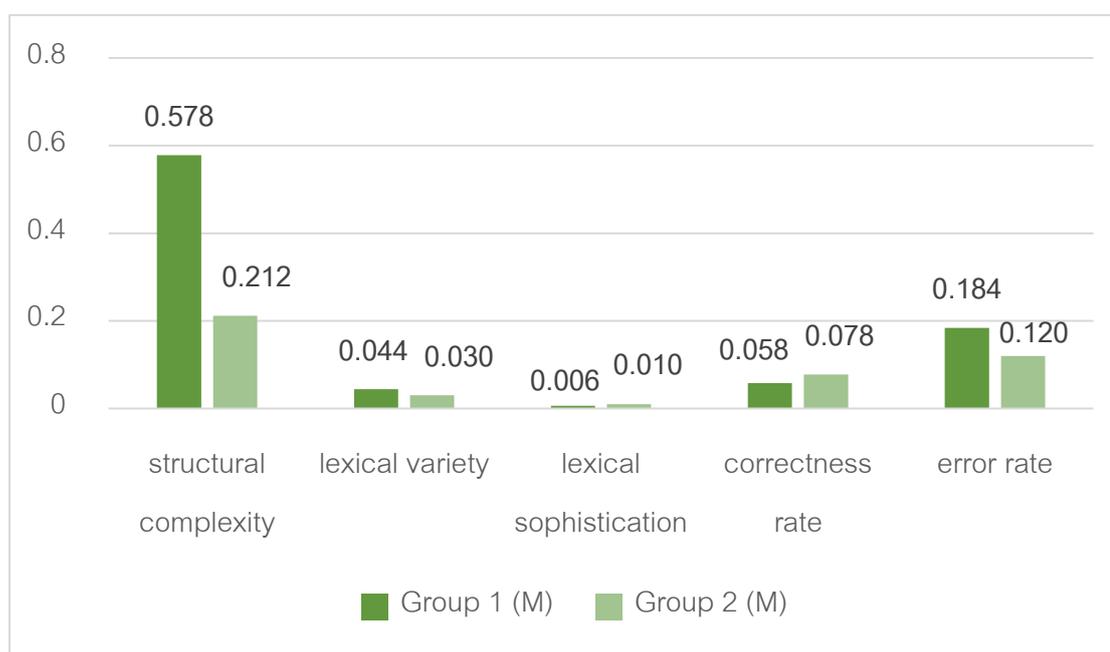
Figure 18 Comparison of CAF Variation (Complexity & Accuracy): Group 1 vs Group 2
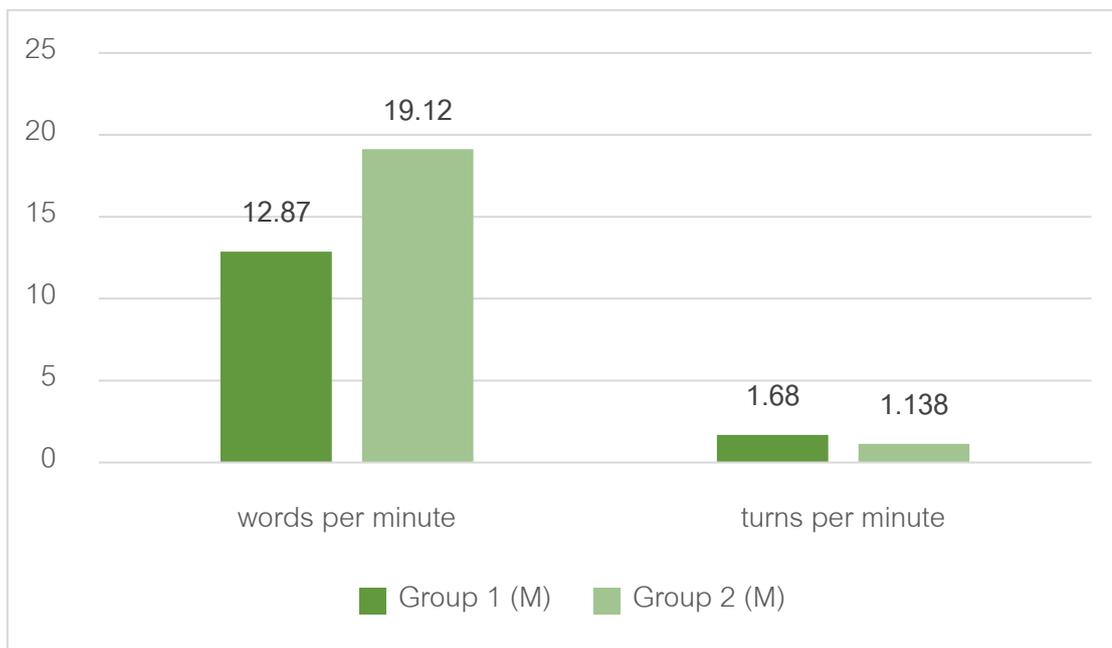
Figure 19 Comparison of CAF Variation (Fluency): Group 1 vs Group 2

It was hypothesised that the performance of Group 2 may be steadier between the two topics than Group 1 since they were better in oral English with more frequent practice in daily lives, but it was verified only in the measures of structural complexity, lexical variety, error rate and turns per minute as the following figures show. Words per minute of Group 2 varied greatly between the two topics, perhaps because they were more capable of making emphasis and conveying emotions with the change of speaking speed.

Figure 20 illustrates the number of participants whose IL performance was enhanced by the other factors including expertise, practice, importance, self-perceived difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression (see the number of participants with enhanced performance from Figure 5 to Figure 11).

Structural complexity was affected by importance the most, which meant that the participants tended to use complex sentences so as to show their seriousness towards the topic. Self-perceived easiness of conceptual expression resulted in lexical variety. Rich word types may be beneficial to the precise expression of ideas. Expertise in the topic promoted the use of academic words since they were regarded as an indicator of professionalism.
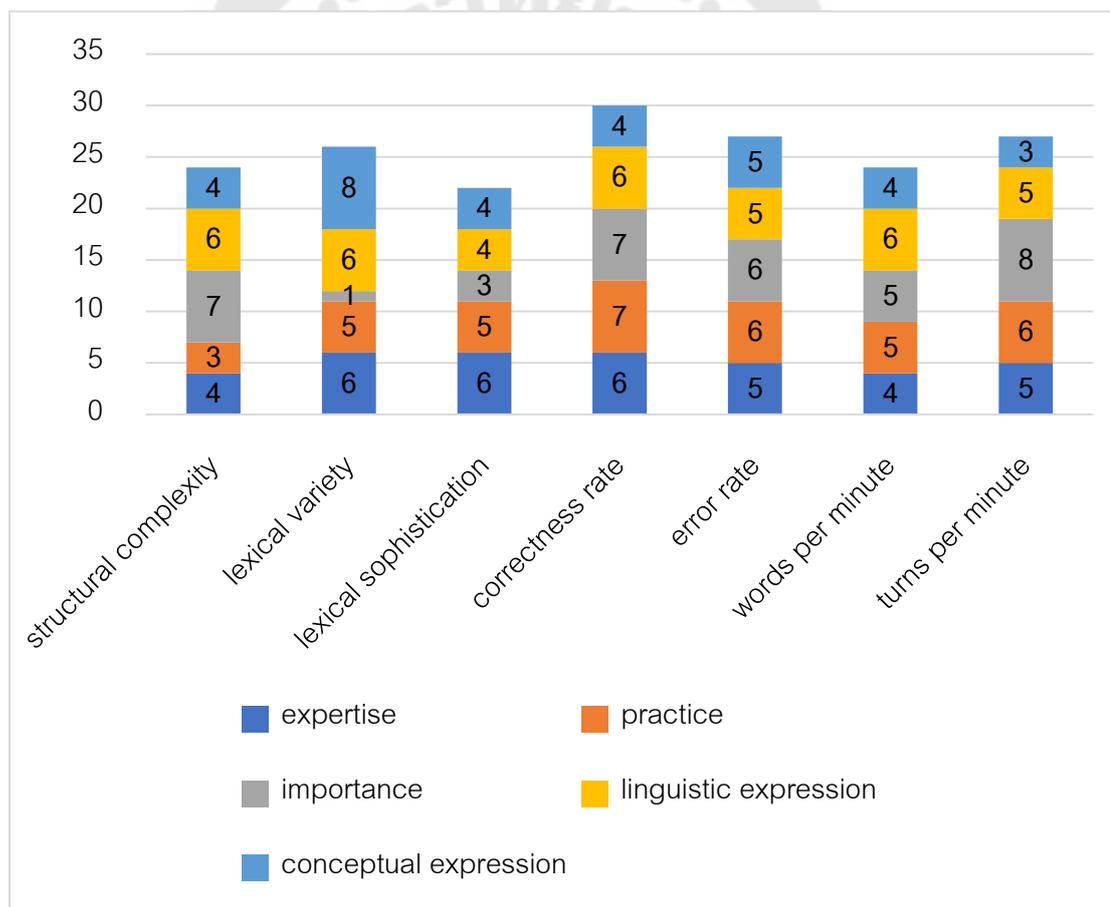
Figure 20 The Number of Participants with Enhancement in CAF Measures by the Influential Factors

Accuracy, as in both measures of correctness rate and error rate, was strengthened by practice and importance. To L2 learners, the improvement of grammaticality was believed to depend on regular training. In the important topic, the participants may pay more attention to their language use in order to make sure that they did not convey wrong information.

Importance, again, played a key role in fluency. When the participants became emotional, they would speed up and produce continuous speeches in order to show their standpoint in the topic.

There may be other factors at work as well. For example, it was assumed to be hard for L2 learners to balance their attention between content and language, so when they were eager to express their ideas, either because the topic was important to them or because they wanted to show their professionalism, grammatical errors may occur. Besides this, their attitudes towards the topics may affect their organization of discourse, with more seriousness in the content leading to more formality and complexity in language. Additionally, some of them may be slow to get into the interview mode. They needed time to consider, which slowed down their speaking speed. The variation may also be linked to personal habits of using complex sentences to prove their high language proficiency or using simple structures to make it easier to interpret.

In summary, the participants' IL performance did not vary significantly between the two topics. The life experience of residing in English-speaking countries

for several years was not a significant factor of their IL variation. Other elements also played a part, such as expertise, practice, importance, linguistic expression, conceptual expression, attention, attitudes, interview mode, language habits, etc.

Since discourse domains are highly personal and dynamic, group patterns are not adequate enough to explain the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation, let alone those inconsistent even unusual data discovered. Therefore, the next section is going to analyse the individual transcriptions in a closer way so as to investigate whether there are any similarities and/or differences in the participants' performance between the two topics in terms of their discourse organisation.

4.3 Qualitative Data

This section is going to analyse the interview and questionnaire data on an individual basis. For one thing, it could supplement quantitative data with qualitative evidence. For another, it is hoped to shed light on the anomalous results found in some participants' IL performance.

The interpretation of the qualitative data is divided into two main parts, one of each group. It begins with a brief introduction of personal background information. Then the participants' IL performance would be analysed from the perspectives of CAF data, speech turns, error types, oral features and discourse organisation. Some of the data presented in 4.2 would be repeated in this section. Finally, a summary of the individual situations of the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation will be provided.

4.3.1 Case studies of Group 1

Group 1 included five females who had never been to any English-speaking countries. The specific interview transcriptions of each participant are offered in Appendix E.

4.3.1.1 Profile of YR

YR majored in Chinese-English translation as an undergraduate. She works as an operation specialist lately. Even though she had some chances to get in touch with foreign businessmen, their correspondence mainly followed a rather fixed format offered by her company. Hence her English use was limited not only in the field of her job but also in her daily life due to the lack of necessity.

Her personal information and the quantitative data are presented in Table 41.

YR's case may be consistent with the Discourse Domain Hypothesis to some extent. She chose Topic A as the one she had more content control, more daily practice and more emotional investment. Except for lexical variety and error rate, the results of the other measures displayed advantages in Topic A. She produced more complicated sentence structures, more academic words, more accurate expressions, more words per minute and less turns per minute when talking about Topic A. These situations accorded closely with the Hypothesis that L2 learners' discourse domains are created with expertise, practice and importance, based on which their ILs develop.

Table 41 Profile of YR

Year of birth	1990	
Age of beginning learning English	9	
Degree of education	B. A.	
Current occupation	Company operation specialist	
Standard test scores	20/25	
Interview topics	A: education; B: travel	
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 10	Topic A: 6.1
		Topic B: 3.9
Structural complexity	Topic A: 94 clauses, 42 AS-units, ratio: 2.36	
	Topic B: 65 clauses, 43 AS-units, ratio: 1.51	
Lexical variety	Topic A: 155 word types, 583 word tokens, TTR: 0.27	
	Topic B: 138 word types, 341 word tokens, TTR: 0.40	
Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 12 academic words, 782 words, ratio: 0.015	
	Topic B: 1 academic word, 480 words, ratio: 0.002	
Correctness rate	Topic A: 67 error-free clauses, 94 clauses, ratio: 0.71	
	Topic B: 42 error-free clauses, 65 clauses, ratio: 0.65	
Error rate	Topic A: 34 errors, 42 AS-units, ratio: 0.81	
	Topic B: 25 errors, 43 AS-units, ratio: 0.58	

Table 41 (Continued)

Words per minute	Topic A: 782 words, 6.1 minutes, ratio: 128.20
	Topic B: 480 words, 3.9 minutes, ratio: 123.08
Turns per minute	Topic A: 11 turns, 6.1 minutes, ratio: 1.80
	Topic B: 17 turns, 3.9 minutes, ratio: 4.36
Expertise	Topic: A
Practice	Topic: A
Importance	Topic: A
Linguistic expression	Topic: A
Conceptual expression	Topic: B

Topic A, as a potential domain topic, brought her lower level of difficulty of linguistic expression, which was supposed to facilitate her conceptual expression, but she thought that she offered more precise answers in Topic B instead, perhaps because she regarded Topic A, 'education', as a serious topic and she was afraid that she may not convey her meanings clearly and accurately enough. The number of self-repairs, false starts, repetitions and duration of pauses (see Table 44) proved her nervousness when discussing the topic.

In contrast, in Topic B, 'travel', she was much more relaxed, illustrated by her obvious intonation change and the number of oral features (see Table 44). Moreover, her lexical variety was much richer in this topic, which corroborated the great influence of self-evaluated conceptual expression level on the measure as displayed in Figure 20.

As for accuracy, because of different means of calculation, the ratio in Topic A surpassed Topic B in the measure of correctness rate, while the situation became opposite in the measure of error rate. It may mean that YR made more errors within one clause than other participants whose data of accuracy were consistent in both measures did.

Table 42 lists the sub-topics discussed in the interview. YR talked much more in Topic A, shown by less turns and longer time. The apparent imbalance of time allocation between the two topics may be attributed to two reasons.

Table 42 YR's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: education (6.1 minutes)				Topic B: travel (3.9 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Memories in university (64 seconds)	1	content	34	Experience (52 seconds)	1	affect	2
	2	affect	30		2	—	1
Impression of university education (115 seconds)	3	content	5		3	content	14
	4	language	12		4	language	27
	5	language	98		5	—	8
Necessity of university education (65 seconds)	6	affect	23	Impressive place (72 seconds)	6	content	14
	7	language	42		7	language	12
Higher education in China (120 seconds)	8	affect	3		8	affect	14
	9	language	45		9	content	16
	10	language	58		10	—	14
	11	language	14		11	—	2

Table 42 (Continued)

Topic A: education (6.1 minutes)				Topic B: travel (3.9 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
				Habits (65 seconds)	12	affect	27
					13	content	7
					14	affect	2
					15	affect	29
				Preferences (43 seconds)	16	affect	4
					17	affect	39

Firstly, Topic A was the topic that YR had more to share because she

knew more, practised more and invested more (see Table 41). Especially in Turn 5,

she was asked about the resources that she got from the university. She talked

continuously for more than one and a half minutes, the longest time for one turn among

all participants. As Example (17) shows, she gave an example of one of her university

professors' utterances and her strong agreement on it after graduation, meaning that

knowledge in the books is unrelated to the actual work. Her tone of voice was

changing from uncertainty of her memories of the professor's words to seriousness of

her realisation of the truth. Her attitude also altered from excitement and emotional to

calmness and helplessness, with her speaking speed, accordingly, from slow in memory to fast in expressing her opinion to slow again in making conclusions.

Example (17):

I:　　　… So do you think that your university provide you with er resources and er like

…

YR:| um I think :: er er { if } as for the resource I think :: um learning language { is is } is only (aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa) er a useful tool |

| { but the } but the knowledge :: I learn from the books er :: it's only |

| after my graduations and when { I go to } er I go to work :: I think :: all these things is just the papers |

| er because er :: that I actually er realize :: that er { the sen } the sentence er from one of my teachers |

| he says :: { all you things } all the things :: you learn from this book |

| { I I } I only remember :: { the book's name is er the book of name } the name of the book is the er commercial English |

| yeah |

| he said :: er { the } er after er you go to the work :: and do your job ::

and { you fi } you find that :: this book is just some piece of papers |

| it have no actual meaning for your job |

| yes |

| that's all |

The other sub-topic of Topic A that she shared a lot was about her comments on current educational situation in China (from Turn 9 to Turn 11), spending 117 seconds in total despite two interruptions of linguistic support (see Example (18). Her tone of voice was even more serious at the beginning of Turn 9. She was very cautious of her expressions and emphasised that it was only her feeling that the students were very stressful nowadays. Her speaking speed was slower in this turn than the others. Besides this, she followed the pattern of 'statement – explanation – conclusion' in answering this question. It showed her clear logic behind and related knowledge about the topic.

Example (18):

I: What do you think of the educational system or the education situation now in China? Generally speaking.

YR: | er |

| only feeling :: I can say this and |

| er er (3s) I'm lucky :: because { I'm I'm not the student in this ti at of this } I'm not the student in this time |

| because er the student at { this speci } this time { they are they have } they are more :: how to say :: they're more impress? |

| yes |

| they have more (2s) :: how to say :: they are more

I: They have more pressure.

YR: | um hum |

| (5s) er I think :: yes :: they have more :: how to say :: they need :: to do (2s) :: they need :: to think more :: and um do more :: if they |

| because { they er the thing } the words :: you said that :: the resource |

| the resource { in } er in this society |

| er er { in } I think :: in Zhuhai er about { half of the about 90 perc } 50% { of the student in of } of the middle school students { will } can :: go to the high school |

| { and the next part and the next } and the other 50% they will :: go to the er school of er like er :: how to say that? |

I: Vocational school.

YR: | yes |

| it's so |

| and so { I that's that's } that's :: why I say :: that um I'm lucky ::
because I'm not the student at this time |

On the contrary, she was much more relaxed and cheerful in discussion of Topic
B and she even laughed when talking about her most impressive travel experience
(see Example (19).

Example (19):

I: So er when you travel with your friends, are you the one who
make the plan?

YR:| I would like :: to be the one *hehehe* |

Such comparison of attitudes reflected her strong emotional investment in
Topic A. Because of the importance, she was scared that her language failed to
express her meanings precisely, as shown from her different topic choices in the self-
evaluation of difficulty of linguistic and conceptual expression.

Furthermore, there were more self-repairs, false starts, repetitions and
pauses in Topic A than those in Topic B, as can be seen in Table 44. These oral
features also reflected her discretion on Topic A. She tried to find the most accurate

way to convey her ideas. Her pauses were mostly distributed on two sub-topics. One

of them was about her comments on the higher education in China, as in Example

(18). As aforementioned, she was extremely careful about her wording, so she

stopped once for a while to adjust her way of expression. The other sub-topic was the

very first one, her memories of university life, as Example (20) displays. For one thing,

she did not remember much about it as she told the interviewer. For another, she may

not be in the mood of interview yet. After moving on to the second sub-topic, she had

much more to share and her speaking speed was faster.

Example (20):

I: So where did you get your education?

YR: | er I get { that } the education of my *(2s)* { in Guangdong } in

Guangdong province |

            | { and } and in the *(3s)* Guangdong University of *(3s)* Finance and

{ Eco } Economics |

In brief, YR spent longer time on Topic A and thus compressed the time of

Topic B mainly due to her perception of the importance of the topic.

As Table 41 displays, the accuracy of YR's performance was unclear

since her ratio of error-free clauses to clauses was higher in Topic A but her errors per

AS-unit were more in Topic A as well, which meant that there may be more errors in

the same sentences. The main reason may be that she did not lay too much stress on

linguistic use in Topic A; instead, her attention was more on the content of the speech because of its importance. With her current language proficiency, the more she talked, the more errors she may make.

This could be confirmed by her types of errors (see Table 43). The overlapping error types between the two topics included number, tense, S-V agreement, infinitive, preposition, part of speech and collocation. Some of them were influenced negatively by her mother tongue — Chinese. For example, there are no inflectional suffixes in Chinese, so the plurality and past tense may be one of the difficulties for Chinese learners, especially in oral English. She attempted to repair the errors by herself but failed in some cases (see Example (21), showing her ability of recognition of such error type. In some other cases like Example (22), she concentrated more on the expression of opinions and thus did not bother to repair herself.

Table 43 YR's Errors

	Topic A: education (total errors: 34)		Topic B: travel (total errors: 25)
Number: 8	e.g.	um er for some people I think :: they need er that *papers*		Number: 3	e.g.	{ this you that } they have a very clear er *plans* for the *travelings*	
Tense: 4	e.g.	he *says* :: (all you things) all the things :: you *learn* from this book		Tense: 7	e.g.	because I *know* :: that oh the news *is* true	
S-V agreement 4	e.g.	after my graduations and when { I go to } er I go to work :: I think :: all these *things* *is* |just the papers		S-V agreement: 2	e.g.	there *is* *stories* about Sichuan	
Infinitive: 1	e.g.	a paper :: that prove you *are* have learned from er er er er er university		Infinitive: 2	e.g.	like they um { to } *to get* in touch with other peoples	
Preposition: 3	e.g.	and so { I that's that's } that's :: why I say :: that um I'm lucky :: because I'm not the student *at* this time		Preposition: 3	e.g.	um because er I will feel afraid :: if *in* some street in some places :: that you never visit	
Part of speech: 1	e.g.	but for some other peoples er they have some *talented*		Part of speech: 5	e.g.	er lot of people they { will } have feeling :: that { they fear } they're *fear* :: to go outside	

Table 43 (Continued)

	Topic A: education (total errors: 34)	Topic B: travel (total errors: 25)
	Collocation: 2	Collocation: 4
	e.g.	{ I } sorry { I don't have a lot } I don't have er (2s) lot of memories about my university :: because { I er it } it was ten years ago :: { since I last since I left the } since I *leave the university*		e.g.	if not :: I would choose :: to *travel with alone*	
	Vocabulary: 2	
	e.g.	because er the student at { this speci } this time { they are they have } they are more :: how to say :: they're more *impress*?		
	Case: 1	
	e.g.	er I get { that } the education of *my* (2s) { in Guangdong } in Guangdong province		
	Article: 6	
	e.g.	{ and } and in *the* (3s) Guangdong University of (3s) Finance and { Eco } Economics		
	Linking: 2	
	e.g.	er *because* er :: *that* I actually er realize :: that er { the sen } the sentence er from one of my teachers		

Example (21):

YR: | { I } sorry { I don't have a lot } I don't have er (2s) lot of memories about my university :: because { I er it } it was ten years ago :: { *since I last since I left the* } *since I leave* the university |

Example (22):

YR: | after my *graduations* and when { I go to } er I *go* to work :: I think :: all *these things is* just *the* papers |

The ways how YR treated her vocabulary problems were diversified and interesting. In Topic A, as Example (23) displays, she mixed up 'certificate' and 'certification', but she made herself intelligible by asking the interviewer for verification and making further explanation.

Example (23):

YR:| um er for some people I think :: they need er that papers |

| { that's } er I do think |

| because :: when you graduate from the university :: you would get { *a the* } *the* certification { *a a a* }*, right?* |

I: Um.

YR: | *a paper :: that prove you are have learned from er er er er er university* |

| I think :: for some people they are useful |

In Example (18), she asked for help directly. She believed that the interlocutor could understand her meanings for they were from the same educational system.

In Topic B, the only case that she needed linguistic prompts was that she could not remember the word 'pandemic' because the word was not that hot in recent years. As shown in Example (24), she did not ask for help but tried to figure out the word by herself. Once she got the word from the interviewer, she became very excited and repeated the word, unlike the previous example in which she just said 'yes' emotionlessly.

Example (24):

YR: | because um { since nine twenty } since five years ago? |

            | ninety { *the the the the* } *the*

I: The pandemic.

YR: | yeah! |

            | the pandemic! |

            | God damns! |

It is claimed that L2 learners' strategic competence derives from L1 acquisition. The strategies adopted differ according to the practical communicative

difficulties and the linguistic resources they possess (Bialystok, 1990; Paribakht, 1985; Young, 1992, February to March). In the play-back session, YR said that in her conversations in L1, she also had such habits when facing vocabulary issues as asking the interlocutor for help, explicitly or implicitly, or explaining her meanings in another way. Hence she was able to transfer a variety of strategies to L2 speech and make use of them flexibly on the basis of her judgement of the contexts.

Table 44 YR's Oral Features

	Topic A: education	Topic B: travel
Self-repairs	number: 14 e.g. | { I I } I only remember :: { *the book's name is er the book of name } the name of the book* is the er commercial English |	number: 7 e.g. | um when you walk in the streets :: you will see many beautiful or { *looking good } er good-looking* boys and boys hehe |
False starts	number: 9 e.g. | because { *they er the thing } the words* :: you said that :: the resource |	number: 4 e.g. | { *and if we we and } and er those sceneries* can :: make me feel :: { *that I }* that this travel um (1s) deserve my time to |

Table 44 (Continued)

	Topic A: education	Topic B: travel
Repetitions	number: 20 e.g. | and so { I *that's that's* } *that's* :: why I say :: that um I'm lucky :: because I'm not the student at this time |	number: 8 e.g. | the place :: { *I I have I have* } *I have* visit or |
Pauses	number: 8 (22 seconds) e.g. | { and } and in the *(3s)* Guangdong University of *(3s)* Finance and { Eco } Economics |	number: 1 (1 second) e.g. | { and if we we and } and er those sceneries can :: make me feel :: { that I } that this travel um *(1s)* deserve my time to |

From the data of words per minute and turns per minute (see Table 41), it

seemed that YR was more fluent in Topic A than in Topic B for she spoke faster with

less turns in Topic A, but meanwhile, there were much more self-repairs, false starts,

repetitions and pauses in Topic A (see Table 44). The number of self-repairs was even

the most compared with other participants. Such situation may, again, be attributed to

her emotional investment in Topic A. There was only a small difference in her words

per minute between the two topics, but her speaking speed varied more in Topic A

with the change of her moods and attitudes towards the sub-topics. Nevertheless, she

had more to share about 'education', so her turns were much less in that topic. The

ratio was even the smallest among all participants. Since she attached more importance to her opinions on the topic, she was so nervous that she made more errors unfortunately.

On the contrary, the topic of 'travel' was rather relaxing. She sounded obviously more relieved and pleased. She was not as nervous as she behaved in Topic A and she even cursed the pandemic as shown in Example (24). Compared with the serious example that she gave in Topic A about the students' pressure at school, she shared an anecdote of seeing a lot of gay couples in her travel as in the following example.

Example (25):

I: Okay. So um which place impress you most?

…

YR:| because hehe um because { I I } I know :: that er { there is a } there is so many gays in the street |

I: Pardon?

YR:| um when you walk in the streets :: you will see many beautiful or { looking good } er good-looking boys and boys hehe |

I: Haha. Okay.

YR: | because I know :: that oh the news is true |

| because it's that :: there are many boys and boys in Sichuan |

| and yeah |

| there is stories about Sichuan |

As aforementioned (see Table 41), YR's lexical variety in Topic A was lower than that in Topic B, perhaps because of the impact of repetitions. As a matter of fact, her TTR in Topic A was the lowest among all participants (see Table 8) and the number of repetitions was the highest. Her thorough consideration brought about careful organisation of language. When she reflected on her performance in the interview, she said that her language could not catch up with her thoughts. As long as she was eager to express herself, her IL became an obstacle. That was why there were much more oral features, especially repetitions and self-repairs, in Topic A than those in Topic B. Example (17) was typical. She quoted her professor's words to convey her comments on the resources that the university could provide. Self-repairs and repetitions were frequent at the beginning when she rushed to express her idea, as proved by her anxious tone of voice, but when she made clear of her meanings, she became calmer and fewer oral features occurred despite the linguistic errors.

Nevertheless, she may regard 'travel' as a more casual topic, so her word choices were more various and she was not that worried about whether her meanings were precisely delivered or not. Her different attitudes towards the topics led to the greatest discrepancy of TTR between topics among all participants.

In summary, YR's case seemed to fit the Discourse Domain Hypothesis to some extent. Comparatively, 'education' could be regarded as her 'domain' topic since her performance was enhanced in this topic. She had more ideas to share and her expressions were more careful. The examples that she gave were more convincing with quotations, data and logic. Even so, there were more linguistic errors and more oral features in Topic A due to her limited language skills. Conversely, when talking about Topic B, she became more relaxed and her tone of voice was more cheerful. She focused more on herself and her wording was more casual. Her IL variation may result from her different attitudes towards the topics. She regarded 'education' as a more serious topic and tried to convey the information in a more precise and objective way, whereas the topic of 'travel' was more personal and daily and she could be unrestrained on what she said. Therefore, importance may be the most influential factor of YR's performance.

4.3.1.2 Profile of LP

LP is a doctor working in a municipal hospital. She had few chances to use English both in her working hours and in her spare time. According to her, it may be more desirable for her to learn to speak local dialects rather than to learn English so as to communicate with the patients more effectively. With the aid of translation tools, she could read English journal articles easily. Hence there seemed to be inadequate incentive for her to put effort into promoting her English proficiency.

The summary of her profile is in Table 45.

Except for structural complexity and turns per minute, LP's IL
performance was slightly better in Topic B. The differences were actually very small,
especially lexical sophistication. All of the influential elements, except for importance,
helped to enhance her performance. Hence her case also accorded to the Discourse
Domain Hypothesis to some extent.

Table 45 Profile of LP

Year of birth	1992	
Age of beginning learning English	6	
Degree of education	M. A.	
Current occupation	doctor	
Standard test scores	19/25	
Interview topics	A: future plan; B: travel	
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 7.4	Topic A: 3.5
		Topic B: 3.9
Structural complexity	Topic A: 36 clauses, 17 AS-units, ratio: 2.12	
	Topic B: 49 clauses, 33 AS-units, ratio: 1.48	

Table 45 (Continued)

Lexical variety	Topic A: 69 word types, 251 word tokens, TTR: 0.27
	Topic B: 93 word types, 284 word tokens, TTR: 0.33
Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 5 academic words, 330 words, ratio: 0.01515
	Topic B: 6 academic words, 395 words, ratio: 0.01518
Correctness rate	Topic A: 25 error-free clauses, 36 clauses, ratio: 0.69
	Topic B: 37 error-free clauses, 49 clauses, ratio: 0.76
Error rate	Topic A: 11 errors, 17 AS-units, ratio: 0.65
	Topic B: 13 errors, 33 AS-units, ratio: 0.39
Words per minute	Topic A: 330 words, 3.5 minutes, ratio: 94.29
	Topic B: 395 words, 3.9 minutes, ratio: 101.28
Turns per minute	Topic A: 10 turns, 3.5 minutes, ratio: 2.86
	Topic B: 21 turns, 3.9 minutes, ratio: 5.38
Expertise	Topic: B
Practice	Topic: B
Importance	Topic: A
Linguistic expression	Topic: B
Conceptual expression	Topic: B

Topic A, 'future plan', was more abstract and complicated to discuss than Topic B, 'travel', according to LP, because one was about something in the future while the other was in the past. She knew more and shared more frequently about her travel experience, so she definitely thought that she did a better job in talking about it. Nevertheless, future plan may be more important to her since the interview happened to be done during the Spring Festival which is Chinese New Year when people are accustomed to make resolutions for the coming year. That could be confirmed by the longer hesitations (see Table 48 and Example (26) and the self-perceived difficulty of linguistic and conceptual expression.

Example (26):

I: And do you have any plan for the coming year?

LP: | in the coming year { I I ha } er I will er *(5s)* :: { s s spend my } spend some time in { my } my work |

            | and I have :: to go to the er *(6s)* er Leizhoushi People Hospital in the Leizhou { to } for my er er *(3s)* for my *(2s)* job :: in order to er *(3s)* (whisper) jinsheng

Her concern about Topic A resulted in more caution in language use, but due to her limited IL proficiency, she needed more time and efforts to organise the discourse, which may bring about richer and more complex sentence structures in return but may increase the risk of making more errors at the same time (see Table

47). Less turns per minute may not mean that she was more independent linguistically in Topic A but was due to the influence of her long pauses. In fact, she talked less in Topic A than in Topic B which could be seen from the total words she uttered.

Such better performance in structural complexity and turns per minute resulting from importance followed the tendency shown in Figure 20, but this factor seemed not to work in the aspect of accuracy.

Table 46 LP's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: future plan (3.5 minutes)				Topic B: travel (3.9 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Holiday plan (116 seconds)	1	content	11	Habit (79 seconds)	1	affect	15
	2	language	36		2	language	4
	3	content	24		3	content	9
	4	content	20		4	language	8
	5	language	19		5	affect	13
	6	language	6		6	language	3
New year resolution (94 seconds)	7	content	54		7	—	2
	8	language	4		8	content	25
	9	content	25	Impressive place (96	9	content	15
	10	content	11		10	—	3

	seconds)	11	content	37
		12	content	5
		13	language	6
		14	—	28
		15	content	2
	Preferences (61 seconds)	16	affect	8
		17	—	4
		18	language	15
		19	affect	8
		20	language	5
		21	language	21

Comparatively, LP needed more linguistic prompts than other participants. Unlike YR, she did not ask the interviewer for help directly. She paused to think about the vocabularies first and if she could not figure them out, she whispered them in Chinese, as Example (26) and Example (27) show.

Example (27):

I: Oh, so do you try to like drive by yourself?

LP: | um no |

| { I I } I don't have a (2s) (whisper) *jiazhao*

I: licence. Okay.

LP: licence |

| I don't have licence :: because I don't have time :: to er get a

licence |

LP was weaker than YR in English proficiency, especially orally. Her way

of dealing with interactive breakdown were different from YR's. Young (1992, February

to March) supposed that L2 learners' strategic competence does not develop with

proficiency level but relies on the linguistic resources at hand based on their

judgement of the real-time problems. LP resorted to such a single strategy because

she knew that she shared the same L1 with the interviewer, so she did not bother to

struggle with the vocabulary, according to her comments.

This habit was common among my students as well. They were

accustomed to turn to Chinese once they lacked linguistic resources in expression.

Such switch of language may be tolerated by some teachers especially in fluency-

oriented tasks and even be welcomed by their classmates for they could understand

each other better. In this circumstance, some teachers may directly tell the students

the English words as the interviewer did in this research in order to save time and

avoid interruption to their thoughts, while some teachers would encourage the

students to adopt communicative strategies to express themselves like using synonyms, making further explanation, using body languages, etc.

In the research, since the interviewer was a Chinese, it gave the participants a chance to adopt such techniques to deal with their linguistic problems. This was not an ideal design. It did not push the participants to their edge of IL capability as Tarone (1983) suggested. Nevertheless, a NS-NNS interaction may increase the stress on the participants. As a matter of fact, some potential participants refused to take the interview when they heard that they may need to speak to a NS, especially those who had few opportunities to get in touch NSs or use English in daily life.

In Topic B, LP became more relaxed gradually, thanks to not only the topic 'travel' but also her own interview state. She dared to ask for further explanation directly as in Example (28).

Example (28):

I: And so when you go travel, do you prefer to go to cities or er to enjoy the natural scenery?

LP: | (whisper) natural scenery… s s s (2s) |

I: Like, do you prefer to

LP: | er { what do yo } *what do you mean?* |

Therefore, it tended be more of a personal L2 strategy that LP resorted to the corresponding Chinese words to express her meanings while YR tried to make further explanation or to ask for help directly. As long as the communication was effective, any techniques should be encouraged, particularly in adult learners' L2 classroom (Ellis, 2003; Hedge, 2001). Besides this, it also displayed the pragmatic competence (Hedge, 2001) of the learners since they were able to choose the most appropriate way to deal with the linguistic contexts independently and flexibly.

Concerning lexicon, even though LP had some difficulties with simple words like 'badminton' or 'distance', she was familiar with professional medical words like 'vomit'. Since 'job' was an acknowledged prototypical 'domain' topic, she may have better mastery of related expressions, but it may need more evidence.

LP's errors (see Table 47) were not as many as was expected, maybe because her production was not as much as other participants'. She expressed her concern about her IL before the interview, which may be the reason why she made a lot of self-repairs of grammar (see Table 48). Most of them were successful, but she still made grammatical errors, indicating that as an L2 learner, her syntactic representation was explicit (Chomsky, 1993). She needed to spare efforts in organizing the discourse consciously when expressing ideas. When she focused more on the content, linguistic problems may be ignored. As in Example (29), she paused for six seconds to think about how to describe her situation, so she forgot to correct her own tense.

Example (29):

LP: | but I :: you know :: I don't like er { take some } I don't like er

sports |

 | so { *I I I don't* } er (6s) *I don't* climb high in the Great Wall |

Nonetheless, when she paid more attention to the grammar, she may be able to realise the errors. As in Example (30), the sentences were relatively easy for her to utter, and thus she noticed her errors and corrected them twice in succession.

Example (30):

LP:| { I } I went to the Beijing :: when I graduated in my er postgraduation |

 | and I { *go* } *went* there with my er classmate |

 | and I think :: er Beijing { *is very* } *was very* interesting |

Table 47 LP's Errors

Topic A: education (total errors: 11)		Topic B: travel (total errors: 13)	
Number: 2	e.g.	er I don't have {any} er any more time :: to make more er *plan* for my holiday		Number: 1	e.g.	er I can er see some er beautiful *place* :: and er eat some er traditional food	
Collocation: 4	e.g.	um in my leisure time {I make I may} (1s) I may want :: {to see some} to *look* some books :: and *listen* some music		Collocation: 3	e.g.	er like some *ancient cultural cities*	
Article: 3	e.g.	and I have :: to go to *the* er (6s) er Leizhoushi People Hospital in the Leizhou {to} for my er er (3s) for my (2s) job :: in order to er (3s)	Article: 4	e.g.	{I} I went to *the* Beijing :: when I graduated in my er {gra} postgraduation	
Part of speech: 2	e.g.	er if I have some time for *relax* :: I want :: to {go to the s} (6s) er go to the sea		Tense: 3	e.g.	the most impressive place :: I *travel* is Beijing	
		Preposition: 2	e.g.	{I} I went to the Beijing :: when I graduated *in* my er {gra} postgraduation	

Many L2 learners in China came across similar status when learning English. They were frustrated at their linguistic competence when they attempted to convey meanings. They may be hindered either by the formation of sentences or by the choice of vocabularies because adult learners suffered from fossilisation to a great extent and Chinese tended to give rise to a negative transfer because of the great differences between the two languages (Gass & Selinker, 1992; Han, 2003, 2004, 2014; Han & Odlin, 2005; Montrul, 2014; Selinker, 1972, 1992).

L1 transfer was reflected in LP's errors as well. Except for the common ones made by Chinese L2 learners like article, preposition, tense, etc., her collocations, as in Example (31) and Example (32), were also typical.

Example (31):

LP: | um in my leisure time { I make I may } (1s) I may want :: { to see some } to *look some books* :: and *listen some music* |

In Chinese, the verb '看' could be translated into both 'see' or 'look' in different collocations, which was emphasised in L2 class, so LP made a repair from 'see' to 'look' consciously. However, it seemed that the verb 'read' did not occur to her. The direct translation of the phrase 'read a book' is '读书' in Chinese. It sometimes is considered to be more formal than '看书', for the former one is often used as a synonym of 'study' while the latter one could refer to reading as a hobby or a daily habit. Hence the phrase 'look a book' was allowed especially in Chinese spoken language.

The other error, 'listen music', was also attributed to the negative transfer of L1 because there was no distinction between transitive or intransitive verbs in Chinese. It was a usual error among Chinese L2 learners.

Example (32):

LP: | { I may enjoy the } I prefer *natural cities* |

| er like some ancient *cultural cities* |

| er just like Yunnan province |

As for Example (32), Chinese attribute was prepositive while that of English was postpositive, so 'natural cities' referred to cities with natural sceneries and 'cultural cities' were cities rich in cultures.

From Table 48, LP's pauses were the longest among all participants, but her words per minute were not the least (see Table 25). Perhaps her speaking speed was relatively fast, and thus her pauses did not impact on the ratio.

Her hesitations in Topic A (see Example (33), was more about the content because as aforementioned, she may be serious but undecided about her future plan, but in Topic B (see Example (34), the pauses were mainly related to linguistic problems. She became clearer about what she wanted to share, so what she needed was to find the most appropriate way to say it.

Example (33):

LP: | in the coming year { I I ha } er I will er *(5s)* :: { s s spend my } spend

some time in { my } my work |

Table 48 LP's Oral Features

	Topic A: education	Topic B: travel
Self-repairs	Number: 5 e.g.	and I have :: to go to the er (6s) er Leizhoushi People Hospital in the Leizhou { *to* } *for* my er er (3s) for my (2s) job :: in order to er (3s)	Number: 4 e.g.	and I { *go* } *went* there with my er classmate	
False starts	Number: 1 e.g.	um { *I* } um { in the } in the holiday I have to (2s) I have :: to work		Number: 4 e.g.	{ *I may enjoy the* } I prefer natural cities |
Repetitions	Number: 8 e.g.	er I don't have { *any* } er any more time :: to make more er plan for my holiday		Number: 9 e.g.	if I have the time :: or { *I* } er I would :: { *choose* } choose the long (2s)
Pauses	Number: 13 (44 seconds) e.g.	er *(4s)* er I *(5s)*		Number: 9 (27 seconds) e.g.	{ I I } I don't have a *(2s)*

Example (34):

LP: | but I :: you know :: I don't like er { take some } I don't like er

sports |

| so { I I I don't } er *(6s)* I don't climb high in the Great Wall |

To sum up, there was no obvious enhanced performance in either topic in

LP's case. The data of the quantitative measures between the two topics were quite

close with a slight advantage in Topic B, confirmed by her topic choices of the

influential factors. She may not think through Topic A, 'future plan', yet, in spite of its

importance, whereas she may be more confident in the discussion of Topic B, 'travel',

as such experience had happened in the past. It could be reflected by her solutions of

linguistic problems. In Topic A, she tended to whisper Chinese when she could not

figure out the English words and waited for the interviewer to provide her with the

answer, but she dared to ask for help directly in Topic B for she may be more relaxed

as the interview went on. Even though LP needed a lot of linguistic prompts, she did

not make many errors and she was able to correct herself for most of the time, which

indicated her satisfactory grammatical competence. However, it did not seem to be

adequate for her to deal with daily communication. She still needed to make explicit

efforts to organise sentences with grammaticality, which was an issue haunting many

L2 learners.

4.3.1.3 Profile of ZM

ZM majored in Business English as an undergraduate but studied law as a postgraduate. Now she is an employee in a university. Like LP, she did not need to use English at all in her daily life, so she said that her English proficiency had deteriorated greatly, especially oral language.

Table 49 displays ZM's data.

Table 49 Profile of ZM

Year of birth	1990	
Age of beginning learning English	9	
Degree of education	M. A.	
Current occupation	University staff	
Standard test scores	19/25	
Interview topics	A: education; B: pet	
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 8.9	Topic A: 6.1
		Topic B: 3.9
Structural complexity	Topic A: 45 clauses, 34 AS-units, ratio: 1.32	
	Topic B: 47 clauses, 33 AS-units, ratio: 1.42	
Lexical variety	Topic A: 103 word types, 325 word tokens, TTR: 0.32	
	Topic B: 105 word types, 317 word tokens, TTR: 0.33	

Table 49 (Continued)

Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 5 academic words, 435 words, ratio: 0.011
	Topic B: 0 academic word, 424 words, ratio: 0
Correctness rate	Topic A: 31 error-free clauses, 45 clauses, ratio: 0.69
	Topic B: 27 error-free clauses, 47 clauses, ratio: 0.57
Error rate	Topic A: 18 errors, 34 AS-units, ratio: 0.53
	Topic B: 21 errors, 33 AS-units, ratio:0.64
Words per minute	Topic A: 435 words, 5.2 minutes, ratio: 83.65
	Topic B: 424 words, 3.7 minutes, ratio: 114.59
Turns per minute	Topic A: 15 turns, 5.2 minutes, ratio: 2.88
	Topic B: 15 turns, 3.7 minutes, ratio: 4.05
Expertise	Topic: A
Practice	Topic: A
Importance	Topic: A
Linguistic expression	Topic: B
Conceptual expression	Topic: B

ZM's situation based on a premise that she supposed that she had much more to share about Topic A, 'education', since she worked in the educational system, but she failed due to limited language proficiency. She expressed her frustration of it, which could also be detected from the eagerness and anxiety in her intonation and self-reported greater difficulties in both linguistic and conceptual expression. Similar to YR, they both regarded 'education' as a serious topic since they were required to make comments on the current educational situation in China. In order to relieve their nervousness and help them to get into the interview quickly, they were asked about the memories of university life first, as could be seen in Table 42 and Table 50. Unlike YR who had a lot of pauses and repetitions because she did not remember much of her university life, ZM was much more talkative in this sub-topic (see Example (35) than the one that needed her to make comments on 'higher education in China' (see Example (36).

Example (35):

I: So what do you think of your university?

ZM: | er { my university my er er er } (4s) I think :: my university is er er perfect |

           | and the er teacher is er professional |

           | and the er classmate also er kindly and helpful |

| and also in the university the environment is er very comfortable ::

and provide me er many opportunities :: to er er er learn all kinds of the

knowledge |

Example (36):

I: OK. And do you think that er the graduates from the university

can er finish their jobs in in a satisfactory way?

ZM: | um yes |

         | yes |

         | yes |

I: And from your from your experience, from your life, do you think

the university graduates have some differences from those who have never

received the university education?

ZM: | yes |

         | yes |

         | er |

I: In what way?

ZM: | ah? |

I: In what way?

ZM: | in what way? |

| er |

Comparatively, ZM was much more relaxed when talking about Topic B, 'pet', even though she had little to share since she had no experience of raising pets. According to her, she was dare to talk more because it was a rather personal and casual topic. Therefore, it seemed that speaker's perception of the degree of formality of the topics was a crucial factor of their performance. Its significance may even exceed expertise and practice as in YR's and ZM's cases. Such seriousness, to some extent, related to emotional investment, and thus importance may be the most decisive influential factor to them, different from the cases in Whyte (1992, April) which emphasised practice more.

ZM chose Topic A as the one with more expertise, practice and importance, but her IL performance was only enhanced in the measures of lexical sophistication, accuracy and turns per minute. Her words per minute in this topic were even the least among all participants (see Table 25).

She produced none of the academic words in Topic B, perhaps because 'pet' was a daily and casual topic to her. She did not need to rack her brains to look for complex expressions and was satisfied with the vocabularies that were familiar and simple to her. Even though the data of lexical variety of the two topics were quite close, Topic B won Topic A slightly in this measure, perhaps promoted by her self-

reported easiness of conceptual expression in the topic, following the tendency that Figure 20 illustrated.

However, the data of accuracy and turns per minute were beyond expectation. The lower error rate in Topic A may not be equal to better performance but perhaps due to her less production. ZM's scores in the standard test was the lowest among all participants (see Table 2), so when she spoke more, she may make more errors.

Additionally, she spent more time on Topic A, but its number of turns was the same as that of Topic B (see Table 50), which may be attributed to her longer hesitations (see Table 52). She paused too much to waste time, and thus she did not convey abundant information as a matter of fact. Since she supposed that Topic B brought her less difficulty in linguistic expression, she was able to produce more on her own initiative, proving the effect of the element on the measure (see Figure 20).

From the types of interview questions, it could be detected that ZM was much more independent in Topic B for all of the questions were interrogative except the last one. On the contrary, in Topic A, she needed three times of linguistic aids, three times of repetitions and once of explanation.

Table 50 ZM's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: education (5.2 minutes)				Topic B: pet (3.7 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Memories in university (109 seconds)	1	content	8	Experience of raising pets (68 seconds)	1	content	2
	2	affect	53		2	—	2
	3	affect	29		3	content	9
	4	language	19		4	—	23
Higher education in China (61 seconds)	5	affect	61		5	affect	8
Necessity of university education (51 seconds)	6	affect	16		6	affect	24
	7	language	4	Friends' pets (25 seconds)	7	content	6
	8	language	5		8	—	1
	9	language	26		9	content	9
University education and work (90 seconds)	10	affect	7		10	content	9
	11	affect	6	Pets' impact on family (130 seconds)	11	content	4
	12	affect	2		12	affect	51
	13	language	7		13	affect	31
	14	language	32		14	affect	37
	15	language	36		15	language	7

ZM had similar habits to LP that she also whispered Chinese when she had no idea what the English words were. After the interviewer provided her with the word, she tried to repeat it, as in Example (37).

Example (37):

ZM: | { um from er not um for it must er } from er different er er (3s)

I: Perspective.

ZM: from different

I: Perspective.

ZM: er { res } pers

I: Perspective.

ZM: um perspective |

However, at the end of Topic A, she seemed to be too frustrated to 'learn' the words, or she may not understand what the interviewer said but did not want to struggle with it. She just said 'yes' and did not echo (see Example (38).

Example (38):

ZM: | er yes er of course |

    | (6s) um { someone } someone finished { the } er his er university

    education will er see the (5s)

I: See the whole picture?

ZM: | *ah?* |

     | *yes* |

    | er in receive the high er reputation and the high position |

The only linguistic prompts offered in Topic B was different (see Example (39). The interviewer may not give the exact words she wanted, so she attempted to utter them on her own. Even though she said the wrong word perhaps because she misremembered the word 'increase', she did not resort to Chinese but pushed herself to the edge of her IL competence as Tarone (1983) expected.

Example (39):

ZM: | um maybe er { it's good for } it's good for the er family er membership |

    | because er sometimes they { s } er regard the pets as er one part of { the } the family |

    | and { they will be } er they will take care of the pet together |

    | and this { can } er can hehehe

I: Make them

ZM: | this will { *ingrace* } *ingrace* the relationship of the family member |

The number of errors, self-repairs, false starts and repetitions (see Table 51 and Table 52) in Topic B was more than that in Topic A. As aforementioned, ZM was more serious with Topic A, so she may be more careful about her language use, while in Topic B, she became more comfortable and relaxed, and thus she may pay more attention to the content rather than the linguistic forms.

Table 51 ZM's Errors

Topic A: education (total errors: 18)		Topic B: pet (total errors: 21)	
Number. 1	e.g. from different um *perspective*		Number: 3	e.g.	and { I will } I also er tell my child er this er *results* :: and I think :: the child understand { the } er that	
Collocation: 2	e.g.	and also in the university the environment is er very comfortable :: and *provide* me er many opportunities :: to er er er learn all kinds of the knowledge		Collocation: 2	e.g.	I can't *receive* this result	
Part of speech: 2	e.g.	you must :: learn the skills from { the er um the the the } the *actually* er works		Part of speech: 3	e.g.	but I never er want :: to have a pet :: because I er *afraid* :: the pet will die someday	
Infinitive: 9	e.g.	something skills { not } not *learn* from book hehehe		Infinitive: 2	e.g.	and maybe the child will learn *to* :: how to take care of the little animals :: or { take care of } take care of others	
Article: 3	e.g.	er { in } in Guangzhou and *the* Shenzhen		Tense: 3	e.g.	and sometimes maybe er { not in not er I } I *didn't* want :: to spend er much time on it	

Table 51 (Continued)

Topic A: education (total errors: 18)		Topic B: pet (total errors: 21)	
Vocabulary: 1	e.g.	*something* skills { not } not learn from book hehehe		Vocabulary: 4	e.g.	this will { ingrace } *ingrace* the relationship of the family member	
		S-V agreement: 3	e.g.	{ and } and er sometimes I see :: er the *pets is* very lovely and cute	
		Preposition: 1	e.g.	so er *for* um this age { I didn't er I will not } I will not allow her :: to have a pet	

Table 52 ZM's Oral Features

	Topic A: education	Topic B: pet
Self-repairs	Number: 5 e.g. | (6s) um { someone } someone finished { *the* } er his er university education will er see the (5s)	Number: 6 e.g. | { it's } er it's very er { *nor nor* } popular |
False starts	Number: 2 e.g. | er { *my university my er er er* } (4s) I think :: my university is er er perfect |	Number: 3 e.g. | and sometimes maybe er { *not in* *not er I* } I didn't want :: to spend er much time on it |
Repetitions	Number: 8 e.g. | something skills { *not* } not learn from book hehehe |	Number: 12 e.g. | and maybe the child will learn to :: how to take care of the little animals :: or { *take care of* } take care of others |
Pauses	Number: 7 (24 seconds) e.g. | er { my university my er er er } *(4s)* I think :: my university is er er perfect |	Number: 0

ZM made no pauses in Topic B. It meant that she was more confident talking about the topic 'pet'. Such performance was supposed to be linked to more frequent practice and more content control, but her topic choices of these elements showed the opposite. Hence it may be attributed to her interview state. Her tone of voice became annoyed and frustrated gradually during Topic A since she was unable to express her ideas with limited IL. When it came to Topic B, her intonation was lively and she made explanations with ease. Even though there were many repetitions and self-repairs, she produced continuous discourse for almost one minute (see Turn 12 and Example (40). Moreover, she was more logical in that she offered her statement and causes step by step.

Example (40):

I: If your if your kid want a pet, would you give give her one?

ZM: | um maybe no hahaha |

I: Why not?

ZM: | er er also is :: because er my er er reason |

        | um as I have say to you :: { I } er I afraid :: that the pet will die one

    day |

        | I can't receive this result |

| and { I will } I also er tell my child er this er results :: and I think ::

the child understand { the } er that |

| so er for um this age { I didn't er I will not } I will not allow her :: to

have a pet |

I: Do you think that a pet would be good for your kid's growth or not?

ZM: | in some way maybe it's good for the er { compa } companion |

| yes |

| and maybe the child will learn to :: how to take care of the little

animals :: or { take care of } take care of others |

| and maybe { he will } she will { be a responsibili } er be responsible

|

In brief, ZM's situation seemed not to confirm to the Discourse Domain

Hypothesis since her performance was not enhanced by the three acknowledged

elements. Comparatively speaking, importance may be more decisive to her IL

variation than expertise and practice. It may be related to her perception of the degree

of formality of the topic. Like YR, she also regarded 'education' as a serious topic to

discuss. She was eager to express her ideas thoroughly and precisely, and thus she

struggled with the language. When she came to a rather casual and daily topic, 'pet',

she was more at ease. She switched her focus from the linguistic production to the

conveyance of information. Therefore, her prosody changed from annoyance to calmness and her expression became clearer and more logical.

4.3.1.4 Profile of JF

JF was a special case in Group 1 because of her job as a university English teacher. Even though she had never been to any English-speaking countries, she had mastered the TL well with so many years of formal and professional language learning and teaching. Compared with others in Group 1, she tended to have more opportunities to speak English, especially during her working time. Such regular practices were expected to keep enhancing her language skills. However, her use of English may be restricted to NNS-NNS interaction, which may leave her with some special features in IL different from those who experienced more NS-NNS communication.

Table 53 shows JF's data.

Table 53 Profile of JF

Year of birth	1990	
Age of beginning learning English	9	
Degree of education	M. A.	
Current occupation	University English teacher	
Standard test scores	23/25	
Interview topics	A: environment; B: public transport	
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 9.2	Topic A: 4.7
		Topic B: 4.5
Structural complexity	Topic A: 90 clauses, 43 AS-units, ratio: 2.09	
	Topic B: 84 clauses, 48 AS-units, ratio: 1.75	
Lexical variety	Topic A: 152 word types, 552 word tokens, TTR: 0.2754	
	Topic B: 154 word types, 555 word tokens, TTR: 0.2775	
Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 7 academic words, 704 words, ratio: 0.010	
	Topic B: 6 academic words, 737 words, ratio: 0.008	

Table 53 (Continued)

Correctness rate	Topic A: 82 error-free clauses, 90 clauses, ratio: 0.91
	Topic B: 80 error-free clauses, 84 clauses, ratio: 0.95
Error rate	Topic A: 10 errors, 43 AS-units, ratio: 0.23
	Topic B: 4 errors, 48 AS-units, ratio: 0.08
Words per minute	Topic A: 704 words, 4.7 minutes, ratio: 149.79
	Topic B: 737 words, 4.5 minutes, ratio: 163.78
Turns per minute	Topic A: 10 turns, 4.7 minutes, ratio: 2.13
	Topic B: 12 turns, 4.5 minutes, ratio: 2.67
Expertise	Topic: B
Practice	Topic: B
Importance	Topic: A
Linguistic expression	Topic: B
Conceptual expression	Topic: B

JF got the highest scores in the standard test (see Table 2). Whyte (1994a) stated that more proficient learners may show greater variation in different topics, but it did not suit JF's situation since her data in all measures between the two

topics were quite close, showing that her IL performance did not diverse to a great extent.

Likewise, JF's situation seemed not to confirm to the Discourse Domain Hypothesis either. Her IL performance in Topic B was slightly enhanced in the aspects of lexical variety, accuracy and words per minute under the impact of the related factors. The other element, importance, as Figure 20 illustrated, gave rise to more complex sentences and less turns per minute in Topic A, but it did not help in increasing her accuracy.

As a lecturer in university, she uttered much less academic words than expected. From my observation, a lot of language teachers tended to use formal words even in oral English. They may be accustomed to the context of language classrooms where they had to teach L2 learners the 'standard' forms. Therefore, they would pay special attention to their own language use. For some university teachers, they needed to teach the subject in English, so they tried to utter the academic words more often so as to give instruction accurately and show their professionalism.

JF seemed not to have such habit. She said that she had delivered lectures related to both topics, 'environment' and 'public transport', even though she seldom discussed them in English in her daily life. Perhaps due to her confidence of her language proficiency, she was quite relaxed in the whole interview, unlike the other participants in Group 1 who may be tense at the beginning. She seemed not to regard the interview as a serious occasion but a casual conversation between friends. Hence

she did not used too many academic words as in her daily work. Even though her topics were also related to Chinese society like YR's and ZM's topic, 'education', she was not that serious and cautious about her production. She even made complaint about the city that she was living in as in Example (41) and Example (42). Her tone of voice was generally delighted and she laughed a lot.

Example (41):

JF: | um how can I say? |

| er the only one thing :: that I'm not satisfied with this place :: is that ::

{ it's } it's too hot *hahaha* especially in summer |

Example (42):

I:　Okay. Okay. So what do you think of the public transport in the place you're living in?

JF: | *oh!* |

| I think :: { that's the } that's { another advan } another disadvantage of Zhanjiang *haha* |

It reflected Douglas' (2004) framework that the speaker develops a discourse domain in a certain context. JF's IL varied due to not only topics but also other contextual elements like interlocutor, setting, purpose, etc. She was able to make appropriate choices of expressions flexibly according to her judgement of the contexts.

JF's turns per minute in Topic A was the least among all participants (see Table 29). She was capable of articulating long speeches on her own, for instance, Turn 6 in Topic A and Turn 2 in Topic B (see Table 54). Her answer generally followed the pattern of 'stating argument – giving reasons or explanations – making conclusions', as in Example (43) and Example (44). It may be attributed to her job which required her to make continuous public speech in logic so as to elaborate knowledge to students.

Example (43):

I: Okay. So er if there is anything that can be improved er about the

natural environment in the place you're living in, er do you have any

suggestions?

JF: | { I think } um I think :: there is one thing { for the } for Zhanjiang :: { to }

to improve |

| and I think :: um maybe { Zhanjiang } the government in Zhanjiang

needs do something about the traveling business in Zhanjiang |

| because :: you know :: I am from Yangjiang, right? |

| and I think :: the traveling business in Yangjiang is better than that

in Zhanjiang |

| er so maybe I think :: er the related authorities or governments or

departments need :: to do something about { the } er the holiday reserve,

{ a ho er some } some places for the traveling people :: { to have a } er to

have a some kind of good rights and entertainments |

| I think :: this is the thing :: { that they that they do } that they need ::

to do about the place |

| um |

Table 54 JF's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: environment (4.7 minutes)				Topic B: public transport (4.5 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Living	1	affect	4	Daily public	1	affect	9
environment	2	language	25	transport (102	2	affect	93
(159				seconds)			
seconds)	3	affect	41	Ideal public	3	affect	28
				transport (28			
				seconds)			
	4	content	26	Preferences	4	affect	35
	5	affect	63	(141 seconds)	5	affect	20

Environmental protection (76 seconds)	6	affect	76		6	language	1
Ideal living environment (47 seconds)	7	affect	3		7	—	1
	8	language	21		8	—	21
	9	—	2		9	affect	5
	10	affect	21		10	language	6
					11	affect	10
					12	language	42

Example (44):

I: Okay. Okay. So what do you think of the public transport in the place

you're living in?

JF: | oh! |

| I think :: { that's the } that's { another advan } another disadvantage

of Zhanjiang haha |

I: Okay, why?

JF: | because :: you know :: { the } the fee { for the for the for the highway no no no no for the for the train } for the high speed train { are so } the fees are so expensive |

| because it asks people too much :: to go to er for example { Zhan er to } to go to Shenzhen or Guangzhou, right? |

| and um we don't have subways in Zhanjiang :: so I think :: um this another problem |

| but I also know that :: we don't have the um preconditions :: for building subways in Zhanjiang :: because we don't have so many people :: living in this city |

| um { maybe } but I think :: { may they may they } er I think :: { they } maybe the government should :: do something about the er bus system in this city |

| and there are too many |

| er er because of this problem may |

| and :: you know :: that the living standards of the people in Zhanjiang are not so high, right? |

| so { they give } some of them cannot afford :: buying cars :: to

commute :: or maybe { to } er to go out :: or even take their kids to

schools |

| so I think :: this a very big problem { in the city } in this city too |

| um |

As for accuracy, in Topic B, JF's error rate was the lowest (see Table 21 and

Table 55) while her correctness rate was the highest (see Table 17), compared with

other participants. It was hypothesised that those in Group 2 would be more proficient

in oral English since they were residing in English-speaking environment and used

English to deal with everything in daily lives. Nevertheless, JF turned out to be the

most excellent one in the aspect of accuracy. It, again, may be influenced by her job.

She spoke English almost every day as an English teacher. Moreover, it may be easy

for the participants in Group 2 to feel satisfied with their IL once it was adequate for

them to communicate with others and tackle daily problems, but JF may aim high and

keep promoting her English proficiency because she had to help other L2 learners to

improve. Therefore, her IL may be reasonably better than other participants, especially

in terms of grammar. Chinese learners of English tended to spend abundant time and

efforts on grammar study because accuracy was emphasised in the examinations.

That was why JF paid close attention to her own syntactic structure and made several

effective self-repairs as in Example (45) and Example (46).

Example (45):

JF: | { and um and I I } and I think :: I don't have anything else :: to complain { about it } er about it :: because er I think ::{ *I'm a satisfy I'm I'm a ve I'm it's I'm very* } *it's very easy for me :: to feel satisfied with my life* haha |

| { I don't } er I don't ask much from life |

Example (46):

JF: | { I } I think :: { I don't er I don't hav } er I don't have the strong awareness :: to protect the environment { *too* } *er either* |

| *I mean either* |

Her errors were more about the inflection which would be easy to ignore in oral language like the singularity and plurality as in Example (47). It sometimes may be her personal habit to add /s/ after nouns because she said that she was not aware of it. University English teachers tended to not make an issue of such pronunciation as language teachers of basic education did. The key of the lectures that JF delivered was on the content rather than language, so she may not bother to correct it.

Example (47):

JF: | and I love oceans and seas |

Table 55 JF's Errors

Topic A: environment (total errors: 10)		Topic B: public transport (total errors: 4)	
Vocabulary: 1	e.g.	er so maybe I think :: er the related authorities or governments or departments need :: to do something about { the } er the holiday *reserve*, { a ho er some } some places for the traveling people :: { to have a } er to have a some kind of good rights and entertainments		Infinitive: 3	e.g.	so { they give } some of them cannot afford :: buying cars :: to commute :: or maybe { to } er to go out :: or even *take* their kids to schools	
Preposition: 1	e.g.	and I think :: um maybe { Zhanjiang } the government *in* Zhanjiang needs do something about the traveling business in Zhanjiang		S-V agreement: 1	e.g.	so { I } I think :: I just mentioned :: there's *subways* hehe	
Part of speech: 1	e.g.	I just er window *shopping* hahaha			
Number: 3	e.g.	and I love *oceans and seas*			
Article: 2	e.g.	{ I } I think :: { I don't er I don't hav } er I don't have *the* strong awareness :: to protect the environment { too } er either			
Collocation: 2	e.g.	{ II } I think :: I just prefer :: to *live in by the sea*			

Even though there were quite a number of repetitions and pauses in both topics (see Table 56), a majority of them were due to her thoughts of content instead of her organisation of language, as Example (48) and Example (49) display. These oral features won her some time to think about the following information that she wanted to convey. It showed that JF was an independent speaker who was good at making use of fillers flexibly.

Example (48):

I: Okay. So er if there is anything that can be improved er about the natural environment in the place you're living in, er do you have any suggestions?

JF: | { *I think* } um I think :: there is one thing { for the } for Zhanjiang :: { *to* } to improve |

Example (49):

I: If you can choose any any place or any environment that you settle settle in, so what's your imagination?

…

JF: | *um (3s) um* or maybe I can :: maybe { *I* } I want :: to *live in (3s) live in (1s)* |

    | no |

| { *I I* } I think :: I just prefer :: to live in by the sea |

| so um |

Table 56 JF's Oral Features

	Topic A: environment	Topic B: public transport
Self-repairs	Number: 8 e.g.	and I think :: um maybe { *Zhanjiang* } the government in Zhanjiang needs do something about the traveling business in Zhanjiang		Number: 11 e.g.	and so we can :: avoid the bad weathers { *in the* } er during the process of commuting	
False starts	Number: 3 e.g.	er so maybe I think :: er the related authorities or governments or departments need :: to do something about { the } er the holiday reserve, { *a ho* er some } some places for the traveling people :: { to have a } er to have a some kind of good rights and entertainments		Number: 11 e.g.	so { *they give* } some of them cannot afford :: buying cars :: to commute :: or maybe { to } er to go out :: or even take their kids to schools	
Repetitions	Number: 16 e.g.	{ *I don't* } er I don't ask much from life		Number: 12 e.g.	because { *they they* } they

		are big cities |
Pauses	Number: 4 (9 seconds) e.g. | and um *(2s)* because I'm just from a nearby city :: so { I thi } I don't think it's much different from my hometown haha |	Number: 3 (4 seconds) e.g. | *(2s)* you mean? |

All in all, there was only slight variation in JF's performance between the two topics, different from what the Discourse Domain Hypothesis stated. Her production may be influenced to a great extent by her job and her English proficiency, apart from the other elements. She produced continuous speech on her own initiative. Her discourse organisation followed a clear logic of 'arguments – supporting details – conclusions', which was a typical explanatory way in teaching. She was able to make effective self-repairs and guarantee high accuracy. Besides this, she could make appropriate choices of vocabularies and sentence structures according to the interactional contexts, indicating that she had a high level of pragmatic competence (Hedge, 2000). Her English proficiency allowed her to be an independent and confident speaker during the whole interview.

4.3.1.5 Profile of LD

Like YR, LD also studied Chinese-English translation for bachelor's degree. After graduation, she worked as foreign trade staff and a civil servant for various years. About five years ago, she quit her job to attend graduate school majoring in Chinese-English translation. Even though she is still a civil servant now, she is considering to become an English teacher. Generally speaking, her frequency of English use was discontinuous. According to her, she thought that her English proficiency was better in school than at work since she spent more time and effort on it then.

LD's data are as follows.

Table 57 Profile of LD

Year of birth	1991	
Age of beginning learning English	10	
Degree of education	M. A.	
Current occupation	Civil servant	
Standard test scores	20/25	
Interview topics	A: music; B: public transport	
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 8.5	Topic A: 4.1
		Topic B: 4.4

Structural complexity	Topic A: 75 clauses, 46 AS-units, ratio: 1.63
	Topic B: 70 clauses, 27 AS-units, ratio: 2.59
Lexical variety	Topic A: 174 word types, 433 word tokens, TTR: 0.40
	Topic B: 194 word types, 510 word tokens, TTR: 0.38
Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 10 academic words, 572 words, ratio: 0.017
	Topic B: 7 academic words, 646 words, ratio: 0.011
Correctness rate	Topic A: 52 error-free clauses, 75 clauses, ratio: 0.6933
	Topic B: 48 error-free clauses, 70 clauses, ratio: 0.6857
Error rate	Topic A: 33 errors, 46 AS-units, ratio: 0.72
	Topic B: 24 errors. 27 AS-units, ratio: 0.89
Words per minute	Topic A: 572 words, 4.1 minutes, ratio: 139.51
	Topic B: 646 words, 4.4 minutes, ratio: 146.82
Turns per minute	Topic A: 15 turns, 4.1 minutes, ratio: 3.66
	Topic B: 9 turns, 4.4 minutes, ratio: 2.05
Expertise	Topic: B
Practice	Topic: B
Importance	Topic: B
Linguistic expression	Topic: B
Conceptual expression	Topic: B

LD chose Topic B consistently in all of the questions about influential factors, so it was expected that this topic could elicit more complex, accurate and fluent production, but according to the data, only structural complexity, words per minute and turns per minute verified the supposition.

LD's structural complexity in Topic B ranked the first among all participants (see Table 4), so was her IL variation between the two topics in this measure. It may be linked to her learning and working experience. She attempted to use heterogeneous syntactic structures (see Example (50) and Example (51) in order to show her language proficiency. This was one of the habits of a great number of Chinese learners of English. They assumed that more complex sentences would win them higher marks in English examinations, so they produced them as many as they could, not only in writing but also in speaking.

Example (50):

LD: | some parents do this :: because they want their children :: to have a better future :: such as to go to a better college or university |

Example (51):

LD: | { the } um (2s) actually { I I } er for myself :: er if I want :: to give you some suggestion on the railway systems :: and that would be :: to lower their prices for more people :: so that { they can } um all of them can take this er railways er system |

Compared with others in Group 1, LD uttered the most diverse academic words, especially in Topic A (see Table 12). Only two of them belonged to sub-list 1 and sub-list 2 respectively. Others scattered from sub-list 6 to sub-list 10. It illustrated that LD tended to use more unusual words to express herself, which may also be impacted by her L2 learning experience as her structural complexity did. There were more writing tasks than oral ones in daily practice which may give rise to L2 learners' tendency of using more formal words.

Like JF, LD possessed the capability of distinguishing language use according to the contexts as well. There were a lot of oral features (see Table 60) in her transcription such as incomplete sentences (see Example (52), informal words (see Example (53), etc. In the latter example, she even made self-repairs from a more formal expression 'going to' to an informal one 'gonna' deliberately.

Example (52):

LD: | of course |

           | music's good |

           | *help you relax* |

Example (53):

LD: | that's the biggest the desire :: they wanna do |

           …

| { I'm not *going* } I'm not *gonna* force my kids :: to do this :: or to do

that |

LD's English proficiency may not as high as JF's, so her discourse was a little bit inconsistent in style. On one hand, she produced long and complex sentences. On the other hand, she emphasised the use of spoken language. Perhaps this was the cause of her lower accuracy compared with JF.

Like JF, LD also needed no linguistic prompts in the interview (see Table 58). Moreover, she was the only one who had an interaction with the interviewer on her own initiative. Other participants may ask for clarity with the questions of 'Pardon?' or 'What do you mean?', but they mainly answered the interview questions one by one. LD, as Example (54) shows, pushed the interview forward by asking interrogative questions to the interviewer.

Table 58 LD's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: music (4.1 minutes)				Topic B: public transport (4.4 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Habits and preferences (87 seconds)	1	affect	5	Daily public transport (135 seconds)	1	affect	3
	2	content	1		2	—	33
	3	—	3		3	—	1
	4	—	15		4	—	14
	5	content	5		5	content	48
	6	content	20		6	content	36
	7	language	14	Long-distance travel (76 seconds)	7	content	38
	8	content	7		8	affect	38
	9	affect	1	Suggestions (52 seconds)	9	affect	52
	10	—	16				
Musical instruments (93 seconds)	11	content	6				
	12	affect	11				
	13	affect	25				
	14	affect	51				

Table 58 (Continued)

Topic A: music (4.1 minutes)				Topic B: public transport (4.4 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Generation gap (63 seconds)	15	affect	63				

Example (54):

I: Do you have any favorite singer?

LD: | singer? |

        | er some of them are Chinese singers |

        | { some } others are er singers from American |

        | *er so do you want me :: to tell you some Chinese or some*

    American? |

I: Any. Any, anyone is okay.

LD: | okay |

        | er such as Taylor Swift and er Adele or Chinese singers Zhang

    Xueyou or Chen Yixun |

Since LD had more content control, more frequent practice and more emotional investment in Topic B, her turns per minute was less and the average duration was longer. However, except for the interruptions, the duration of each turn varied from as short as five seconds (see Turn 1 and Turn 5 in Topic A) to as long as 63 seconds (see Turn 15 in Topic A) in the same topic. It may be impacted by the nature of questions to some extent. For instance, Example (55) was an open question which may encourage a more thorough reply, while Example (56) only elicited a short answer. To a speaker who had more enthusiasm and knowledge of 'music', they may continue to explain why they love a certain kind of music or to suggest some piece of music to the interlocutor. Since it was not LD's 'domain' topic according to her topic choice of the influential factors, she may be unable to offer further information.

Example (55):

I: So it's about Spring Festival. What do you think what do you think of the, do you have any suggestions for the um public transport during Spring Festival?

LD: | well you know :: when { it } er the Spring Festival { is com } is around the corner :: and the public transportation is usually um |

       | the experience about that is quite bad :: because um the traffic jam is too heavy :: and { most of people } some of the people { can } cannot get a ticket { to } er for home |

| er some have :: to stand for long hours on their way home |

| so if I am the one :: who make the decisions :: I would like :: to ask

them :: to choose different time :: to er set up for home |

| such as er some will leave early :: and some will leave several days

later |

Example (56):

I: What kind what kind of music do you like?

LD: | um some pop musics or classics |

LD's ratio of error-free clauses to total clauses in both topics was the

closest in the two groups, but there were ten more errors in Topic A than in Topic B

(see Table 59). Besides the common errors such as number, tense, collocation, etc.,

she made an error of subjunctive. It was a relatively hard grammar for Chinese

learners of English, generally speaking. Even though she did not make it right, she was

dare enough to try complex syntactic structure, in accordance with her ratio of clauses

to AS-unit in Topic B which was the highest among all participants.

The TTR (see Table 57) echoed her boldness. Her TTR was the highest in

Group 1 (see Table 8). Even though JF made fewer errors than LD, she seemed to

possess a list of frequently used vocabulary. Her word types were not as many as

LD's. It may be a negative impact of fossilisation on language teachers who tended to

be accustomed to a certain way of speech since they had to repeat the same lectures

to different classes for several time. Such habitual list of lexica may facilitate them to find the exact words quickly within limited time and thus their speech could keep going more smoothly.

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Table 59 LD's Errors

Topic A: music (total errors: 33)		Topic B: public transport (total errors: 24)	
Number: 11	e.g.	and when I get older ::	prefers those those *kind of er musics* :: that make you relax		Number: 7	e.g.	if the (distance is) *distances* between the *destination* and (the the the the the) the what?	
Collocation: 1	e.g.	that's the biggest the *desire* :: they wanna *do*		Collocation: 1	e.g.	so if I am the one :: who make the decisions :: I would like :: to ask them :: to choose different time :: to er *set up* for home	
Part of speech: 6	e.g.	(some) others are er singers from *American*		Part of speech: 3	e.g.	well to be honest :: I'm *surprise* at the distance :: (the) we have made	
Infinitive: 2	e.g.	If *some kids so talents* in the (mu) instruments :: I think :: it is a perfect choice for them :: to practice (this) er this kind of instruments		Infinitive: 4	e.g.	er I think :: *there's* (a) still *have* a large space :: *to be improve* :: because the (traffic jam) traffic jam in our city (the Guang) the Guangzhou the capital city of Guangdong province is hehe is heavy	
Article: 2	e.g.	that's *the* bit much slower than the pop music		Article: 1	e.g.	er I think :: there's (a) still have a large space :: to be improve :: because the (traffic jam) traffic jam in our city (the Guang) *the* Guangzhou the capital city of Guangdong province is hehe is heavy	
Tense: 2	e.g.	just like me :: when I was young :: I *prefer* pop music :: and always chase the stars		Tense: 1	e.g.	well er in my city the bus transportation, the bus or the subway *will be* the most common er tools :: we use	

Table 59 (Continued)

Topic A: music (total errors: 33)		Topic B: public transport (total errors: 24)	
S-V agreement: 5	e.g.	{ it } *it make* them :: have a promising future		S-V agreement: 1	e.g.	so if I am the one :: who *make* the decisions :: I would like :: to ask them :: to choose different time :: to er set up for home	
Preposition: 2	e.g.	um I think :: we have disputes or some different point *in* all kinds of things not just in music		Preposition: 2	e.g.	well *for* my preference I would like :: to choose the { higher rail high } high-speed { railway transportation } er railway system :: because er it is the most safe tools :: er that we use right now	
Adverb: 1	e.g.	sometimes I can't *just* appreciate the { classes one } classic one		Adjective: 1	e.g.	well for my preference I would like :: to choose the { higher rail high } high-speed { railway transportation } er railway system :: because er it is *the most safe* tools :: er that we use right now	
Linking: 1	e.g.	and if I were them :: *I'm not sure* :: *I will do the same* :: because er children's happiness are the most important for me		Vocabulary: 2	e.g.	er especially in the busy time :: when *commuting*	
		Subjunctive: 1	e.g.	so if I *am* the one :: who make the decisions :: I would like :: to ask them :: to choose different time :: to er set up for home	

According to Table 60, LD's pauses were few in both topics and there was no false start in Topic A. It may mean that she was quite clear about what she wanted to say without much thinking. IL seemed not to be a barrier to her in terms of fluency for she was able to produce speeches on both topics continuously in spite of the error made.

However, she came across linguistic difficulties for several time. In Topic A, she continued her speech by adopting different strategies. For instance, in Example (57), she changed another way to convey her idea. In Example (58), she offered further explanation. In both occasions, she uttered 'how should I say' or 'how to say' in order to win her time to think rather than to elicit reply from the interviewer, according to her reflection.

Example (57):

LD: | some parents do this :: because they want their children :: to have a better future :: such as to go to a better college or university |

| or just for the um |

| { to } to add some :: { what } *how should I say* um |

| { it } *it make them :: have a promising future* |

Table 60 LD's Oral Features

	Topic A: music	Topic B: public transport
Self-repairs	Number: 8 e.g. | sometimes I can't just appreciate the { *classes one* } classic one |	Number: 10 e.g. | er but some friends younger than me they would like :: to choose the public transportations :: because they don't know :: how to drive :: or { *they don't they can't afford er to pay* } they can't afford a private car yet |
False starts	Number: 0	Number: 5 e.g. | well to be honest :: I'm surprise at the distance :: { *the* } we have made |
Repetitions	Number: 9 e.g. | { *but some* } er but some they are not interested in this |	Number: 11 e.g. | er I think { *it's* } er it's time :: to change our view or opinion :: that we should take more public transportations { *ra* } rather than private cars |
Pauses	Number: 1 (4 seconds) e.g. | um *(4s)* so |	Number: 1 (2 seconds) e.g. | { the } um *(2s)* actually { I I } er for myself :: er if I want :: to give you some suggestion on the railway systems :: and that would be :: to lower their prices for more people :: so that { they can } um all of them can take this er railways er system |

Example (58):

LD: | like { some } er some teenagers prefer some pop musics |

            | while the adults or the elderly would { prefer } er prefer classics or

{ slow the musics in er slow } :: *how to say* :: *slow music* |

| *that's the bit much slower than the pop music* |

In Topic B, as Example (59) shows, even though she had already answered the questions, she seemed to be unsatisfied with it. She did not go on perhaps due to her lack of knowledge or language, or simply because she was unconfident about what she said. The question may be quite important to her. She praised the high-speed railway system in China first, and then she gave a suggestion. She may consider it to be inappropriate later, but she could not take her utterances back, so she ended her turn with 'I don't know how to say' to relieve her anxiety and show her uncertainty.

Example (59):

I: What do you think about the um high-speed railway system in China generally?

LD: | well to be honest :: I'm surprise at the distance :: { the } we have made |

            | { the } um (2s) actually { I I } er for myself :: er if I want :: to give you some suggestion on the railway systems :: and that would be :: to lower

their prices for more people :: so that { they can } um all of them can take

this er railways er system |

| { I } *I don't know :: how to say* |

In short, in LD's case, Topic B, as the one having advantages in all influential elements, had seemingly elicited slightly better IL performance than Topic A did, not fitting the Discourse Domain Hypothesis. LD seemed to have strong awareness of her language use because she repeatedly changed her way of speaking, more specifically, the formality of her expression, based on her judgement of the contexts (Douglas, 2004). She was relatively bold in the discourse organisation in that she used a variety of linguistic structures and vocabularies and she asked questions on her own initiative. She made good use of her strategic competence (Hedge, 2001) to deal with breakdowns in the communication flexibly, which showed her high IL proficiency.

4.3.2 Case studies of Group 2

Group 2 included five females who had residing in English-speaking countries for various years after receiving formal English education in China. The specific interview transcriptions of each participant are offered in Appendix E.

4.3.2.1 Profile of LY

LY attended college in Australia and went backpacking in Europe for more than a year after graduation. She settled down in New Zealand for 14 years,

spending the longest time in an English-speaking country among Group 2. At first, she worked in a company and had a rich social life with the locals. She married to a Chinese, so basically, she fitted the example of 'domain' (Richards & Schmidt, 2013) mentioned in 2.7.1 in that she used English in the Employment Domain and Chinese in the Family Domain. Nevertheless, after the pandemic, she quit her job and became a housewife, taking care of her family at home for most of her time. Even though she aimed to create a bilingual environment for her children, she said that they tended to say more Chinese at home, comparatively speaking.

Table 61 shows LY's profile.

Table 61 Profile of LY

Year of birth	1989	
Age of beginning learning English	12	
Degree of education	B. A.	
Current occupation	Housewife	
Standard test scores	21/25	
Residence	New Zealand (14 years)	
Interview topics	A: public transport; B: travel	
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 7.5	Topic A: 2.7
		Topic B: 4.8

Table 61 (Continued)

Structural complexity	Topic A: 68 clauses, 49 AS-units, ratio: 1.39
	Topic B: 100 clauses, 69 AS-units, ratio: 1.45
Lexical variety	Topic A: 127 word types, 311 word tokens, TTR: 0.41
	Topic B: 167 word types, 454 word tokens, TTR: 0.37
Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 11 academic words, 422 words, ratio: 0.026
	Topic B: 8 academic words, 624 words, ratio: 0.013
Correctness rate	Topic A: 52 error-free clauses, 68 clauses, ratio: 0.76
	Topic B: 79 error-free clauses, 100 clauses, ratio: 0.79
Error rate	Topic A: 17 errors, 49 AS-units, ratio: 0.35
	Topic B: 22 errors, 69 AS-units, ratio: 0.32
Words per minute	Topic A: 422 words, 2.7 minutes, ratio: 156.30
	Topic B: 624 words, 4.8 minutes, ratio: 130.00
Turns per minute	Topic A: 16 turns, 2.7 minutes, ratio: 5.93
	Topic B: 16 turns, 4.8 minutes, ratio: 3.33
Expertise	Topic: B
Practice	Topic: B
Importance	Topic: B
Linguistic expression	Topic: B
Conceptual expression	Topic: B

Topic B had advantages in all influential elements in LY's case. The data, however, told a different story. Only structural complexity, accuracy and turns per minute displayed enhanced IL performance in Topic B, different from what Discourse Domain Hypothesis had predicted. Besides this, her difference of structural complexity between the two topics was even the smallest, compared to other participants (see Table 4). Perhaps it was because Topic A, 'public transport', was of a public essence, whereas Topic B, 'travel', was more about her personal experience, so she may be more confident in expression and have more to share. However, as Example (60) shows, she did not travel a lot in recent years, which seemed not to conform to the element of frequent or recent practice.

Example (60):

I: Okay, so do you usually go traveling?

LY: | um *no* |

| recently after having children haha |

| I used :: to travel a lot by myself |

| but after having children and especially during pandemic :: *we don't really travel* |

As shown in the column of 'seconds' in Table 62, LY was quite reserved in the interview, compared with other participants, especially in Topic A, which may be the reason why her interview time of the two topics were not equally distributed. She

offered her answers in a condensed but clear way. Both words per minute and turns

per minute in Topic A were more than those in Topic B, which meant that she talked

faster with less content in Topic A. Her turns per minute in Topic A were even the most

among all participants (see Table 29). It may be attributed to her personal style of

answering questions. Unlike JF who tended to provide detailed explanations on her

initiative, LY needed the interviewer to make further questions so as to elicit more

information (see Example (61).

    Example (61):

I: So do your neighbours and friends er also own their own vehicles or do

they prefer to take the public transport?

LY: | I think :: yes |

    | most people around me they have their own car |

I: Why? Why don't they take the public transport?

LY: | because in my circle of friends they are mostly families with

childrens :: it's not really convenient for them :: to take public transport |

    The longest turn in Topic B (see Turn 7) was more than twice as long as

the longest one in Topic A (see Turn 9 and Turn 10), illustrating that she had much to

share and she was more independent when talking about 'travel'. Different from

Example (61), she offered more details without further questions. Her less words per

minute may be due to her slower speaking speed and more pauses (see Table 64) for

retrieving memory of her travel experience long time ago. Actually, Turn 6 and Turn 7

aimed to answer the same question. The interviewer made a supportive sound which

interrupted the turns because it took her quite a time to think (see Example (62). Even

though she considered it a hard question, she provided a complete answer in a clear

and logical 'statement – reasons – conclusion' pattern.

Table 62 LY's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: public transport (2.7 minutes)				Topic B: travel (4.8 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Daily	1	content	10	Experience	1	content	16
transport	2	content	3	(148	2	affect	3
(42	3	affect	13	seconds)	3	language	2
seconds)	4	content	6		4	—	31
	5	content	10		5	affect	32
Long-	6	content	17		6	affect	23
distance	7	affect	4		7	—	41
transport	8	content	4	Habits (40	8	affect	7
(43	9	language	18	seconds)	9	content	25
seconds)							
China vs	10	affect	18		10	content	8

New	11	content	10	Preferences	11	content	8
Zealand (74	12	affect	14	(57	12	content	6
seconds)	13	content	3	seconds)	13	affect	1
	14	content	11		14	—	5
	15	content	4		15	affect	21
	16	content	14		16	affect	16

Example (62):

I: So is there any city or place that um that turns out to be very different

from your imagination or from your impression?

LY: | um |

| that's a hard question |

| um places (3s) |

| I don't know |

| maybe (3s) |

| very different |

| a place :: that's very different from :: what I expected |

I: Um.

LY:| um |

| maybe New York City hehe |

| cuz New York City is so big |

| and every places :: I go in New York :: they turn out to be very

different |

| it's like :: you go from one city to another city just within the same

city |

| New York is very um (1s) |

| it's very multicultural :: and it 's very um has (aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa)

a huge variety |

| people are very different from all over the world |

| so I think :: New York City really impress me :: and surprises me |

In contrast, as Example (63) displays, she gave a rather objective and

general description of the public transport without any hesitations to a question in

Topic A which was meant to recall her memory as well. This question was easier for

her to answer, according to her, because she often came across delayed or cancelled

trains in her daily life, not just in the past but also recently. Her friends often made

similar complaints with her as well, indicating that frequent practice and recent

rehearsal of the topic may promote the IL performance. It was considered to be

different from the one-time experience that she shared as in the last example.

Example (63):

I: Er so have you ever had some interesting story with er.

LY: | about public transport or? |

I: Er yes.

LY: | interesting story |

            | okay |

            | um I think :: public transport here are really unreliable |

            | they often delayed :: or they just cancel suddenly |

            | so you can miss your appointment very easily :: if you rely heavily

on public transport |

There were also differences in her answer about personal ideas between the two topics. In Topic A (see Example (64), she offered more description of facts to support her opinion, and her intonation was consistently calm and stable. In Topic B (see Example (62), her expressions were more subjective as in 'very different', 'very multicultural', etc. Her intonation changed with her emotions as well.

Example (64):

I: So when you were a kid, you live in China, right? So what do you think of your think of the public transport in your hometown?

LY: | um I think :: compared to New Zealand :: it's very convenient

in China |

| yeah |

| *there are many buses :: and they run or like from morning to night*

|

| *they have many schedules* |

| it's very easy :: to go around with public transport in China |

As for her errors (see Table 63), the most outstanding ones LY made was

the tense in Topic B, which was equal to the total number of errors that she made in

Topic A. The majority of them were about the past tense when she recalled her travel

experiences (see Example (65) and Example (66).

Example (65):

LY: | I actually really *enjoy* :: being in Europe |

| I like Germany |

| um I like um yeah just Germany |

| Germany in general |

| cuz people *are* very nice |

| they*'re* really approachable |

| and I *make* good friends there |

| so { I } I *enjoy* my time :: being in Germany |

Example (66):

LY: | er when I was younger :: I *prefer* :: to travel alone |

| but now I would prefer :: to travel with my family |

I: So why do you er travel alone back then?

LY: | back then? |

| er because I was single |

| { I don't have any } I *don't* have anyone :: to go with me :: and I *prefer* :: to plan my own trip |

| it*'s* more flexible :: and { more } um I *can* just plan it my way |

| so { I don't I don't need to } I *don't* need :: to go along with others' plan |

In the latter example, despite the errors in italics, LY uttered correct form of past tense as in 'when I was younger' and 'because I was single'. It was seemingly that she was able to produce such grammatical form and it was in her syntactic representation. However, in the whole interview, she only made the past tense correctly for four times, much less than the errors.

Table 63 LY's Errors

Topic A: public transport (total errors: 17)		Topic B: travel (total errors: 22)	
Number: 6	e.g.	most people around me they have their own *car*		Number: 3	e.g.	and every *places* :: I go in New York :: they turn out to be very different	
Article: 3	e.g.	I think :: people take *the* flight		Article: 1	e.g.	but after having children and especially during *pandemic* :: we don't really travel	
Tense: 1	e.g.	I'*m live* in Auckland New Zealand		Tense: 17	e.g.	and I *make* good friends there	
Infinitive: 1	e.g.	so you *can* miss your appointment very easily :: if you rely heavily on public transport		Infinitive: 1	e.g.	er *depends*	
Part of speech: 1	e.g.	er the train system is not really *develop*			
Preposition: 1	e.g.	actually *New Zealand* we don't have high speed train here			
S-V agreement: 1	e.g.	um I think :: *public transport* here *are* really unreliable			
Voice: 2	e.g.	they often *delayed* :: or they just *cancel* suddenly			
Collocation: 1	e.g.	um in my leisure time { I make I may } (1s) I may want :: { to see some } to *look* some books :: and *listen* some music			

In the play-back session, she reported that she did not realise her errors and did not care about correcting them because they did not hinder her from having effective communication with others in daily life. Hence past tense may have become a fossilised linguistic item to her. Her speech was still fluent, natural and logical with the errors of tense. Unlike JF, she was satisfied with her language, so she would not attempt to make a difference to it. For L2 adult learners, when conscious effort was absent, fossilisation may be hard to overcome (Han, 2003, 2004; Han & Odlin, 2005; Montrul, 2014; Selinker, 1972; Selinker & Lakshmanan, 1992).

Table 64 LY's Oral Features

	Topic A: public transport	Topic B: travel
Self-repairs	Number: 0	Number: 1 e.g. | um Europe is { *they have a long* } *they have longer* history :: compared to New Zealand |
False starts	Number: 1 e.g. | { *by* } *I mean* :: by flight |	Number: 1 e.g. | it's more flexible :: and { *more* } um *I can* just plan it my way |
Repetitions	Number: 2 e.g. | it's just the { *normal* } er *normal* train |	Number: 7 e.g. | so { *I* } *I* enjoy my time :: being in Germany |
Pauses	Number: 0	Number: 4 (8 seconds) e.g. | um places *(3s)* |

The number of the oral features (see Table 64) in LY's performance was the least among all participants, particularly in Topic A, showing that she was very clear about what she was going to say, partly benefited by her calm attitudes and slow speaking speed. She was able to answer all questions in an easy manner.

In summary, LY's situation confirm to Discourse Domain Hypothesis to a limited extent for her IL production was not apparently better in her consistent topic choice of the influential factors. She adopted different ways of organising her speech. Her answers were brief and objective in Topic A while those in the other topic were more subjective and emotional. Her turns were longer and her prosody changed more in Topic B, showing that she had more to share and attached more importance to it. She made a lot of errors in past tense when she talked about her past travelling experience. Even though she also uttered the correct form for several times, in the majority of contexts, she seemed not to notice the errors nor to repair them. Hence this linguistic item may be fossilised in her IL system.

4.3.2.2 Profile of YJ

YJ studied Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in UK for master degree. After graduation, she went back to China and worked as an English teacher in a tutoring institution for several years. About seven years ago, she moved to Canada with her husband who is also Chinese. Now she works freelance at home.

YJ's data are as follows.

Table 65 Profile of YJ

Year of birth	1989	
Age of beginning learning English	12	
Degree of education	M. A.	
Current occupation	Freelance	
Standard test scores	22/25	
Residence	Canada (7 years)	
Interview topics	A: pet; B: travel	
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 9.1	Topic A: 3.4
		Topic B: 5.7
Structural complexity	Topic A: 88 clauses, 56 AS-units, ratio: 1.57	
	Topic B: 125 clauses, 93 AS-units, ratio: 1.34	
Lexical variety	Topic A: 147 word types, 428 word tokens, TTR: 0.34	
	Topic B: 245 word types, 682 word tokens, TTR: 0.36	
Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 0 academic words, 601 words, ratio: 0.000	
	Topic B: 2 academic words, 959 words, ratio: 0.002	
Correctness rate	Topic A: 81 error-free clauses, 88 clauses, ratio: 0.92	
	Topic B: 101 error-free clauses, 125 clauses, ratio: 0.81	
Error rate	Topic A: 7 errors, 56 AS-units, ratio: 0.13	
	Topic B: 25 errors, 93 AS-units, ratio: 0.27	

Table 65 (Continued)

Words per minute	Topic A: 601 words, 3.4 minutes, ratio: 176.76
	Topic B: 959 words, 5.7 minutes, ratio: 168.25
Turns per minute	Topic A: 17 turns, 3.4 minutes, ratio: 5.00
	Topic B: 18 turns, 5.7 minutes, ratio: 3.16
Expertise	Topic: B
Practice	Topic: B
Importance	Topic: A
Linguistic expression	Topic: B
Conceptual expression	Topic: B

At first, YJ got the topics of 'future plan' and 'family', but she refused to talk about such private topics, so she drew lots again and changed her topics to the current ones. Since the two topics were relatively casual, YJ was quite relaxed in the whole interview, with her tone of voice being consistently calm and stable.

Topic B, 'travel', was supposed to work to YJ's advantage since it conformed to her topic choices of the influential elements. However, such advantage only occurred in the aspects of lexical complexity and turns per minute, different from what the Discourse Domain Hypothesis predicted.

Table 66 YJ's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: pet (3.4 minutes)				Topic B: travel (5.7 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Experience (55 seconds)	1	content	26	Experience (133 seconds)	1	—	1
	2	—	2		2	affect	3
	3	content	4		3	content	4
	4	affect	23		4	—	54
China vs Canada (109 seconds)	5	content	6		5	—	20
	6	content	7		6	affect	15
	7	affect	2		7	—	33
	8	language	15		8	—	3
	9	affect	18	Impressive place (109 seconds)	9	affect	21
	10	affect	5		10	affect	47
	11	affect	17		11	affect	1
	12	content	15		12	language	1
	13	—	24		13	—	3
Personal preferences (40 seconds)	14	interrogative	3		14	affect	
	15	explanatory	23	China vs Canada (99 seconds)	15	content	1
	16	supportive	7		16	content	3
	17	interrogative	7		17	affect	2
					18	—	93

The exceptional element, importance, may be one of the vital reasons of her better performance of structural complexity and accuracy, as Figure 20 displays. Compared with LP and JF whose accuracy was not enhanced by importance, YJ's emotional investment in the topic led her attention to the language uttered and her high proficiency ensured her success in these two measures. Nevertheless, the element did not work on turns per minute for YJ, which was opposite from LP's and JF's cases. Even though the topic 'pet' mattered to her, she did not possess plenty of knowledge of it, nor did she talk about it frequently, so her turns in this topic were shorter in general and the number of turns became more.

One of the most obvious differences in YJ's performance between the two topics was the length of the turn as shown in Table 66. Even though the total number of speech turns was pretty much the same, her ways of answering questions were quite different.

In Topic A, whether she was describing the facts or expressing her opinions, her answers were rather concise. On the contrary, in Topic B, she shared much more in every question. The first sub-topic was about her impressive travelling experience (see Example (67). She talked about her difficult way back to China in 2023 and then her side trip to Korea and her impression on that country and its people. She did not need the interviewer to ask further questions since her reply was very elaborated. The interruptions were more like the interviewer's natural response in hearing an interesting anecdote. She was able to make a speech on her own for more

than two minutes (see the duration of Sub-topic 1). Moreover, there were no pauses during this speech. Her flow of speech was very natural and fluent and her tone of voice was calm and soft. Maybe she had shared this story for several times or perhaps it was her usual way of speech, even when she was sharing such a wonderful experience.

Example (67):

YJ: | well the last year 2023 { I had a } I had a very good trip |

| but the reason for that trip is :: that { I cannot } I couldn't get a ticket { to } to mainland China |

| that time the ticket was super expensive |

| even now is also very expensive |

| so I made a plan |

| um I first book a ticket to Seoul |

| then { I } I stay about { three } four days there |

| four days and four nights |

| and I flew to Hong Kong |

| yeah |

| so I stay in Hong Kong for three days |

| so that's us about eight days East Asia tour around mainland China

|

I: Haha.

YJ: | you know |

| I would say :: yeah yeah |

| { that's a } that's a very impressive trip |

| because before I went to Korea :: I had some assumptions about Korea and Korean people |

| that trip kind of um broke some of my assumptions |

| yeah |

I: What what kinds of?

YJ: | we have stereotype |

| I thought like :: Korean people are rude |

| they're loud |

| yeah |

| some of them are |

| but { they also um-hum they al some of I } one thing :: that impress

me is :: that most of them can speak English |

I: Oh, really?

YJ: | yeah |

| and in their like public services in the subway they have four

different languages |

| they have English, Chinese, Japanese and Korean |

| so if you are a tourist :: you feel no problem :: like finding your way |

| most difficult part is :: that { they } their subway { are } are built so

deep under the ground |

| so deep |

| { you } you might need :: to walk like 10 minutes :: to get to the

platform |

I: Interesting.

YJ: | so everyday is 20k steps |

Similar situation happened in the last sub-topic of Topic B. She compared

the differences between her hometown and the place she was living in for one and a

half minute continuously and independently. Her knowledge and possibly frequent

practice of the content in Topic B seemingly gave her more confidence in speech. Her turns per minute in this topic were much less than those in Topic A, and she was more pleased with her own performance in Topic B as well, according to her self-perceived difficulty of linguistic and conceptual expressions.

Like LY, YJ also made a great number of errors in past tense (see Table 67), compared with other error types. She may not pay too much attention to her grammar when she was busy in sharing her travel experience as Example (67) shows or when she concentrated on improving her expression by changing vocabularies as Example (68) shows. She made a self-repair from a grammatically correct form 'went to' to a wrong form 'visit'. She may consider 'visit' as a more precise word to represent her meanings in that context, but she may not have extra minds to alter it to past tense.

Table 67 YJ's Errors

	Topic A: pet (total errors: 7)		Topic B: travel (total errors: 25)
Number: 2	e.g.	but er my friends they all have *cat* at home		Number: 3	e.g.	we have *stereotype*	
Collocation: 2	e.g.	because it *feel like* :: people choose :: to say :: sometimes er pets can bring some germs or virus		Collocation: 1	e.g.	*the most reason* :: that made me feel :: it's a little bit different from :: what I thought { it } it was :: is :: { it it } it was not that safe	
Tense: 2	e.g.	because of an accident { the the } the cat *jump* out from the window :: and we were in 19th floor		Tense: 15	e.g.	but when we *arrive* :: we found the city is dirty :: { and and } and you *can* see thieves	
Infinitive: 1	e.g.	foreigners um well :: I think :: from my observation { they have they } I see more people :: *having* dogs		Infinitive: 1	e.g.	even now *is* also very expensive	
		Preposition: 2	e.g.	er you'll see :: it's very crowded on the street even *on* small towns	
		Article: 1	e.g.	well *the* last year 2023 { I had a } I had a very good trip	
		Part of speech: 1	e.g.	I like :: *travel* cities er than those like landscapes	
		S-V agreement: 1	e.g.	*it* { fir } first *start* with :: the weather is quite different	

Example (68):

YJ: | my favorite city |

| well um my dream city is New York |

| { I *went* I *went to* } I *visit* New York in 2022 |

| yeah { two thou } 2022 yeah |

Additionally, she also produced the correct forms in both topics as in Example (69) and Example (70), which meant that tense was within her linguistic competence. However, her production of past tense was rather unstable even within one turn. It may be a difficult point to a lot of Chinese learners of English since there were no such inflection in their mother tongue.

Example (69):

YJ: | no |

| I don't have a pet |

| but I think :: it *was* like in 2016 or 15 :: I *had* a cat |

| but I only *had* it for less than three months |

| because of an accident { the the } the cat *jump* out from the window :: and we *were* in 19th floor |

| so the cat *died* |

Example (70):

YJ: | Paris |

| yeah |

| Paris before um we *went* there :: we *thought* :: { it was a } it *was* a romantic city :: as all the art |

| all kind of |

| { we ha } we *have* this fantasy :: before we *went* there |

| but when we *arrive* :: we *found* the city *is* dirty :: { and and } and you *can* see thieves |

| it*'s* not that sweet |

| the most reason :: that *made* me feel :: it*'s* a little bit different from :: what I *thought* { it } it *was* :: *is* :: { it it } it *was* not that safe |

YJ had no pauses in either of the topic (see Table 68), proving that she was a fluent speaker to some extent. Her IL was adequate for her to convey her thoughts clearly.

However, there were a lot of repetitions in YJ's utterances (see (Example (70), the number of which in Topic B were the most compared to other participants. It may be treated as a filler and became a communicative strategy so as to gain her more time to think about what she was going to say next, for these repetitions did not

have any negative impact on the rhythm of her speech or on the information she was

passing on.

Table 68 YJ's Oral Features

	Topic A: pet	Topic B: travel
Self-repairs	Number: 3 e.g. | but I don't think :: { I I } I'll have { *a pet* } *a cat* again |	Number: 9 e.g. | the summer { *can* } *was* really scorching hot |
False starts	Number: 7 e.g. | { *dogs* } *cats* you can just kept them at home, right? |	Number: 3 e.g. | but { *they also um-hum they al* *some of I* } *one thing* :: that impress me is :: that most of them can speak English |
Repetitions	Number: 10 e.g. | { *I would* } *I would* say :: half and half |	Number: 22 e.g. | { *that's a* } *that's a* very impressive trip |
Pauses	Number: 0	Number: 0

To sum up, YJ was a very independent and confident L2 speaker. She

was able to produce long turns continuously and she kept a relaxed and comfortable

attitude during the whole interview. Language seemed not to be a barrier to her for her

IL variation was not salient and the errors were not permanent in her syntactic representation. However, her situation was not in line with the Discourse Domain Hypothesis to a great extent, according to the close data between the two topics. Her production in Topic B may win that in Topic A by a narrow margin because of more content control, more frequent practice and easiness of linguistic and conceptual expressions.

4.3.2.3 Profile of ZR

ZR pursued her master degree in America majoring in Hotel Management after learning Business English in a Chinese university. She stayed in America since then and later married to a Canadian. She has been working in hotels all these years. Because she needs to serve customers from all over the world, her English proficiency, especially oral skill, have been greatly enhanced. She said that she barely spoke Chinese in her daily life except the conversations with her parents, siblings and friends in China.

ZR's data are shown in Table 69.

Table 69 Profile of ZR

Year of birth	1990	
Age of beginning learning English	7	
Degree of education	M. A.	
Current occupation	Hotel director of revenue	
Standard test scores	22/25	
Residence	America (10 years)	
Interview topics	A: family; B: pet	
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 6.7	Topic A: 3.0
		Topic B: 3.7
Structural complexity	Topic A: 53 clauses, 38 AS-units, ratio: 1.39	
	Topic B: 70 clauses, 39 AS-units, ratio: 1.79	
Lexical variety	Topic A: 119 word types, 292 word tokens, TTR: 0.41	
	Topic B: 162 word types, 412 word tokens, TTR: 0.39	
Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 3 academic words, 384 words, ratio: 0.008	
	Topic B: 10 academic words, 547 words, ratio: 0.018	
Correctness rate	Topic A: 47 error-free clauses, 53 clauses, ratio: 0.89	
	Topic B: 61 error-free clauses, 70 clauses, ratio: 0.87	

Table 69 (Continued)

Error rate	Topic A: 9 errors, 38 AS-units, ratio: 0.24
	Topic B: 11 errors, 39 AS-units, ratio: 0.28
Words per minute	Topic A: 384 words, 3.0 minutes, ratio: 128.00
	Topic B: 547 words, 3.7 minutes, ratio: 147.84
Turns per minute	Topic A: 11 turns, 3.0 minutes, ratio: 3.67
	Topic B: 11 turns, 3.7 minutes, ratio: 2.97
Expertise	Topic: A
Practice	Topic: A
Importance	Topic: A
Linguistic expression	Topic: A
Conceptual expression	Topic: A

Relatively speaking, ZR was hypothesised to perform better in Topic A, 'family', according to her topic choices of the influential factors. It was a rather personal topic and ZR was the only one who selected it. However, only lexical variety and accuracy in Topic A was enhanced, far from what Discourse Domain Hypothesis stated.

Table 70 ZR's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: family (3.0 minutes)				Topic B: pet (3.7 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Personal information (83 seconds)	1	content	15	Experience (52 seconds)	1	content	2
	2	content	3		2	affect	8
	3	content	11		3	content	17
	4	content	2		4	affect	4
	5	content	16		5	affect	21
	6	content	9	Friends' pets (63 seconds)	6	content	3
	7	content	5		7	affect	50
	8	language	1		8	content	7
	9	content	21		9	content	3
Chinese vs Americans (97 seconds)	10	affect	87	Opinions on keeping pets (109 seconds)	10	affect	26
	11	—	10		11	affect	83

Even though ZR did not ask for a change of topic like YJ, she may be a little uncomfortable when sharing her family information with the interviewer, like the informants in Whyte (1992, 1992, April) who showed reluctance in discussing private topic with a strange interlocutor.

As in Table 70, she offered brief answers in Turn 1 when asked about personal information (see Example (71), but she produced a continuous speech more than one and a half minute about the comparison between a Chinese family and an American family from Turn 10 to Turn 11 (see Example (72). In the same topic of 'family', she seemed to be more willing to make comments on general situations rather than private ones.

Example (71):

I: Okay. So like, can you tell me something about your family?

ZR: | sure |

            | my dad is a business owner |

            | my mom used :: to be a university professor :: and she um is now a

            homemaker |

            | that's my family |

Example (72):

I: Okay, so do you like, when you compare your own family, your own

     Chinese family and also your husband's family, so do you think there are

some kinds of difference between an American family and a Chinese family?

ZR: | um well (1s) I think :: one thing is for sure :: that love is a universal language :: whether it's a Chinese family or a US family |

| the differences um (5s) well I consider :: the biggest difference would be (3s) um boundaries |

| I think :: western families tend :: to have a { clear } clearer boundaries |

| { they tend to (3s) have a bet they } they tend :: to have a better understanding of um (2s) individualism |

| versus in a Chinese family they will always consider you as their :: you know :: little girl or little boy |

| they will always feel somehow responsible for your behaviour or whatever :: that you do |

| versus in a western family you're on your own |

| you're responsible for your behaviours |

| and um (1s) yeah |

| that's probably |

I: Ok.

ZR: | { in in } independence and individualism are the two main differences between Chinese family and western family |

Such attitude may be one of the reasons that ZR produced short and simple sentences and spoke rather slow in the topic. Nevertheless, since Topic A was more familiar to her than Topic B, she was more satisfied with her linguistic as well as conceptual expression of it. Her TTR in this topic, the same as LY's, was actually the maximum among all participants (see Table 8), indicating that she attempted to utilise rich vocabularies to convey her meanings in a precise manner perhaps due to its importance.

According to Table 70, the majority of the interview question types were interrogative, which meant that ZR did not need any help in language or content understanding. She generally followed the interview pattern and answered the questions one by one attentively.

From the length of each turn, it seemed that ZR uttered more in expressing personal opinions than in describing facts. Besides Example (71) and Example (72), similar situation happened in Turn 3 and Turn 11 of Topic B, as in the following examples.

Example (73):

I: So you, have you ever like raised a pet in your childhood?

ZR: | I have |

          | I used :: to have seven { f } golden fish |

          | and unfortunately because I overfed them :: they die one by one

within one week |

          | yeah hehe |

Example (74):

I: Ok, so like if you. Er, and why do you think that like somebody

would, er, would rather, like, raise a pet than raise a kid?

ZR: | well um (1s) a pet has a shorter lifetime |

          | um a kid requires (1s) a lifetime of commitment |

          | versus a pet lives by ten years 15 years at the most |

          | I think :: that's one big factor |

          | the second factor would be the amount of time and effort :: that's

be required |

          | for a pet you don't necessarily :: to think about :: oh { if I need do }

do I need :: to put the pet to a language school for example :: { to } to

learn some French sure |

| you don't need :: to care about :: oh { if } if I live in the school

district :: { if my } if my kid is able :: to go to (aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa) a

good school :: receive the :: you know :: great education |

| { um you don't necessarily need to } um (2s) it just a lot less

responsibility, a lot er shorter commitment |

| and (1s) overall it's less attention, less effort :: raising a pet :: than

raising a child |

In addition, ZR was logical and clear when making comments in both

topics. In Example (72) of Topic A, she was asked about the differences between a

Chinese family and an American family, but she began with the similarity. Instead of

dwelling on it, she moved on to the differences quickly. She offered her statement,

supporting by her description of western families then Chinese families and back to

western families. At the end, she made a conclusion of her speech. In Example (74) of

Topic B, she offered her first reason directly, followed by the second one. Likewise,

she summarised her opinions at last. Even though there were a few pauses in both

topics (see Table 72), they tended to be for thoughts about content rather than about

language, indicating that ZR's IL was proficient enough for her to express herself.

ZR's errors were relatively few (see Table 71), compared to other

participants in Group 2 (see Table 21). Most of the errors were common ones among

Chinese learners of English like tense, number, etc.

One of her persistent errors was the part of speech of the word 'versus' (see Example (72) and Example (74). She used the word three times as an adverb instead of a preposition. It may have become her personal usual use.

Additionally, her errors seemed to be distributed more in the expression of opinions as shown in Example (72) and Example (74) rather than the description of facts like Example (71) and Example (73). Perhaps it was because the more she uttered, the greater the probability of making errors was, or maybe producing opinions required more efforts than offering facts since reasoning was involved (Robinson, 2001, 2005). She had to pay more attention to the content in order to convey her meanings effectively and precisely.
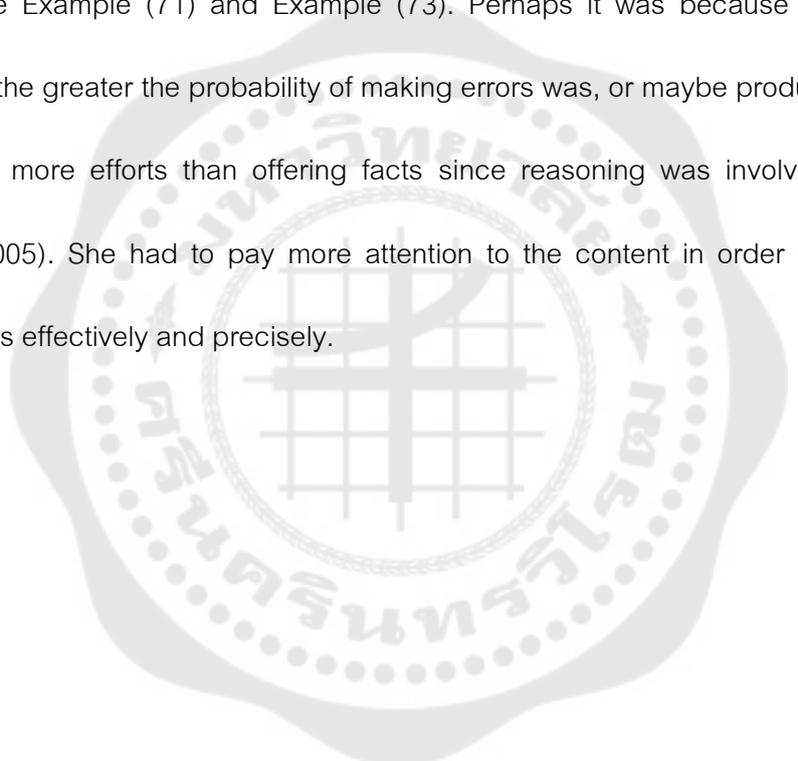
Table 71 ZR's Errors

Topic A: family (total errors: 9)		Topic B: pet (total errors: 11)	
Number: 2	e.g.	I think :: western families tend :: to have a { clear } clearer *boundaries*		Number: 4	e.g.	well I think er :: raising a pet requires a lot of time, efforts and *responsibility*	
Tense: 2	e.g.	versus in a Chinese family they *will* always consider you as their :: you know :: little girl or little boy		Tense: 1	e.g.	and unfortunately because I overfed them :: they *die* one by one within one week	
Article: 2	e.g.	{ in in } independence and individualism are the two main differences between Chinese *family and western family*		Article: 2	e.g.	you don't need :: to care about :: oh { if } if I live in the school district :: { if my } if my kid is able :: to go to { a } a good school :: receive *the* :: you know :: great education	
Part of speech: 2	e.g.	*versus* in a western family you're on your own		Part of speech: 1	e.g.	*versus* a pet lives by ten years 15 years at the most	
Linking: 1	e.g.	they will always feel somehow responsible for your behaviour or whatever :: *that you do*		Preposition: 1	e.g.	versus a pet lives *by* ten years 15 years at the most	
		Infinitive: 2	e.g.	the second factor would be the amount of time and effort :: that's *be* required	

Table 72 ZR's Oral Features

	Topic A: family	Topic B: pet
Self-repairs	Number: 1 e.g. | I think :: western families tend :: to have a { *clear* } *clearer* boundaries |	Number: 3 e.g. | { *you they evoke a sense of* } (2s) um *they evoke* (1s) *a feeling* :: that { *you wanna be protect* } *you wanna protect* it |
False starts	Number: 0	Number: 4 e.g. | um { *and they* } it's just not a great experience { *for a* } for a pet |
Repetitions	Number: 6 e.g. | um { *what do you* } *what do you* mean? |	Number: 13 e.g. | { *not* } *not* right now |
Pauses	Number: 7 (16 seconds) e.g. | the differences um *(5s)* well I consider :: the biggest difference would be *(3s)* um boundaries |	Number: 8 (12 seconds) e.g. | um a kid requires *(1s)* a lifetime of commitment |

There were only a few self-repairs and false starts in ZR's production (see Table 72). It may be related to her job in the hotel which required her to deal with many guests of different L1s every day. She spoke slowly and clearly. Such habits may allow her to have an overall thought quickly about what she wanted to say before she actually said it, and thus she did not need to make changes in the middle of her utterances. As in Example (75), even though there were several repetitions, she did not alter the content or the expression, indicating that she knew exactly what she was going to say and how she wanted to say it.

Example (75):

ZR: | I think :: western families tend :: to have a { *clear* } *clearer* boundaries |

         | { *they tend to (3s) have a bet they* } *they tend :: to have a better understanding* of um (2s) individualism |

Even though her total duration of pauses was close between two topics, the ones of Topic A focused on Turn 10 (see Example (71) while those of Topic B were distributed in different answers. Turn 11 in Topic B (see Example (74), which took similar duration and of similar type as Turn 10 in Topic A, did not include many pauses. It may be because Example (72) was about the comparison between two cultures, whereas Example (74) was more of personal choice. It is acknowledged that 'native culture' is a prototypical domain topic (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986,

October 10-11, 1989; Whyte, 1994b). ZR hesitated more when talking about it, maybe because she was more careful about her expressions in such an important subject matter. The informant in Selinker and Douglas (1985) also displayed similar tendency in discussing his native food.

In brief, the influential elements did not impact ZR's IL variation between the two topics as much as the Discourse Domain Hypothesis stated. Her variant performance may be related to the level of privacy of the topic to some extent. She did not talk more than basic information about her family but was more willing to share her opinions on 'pet'. Besides this, it may also depend on the question types. She produced briefer speeches with fewer errors when describing facts, while her turns lasted longer and more errors and oral features occurred when expressing personal opinions. In the whole interview, she seemed to be clear about what she aimed to say and be capable of organising her speech in a logical and calm manner.

4.3.2.4 Profile of YX

Compared with others in Group 2, YX spent the shortest time in an English-speaking country. She studied TESOL in UK as a postgraduate. After that, she came back to China to work for several years. About five years ago, she moved to Australia because her husband studied there. Her learning experience in UK made her get used to the life abroad easily. She works in a university with colleagues from different countries now, so she uses English a lot on a daily basis. After the end of the pandemic, she took her eldest son to Australia. She said that her son could not speak

English at all when he arrived, but after going to the kindergarten, his English proficiency was greatly enhanced. In order to help him to deal with the cultural shock, YX spoke English with him at home as well. Since he was too young to go to school back in China, he could not read nor write Chinese fluently and sometimes he even refused to speak his mother tongue at home with his Chinese parents. YX realised this problem and began to teach him Chinese intentionally. Later her youngest son was born in Australia. Now both of her sons grow in a bilingual environment.

The following table shows YX's profile.

Table 73 Profile of YX

Year of birth	1989	
Age of beginning learning English	10	
Degree of education	M. A.	
Current occupation	University international admissions advisor	
Standard test scores	22/25	
Residence	Australia (5 years)	
Interview topics	A: environment; B: future plan	
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 8.7	Topic A: 4.6
		Topic B: 4.1

Table 73 (Continued)

Structural complexity	Topic A: 125 clauses, 85 AS-units, ratio: 1.47
	Topic B: 94 clauses, 60 AS-units, ratio: 1.57
Lexical variety	Topic A: 181 word types, 613 word tokens, TTR: 0.30
	Topic B: 184 word types, 550 word tokens, TTR: 0.33
Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 6 academic words, 860 words, ratio: 0.007
	Topic B: 11 academic words, 744 words, ratio: 0.015
Correctness rate	Topic A: 98 error-free clauses, 125 clauses, ratio: 0.78
	Topic B: 65 error-free clauses, 94 clauses, ratio: 0.69
Error rate	Topic A: 29 errors, 85 AS-units, ratio: 0.34
	Topic B: 34 errors, 60 AS-units, ratio: 0.57
Words per minute	Topic A: 860 words, 4.6 minutes, ratio: 186.96
	Topic B: 744 words, 4.1 minutes, ratio: 181.46
Turns per minute	Topic A: 10 turns, 4.6 minutes, ratio: 2.17
	Topic B: 9 turns, 4.1 minutes, ratio: 2.20
Expertise	Topic: B
Practice	Topic: A
Importance	Topic: A
Linguistic expression	Topic: B
Conceptual expression	Topic: B

The data of complexity, both structures and vocabulary, in Topic B were better than those in Topic A in YX's case, in accordance to her topic choices of expertise, easiness of linguistic and conceptual expression, implying that more complex sentence structures and more diversified vocabularies may boost her confidence for they reflect her content control.

On the contrary, practice and importance gave rise to higher means in the measures of accuracy and fluency in Topic A, generally following the tendency displayed in Figure 20. Frequent practice was likely to help her polish her expression and make her more skilful gradually, the effect of which would be strengthened by the motivation resulted from her emotional investment.

YX had some distinctive personal oral habits in both topics. For example, she loved saying 'yeah'. There were 48 'yeah' in total in the interview, and it even appeared eight times in the same turn (see Example (76). Sometimes she used it as a positive answer or as a filler. For the rest of times, it may be an unconscious utterance to her.

Example (76):

YX: :: to eat all |

| *yeah* |

| it's one thing |

| They say :: oh you remember :: you're not in China |

| *yeah* |

| I think :: they seems like :: teasing us |

| like say :: oh it's not in China |

| you're very safe |

| you can eat |

| you even don't need :: to wash :: because there's no |

| *yeah* |

| they're very um organic :: they say |

| *yeah* |

| in China in Shanghai the big city I know :: um *yeah* people wear masks, right? |

| there's a lot of dusts |

| *yeah* |

| I know :: { it's } and a lot of people of course a lot of people |

| um here you can't even |

| especially now like now the weekdays in the morning :: if you go outside :: you can't see people working |

| only for people :: who are calling :: who { like the } for the mommies

{ they } they're walking the dog :: or { walking with um } pulling { the } the

{ baby } er baby er stroller in the street |

| maybe *yeah* |

| only for this group of people |

| no others I think |

| *yeah* |

She also liked to add 'right?' at the end of sentences. In Example (77), she uttered it to ask for clarification, so as the first 'right?' in the Example (78). The rest one may be used to seek understanding from the interlocutor for she could not or did not bother to make further explanation.

Example (77):

I: Okay. Okay. So first let's talk about the environment you live.

YX: | Okay |

          | the environment |

          | yeah |

I: So

YX: | oh |

| I live |

| *right?* |

I: Yeah.

YX: | okay |

Example (78):

I: Okay, so are you accustomed to the environment there? Very soon after you went to Perth.

YX: | went to Perth um |

| easy for me, *right?* |

| it did take quite a few yeah a few days for me :: to finally settle down :: because before I { live } work in Shanghai very, *right?* |

| a lot of people :: and here is very quiet |

These expressions seemed to reflect that she may be used to everyday speech in English, which was aligned with her use of academic words. She produced the largest number of academic word types, compared with other participants (see Table 12), but only one of them belonged to sub-list 9 while others scattered from sub-list 1 to sub-list 4, so relatively speaking, these sophisticated words uttered were of higher frequencies in AWL.

According to the duration of turns in average in Table 74, YX was a very independent speaker for she was able to produce long speeches on her own initiative. Her turns per minute in the two topics were the closest, compared with other participants, showing that she was able to produce considerable content in both topics.

Table 74 YX's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: music (4.1 minutes)				Topic B: public transport (4.4 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Neighbourhood (177 seconds)	1	affect	4	Personal future plan (74 seconds)	1	content	4
	2	—	2		2	language	54
	3	language	35		3	—	16
	4	affect	30	Family's future plan (171 seconds)	4	content	32
	5	content	18		5	affect	53
	6	affect	27		6	affect	15
	7	content	6		7	—	1
	8	affect	55		8	—	30
China vs Australia (99 seconds)	9	affect	34		9	—	40
	10	—	65				

For example, in the second sub-topic in Topic A, she was interrupted by the interviewer's back-channel 'oh', otherwise she could talk about the differences between the environment of her hometown and that of the place that she was living in for more than one and a half minutes.

In Topic B, the one she had more expertise, practice and investment, her speeches were even longer regardless of the interviewer's interruptions. Turn 1 to Turn 3 were about her own future plan, lasting for 74 seconds; Turn 4 to Turn 5 were about her parents' plan, lasting for 85 seconds; Turn 6 to Turn 9 were about her children's plan, lasting for 86 seconds. All of these answers followed a similar pattern. She talked about her general plan and then made further explanation (see Example (79). 'Future plan' may be a hard question for some speakers like LP for it needed thorough thoughts and careful preparation. YX may actually have considered the plans for her family and even discussed them with others since it mattered to every immigrant normally. Therefore, she was able to produce continuous and comprehensive speeches in this topic.

Example (79):

YX: | yeah |

             | we got { our } um our permanent resident um yeah PR { two ye(ar) }
        er last year :: so yeah |

| { de we } we decide :: to apply { for the } um for the PR is :: because we do feel :: here is very good { for for } for kids their growth um |

| because there's not a lot of pressure :: and { they } they do focus on { their } the development of kids, creativity, something yeah so |

| and also I think :: it's good for the eld group yeah :: cuz the { very } um environment is quite good |

| and also hope myself um yes :: cuz my job { is now } is permanent :: so I don't think :: I will move to somewhere |

| yeah |

I: Okay.

YX: | maybe { in the } in the first ten years I will be here |

| if the kids already grow up :: if { they're inde } they're already independent :: then { we probably we think } maybe we go the other country or other city |

| yeah |

In contrast, YX may not be so logical in Topic A. In Example (80), even though she was also able to provide long answer, she seemed not to have a general thought about what she was going to say by moving from one difference to another

without obvious discourse markers. She elaborated on the first point but only

produced two sentences for the second one, and then she immediately skipped to the

third. Most of the sentences were short and simple. Some were even incomplete.

Example (80):

I: So do you remember that about your hometown in China, what

is the, how is the environment there?

YX: | er my hometo |

| actually my hometown is in a small town in Fujian |

| er but I work in Shanghai |

| so my hometown { is } is okay |

| er not a lot of industries |

| not a lot of pollutions |

| but I think :: one thing :: you remind me |

| { like um here right } in China normally we er peel any skin, right? |

| like { for } er cucumber apples |

| but here people never |

| never peel the skin |

| they say :: it's very safe

I: Oh.

YX: :: to eat all |

  | yeah |

  | it's one thing |

  | They say :: oh you remember :: you're not in China |

  | yeah |

  | I think :: they seems like :: teasing us |

  | like say :: oh it's not in China |

  | you're very safe |

  | you can eat |

  | you even don't need :: to wash :: because there's no |

  | yeah |

  | they're very um organic :: they say |

  | yeah |

  | in China in Shanghai the big city I know :: um yeah people wear

masks, right? |

  | there's a lot of dusts |

| yeah |

| I know :: { it's } and a lot of people of course a lot of people |

| um here you can't even |

| especially now like now the weekdays in the morning :: if you go outside :: you can't see people working |

| only for people :: who are calling :: who { like the } for the mommies { they } they're walking the dog :: or { walking with um } pulling { the } the { baby } er baby er stroller in the street |

| maybe yeah |

| only for this group of people |

| no others I think |

| yeah |

Table 75 YX's Errors

	Topic A: education (total errors: 29)		Topic B: travel (total errors: 34)
Number: 6	e.g.	and also they got a lot of *beach*		Number: 1	e.g.	now { I don't ha } I don't feel :: my work really needs me :: to improve :: especially a lot of *Asian* working with me	
Collocation: 2	e.g.	only for people :: who are calling :: who { like the } for the mommies { they } they're walking the dog :: or { walking with um } *pulling* { the } *the* { baby } er *baby* er *stroller* in the street		Collocation: 3	e.g.	but he is only applying for the *tourist visit visa*	
Article: 3	e.g.	*pace* is very slow		Article: 2	e.g.	if the kids already grow up :: if { they're inde } they're already independent :: then { we probably we think } maybe we go the other country or *other city*	
Part of speech: 2	e.g.	and here you will feel :: every day you have a very good *living* here		Part of speech: 3	e.g.	but I talk to them about the benefits for { the elds the the } the *age group*	
Infinitive: 3	e.g.	er { now } as I told you :: now I'm *have* already moved to er Perth in um west Australia		Infinitive: 8	e.g.	if the kids already grow up :: if { they're inde } they're already independent :: then { we probably we think } maybe we *go* the other country or other city	

Table 75 (Continued)

Topic A: education (total errors: 29)		Topic B: travel (total errors: 34)	
Tense: 4	e.g. | er but I *work* in Shanghai |	Tense: 6	e.g. | { de we } we *decide* :: to apply { for the } um for the PR is :: because { we } we *do* feel :: here is very good { for for } for kids their growth um |
S-V agreement: 1	e.g. | you will feel like :: oh { you can't find it's not } also it's not very um convenient sometimes yeah :: if you goes somewhere working or yeah |	S-V agreement: 5	e.g. | so { she } *she* only *feel* very free and happy, relaxed :: when *she meet* Chinese |
Adverb: 2	e.g. | you *even* don't need :: to wash :: because there's no |	Pronoun: 2	e.g. | but *he* is only applying for the tourist visit visa |
Voice: 1	e.g. | { compare to } I think :: *compare* to China :: { you can feel some people will feel } especially for some people they are very sensitive |	Subjunctive: 2	e.g. | if the kids already grow up :: if { they're inde } they're already independent :: then { we probably we think } maybe we *go* the other country or other city |
Preposition: 5	e.g. | only *for* people :: who are calling :: who { like the } *for the* mommies { they } they're walking the dog :: or { walking with um } pulling { the } the { baby } er baby er stroller in the street |	Possessive: 1	e.g. | { de we } we decide :: to apply { for the } um for the PR is :: because { we } we do feel :: here is very good { for for } for *kids their* growth um |
		Vocabulary: 1	e.g. | *age* is very hard :: to improve especially for me |

The number of errors that YX made in Topic B was the maximum (see Table 75), compared with others (see Table 21). The type as Example (81) displays was worth noticing. In China, there was no clear distinction between durative verb 'been in some place' and momentary verb 'come to some place'. The verb '来' (come) could be used in both contexts. Hence many learners of L1 Chinese may make similar errors like 'They married for two years.'

Example (81):

YX:　　　　| um actually my son { my older } er my older boy um { sh } he just came here last year |

　　　　| yeah |

　　　　| she *came* here for one year |

I:　She, she, er sorry, he

YX:　　　　| he he sorry |

I:　　　　he was born in … sorry

YX:　　　　　　| he *came* here for one year |

This example also exposed another common error among English learners of L1 Chinese, the confusion between the masculine pronoun 'he' and the feminine one 'she'. These two words share the same pronunciation 'tā' in Chinese, so in oral

English, Chinese speakers tended not to make careful selection between these two pronouns. That was why both YX and the interviewer suffered from mixing them up.

Table 76 YX's Oral Features

	Topic A: education	Topic B: travel
Self-repairs	Number: 8 e.g. | { but it's } er but here :: you know :: even { *in the city* } *near the city* { they got a very big natural } they got botanic park |	Number: 9 e.g. | but I talk to them about the benefits for { *the elds the the* } *the age group* |
False starts	Number: 13 e.g. | { *people* } *I think* :: { the } the environment is quite um um um :: like I say :: friendly :: I think |	Number: 5 e.g. | and also I think :: it's good for the eld group yeah :: cuz *the* { *very* } *um environment* is quite good |
Repetitions	Number: 7 e.g. | { *I* } *I* personally { I like I like go to er } I don't like :: go to beach very often |	Number: 18 e.g. | { de we } we decide :: to apply { *for the* } um *for the* PR is :: because *we* do feel :: here is very good { *for for* } *for* kids their growth um |
Pauses	Number: 0	Number: 0

Like YJ, YX did not pause once in the whole interview either (see Table 76), showing her fluency to some extent. However, in Topic B, she made many repetitions. As the topic that she had deep consideration, she may be more cautious in organising her expressions so that she could make clear about the content as Example (79) shows. Such repetitions reflected her nervousness and carefulness.

In contrast, there were more false starts in Topic A, the number of which was even the most among all participants. In the interview, it could be detected that YX had a lot to share, but her mouth may not be able to keep up with her mind, so she had to stop and reorganise her utterances every now and then (see Example (82). That may also be the reason why she produced many incomplete sentences (see Example (83). She seemed to rush to express her ideas, so she did not wait for the sentences to finish. Some of the errors of infinitive may be attributed to this reason as well (see Table 75 and Example (84). In the play-back session, she reported that sometimes she had similar problem even when she spoke in L1, especially in the topic that mattered to her. Hence emotions at and attitudes towards the topic may be one of the critical influential factors of her performance.

Example (82):

YX: | okay |

         | er { *now* } *as I told you* :: now I'm have already moved to er Perth in um west Australia |

| { *here is quite* } *here you can* feel the fresh air |

| yes |

| { *people* } *I think* :: { the } the environment is quite um um um :: like

I say :: friendly :: I think |

| yeah |

| { *compare to* } *I think* :: compare to China :: { *you can feel some*

people will feel } *especially for some people* they are very sensitive |

| yeah |

| and here you will feel :: every day you have a very good living here |

Example (83):

YX: | um { so } so I feel :: { it's } it's not really help me :: to improve a

lot |

| but yeah my listening improve |

| but my speaking *I don't think it a lot* |

| *don't think it improve* |

| *be honest* |

| yeah |

Example (84):

YX: | { I } I personally { I like I like go to er } I don't like :: *go* to beach

very often |

All in all, YX's case could not be explained by the Discourse Domain
Hypothesis because of the mismatch between the topic with better performance and
the topic choices of influential factors. Complexity was affected by more expertise,
higher level of linguistic and conceptual expression, while accuracy and fluency were
attributed to more daily practice and more emotional investment. In Topic B, generally
speaking, she was able to produce longer speeches independently and her logic was
clearer and smoother. Generally speaking, she was a confident speaker since she did
not hesitate once in the whole interview.

4.3.2.5 Profile of LF

LF learned Traditional Chinese Medicine in China for bachelor's
degree and Marketing in America for master degree. After graduation, she married to
a local and stayed abroad. She works in a company now, responsible for
communicating between doctors and patients. Like ZR, her customers are also of
different L1 backgrounds. In order to build closer family bond, she teaches her
husband and son Cantonese — her mother tongue. They could understand some daily
expressions in Cantonese gradually, but for most of the time, English is still the major
language used in their daily life.

LF's data were presented in Table 77.

Table 77 Profile of LF

Year of birth	1990
Age of beginning learning English	9
Degree of education	M. A.
Current occupation	Clinic project manager
Standard test scores	22/25
Residence	America (9 years)
Interview topics	A: pet; B: public transport
Interview time (minutes)	Total: 7.1 — Topic A: 3.4 / Topic B: 3.7
Structural complexity	Topic A: 114 clauses, 63 AS-units, ratio: 1.81
	Topic B: 86 clauses, 56 AS-units, ratio: 1.54
Lexical variety	Topic A: 169 word types, 570 word tokens, TTR: 0.30
	Topic B: 178 word types, 524 word tokens, TTR: 0.34
Lexical sophistication	Topic A: 2 academic words, 750 words, ratio: 0.003
	Topic B: 15 academic words, 685 words, ratio: 0.022
Correctness rate	Topic A: 99 error-free clauses, 114 clauses, ratio: 0.87
	Topic B: 63 error-free clauses, 86 clauses, ratio: 0.73

Table 77 (Continued)

Error rate	Topic A: 17 errors, 63 AS-units, ratio: 0.27
	Topic B: 24 errors, 56 AS-units, ratio: 0.43
Words per minute	Topic A: 750 words, 3.4 minutes, ratio: 220.59
	Topic B: 685 words, 3.7 minutes, ratio: 185.14
Turns per minute	Topic A: 12 turns, 3.4 minutes, ratio: 3.53
	Topic B: 15 turns, 3.7 minutes, ratio: 4.05
Expertise	Topic: B
Practice	Topic: B
Importance	Topic: A
Linguistic expression	Topic: A
Conceptual expression	Topic: B

As the following examples display, LF held a very strong negative opinion on raising pets. Her attitudes were firm and her expressions were blunt. It was corroborated by her topic choice of emotional investment. Comparatively, 'pet' may be a more personal topic than 'public transport', so she could say whatever she wanted, which resulted in easiness of linguistic expression. These two elements gave rise to

relatively better performance in the measures of structural complexity, accuracy and fluency, in accordance to what Figure 20 illustrates to some extent.

Example (85):

I: Okay, so first let's talk about pet. So do you raise a pet?

LF: | no :: I don't |

I: Have you ever raised a pet?

LF: | no |

            | no :: I don't |

I: Why?

LF: | I have never |

            | er I don't like pets |

            | it's a lot of work |

            | and I just rather to be myself and my husband and my kids |

I: Okay, so if you if you may want to keep a pet in the future, what kinds of animal do you prefer?

LF: | I prefer something { is not } :: have no fur and er not active |

            | maybe a goldfish |

| if you ask me :: have to choose one |

Example (86):

 I: Okay. So like, have you ever like come talk about their pets with

your friends? Like why do they want to raise a pet?

 LF: | no I don't :: because I don't care |

   | I don't want one |

   | that's all |

Example (87):

 I: So do you think that like er raise a pet would be good for kids'

growth?

 LF: | I guess :: yes |

 …

   | it must be have some benefits |

   | but it's just like not that important to me |

Example (88):

 I: So if if in the future your kids want a pet, do you like wh do you

do you, would you give him like some animal?

LF: …

| so I don't think :: I would say yeah to them |

| oh okay :: yeah :: I'm gonna give you a pet |

| no :: I don't think :: that's :: what it is |

| so { I don't think I would } I don't see :: that I would change my

mind :: to have a pet |

In these examples, LF showed a very tough attitude that she did not like or want a pet, so she did not hesitate for a second in answering the questions and her tone of voice was very determined and straightforward. Unlike the other participants such as LY, YJ, ZR who was calm and slow during the whole interview, LF's intonation changed to a great extent with the content of her speech. Impacted by her strong emotion, she did not pay too much attention to her language use, nor did she care about whether she had explained herself clearly or not. She only focused on showing her stand, so it may reduce the degree of linguistic difficulty.

However, in Topic B, 'public transport', her attitude was not that firm. She eased her tone of voice and slowed down her speaking speed. She seemed to be more rational and more objective, and thus she was more satisfied with her own conceptual expression. In the following examples of Topic B, different from her direct negation in Topic A, she explained her options in different situations.

Example (89):

I: So do you think that public transport is convenient in your city or generally in your, in your con in America? What do you think?

LF: | so { it depen } :: like I say :: *it really depends on the area* |

| like if you live in a city such as er New York City :: I was just mention :: of course :: public transport is more convenient than you owning your own er vehicle |

| but because I'm living in a suburban :: so like people just have their own house :: and they're far away from the grocery store, pharmacy, the doctor's office |

| so I will think :: er a car may be more convenient than the public {trans} transport |

Example (90):

I: And if you want to go travel, do you prefer er taking a plane or a train?

…

LF: | um *it depends* |

| like { if } um it would depends on the time and the price |

| so { if if it's it's the } if the price { not the } it's not inside my consideration :: I would take the fly |

| if price really matter to me :: I probably would take the express train |

|

Even though she showed subjective attitudes towards the public transport in China (see Example (91), she was able to provide her reasons in a logical and calm manner with her own experience as a piece of supporting evidence.

Example (91):

I: So what do you think about China's public transport?

LF: | oh it's amazing |

| because :: you know :: I've been living in China for 20 years |

| you know :: er { be er before I } when I was younger { in er was when I was } when I were a student :: { I take } I took the bus |

| I took the subway |

| I took { the tr } even the train |

| travel with friends and all that |

| and er of course :: er it's so convenient in China |

| I love it |

LF reported that she had more knowledge on Topic B and practised it more frequently in daily life, but only the measure of lexical complexity had an advantage over that in Topic A. It did not follow the description of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis but the tendency of the correlation between expertise, practice and lexical complexity displayed in Figure 20. She may be able to make a more diversified selection of the lexicon when she was not affected by emotions.

LF's speaking speed was the fastest in average among all participants, especially in Topic A (see Table 25). She kept speeding up when she was thrilled. The change of attitudes may be the reason why her IL variation in terms of words per minute between the two topics was the biggest, compared with others (see Table 25).

Table 78 LF's Sub-topics & Turns

Topic A: pet (3.4 minutes)				Topic B: public transport (3.7 minutes)			
Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds	Sub-topics	Turns	Questions	Seconds
Experience (27 seconds)	1	content	2	Daily public transport (64 seconds)	1	content	5
	2	content	2		2	language	15
	3	affect	10		3	content	32
	4	affect	13		4	content	12
Friends' pets (33	5	content	5	China vs America (109	5	affect	32
	6	content	10		6	affect	28

seconds)	7	content	13	seconds)	7	affect	15
	8	content	5		8	—	5
Opinions on	9	affect	33		9	affect	27
keeping	10	content	19		10	—	2
pets (142	11	affect	30	Preferences	11	affect	1
seconds)	12	affect	60	(51 seconds)	12	—	14
					13	affect	6
					14	affect	4
					15	—	26

LF's turns per minute were less in Topic A than in Topic B. The sub-topics

of 'experience' and 'friends' pets' took shorter time perhaps because she was stating

the facts, while 'opinions on keeping pets' lasted the longest in the whole interview

(see Table 78). Even though she emphasised and repeated her stand on not keeping

pets for several times as the examples above show, she was patient enough to explain

her reasons and ideas, especially in the last turn in Topic A (see Example (92). She

was asked about whether she would consider raising a pet if her child wanted one.

She followed a similar pattern of 'statement – reason – conclusion' like JF, LY and ZR

did. She may be emotional early in the interview, but she was logical and reasonable

later.

Example (92):

I: So if if in the future your kids want a pet, do you like wh do you do you, would you give him like some animal?

LF: | I don't think :: giving my kid a pet :: just because he wants it |

| I think :: I need :: to consider the multiple factors such as expense |

| because raising a pet :: not just about you bought them from the store :: or you just like adopt them from { the } er a breeder or anything |

| { it's a lot of res } you know :: it's a lot of responsibility |

| { need to } you need :: to pay for their meal |

| you need :: to buy them insurance |

| you need :: to walk them :: if it's a dog |

| it's a lot |

| and you know :: sometimes the kid just say :: oh I want a toy :: I want a car |

| and that's it |

| but for pets { you } you need :: to take more responsibility beyond that |

| so I don't think :: I would say yeah to them |

| oh okay :: yeah :: I'm gonna give you a pet |

| no :: I don't think :: that's :: what it is |

| so { I don't think I would } I don't see :: that I would change my

mind :: to have a pet |

From Table 79, besides the common errors like tense, number, infinitive, etc., there were some other special errors in LF's utterances. Example (93) was very typical among Chinese learners of English. In Chinese, 'because' and 'so' are used in the same sentence to show the causality, while the two words do not occur together in English.

Example (93):

LF: | but *because* I'm living in a suburban :: *so* like people just have

their own house :: and they're far away from the grocery store, pharmacy,

the doctor's office |

It could also be due to LF's speaking habit. Sometimes she tended to add 'so' in front of the sentences, which may facilitate her logic in speech, as in Example (94).

Table 79 LF's Errors

	Topic A: pet (total errors: 17)		Topic B: public transport (total errors: 24)
Number: 5	e.g.	but *pet* :: you know :: they're animals		Number: 2	e.g.	{ all } I believe :: { all the } all the people in the neighborhood owns *a car*	
Part of speech: 1	e.g.	and yeah { I I I mean I don't I haven't } I mean :: some people they have pets :: only maybe because they're not *marry*		Part of speech: 6	e.g.	er so I live in *suburban*	
Infinitive: 6	e.g.	it must *be have* some benefits		Infinitive: 3	e.g.	like if you live in a city such as er New York City :: I *was just mention* :: of course :: public transport is more convenient than you owning your own er vehicle	
S-V agreement: 1	e.g.	so { sh } according to my husband *she like* the weird animals		S-V agreement: 3	e.g.	you know :: er { be er before I } when I was younger { in er was when I was } when I *were* a student :: { I take } I took the bus	
Preposition: 1	e.g.	but just like in my preference I prefer :: to have kids *over pets*		Preposition: 1	e.g.	so { if if it's it's the } if the price { not the } it's not *inside* my consideration :: I would take the fly	
Article: 1	e.g.	I think :: I need :: to consider *the* multiple factors such as expense		Article: 1	e.g.	oh absolutely { a plane air er } take *the* flight	

Table 79 (Continued)

	Topic A: pet (total errors: 17)		Topic B: public transport (total errors: 24)
Tense: 1	e.g.	because raising a pet :: not just about you *bought* them from the store :: or you just like adopt them from { the } er a breeder or anything		Tense: 3	e.g.	I mean :: { there was } there *was* bus in the downtown area	
Subject: 1	e.g.	er I think :: *most people* :: I know :: *they* have both		Conjunction: 2	e.g.	*unless* er *if* I and my family plan :: to go to New York City or Boston	
		Comparative: 3	e.g.	but the price is like ten times *expensive* than China	
		Vocabulary: 1	e.g.	*otherwise* I don't see that :: { they } yeah they can travel without a car here	

Example (94):

LF: | er *so* I live in suburban |

| *so* there's not really any public er transport in the area |

| *so* I have my own vehicle |

| *so* I just normally travel by my own vehicle |

Example (95) was special. Her answer was understandable, but it seemed that the second sentence was redundant with the conjunction 'otherwise', the double negation and the noun 'a car'. It may be more natural to say 'Otherwise they cannot travel here.' or 'Otherwise I don't see how they can travel here.'. In oral Chinese, when we use 'otherwise', sometimes we would repeat the condition in the pervious sentence, but such repetition was not allowed grammatically in written discourse either.

Example (95):

LF: | I believe :: { all the } all the people in the neighborhood owns a

car |

| *otherwise I don't see that* :: { they } yeah *they can travel without a*

car here |

Like YJ and YX, LF had no pauses at all in both topics either (see Table 80). It showed her general fluency to some extent. She was clear about what she wanted to say and her IL was adequate for her to express herself.

Table 80 LF's Oral Features

	Topic A: pet	Topic B: public transport
Self-repairs	Number: 5 e.g. | like { *she use he* } *she* used :: to have birds or something :: I remember |	Number: 6 e.g. | you know :: er { *be er before I* } *when I* *was younger* { in er was *when I was* } *when* *I were a student* :: { *I take* } *I took* the bus |
False starts	Number: 6 e.g. | and yeah { *I I I mean I don't I* *haven't* } *I mean :: some people* *they have pets* :: only maybe because they're not marry |	Number: 9 e.g. | { *you you* } *I'm sorry* |
Repetitions	Number: 7 e.g. | I mean :: { *it's* } *it's* people's choice, right? |	Number: 7 e.g. | I mean :: { *there was* } *there was* bus in the downtown area |
Pauses	Number: 0	Number: 0

Some of her self-repairs were interesting. In Example (96), she may attempt to figure out the most precise way to express her meanings that she took buses when she was a student. She first tried 'before' to mean 'in the past', but after

she added the clause 'I was younger', she may be afraid that the meaning of the sentence would be changed from 'in the past, when I was younger' to 'in the time when I was a little child' based on the temporary ambiguity caused by the part of speech of 'before' as an adverb and a conjunction. Hence she deleted the word and used the adverbial clause of time directly so as to make the sentence neater and clearer. Then she came across another problem. She may mix the use of adverbial clause of time with the conjunction 'when' and that of condition with 'if', so she repaired 'when I was' to 'when I were' and an error occurred. It showed that LF was proficient enough to detect and correct the grammatical errors on her own, but as an L2 learner, she had to think about the syntactic rules before uttering the sentences. Unlike NSs of English who tend to produce discourse naturally and unconsciously, NNSs suffer from extra linguistically cognitive load when using IL, no matter how proficient they are (Selinker, 1972).

Example (96):

LF: | you know :: er { be er *before* I } *when* I was younger { in er was when I *was* } when I *were* a student :: { I take } I took the bus |

The other one was Example (97). She seemed to have made a hard choice among 'plane', 'airplane' and 'flight', even though these words were all accurate in the context. She may want to find the most precise word to make her speech perfect, or she may have weighted up the three words quickly in her mind when she produced the sentence.

Example (97):

I: And if you want to go travel, do you prefer er taking a plane or a train?

LF: | oh absolutely { a *plane air* er } take the *flight* |

          | { air } *airplane* |

Interestingly, such 'complicated' self-repairs occurred more often in Topic B than in Topic A since she was calmer and more reasonable. Anxiety and excitement may give rise to temporary loss of target-like forms, according to Selinker (1974). Such great change of attitudes and emotions may be the cause of LF's IL variation in terms of correctness rate between the two topics being the greatest among all participants.

In short, LF held a very strong emotion at Topic A, which had a rather great impact on her performance in terms of prosody, speaking speed, errors, etc. Only her lexical complexity was enhanced by expertise and practice, while other measures was affected by importance and easiness of linguistic expression, not in line with what the Discourse Domain Hypothesis predicted. Her different attitudes may exceed other elements to be a critical factor of her performance. Nevertheless, when she calmed down, she was able to express herself in a clear and logical way, and her IL was proficient enough for her to air opinions in details and make rather 'complicated' self-repairs regardless of the errors.

4.3.3 Summary of Qualitative Data

This section has provided the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation with qualitative analysis of each participant's discourse, combining with the quantitative data reported in the last section. It aimed at promoting a more thorough and more comprehensive investigation in the phenomenon on an individual basis and its relationship with the Discourse Domain Hypothesis.

Table 81 The Influential Factors & the Enhanced IL Measures of Each Participant

Group	Name	Influential factors	Measures of enhanced performance
1	YR	expertise, practice, importance, linguistic expression	structural complexity, lexical sophistication, correctness rate, words per minute, turns per minute
		conceptual expression	lexical variety, error rate
	LP	expertise, practice, linguistic expression, conceptual expression	lexical variety, lexical sophistication, correctness rate, error rate, words per minute
		importance	structural complexity, turns per minute
	ZM	expertise, practice, importance	lexical sophistication, correctness rate, error rate, turns per minute
		linguistic expression, conceptual expression	structural complexity, lexical variety, words per minute
	JF	expertise, practice, linguistic expression, conceptual expression	lexical variety, correctness rate, error rate, words per minute
		importance	structural complexity, lexical sophistication, turns per minute
	LD	expertise, practice, importance, linguistic expression, conceptual expression	structural complexity, words per minute, turns per minute

Table 81 (Continued)

Group	Name	Influential factors	Measures of enhanced performance
	LY	expertise, practice, importance, linguistic expression, conceptual expression	structural complexity, correctness rate, error rate, turns per minute
		expertise, practice, linguistic expression, conceptual expression	lexical variety, lexical sophistication, turns per minute
	YJ	importance	structural complexity, correctness rate, error rate, words per minute
	ZR	expertise, practice, importance, linguistic expression, conceptual expression	lexical variety, correctness rate, error rate
2		expertise, linguistic expression, conceptual expression	structural complexity, lexical variety, lexical sophistication
	YX	practice, importance	correctness rate, error rate, words per minute, turns per minute
		expertise, practice, conceptual expression	lexical variety, lexical sophistication
	LF	importance, linguistic expression	structural complexity, correctness rate, error rate, words per minute, turns per minute

Table 81 displays the summary of the participants' enhanced IL performance in the CAF construct that conformed to the influential factors.

LD, LY and ZR were consistent in their topic choices of all influential factors, but not all IL measures were impacted positively. Structural complexity and turns per minute were enhanced for LD and LY; accuracy was enhanced for LY and ZR; words per minute was enhanced only for LD; and lexical variety was enhanced only for ZR. Lexical sophistication was not enhanced in all three cases.

Both YR and ZM were consistent in their topic choices of the three acknowledged elements, i.e. expertise, practice, importance, in the Discourse Domain Hypothesis, in which case only lexical sophistication, correctness rate and turns per minute were promoted for them both.

The ratio of the measures of LP, JF, YJ and YX were quite close in the two topics (see Table 45, Table 53, Table 65, Table 73), which meant that their IL performance may not be mainly influenced by topic change or the elements under investigation.

All these inconsistencies between IL performance and influential factors verified that discourse domains were highly personal (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11) and case study may be the appropriate method to explore it.

Generally speaking, participants in Group 2 were more fluent and more independent in speeches than those in Group 1 for they paused less. They seldom needed linguistic prompts and their IL seemed to be adequate for them to deal with

the interviews. Since language was not a barrier for them in the communication, they were more relaxed, which enabled them to put more focus on the conveyance of information. In contrast, participants in Group 1, except for JF who was apparently more proficient in English than others, suffered from linguistic problems in different degrees. Some of them tended to be frustrated every now and then with the failure of expression of ideas.

Among all of the provided influential factors, frequency may catch more attention since it was related to the other important variable in this research, i.e. the life experience of residing in English-speaking countries. It was reasonably assumed that the frequency of English use of Group 2 was generally more than that of Group 1 since these participants were immersed in the TL environment. They must come across the occasions which required them to communicate in English in daily lives. However, for Group 1, the participants' frequency of English use may be more dependent on their jobs because there were few chances for them to speak English in Chinese context. Comparatively speaking, LP and ZM may speak English less than others in Group 1, but their IL performance in the CAF construct was not the poorest in average except for ZM's correctness rate (see Table 17) and LP's turns per minute (see Table 29). JF may be the one in Group 1 that practised English most frequently, which resulted in the highest correctness rate (see Table 17) and the lowest error rate (see Table 18) among all participants, but her use of English was restricted in her job. She seldom used it in spare time, similar to others in Group 1. As for Group 2, even though LY, YJ

and YX did not marry to locals and thus tended to speak more Chinese at home, it did

not mean that they used English less than the other two (i.e. ZR and LF) who married

to locals since as far as I know, YX, for instance, used English as a working language,

while LF tried to teach her American husband and son Cantonese every now and then.

Furthermore, their IL performance varied in all measures. Therefore, such

inconsistencies may demonstrate that frequency, as an acknowledged element, was

hard to quantify even though it may not rely on subjective sensation as heavily as

'importance' did. Since 'job' was not selected as an interview topic by any of the

participants, their IL production between the two topics may not be so varied as

anticipated, aligned with the quantitative results. Nevertheless, the differences in

performance between the two groups could still led to the assumption that life

experience of residing in English-speaking countries, which in some degree

determined the participants' frequency of English use, may be influential in their IL

performance.

Besides the impact of the factors under investigation, some other possible

causes included but not limited to the following points.

Firstly, the participants' perception of the degree of formality of the topic

determined their attitudes, which had an impact on their prosody, speaking speed,

phraseology and logic. YR and ZM regarded 'education' as a more serious topic, and

thus they were more cautious of their expressions, but YR was more logical for she

was clear of what she wanted to say, while ZM's utterances were disordered as she

was not proficient enough to convey her meanings. ZR's answers in the topic of 'family' was briefer than that of 'pet', especially when she was asked to describe her family status, since it was rather private.

Secondly, the questions differed the way how the participants offered their answers. LP performed better in the topic of 'travel' than that of 'future plan' since the former was about the past while the latter was about the future. LY was more objective in the topic of 'public transport' which was of social and common essence than in that of 'travel' which was more about personal experience. YX organised more logical discourse in the topic of 'future plan', perhaps because she had already thought about it thoroughly. YR, JF, LY, ZR and LF followed the logic of 'statement — explanation — conclusion' when asked for their personal questions.

Thirdly, job may be one of the influential factors. JF, as a university English teacher, had a good command of the language. She was able to alter her expressions flexibly according to the interactive contexts and her performance were excellent in both topics.

Fourth, Chinese tended to bring a transfer to the L2 learners. All participants made grammatical errors caused by the differences between Chinese and English and presented some habits of learning English in schools. LD was accustomed to use long and complex sentences in her utterances in order to show her proficiency. LP and ZM whispered the words in Chinese in order to imply help from the interlocutor.

Fifth, high L2 proficiency may be beneficial to the elimination of differences across topics. JF and YJ were able to produce fluent and complete answers to every question in both topics with a calm manner profited from their language skills.

Sixth, IL performance may change with personal emotions. LF held a strong negative opinion on raising pets, hence her tone of voice was much more passionate and her speaking speed was faster in this topic than in the other one.

The analysis presented, therefore, supported the quantitative finding that the Discourse Domain Hypothesis was not adequate to explain the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation among the participants in this research. Some of the potential causes aforementioned may be linked to the three acknowledged elements, i.e. expertise, practice, importance. For example, the speaker's attitudes and emotions may be based on their perception of the importance of the topic. Job may increase the times of practice of the topic in one's daily life.

Even though there may be doubts about the reliability and the generalisation of the findings because of the small sample, the diversity of IL performance of the participants and the related influential factors discussed may still be possible to bring inspiration to the revision of the current defective Discourse Domain Hypothesis, which would be done in the next chapter.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the research. The quantitative data were collected from comparison of complexity, accuracy and fluency of the participants' IL performance in interviews between two topics and between two groups. No significant results were detected, which meant that there may be no apparent IL variation between topics and the life experience of residing in English-speaking countries may not be a key factor. The qualitative data focused on analysis of each participant's IL performance and other possible influential factors. Not only individual features but also shared patterns were revealed.

In the next chapter, the methodology and main findings of this study will be summarised again in order to draw conclusion about the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter is going to, in the first place, restate the aim and significance of the

study. Then the methods of both theoretical and empirical investigation and the

corresponding findings will be summarised. Thirdly, the possibility of the formulation of a

new hypothesis is discussed by identifying the current problems based on the findings

of previous relevant research and of this study. At last, the limitations of the study will be

reflected on and the directions of future studies will be offered.

5.1 Overview of the Study

This study aims at investigating the topic-based IL variation among Chinese

learners of English. One of the existing explanations of such phenomenon in SLA is the

Discourse Domain Hypothesis put forward by Selinker and Douglas (1985, 1986,

October 10-11) and revised by Whyte (1994a, 1994b) and Douglas (2004) in succession.

The Hypothesis is built on the basis of IL theory (Selinker, 1972). IL is regarded

as a linguistic system of L2 learners that activates when they attempt to produce the TL

they are learning. It is independent from the speaker's NL and the TL norms. One of the

distinctive features of IL is variability. At first, it was explained from the psycholinguistic

perspectives such as language transfer, transfer-of-training, etc. Later, scholars shifted

the emphasis to the sociolinguistic factors because it was discovered that one's IL kept changing with different contexts. Hence the Discourse Domain Hypothesis occurred.

Selinker and Douglas (1985, 1986, October 10-11) used the phrase 'discourse domain' to refer to a 'slice' of the learner's life, based on which IL develops and SLA processes like fossilization, backsliding, etc. occur. The discourse domain is highly personal and dynamic since it changes with one's life experience. This definition lacked theoretical foundation and criteria for identification. Later Whyte (1992) tried to compare the discourse domain with the concept of schema and considered it as a more elaborate, more stable and more important schema. She created a framework (1994a, 1994b) linking the topics and speakers together. A discourse domain was then defined as a topic area characterised by extensive, current and important knowledge. It provided the empirical research with explicit testable variables and predictions. However, Widdowson (2001) supposed that it was the interpretative procedures instead of the schemata themselves that resulted in the IL idiosyncrasy. Hence Douglas (2004) took the interactional contexts into account and redefined the discourse domain as a cognitive construct developing with contexts. The speaker activates a specific discourse domain based on their judgement of the contexts and then adopts proper communicative strategies to deal with the contexts. It enlarged the scope of research from topics to other contextual elements such as settings, interlocutors, purposes, etc.

The Discourse Domain Hypothesis was seemingly reasonable enough to provide an explanation to IL variation and the findings of many empirical research had verified the feasibility of the frameworks. However, the theory itself was defective when it was examined on the basis of the guidelines of theoretical construction in social sciences and SLA studies (cf. (Jordan, 2004; Reynolds, 2016).

Firstly, there was no consistent interpretation of the core concept 'discourse domain'. A '"slice" of one's life' (Selinker & Douglas, 1986, October 10-11) was vague in nature and abstract to identify. An episode of experience may be not so much a discourse domain itself as its influential factor. A 'topic area' (Whyte, 1994a, 1994b) may be too limited to define a discourse domain since topic was not the only factor that affected IL variability. A 'cognitive construct' (Douglas, 2004) seemed to be appropriate to describe a discourse domain, but it gave rise to a new problem of defining 'a cognitive construct' and thus complicated the situation.

Secondly, the statement was not clear enough. There was no systematic operational definition in the original statement. Even though this problem had been solved later, the three elements may not be easy to test empirically, especially importance as being subjective and dynamic. As for the last version, the scope of the concept may be too broad, with so many contextualisation cues at work in daily interaction. Additionally, except for Whyte's (1994a, 1994b) definition, the other two

versions did not mention 'topic' in describing discourse domains, but related empirical studies based on them used topic as one of the main variables, illustrating a mismatch between theory and practice.

Thirdly, it lacked common criteria for the recognition of one's 'discourse domain'. Even though expertise, practice and importance were acknowledged by all three definitions to be the norms that help the researchers as well as the speakers to identify the discourse domains, some empirical results found that there may be ambiguity of the developmental level of one's discourse domains. The boundaries between domains and non-domains were blurred. Besides this, the feature of dynamicity was emphasised, so logically there would not be any criteria that were certain in recognising the discourse domains.

In order to figure out whether the Discourse Domain Hypothesis was adequate enough to explain the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation, this research compared the IL performance of two groups of Chinese adult learners of English between two random topics. Group 1 included five females who had never been to any English-speaking countries, whereas Group 2 were five females who had been residing in different English-speaking countries for various years. Since one's discourse domains were supposed to change with their life experience, this research tried to explore the impact of residence in TL environment on their IL performance. Different from related

previous research (Cornu & Delahaye, 1987; Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Smith, 1989; Whyte, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Zuengler, 1989, 1993a, 1993b; Zuengler & Bent, 1991) which compared the 'major/job' domain and the 'life story' domain, the topics were randomly selected by the participants in this research. It happened that all topics chosen were within the scope of the 'life story' domain, so no participant enjoyed any advantages in the performance. In addition, the focus of the research was IL variation between two topics, so any differences discovered in the participants' performance could lead to the conclusion, regardless of the topics under discussion.

In the research, the participants were delivered questionnaires about their personal information first, including years of learning English, degree of education, job and residential situation. Then they needed to take a standard test on the online Cambridge English Language Assessment so as to guarantee their capability of taking the oral interviews and the recruitment of only learners of upper-intermediate and advanced levels. The main part of the research was ten-minute semi-structured interviews of the two topics that the participants randomly chose. At last, they filled in the other questionnaires about the comparison of expertise, practice, importance, difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression between the two topics interviewed.

The interviews were transcribed into AS-units (Foster et al., 2000) which were believed to be more proper in dealing with oral features. Then the data were analysed in the CAF construct adjusted from previous research (Chiu, 2011; Coxhead, 2000; Elder & Iwashita, 2005; Foster et al., 2000; Michel, 2017; Michel et al., 2007; Raish, 2017; Skehan, 2009; Skehan & Foster, 2005; Van Daele et al., 2007; Whyte, 1994a, 1994b, 1995). The participants' IL performance in the two topics was compared in terms of structural complexity, lexical variety, lexical sophistication, correctness rate, error rate, words per minute and turns per minute. These results would be linked to their choices of topics about the influential factors from the post-interview questionnaires in order to verify the correlation between these factors and their IL production. Besides the quantitative analysis, qualitative case studies of each participant followed so that a more thorough and more comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon and the adequacy of the Discourse Domain Hypothesis in explaining it could be summarised.

The quantitative results did not support the Discourse Domain Hypothesis in that the participants in both groups did not show significant differences in their IL performance between the two topics. It meant that their IL production did not vary much with the change of topics. Besides this, the differences of IL performance between the two groups were not significant either, which indicated that the life experience of

residing in English-speaking countries was not a critical factor of the topic-based IL variation. The possible causes were as follows.

Firstly, as aforementioned, the topics selected by the participants were within the same domain topic — 'life story' domain. It may not elicit great variation in the participants' IL production as those studies which compared that between two domain topics like 'major/job' and 'life story' did.

Secondly, the sample size may be too small to lead to statistically significant results. Since the discourse domain was a highly personal construct, intra-personal differences were supposed to be more worthy of investigation than group patterns. Besides this, this research tried to combine the quantitative and qualitative analysis, so a big sample was not an ideal consideration.

Thirdly, even though none of the influential factors was decisive in the results, comparatively speaking, the impact of the life experience of residing in English-speaking countries surpassed the other elements to some extent according to the variation between two groups, which partly verified the second hypothesis stated in 3.1.1.

It was seemingly that there may be more factors that brought IL variation to the participants. For example, some of them maintained the habits of learning English at school, and they tended to produce long and complex sentences and rich sets of

vocabulary in order to show their language proficiency. Some participants' performance

may be restricted by their language competence since their attention could not be

distributed equally to both content and linguistics. The speed of entering into interview

mode may also give rise to IL variation in different phases of the interview. Hence a

deeper exploration of the phenomenon was demanded.

In the qualitative case studies, it turned out that none of the participants' better

performance in terms of complexity, accuracy, fluency was totally consistent with their

choices of topics of the influential factors including expertise, practice, importance,

difficulty of linguistic expression and that of conceptual expression. Generally speaking,

Group 2 were more independent and more confident in the interviews. They were more

able to produce long continuous speeches on their own and behaved relaxed during the

whole interview. Group 1, except JF who was more proficient in English than others as a

university English teacher, needed more linguistic aids from the interviewer. Some of

them even failed in expressing themselves clearly due to the language barrier. Hence it

verified the quantitative result that the life experience of residing in English-speaking

environment may have an impact on the topic-based IL variation of L2 learners since

Group 2 tended to have more opportunities to discuss the daily topics in English with

NSs. As for the intra-personal performance, the CAF data of LP, JF, YJ and YX were

quite close between the two topics, which meant that topic may not be the main element

of their IL variation, in support of the quantitative result as well. More factors were discovered to play a part in the cases studied.

Firstly, the learners' perception of the topics may affect their attitudes towards the interview. Their prosody, speaking speed, choices of vocabularies and discourse organisation changed with their assessment of the formality degree of the topics.

Secondly, the nature of questions may bring about different kinds of answers. Those of opinions may elicit longer, more subjective and more logical speeches, while those of facts may lead to briefer and more objective replies.

Thirdly, occupations may be a crucial factor. Those learners whose jobs needed to deal with people and issues in English on a daily basis may have advantages in their performance.

Fourthly, learners' production may be affected by the negative transfer of L1s. Different norms among one's NL, TL and IL were likely to increase difficulties in their L2 learning.

Fifthly, IL variation between topics may be mitigated by high language proficiency. Even though one was not familiar with the topic, they may still be able to produce accurate and fluent speeches with language skills.

Sixthly, strong emotions may give rise to unusual language behaviours. It may change the way how the learner expressed ideas.

In conclusion, theoretically speaking, the Discourse Domain Hypothesis was defective. There are inconsistent interpretations of the concept, unclear statements and unsatisfactory criteria for discourse domain recognition. Empirically speaking, the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation was not apparent in the sample and the Hypothesis was not adequate enough to explain the findings. Apart from the life experience of residing in English-speaking environment, there were more factors at work at the same time.

5.2 The Revised Discourse Domain Hypothesis

As what has been discussed in 2.7, 'discourse domain' may be a proper term to refer to the concept of cognitive nature that promotes the IL development. However, a cognitive construct cannot be identified as an entity, which increases the difficulty of research. According to Occam's Razor, it is not necessary to add such a term to describe or explain phenomena. Instead of identifying domain topics and listing the appropriate criteria to do so, it may be better to discard the concept of 'discourse domain' and lay the emphasis on 'topic'. It is the main variable in the relevant empirical research but it is rarely mentioned in the statement of the current Discourse Domain Hypothesis.

There are three acknowledged discourse domains in the related studies: major/job, life story, native cultures (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11, 1989; Whyte, 1994b), from which great IL variation has been detected. However, such classification exposes serious problems.

Firstly, there is no clear way to categorise discourse domains, which blocks the way of forming a theory in the first step. One could not actually distinguish 'major/job' from 'life story' since the former is a part of the latter. All aspects of one's 'major/job' and 'life story' are bonded with their 'native cultures' closely. For example, 'sports' may be a 'life story' topic to the mass but belongs to a 'major/job' domain for a student of physical education or a referee of sports matches. Their habits of and attitudes towards 'sports' must be influenced by the sports culture of the country. If there is no certain typology of the concept, the predictions of future events and the explanations of past events cannot be made and the sense of understanding cannot be achieved (Reynolds, 2016).

Secondly, 'major/job' may be a relatively restricted discourse domain, but topics of 'life story' and 'native cultures' are too broad as a basis to design empirical research and find patterns. For instance, 'hobby' was one of the comparative items in Cornu and Delahaye (1987) and 'food' was in Selinker and Douglas (1985), Zuengler and Bent (1991) and Zuengler (1993a). Even with topics as simple and daily as such could the researchers detect complicated patterns, let alone the wider variety of options in the

designs like 'topics of importance/unimportance' (Ebsworth & Starbuck, 1989), 'topics in the textbook' (Whyte, 1994a, 1994b, 1995), 'familiar/unfamiliar topics' (Chiu, 2011). Besides this, 'hobby' and 'food' were not a non-domain topic in the strict sense if they were classified into the 'life story' domain, so such variation did not seem to result from a domain topic versus a non-domain topic but two different domain topics. Better performance found in the 'major/job' topic but not in the 'hobby'/'food' topic was paradoxical to the Discourse Domain Hypothesis that learners' IL would be enhanced when talking about domain topics.

Last but not least, even though there may possibly be clear boundaries between discourse domains, the learners' speech cannot be controlled. Their IL production may not be shaped only by the topic itself but also by the questions asked. For example, an informant linked his answer in a non-domain topic about a folk tale to his domain topic 'job' as a psychiatrist by describing the psychological reactions from children when listening to the tale in Whyte (1992, April). In the pilot study of this research, one of the participants also talked about her 'job' when discussing the topic of 'sharing in daily life', so was YX in Group 2 who described her 'job' as well when asked about her future plan. Hence the intention of eliciting non-domain production may invoke domain talk (Whyte, 1994a).

Therefore, due to the blurred boundaries between one's discourse domains and the difficulty of explaining their existence, it is suggested that the term 'discourse domain' falls out of use.

In this research, it was found that the IL variation was not as great as expected perhaps because the random topics chosen tended to belong to the same domain of 'life story'. Even though there may be some kind of distinction in L2 learners' IL performance brought by discourse domains as what had been found in other empirical research, that brought by topics was not significant as the results of this research show. Hence the Discourse Domain Hypothesis may not be adequate enough to explain the phenomenon of topic-based IL variation.

Moreover, the related empirical research, to some extent, discovered the impact of expertise (Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Whyte, 1992, April, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Woken & Swales, 1989; Zuengler, 1989, 1993a; Zuengler & Bent, 1991), practice (Chiu, 2011; Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Whyte, 1992, April, 1994a, 1994b, 1995) and importance (Chiu, 2011; Ebsworth & Starbuck, 1989; Selinker & Douglas, 1985, 1986, October 10-11; Whyte, 1992, April, 1994a, 1994b, 1995) on the participants' IL variation in different topics. However, in the current Hypothesis, these three elements were claimed to be the criteria for recognising a discourse domain (Selinker & Douglas, 1986, October 10-11) or the continuum along which a discourse

domain is created (Douglas, 2004). Hence there is a mismatch between the empirical focus on topic and the theoretical focus on discourse domain. In Whyte's (1994a) definition of 'discourse domain', these elements were regarded as the characteristics of a topic area, which tended to tackle the problem to some extent.

The inadequacy of the Hypothesis also occurred in the explanation of the inconsistent enhancement of the participants' IL performance. Expertise, practice and importance were claimed to be at work simultaneously, but the influential factors seemed to interfere with one another. Since 'discourse domains' are highly personal and dynamic, it is hard for researchers to draw a consistent global conclusion on its causes. It may be more reasonable to resort to a less ambitious hypothesis that the contextualisation cues such as topic, interlocutor, setting, etc. are analysed independently, based on which better predictions and higher possibility of generalisation may be guaranteed (Preston, 1989). Whyte (1994b) also suggests that the Discourse Domain Hypothesis could be abandoned when investigating the relationship between topic and IL variation. Separate evaluation of the components of contexts may shed more lights on SLA.

In summary, based on the theoretical and empirical results of this study, topic may not be a significant element in distinguishing L2 learners' IL performance, but the other factors, including life experience of residing in English-speaking countries,

expertise, current or frequent practice, emotional investment, easiness of linguistic and conceptual expression, attention, interactive mode, perception of the topic, question types, jobs, L1 transfer, emotions, etc. turned out to have some kind of impact on their IL variation in varying degrees. Life experience, particularly, seemed to be more influential due to the differences between two groups, which also reflected the effect of frequency of practice. Hence the level of exposure to the TL may, to some extent, be more decisive in L2 learners' IL performance, comparatively speaking, which verifies the importance of TL environment in the learning process.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

There are still limitations of this study which could provide future studies with more research directions in the area of IL variability.

In terms of the research methods, the combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis is still suggested in order to draw a more complete picture of learners' IL features. Cross-sectional studies may reveal more group patterns so that the effect of the discourse domain framework could be investigated more comprehensively. However, IL tends to develop on an individual basis, so case studies are also necessary. Due to its dynamicity, longitudinal research is ideal to find out how an L2 learners' IL changes and what are the possible influential factors in different stages. Moreover, even though this research took a mixed method, it did not examine the influential factors

independently. In future design, better control of variables is needed. For instance, if the element 'importance' is under examination, the researcher could provide the participants with specific information about the topic in advance so that they possess similar amount of knowledge and experience of current practice.

In terms of the variables, this research mainly concentrated on topic and life experience of residing in English-speaking countries. They are definitely not the only factors that affect learners' performance, so other contextualisation cues could be considered. As Preston (1989) and Whyte (1994b) suggested, the components needed to be examined separately. For example, the same topic could be discussed with different interlocutors, NSs versus NNSs, strangers versus friends, parents versus children, etc. Besides this, interview may be the most popular way in the relevant study, but more interesting findings will occur when various settings are included as Selinker and Douglas (1986, October 10-11) did. For instance, Makoni (1992) mentioned a comparison of a professor's production in his lectures and after drinking alcohol. Different tasks also elicit different levels of CAF (Robinson, 2001; Skehan & Foster, 1997, 2012) such as storytelling, selling products, answering phones, etc.

In terms of the participants, this research only recruited Chinese females, so it is uncertain whether the results could be generalised to the male group or learners of other L1s or even NSs. Even though the participants were divided by their life experience of

residing in English-speaking countries, the years of residence varied a lot. It may be hypothesised that the longer the learners have been immersed in the TL environment, the more likely they perform similarly across topics, settings, purposes, etc. Since language proficiency may mitigate IL variation, the phenomenon could also be explored among lower-level learners. In addition, JF, as a university language teacher, stood out in the group, so research targeting language teachers of different educational levels may bring insights to L2 teaching and learning.

In terms of the measures, CAF provided a rather global description of learners' IL proficiency. Studies in more specific items are also encouraged. For example, tense was used wrongly by almost all participants in this research, so focus could be placed on the accuracy of this grammatical points in different settings with different interlocutors. The participants' awareness and perception of their own errors can also be taken into consideration. Additionally, Selinker (1972, 1992) suggests that in the investigation of IL, speakers' corresponding utterances in L1 could be used as a reference of meaning in case their ideas are not conveyed precisely due to the restriction of language skills. Besides this, L2 learners' strategic competence is supposed to derive from L1 acquisition (Bialystok, 1990; Paribakht, 1985). Even though this research has discovered the trace of L1 transfer in the aspect of communicative strategies, it still needs a means

of triangulation to be further verified by not only the speakers' IL performance but also

their L1 spontaneous utterances and their own awareness of strategic application.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Pre-interview Questionnaire

Pre-interview Questionnaire

Name _____

Gender _____

Year of birth _____

Age of beginning learning English _____

Degree of education _____

Major in university _____

Current occupation _____

1.   Have you received formal English education in China?

A.   Yes.   B. No.

2.   Have you ever been to an English-speaking country?

A.   Yes.   B. No.

3.   If you choose 'yes' in Question 2, which country have you been to? _____

How long have you been there? _____

What is your main purpose of staying there? _____

Appendix B

Interview Topics

1. education

2. environment

3. family

4. future plan

5. job

6. music

7. pet

8. public transport

9. the place you live

10. travel
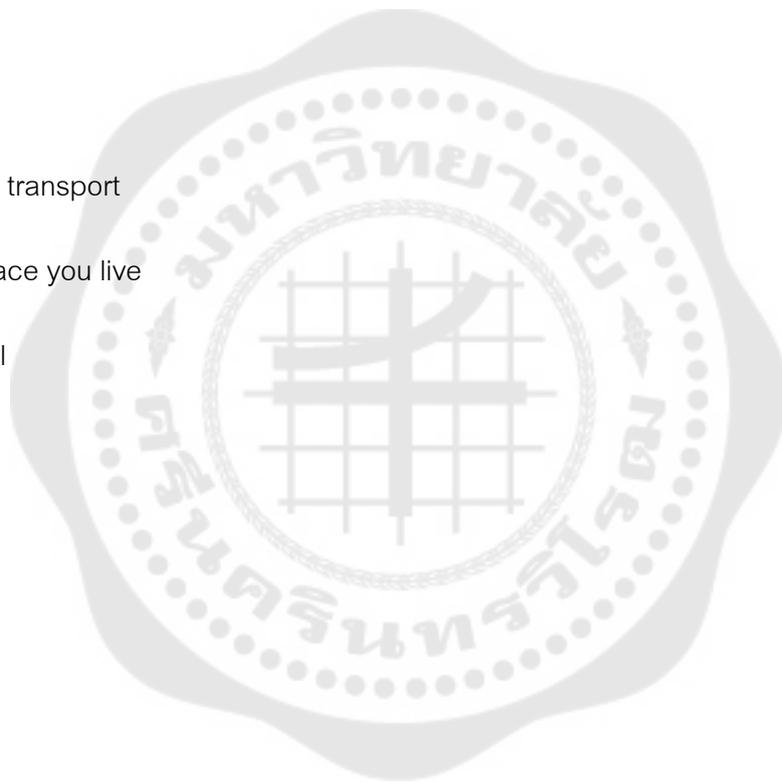
Appendix C

Post-interview Questionnaire

You have been interviewed in topic A _____ and topic B _____.

Please compare the two topics and fill in the blanks with 'A' or 'B' according to your own judgement.

1.   I think I know more about the topic of _____.

2.   I have more opportunities to talk about the topic of _____ in daily life.

3.   I treat the topic of _____ more seriously.

4.   I do not need to pay special attention to my language when talking about the topic of _____.

5.   I can express my opinions more precisely when talking about the topic of _____.
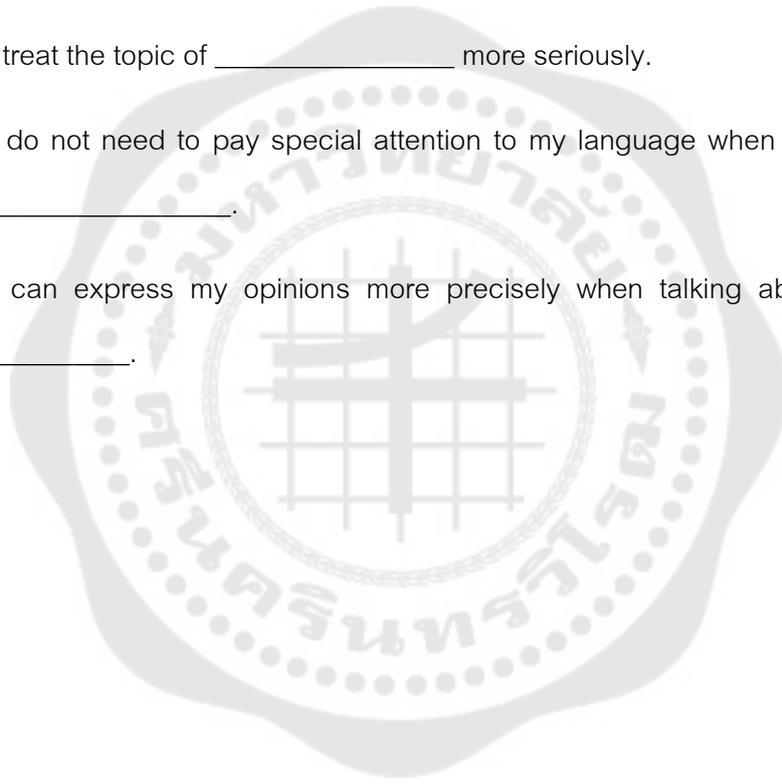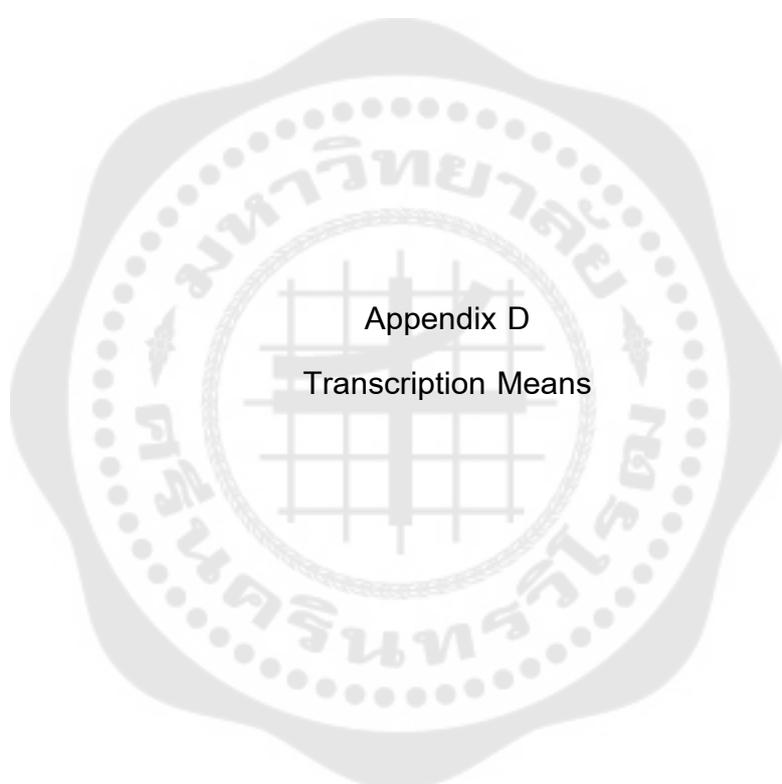
Appendix D

Transcription Means

AS-unit | |

      e.g. | um resources |

clause ::

      e.g. | I would like :: to be the one hehehe |

self-repair, false start, repetition { }

      e.g. | so { I don't have a } I even don't have er too much er traveling times |

pause (second)

      e.g. | er I get { that } the education of my (2s) { in Guangdong } in Guangdong province |

overlap

      e.g. YR: | they have more (2s) :: how to say :: they are more

           I: They have more pressure.

                                    (adapted from (Foster et al., 2000)

Appendix E

Interview Transcriptions

Group 1 — YR's case

I: So where did you get your education?

YR: | er I get { that } the education of my (2s) { in Guangdong } in

Guangdong province |

           | { and } and in the (3s) Guangdong University of (3s) Finance and { Eco }

    Economics |

I: Okay, so what do you think of your er university?

YR: | { I } sorry { I don't have a lot } I don't have er (2s) lot of memories

about my university :: because { I er it } it was ten years ago :: { since I last since I left

the } since I leave the university |

I: Okay, so generally speaking, do you think that er you have received a lot

of er education you have imagined from the university?

YR: | imagine? |

        | what do you mean im |

I: Imagination. Like before you went to the university, you must have some

imagination about the education, the university education. So do you think that your

university provide you with er resources and er like

YR: | um resources |

| { you you } do you mean :: that the resources :: that can help me :: to get a good job { in my } in the future? |

I: Er yes, er this can be one aspect.

YR: | um I think :: er er { if } as for the resource I think :: um learning language { is is } is only (aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa) er a useful tool |

| { but the } but the knowledge :: I learn from the books er :: it's only |

| after my graduations and when { I go to } er I go to work :: I think :: all these things is just the papers |

| er because er :: that I actually er realize :: that er { the sen } the sentence er from one of my teachers |

| he says :: { all you things } all the things :: you learn from this book |

| { I I } I only remember :: { the book's name is er the book of name } the name of the book is the er commercial English |

| yeah |

| he said :: er { the } er after er you go to the work :: and do your job :: and { you fi } you find that :: this book is just some piece of papers |

| it have no actual meaning for your job |

| yes |

| that's all |

I: So do you think that because now there are a lot a lot of university

graduates in China, so do you think it's necessary for everyone to go to university?

YR: | um er for some people I think :: they need er that papers |

        | { that's } er I do think |

        | because :: when you graduate from the university :: you would get { a the }

the certification { a a a }, right? |

I: Um.

YR: | a paper :: that prove you are have learned from er er er er er

university |

        | I think :: for some people they are useful |

        | but for some other peoples er they have some talented |

        | er emaybe they can do better :: { if they're not } er er even they don't go to

the university |

        | { they can still } they can still :: do er { make } maybe make more money

than the people :: { or make } er or get some more resource { from } than the

people from the university |

I: Okay, so um what do you think of the er educational system generally in

China?

YR: | sorry? |

I: What do you think of the educational system or the education situation

now in China? Generally speaking.

YR: | er |

| only feeling :: I can say this and |

| er er (3s) I'm lucky :: because { I'm I'm not the student in this ti at of this }

I'm not the student in this time |

| because er the student at { this speci } this time { they are they have } they

are more :: how to say :: they're more impress? |

| yes |

| they have more (2s) :: how to say :: they are more

I: They have more pressure.

YR: | um hum |

| (5s) er I think :: yes :: they have more :: how to say :: they need :: to do

(2s) :: they need :: to think more :: and um do more :: if they |

| because { they er the thing } the words :: you said that :: the resource |

| the resource { in } er in this society |

| er er { in } I think :: in Zhuhai er about { half of the about 90 perc } 50% { of

the student in of } of the middle school students { will } can :: go to the high school

|

| { and the next part and the next } and the other 50% they will :: go to the er

school of er like er :: how to say that? |

I: Vocational school.

YR: | yes |

| it's so |

| and so { I that's that's } that's :: why I say :: that um I'm lucky :: because I'm

not the student at this time |

I: Okay. So let's talk about another topic, traveling. Do you like traveling?

YR: | yes |

I: So have

YR: | yes |

I: er do you travel a lot?

YR: | no |

| because um { since nine twenty } since five years ago? |

| ninety { the the the the } the

I: The pandemic.

YR: | yeah! |

| the pandemic! |

| God damns! |

| er lot of people they { will } have feeling :: that { they fear } they're fear :: to

go outside |

| like they um { to } to get in touch with other peoples |

| { they } they have in panic :: I think :: { especial especially for the people the

the like } especially like me haha |

| just er yeah |

I: So any place

YR: | so { I don't have a } I even don't have er too much er traveling times

|

| yes |

I: Okay. So um which place impress you most?

YR: | which place impress me most |

| okay |

| the place :: { I I have I have } I have visit or |

I: Yeah.

YR: | okay |

| um maybe er Sichuan |

| er okay |

I: Why?

YR: | because hehe um because { I I } I know :: that er { there is a } there is so many gays in the street |

I: Pardon?

YR: | um when you walk in the streets :: you will see many beautiful or { looking good } er good-looking boys and boys hehe |

I: Haha. Okay.

YR: | because I know :: that oh the news is true |

| because it's that :: there are many boys and boys in Sichuan |

| and yeah |

| there is stories about Sichuan |

I: Oh, I don't know that.

YR: | ok |

I: So er do you like travel alone or with others?

YR: | I think :: I would like :: to travel with someone with er schedule with er details |

| { this you that } they have a very clear er plans for the travelings |

| if not :: I would choose :: to travel with alone |

I: So er when you travel with your friends, are you the one who make the plan?

YR: | I would like :: to be the one hehehe |

I: Okay, so you are the per the kind of person who prefer to have a planned tour than a free tour, right?

YR: | yes |

I: Why?

YR: | um because er I will feel afraid :: if in some street in some places :: that you never visit |

| yeah |

| { I I I } if I can do the plan :: { and } and I know :: that { I } the next place er is certain :: or it's the make me :: feel safe or |

| yeah |

I: So do you prefer to go to city or to visit the scenery? Natural scenery?

YR: | ah of course the natural scenery |

I: Why?

YR: | yes |

| er because I have heard from someone hehe |

| { and } and maybe all the modern cities they look the same |

| but the natural sceneries they are different |

| { and if we we and } and er those sceneries can :: make me feel :: { that I }

that this travel um (1s) deserve my time to |

| yeah |

I: Okay. Thank you.

Group 1 — LP's case

I: Okay, so what's your future plan?

LP: | er (4s) er I (5s) |

I: Like um the holiday is coming. Er do you have any plan for the holiday?

LP: | um { I } um { in the } in the holiday I have to (2s) I have :: to work |

| er and I have :: to er (2s) go to my hometown :: to see my er grandparent :: and to meet my er friends :: and meet my er classmates in the er high school |

I: And er do you er do you have any er do you usually make plans for the coming holidays?

LP: | um no |

| { because my } because my er I'm a doctor :: and my job is very busy |

| er I don't have { any } er any more time :: to make more er plan for my holiday |

| er |

I: And er if you want to like go somewhere to um have a relax and do you prefer to make a plan or do you prefer to er to go any anytime you want?

LP: | er if I have some time for relax :: I want :: to { go to the s } (6s) er go to the sea |

I: You you you mean you prefer to go to a seaside city?

LP: | yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah go to a seaside |

| er and I want :: to { learn to learn the } learn :: to { s s } er swim |

| and if I have any time in my er relax time :: I want :: to play the er

I: Badmin-ton.

LP: badminton |

        | I want :: to play badminton for er and the other sports |

I: And do you have any plan for the coming year?

LP: | in the coming year { I I ha } er I will er (5s) :: { s s spend my } spend

some time in { my } my work |

        | and I have :: to go to the er (6s) er Leizhoushi People Hospital in the Leizhou

    { to } for my er er (3s) for my (2s) job :: in order to er (3s) (whisper) jinsheng

I: Okay, in order to make a promotion, right?

LP: promotion { in my } in my work |

I: And what about your some personal plan like er your hobby or your

leisure time?

LP: | um in my leisure time { I make I may } (1s) I may want :: { to see

some } to look some books :: and listen some music |

        | er |

I: Er do you um so when when you're tired from work, would you like to er

would you like um give yourself some kind of relax holiday?

LP: | er (5s) pardon? |

I:	Okay. And if you. Okay. Okay. Let's talk about travel. Okay. Do you like travel?

LP:	| er I don't like travel :: because { I } I will vomit :: when I (2s)

I:	when you take the bus?

LP:	when I take { the } the bus or the er taxi |

I:	Oh, so do you try to like drive by yourself?

LP:	| um no |

	| { I I } I don't have a (2s) (whisper) jiazhao

I:	licence. Okay.

LP:	licence |

	| I don't have licence :: because I don't have time :: to er get a licence |

I:	Okay, so er if you go travel, you prefer long distance or the short distance place? Because you

LP:	| { I } um I may |

	| if I have the time :: or { I } er I would :: { choose } choose the long (2s)

I:	dis- tance

LP:	{ tra } long distance

I: Okay.

LP: and er |

I: And what kinds of transport would you take?

LP: | er (2s) I would :: choose the plane |

| but er (2s) because I will er take some medication :: when I er take the plane

|

I: Okay. And er do you travel a lot?

LP: | er the most |

| er no no no |

| the most impressive place :: I travel is Beijing |

I: Um.

LP: | um (3s) |

I: So what, did you have a good time or did you meet some interesting

people there?

LP: | er yeah |

| { I } I went to the Beijing :: when I graduated in my er { gra } postgraduation |

| and I { go } went there with my er classmate |

| and I think :: er Beijing { is very } was very interesting |

| er I can er see some er beautiful place :: and er eat some er traditional food |

I: So any spots er attracts you most?

LP: | pardon? |

I: Any tourist spot, any place in Beijing attracts you most?

LP: | the most attractive one is the Great Wall |

I: Oh.

LP: | but I :: you know :: I don't like er { take some } I don't like er sports |

| so { I I I don't } er (6s) I don't climb high in the Great Wall |

I: Okay, so you just er visit the Great Wall from er from the distant?

LP: | yeah |

I: Okay, hahaha that is interesting. And so when you go travel, do you

prefer to go to cities or er to enjoy the natural scenery?

LP: | (whisper) natural scenery… s s s (2s) |

I: Like, do you prefer to

LP: | er { what do yo } what do you mean? |

I: Do you like to visit the big cities like Shanghai like, yes. Or do you like to climb mountains or to like, as you said, that you like the seaside city, right? So would you prefer to take a city walk or you may like to enjoy the natural scenery?

LP: | { I may enjoy the } I prefer natural cities |

    | er like some ancient cultural cities |

    | er just like Yunnan province |

I: Um. Why?

LP: | er (6s) |

I: So do you think that this kind of er ethnic groups have the special cultures?

LP: | pardon? |

I: So do you think that er like different cultures in different cities will be more attractive to you than the convenience in the city, right?

LP: | yeah |

    | er I like the sea |

    | so I think :: er the Erhai Lake is very beautiful |

    | so { I } :: if I have my leisure time :: { I want to see the } I want :: to go to er Yunnan province |

I: Okay okay, thank you very much.

Group 1 — ZM's case

I: Okay, so let's talk about your education first. Er so where did you receive your education?

ZM: | er { in } in Guangzhou and the Shenzhen |

I: So what do you think of your university?

ZM: | er { my university my er er er } (4s) I think :: my university is er er perfect |

             | and the er teacher is er professional |

             | and the er classmate also er kindly and helpful |

             | and also in the university the environment is er very comfortable :: and provide me er many opportunities :: to er er er learn all kinds of the knowledge |

I: Um so do you think that the resources in your university er satisfied?

ZM: | yes |

             | yes |

             | er { in the } er in my master degree er { I er I I er I try to try my best to er er er } (3s) I try my best :: to er er

I: Take part in.

ZM: | ah yes |

        | yes |

        take part in er all kinds of er activities er not only er in studies also in er other

    kinds of er er (1s) activities |

I: Do you think that um the educational, the university education in China er

can provide the students with enough knowledge to deal with the future work?

ZM: | { er er not um not the bo not not } not the both |

        | because in the world you have :: to learn something er not from the

    university not from the book |

        | you must :: learn the skills from { the er um the the } the actually er works |

        | something skills { not } not learn from book hehehe |

        | { you er must } er you must er :: learn the skills like communicate with

    others :: or er deal with some staffs er from your actually work |

I: And do you think that because like some, do you think that it's necessary

for everyone to go to university?

ZM: | { um from er not um for it must er } from er different er er (3s)

I: Perspective.

ZM: from different

I: Perspective.

ZM: er { res } pers

I: Perspective.

ZM: um perspective |

          | someone if his er skill { is } er is very er |

          | someone { if } if he can :: do the job not er { from the } from the (2s) hehe |

I: OK. And do you think that er the graduates from the university can er

finish their jobs in in a satisfactory way?

ZM: | um yes |

          | yes |

          | yes |

I: And from your from your experience, from your life, do you think the

university graduates have some differences from those who have never received the

university education?

ZM: | yes |

          | yes |

| er |

I: In what way?

ZM: | ah? |

I: In what way?

ZM: | in what way? |

                 | er |

I: Those who graduate from university and compared to those who didn't

receive education in university, so do they have any differences in their er ability in job?

ZM: | er yes er of course |

       | (6s) um { someone } someone finished { the } er his er university education

will er see the (5s)

I: See the whole picture?

ZM: | ah? |

       | yes |

       | er in receive the high er reputation and the high position |

       | and the someone :: no finish his er university education maybe have :: to er

do the basic work not the { manage manager work } management work |

       | yes |

I: Okay. Okay. Let's talk about pet. Do you have a pet?

ZM: | er no |

I: And

ZM: | I don't have |

I: And did you have a pet in your childhood? In the past?

ZM: | er no |

       | um my parents never let me :: er have a pet |

I: Do you

ZM: | { and } and er sometimes I see :: er the pets is very lovely and cute |

       | but I never er want :: to have a pet :: because I er afraid :: the pet will die

someday |

       | I can't receive this result |

I: Oh. If you er may have a pet in the future, what kind of animal do you

want?

ZM: | um maybe a rabbit hahaha |

I: Ah, why?

ZM: | er because rabbit is er lovely |

        | and it's er quiet |

        | and sometimes maybe er { not in not er I } I didn't want :: to spend er much time on it |

I: So do your friends have pets?

ZM: | ah yes |

        | er some friends { hav hav } er have pet |

I: What kinds of pet

ZM: | like

I: do they usually have?

ZM: er like dogs er cats |

        | yes |

        | { it's } er it's very er { nor nor } popular |

I: Do you have any friends that have some er weird pet or like not not normal animals as a pet?

ZM: | er { as } as I know :: no |

I: If your if your kid want a pet, would you give give her one?

ZM: | um maybe no hahaha |

I: Why not?

ZM: | er er also is :: because er my er er reason |

| um as I have say to you :: { I } er I afraid :: that the pet will die one day |

| I can't receive this result |

| and { I will } I also er tell my child er this er results :: and I think :: the child understand { the } er that |

| so er for um this age { I didn't er I will not } I will not allow her :: to have a pet |

I: Do you think that a pet would be good for your kid's growth or not?

ZM: | in some way maybe it's good for the er { compa } companion |

| yes |

| and maybe the child will learn to :: how to take care of the little animals :: or { take care of } take care of others |

| and maybe { he will } she will { be a responsibili } er be responsible |

I: And do you think that keep an animal at home er is good for the family member's relationship?

ZM: | um maybe er { it's good for } it's good for the er family er membership

|

          | because er sometimes they { s } er regard the pets as er one part of { the }

the family |

          | and { they will be } er they will take care of the pet together |

          | and this { can } er can hehehe

I: Make them

ZM: | this will { ingrace } ingrace the relationship of the family

member |

I: Okay.

Group 1 — JF's case

I: Okay, so first, let's talk about the environment you live in. So what do you

think of the environment generally in the place you're living in?

JF: | you mean :: the place :: I'm living now? |

I: Yes.

JF: | um so I'm living in Zhanjiang :: and it's a seaside city |

          | and um I think :: it's very hot |

| and um (2s) because I'm just from a nearby city :: so { I thi } I don't think it's much different from my hometown haha |

| um so |

I: So do you enjoy it?

JF: | um how can I say? |

| er the only one thing :: that I'm not satisfied with this place :: is that :: { it's } it's too hot hahaha especially in summer |

| { and um and I I } and I think :: I don't have anything else :: to complain { about it } er about it :: because er I think ::{ I'm a satisfy I'm I'm a ve I'm it's I'm very } it's very easy for me :: to feel satisfied with my life haha |

| { I don't } er I don't ask much from life |

I: Okay, so er what kinds of like er what kinds of place would you usually go in your free time?

JF: | um er maybe shopping malls |

| but I don't shop |

| I just er window shopping hahaha |

| and I will go :: to walk with my husband er especially in Jinshawan :: you know :: and some parks |

| er and I think :: that's all haha |

I: Okay. So er if there is anything that can be improved er about the natural

environment in the place you're living in, er do you have any suggestions?

JF: | { I think } um I think :: there is one thing { for the } for Zhanjiang :: { to }

to improve |

| and I think :: um maybe { Zhanjiang } the government in Zhanjiang needs do

something about the traveling business in Zhanjiang |

| because :: you know :: I am from Yangjiang, right? |

| and I think :: the traveling business in Yangjiang is better than that in

Zhanjiang |

| er so maybe I think :: er the related authorities or governments or

departments need :: to do something about { the } er the holiday reserve, { a ho er

some } some places for the traveling people :: { to have a } er to have a some kind

of good rights and entertainments |

| I think :: this is the thing :: { that they that they do } that they need :: to do

about the place |

| um |

I: Do you think that people around you attach importance to the

environmental protection?

JF:	| um I think :: { the envi } the awareness of environmental protection of the people around me is relatively weak |

| so um um we're living in a seaside city :: but I don't think :: they have a strong er awareness or |

| er { they } they don't have a strong awareness :: to protect the sea or even the forest or the park and so on |

| so I think :: { and a } and even me |

| { I } I think :: { I don't er I don't hav } er I don't have the strong awareness :: to protect the environment { too } er either |

| I mean either |

| um and I think :: this is the thing :: that we um { me } I and my husband and even my whole family er { need to need to } er need :: to get started with er some measures right now |

| and { I } because I think :: this is very important |

| so um |

I:	If you can choose any any place or any environment that you settle settle in, so what's your imagination?

JF:	| er pardon? |

I: Um if you have the chance to live in any kinds of place, any kinds of environment, so, and do you have any expectation?

JF: | well { I } I think :: I prefer :: to live in Maldives hahaha |

| It's a very beautiful place haha |

| and I love oceans and seas |

| but I can't swim |

| but I think :: I enjoy :: surfing or diving in the sea |

| I think :: that's wonderful hahaha |

I: Okay.

JF: | and I |

| um yes |

I: And? You can go on.

JF: | um (3s) um or maybe I can :: maybe { I } I want :: to live in (3s) live in (1s) |

| no |

| { I I } I think :: I just prefer :: to live in by the sea |

| so um |

I: Okay. Okay. So what do you think of the public transport in the place you're living in?

JF: | oh! |

| I think :: { that's the } that's { another advan } another disadvantage of Zhanjiang haha |

I: Okay, why?

JF: | because :: you know :: { the } the fee { for the for the for the highway no no no no for the for the train } for the high speed train { are so } the fees are so expensive |

| because it asks people too much :: to go to er for example { Zhan er to } to go to Shenzhen or Guangzhou, right? |

| and um we don't have subways in Zhanjiang :: so I think :: um this another problem |

| but I also know that :: we don't have the um preconditions :: for building subways in Zhanjiang :: because we don't have so many people :: living in this city |

| um { maybe } but I think :: { may they may they } er I think :: { they } maybe the government should :: do something about the er bus system in this city |

| and there are too many |

| er er because of this problem may |

| and :: you know :: that the living standards of the people in Zhanjiang are not so high, right? |

| so { they give } some of them cannot afford :: buying cars :: to commute :: or maybe { to } er to go out :: or even take their kids to schools |

| so I think :: this a very big problem { in the city } in this city too |

| um |

I: So have you ever er gone to any cities that you think the public transport is er ideal? Or

JF: | oh of course |

| { some some } the big cities |

| er I think :: the transportation systems in the big cities in China are perfect for example in Shanghai or Beijing or Guangzhou |

| because { they they } they are big cities |

| { they need to do } they need :: to provide these things for the people :: living { in in } in these cities, right? |

| that's a very basic requirement for their living |

| so |

I: So what kinds of public transport do you prefer to take to commute?

JF: | to commute? |

     | I think subways haha |

     | because er { if I take a subways or } if I take a subway :: I can maybe avoid the bad weathers, right? |

     | er because { they we what we } if we take subways :: we need :: to go underground |

     | and so we can :: avoid the bad weathers { in the } er during the process of commuting |

     | { and I } and subways are very fast |

     | and so it saves much time for us |

     | um |

     | so I prefer subways |

     | um |

I: Er do you prefer to take the public transport or er your own vehicles? Generally speaking.

JF: | oh { I } I think :: it's very tiring for me :: { to to } to drive cars |

     | so { I } I seldom drive cars to schools right now |

| and { I and by trans } by public transport you mean buses, right? |

I: Um, buses or er yes

JF: | buses |

I: or like er public cars, shared cars or shared bikes

JF: | oh |

I: any any kninds of

JF: | okay |

| so I don't think :: it's very comfortable for me :: to take buses or shared cars um |

| because there are too many people |

| maybe sometimes there are too many people { in the in } in the cars or in the buses |

| and er { I I don't think I } I think :: it's not private enough |

I: So what about the long distance traveling? Er what kinds of public transport do you like?

JF: | (2s) you mean? |

I: Travel to somewhere far away from the place you're living in.

JF: | so { I } I think :: I just mentioned :: there's subways hehe |

I: And if the if it is the long-distance travel?

JF: | oh long-distance travel |

           | um I think um (2s) |

I: Like tra flights or train.

JF: | { I prefer } I prefer traveling maybe er er by airplanes, right? |

| um because er it's very fast |

| { and } but I don't think :: it's very convenient for us :: { to take to to travel by } er to travel by flight by planes er now in Zhanjiang :: because { the airplane } the airport is too far away from us now |

| er so sometimes I think :: er to travel { by } er by trains is also a good choice |

I: Okay, thank you.

Group 1 — LD's case

I: Okay, so first let's talk about music. Um do you like listening to music in your daily time?

LD: | of course |

           | music's good |

| help you relax |

I: What kind of

LD: | and what else |

I: Yeah yeah yeah. Pardon?

LD: | pardon? |

I: Em.

LD: | because music make us feel relax :: especially when you're er not

happy or depressed |

| um (4s) so |

I: What kind what kind of music do you like?

LD: | um some pop musics or classics |

I: Do you have any favorite singer?

LD: | singer? |

| er some of them are Chinese singers |

| { some } others are er singers from American |

| er so do you want me :: to tell you some Chinese or some American? |

I: Any. Any, anyone is okay.

LD: | okay |

| er such as Taylor Swift and er Adele or Chinese singers Zhang Xueyou or

Chen Yixun |

I: Okay so do you go to concert?

LD: | er never hehe |

| I haven't had a chances :: to do this |

I: And er do you prefer modern music or some classic music? Pop music

LD: | modern mu |

I: or classic music?

LD: | um nowadays I just er like er { any } anyone of us I would like :: to

choose pop music |

| sometimes I can't just appreciate the { classes one } classic one |

I: Do you think that, er er do you know how to play any kind of musical

instrument?

LD: | er sadly no |

| I haven't learned an instrument yet |

I: And if you have the chance to learn any kind of it, what what would you

like to learn?

LD: | um such as some drums { or some or the } or the piano will be my choice |

I: Do you think it's necessary for kids to learn musical instrument?

LD: | well it depends |

| if some kids so talents in the { mu } instruments :: I think :: it is a perfect choice for them :: to practice { this } er this kind of instruments |

| { but some } er but some they are not interested in this |

| I think :: er um we just { respect } respect { that } their choice |

I: So what do you think of the phenomenon that a lot of parents, they would require the kids to learn er the musical instrument for like the future ch job or some kinds of academic advantage?

LD: | yes |

| I agree with you |

| some parents do this :: because they want their children :: to have a better future :: such as to go to a better college or university |

| or just for the um |

| { to } to add some :: { what } how should I say um |

| { it } it make them :: have a promising future |

| that's the biggest the desire :: they wanna do |

| and if I were them :: I'm not sure :: I will do the same :: because er children's happiness are the most important for me |

| I would respect their interest :: and find some other way |

| { I'm not going } I'm not gonna force my kids :: to do this :: or to do that |

I: Okay, so now there are some. Oh, what do you think of the, er what do you think of the disputes between different generations in terms of music?

LD: | okay |

| um I think :: we have disputes or some different point in all kinds of things not just in music |

| like { some } er some teenagers prefer some pop musics |

| while the adults or the elderly would { prefer } er prefer classics or { slow the musics in er slow } :: how to say :: slow music |

| that's the bit much slower than the pop music |

| I think :: they're all er normal in all kind of us in all stage of the lives |

| just like me :: when { I } I was young :: I prefer pop music :: and always chase the stars |

| and when I get older :: I prefers those kind of er musics :: that make you relax |

| that's fine |

| but both |

I: Okay. And let's talk about public transport. What do you think of the public transport system in the city you're living in?

LD: | public transportation? |

I: Em.

LD: | um that's { another } another field |

| er I think :: there's (aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa) still have a large space :: to be improve :: because the { traffic jam } traffic jam in our city { the Guang } the Guangzhou the capital city of Guangdong province is hehe is heavy |

| and er I knew :: that's { Chi er the Guang } er the Guangzhou's government is making a progress in this |

| but { it's far from } it's far from better :: I think |

I: What kinds of

LD: | the

I: Yes, go on.

LD: | er I think { it's } er it's time :: to change our view or opinion :: that we should take more public transportations { ra } rather than private cars |

I: And er what kinds of public transport would you take in your daily life?

LD: | well er in my city the bus transportation, the bus or the subway will be the most common er tools :: we use |

| and um it's convenient for us |

| usually you just er walk less than er 1,000 meters :: to get there |

| but er I think :: it's better :: { to er to increases or } to hehe increase the number of buses :: when it is in the high time |

| er er especially in the busy time :: when communiting |

I: And er do your friends or the people around you usually take public transport to commute or they prefer to take their own vehicle?

LD: | well it depends |

| some of my friends are wealthy or rich |

| they prefer :: to buy their own cars :: to get anywhere :: they want |

| er but some friends younger than me they would like :: to choose the public

transportations :: because they don't know :: how to drive :: or { they don't they

can't afford er to pay } they can't afford a private car yet |

| so it all depends on their { eco } economy situations or their { prefe preferen }

preference |

I: And if you go travel, er some long-distance travel, what kinds of public

transport do you prefer?

LD: | well for my preference I would like :: to choose the { higher rail high }

high-speed { railway transportation } er railway system :: because er it is the most safe

tools :: er that we use right now |

| if the { distance is } distances between the destination and { the the the the

the } the what? |

| er if the distance is too long :: and then I will consider :: to take a plane ::

because er it can save us some time |

I: What do you think about the um high-speed railway system in China

generally?

LD: | well to be honest :: I'm surprise at the distance :: { the } we have made

|

| { the } um (2s) actually { I I } er for myself :: er if I want :: to give you some suggestion on the railway systems :: and that would be :: to lower their prices for more people :: so that { they can } um all of them can take this er railways er system |

| { I } I don't know :: how to say |

I: So it's about Spring Festival. What do you think what do you think of the, do you have any suggestions for the um public transport during Spring Festival?

LD: | well you know :: when { it } er the Spring Festival { is com } is around the corner :: and the public transportation is usually um |

| the experience about that is quite bad :: because um the traffic jam is too heavy :: and { most of people } some of the people { can } cannot get a ticket { to } er for home |

| er some have :: to stand for long hours on their way home |

| so if I am the one :: who make the decisions :: I would like :: to ask them :: to choose different time :: to er set up for home |

| such as er some will leave early :: and some will leave several days later |

I: Okay, thank you very much.

Group 2 — LY's case

I: Okay. Okay, so let's talk about the public transport first. So what kinds of

public transport do you usually take in your daily life?

LY: | er public transport |

          | I don't really take public transport |

          | but if I do :: I take buses and the train |

I: So you own your own vehicle, right?

LY: | yes |

          | I have my own car |

I: Okay. So is the public transport convenient in your community?

LY: | um not really |

          | I'm live in Auckland New Zealand |

          | and public transport here is very expensive |

          | and it's more convenient :: to take my own cars around |

I: So do your neighbours and friends er also own their own vehicles or do

they prefer to take the public transport?

LY: | I think :: yes |

          | most people around me they have their own car |

I: Why? Why don't they take the public transport?

LY: | because in my circle of friends they are mostly families with childrens ::

it's not really convenient for them :: to take public transport |

I: Um so if you travel, what kinds of public transport do you prefer?

LY: | if I travel for long distances :: I would take flight |

           | for short distances :: I would just take my own car :: or I'll take buses or train

|

I: So is the railway system convenient and comfortable in New Zealand?

LY: | um I guess so |

           | yes |

I: Er so have you ever had some interesting story with er.

LY: | about public transport or? |

I: Er yes.

LY: | interesting story |

           | okay |

           | um I think :: public transport here are really unreliable |

           | they often delayed :: or they just cancel suddenly |

| so you can miss your appointment very easily :: if you rely heavily on public

transport |

I: So when you were a kid, you live in China, right? So what do you think of

your think of the public transport in your hometown?

LY: | um I think :: compared to New Zealand :: it's very convenient in China

|

| yeah |

| there are many buses :: and they run or like from morning to night |

| they have many schedules |

| it's very easy :: to go around with public transport in China |

I: And er and er have you ever take the er high speed train in China?

LY: | er I think only once a while ago |

| hehe |

| yes |

| I only did it once |

I: Do you think that er what which one do you think is better, the one in

China or the one in New Zealand?

LY: | actually New Zealand we don't have high speed train here |

| it's just the { normal } er normal train |

| there's no high speed like China |

| um hum |

I: So when people go travel er in New Zealand, would they er usually take

train or the fight?

LY: | I think :: people take the flight |

I: Why?

LY: | er the train system is not really develop |

          | the train is only for { sh } shorter distant travels :: I guess |

I: Is the flight expensive there?

LY: | no |

          | actually no |

          | not very expensive |

I: And er is there an airport in every city?

LY: | I think so |

          | yes |

          | even in small towns there are airport |

| and they're really affordable |

| so yeah |

| it's really very er easy :: to travel by trains |

| yeah |

| { by } I mean :: by flight |

I: Okay, so do you usually go traveling?

LY: | um no |

| recently after having children haha |

| I used :: to travel a lot by myself |

| but after having children and especially during pandemic :: we don't really

travel |

I: So which city is the most impressive?

LY: | what do you mean? |

I: Er in your traveling experience, so which city

LY: | oh in my traveling experience |

I: or which place impress you most?

LY: | okay |

| um (1s) place |

| I actually really enjoy :: being in Europe |

| I like Germany |

| um I like um yeah just Germany |

| Germany in general |

| cuz people are very nice |

| they're really approachable |

| and I make good friends there |

| so { I } I enjoy my time :: being in Germany |

I: So do you prefer to go er traveling in the city or do you enjoy the like the

natural er the natural spots?

LY: | er depends |

| being in New Zealand :: it's mostly scenery sightseeing |

| we don't have a long history here |

| so um |

| but yeah |

| in other places like Europe and America :: there are a lot more :: to see in

city |

| er in their history |

| so yeah |

| { depends on where } depends on where I go |

I:　　　　　So is there any city or place that um that turns out to be very different

from your imagination or from your impression?

LY:　　　　| um |

| that's a hard question |

| um places (3s) |

| I don't know |

| maybe (3s) |

| very different |

| a place :: that's very different from :: what I expected |

I:　　　　　Um.

LY:　　　　| um |

| maybe New York City hehe |

| cuz New York City is so big |

| and every places :: I go in New York :: they turn out to be very different |

| it's like :: you go from one city to another city just within the same city |

| New York is very um (1s) |

| it's very multicultural :: and it 's very um has (aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa) a huge

variety |

| people are very different from all over the world |

| so I think :: New York City really impress me :: and surprises me |

I: And you just mentioned that you used to travel alone. So do you prefer to

travel alone or with others?

LY: | er when I was younger :: I prefer :: to travel alone |

| but now I would prefer :: to travel with my family |

I: So why do you er travel alone back then?

LY: | back then? |

| er because I was single |

| { I don't have any } I don't have anyone :: to go with me :: and I prefer :: to

plan my own trip |

| it's more flexible :: and { more } um I can just plan it my way |

| so { I don't I don't need to } I don't need :: to go along with others' plan |

I: So how do you choose your er destination?

LY: | how? |

| depends on budget |

| depends on my interest |

I: So where is the first place that you travel back then?

LY: | the first |

| um |

| not including New Zealand :: I guess :: um Australia |

I: And do you choose there for any special reason?

LY: | because it's nearby |

| Australia is next to New Zealand |

| not far away |

I: So do you think that Australia and New Zealand had a lot of differences

LY: | no |

I: or more similarities?

LY: | yeah |

| they're very similar |

| yeah |

| in terms of culture they're similar |

I: Um and what about the Europe and New Zealand?

LY: | um Europe is { they have a long } they have longer history :: compared

to New Zealand |

| and they have a lot more culture there |

| { there are } there are many { old ci } old cities :: compared to New Zealand |

| New Zealand is a really young country |

I: Okay, so if you travel, do you prefer or do you recommend the European

cities or the cities in New Zealand? Generally.

LY: | um depends on :: what you like |

| if you are into history :: if you are into cultures :: Europe would be good |

| but if you prefer nature :: and prefer being outdoor :: New Zealand is better |

I: Okay, thank you.

Group 2 — YJ's case

I: Okay. So do you have a pet?

YJ: | no |

| I don't have a pet |

| but I think :: it was like in 2016 or 15 :: I had a cat |

| but I only had it for less than three months |

| because of an accident { the the } the cat jump out from the window :: and we were in 19th floor |

| so the cat died |

I: Oh, that's so sad.

YJ: | it's a sad story |

I: So do you ever have a cat in your childhood?

YJ: | no |

| that was my first pet |

I: Oh. So do you like, er will have, want to have another one in the future? Maybe?

YJ: | um yeah |

| but I don't think :: { I I } I'll have { a pet } a cat again |

| I prefer :: to have a dog |

| but :: you know :: dog needs more space |

| currently { I } I cannot find { a dog } a huge space for them :: to run :: and

play |

| so yeah that |

| I don't know |

| { maybe } maybe in the future when I have a big house |

I: So do you have er many friends that have pet?

YJ: | um yes yes |

| I think :: half of them have pets |

I: So are they foreigners or Chinese?

YJ: | um some of them are Chinese |

| { I would } I would say :: half and half |

I: Okay, so like, what kinds of pets do you think that Chinese would like to

keep?

YJ: | you mean Chinese people? |

I: Yeah.

YJ: | um I think :: they like dogs :: but um |

| { I I } I think :: still the answer is half and half |

| half of them raise dogs :: and the other half they have cats |

| so I don't know |

I: So what about the foreigners?

YJ: | foreigners um well :: I think :: from my observation { they have they } I see more people :: having dogs |

| but er my friends they all have cat at home |

I: Okay. Do you think that, like, er the the people who keep pets have different habits in the er in China and Canada?

YJ: | oh you mean :: they raise their cat? |

I: Yes. Any special habits?

YJ: | { I } I really don't know |

| because { I I } I don't visit their homes |

| we often just hang out :: and have dinner outside |

| I didn't go to their home |

| see :: how they raise their cats |

| so I don't know the answer |

I: So do the canteens in the Canada allowed people to get a dog inside?

YJ: | er it depends |

           | the restaurant owners have the right { to like } :: to choose |

           | { you you will } you choose :: to make your restaurant of a pet-friendly one or

not |

I: Oh, okay.

YJ: | um hum |

           | because it feel like :: people choose :: to say :: sometimes er pets can bring

some germs or virus |

           | it's not that safe |

           | so mostly { if } for example if you eat er on the patio :: you can take your pet

|

           | but if you want :: to eat inside :: it depends |

I: So why do you think that like some people would prefer dog rather than

cats?

YJ: | prefer dogs than cat? |

I: Um-hum.

YJ: | um dogs { are } are more friendly :: wouldn't they? |

| and another reason I think :: { people feel like } er { we } I feel like :: people

prefer dogs better :: because er { dogs } you have :: to walk your dogs |

| so in the street you will see more dogs than cats |

| few people walk their cats |

I: Yeah, that makes sense.

YJ: | { that } that might be the reason |

| maybe |

| yeah |

| { dogs } cats you can just kept them at home, right? |

I: So do you have any friends that keep some er like not so um common

pets?

YJ: | er no |

| no |

| mostly dogs and cats |

I: Okay, so let's talk about travel.

YJ: | okay |

I: Do you like traveling?

YJ: | yes |

| I like travel a lot |

I: So can you share any special experience during the your travel?

YJ: | special experience um |

I: Or like any impressive one?

YJ: | well the last year 2023 { I had a } I had a very good trip |

| but the reason for that trip is :: that { I cannot } I couldn't get a ticket { to } to mainland China |

| that time the ticket was super expensive |

| even now is also very expensive |

| so I made a plan |

| um I first book a ticket to Seoul |

| then { I } I stay about { three } four days there |

| four days and four nights |

| and I flew to Hong Kong |

| yeah |

| so I stay in Hong Kong for three days |

| so that's us about eight days East Asia tour around mainland China |

I: Haha.

YJ: | you know |

| I would say :: yeah yeah |

| { that's a } that's a very impressive trip |

| because before I went to Korea :: I had some assumptions about Korea and

Korean people |

| that trip kind of um broke some of my assumptions |

| yeah |

I: What what kinds of

YJ: | we have stereotype |

| I thought like :: Korean people are rude |

| they're loud |

| yeah |

| some of them are |

| but { they also um-hum they al some of I } one thing :: that impress me is ::

that most of them can speak English |

I: Oh, really?

YJ: | yeah |

| and in their like public services in the subway they have four different languages |

| they have English, Chinese, Japanese and Korean |

| so if you are a tourist :: you feel no problem :: like finding your way |

| most difficult part is :: that { they } their subway { are } are built so deep under the ground |

| so deep |

| { you } you might need :: to walk like 10 minutes :: to get to the platform |

I: Interesting.

YJ: | so everyday is 20k steps |

I: So like in all those cities that you have been traveled to, any any one do you like the best?

YJ: | my favorite city |

| well um my dream city is New York |

| { I went I went to } I visit New York in 2022 |

| yeah { two thou } 2022 yeah |

| um but |

| yeah |

| I would say New York |

I: Why do you like it best?

YJ: | um you know :: I'm a city person |

| I like :: travel cities er than those like landscapes |

| you know :: in China and er Canada we have all kind of sceneries, right? |

| especially in Canada we have the Banff National Park |

| { it's more like } it's like Tibet or Xinjiang province |

| so it's very beautiful |

| but you live in these countries |

| so { you want to } you want something different |

| and in your case the best of the best |

| { it's } it's the best city, right? |

| in terms of big cities { New York is } New York is the best |

| so I like New York |

I: And any place that you find that it doesn't fit your imagination, any city?

Any place?

YJ: | New York? |

I: No. Any other cities or any other place

YJ: | other city um |

I: that you find um

YJ: | I would say Paris |

          | hehe |

I: Oh, why is that?

YJ: | Paris |

          | yeah |

          | Paris before { we } um we went there :: we thought :: { it was a } it was a romantic city :: as all the art |

          | all kind of |

          | { we ha } we have this fantasy :: before we went there |

          | but when we arrive :: we found the city is dirty :: { and and } and you can see thieves |

          | it's not that sweet |

| the most reason :: that made me feel :: it's a little bit different from :: what I

thought { it } it was :: is :: { it it } it was not that safe |

I: So er what do you think? Like, you live in Toronto now, right?

YJ: | yeah |

I: And and where's your hometown?

YJ: | er Hubei |

I: So any difference between these two places do you think?

YJ: | well there are ma |

I: The biggest one.

YJ: | it { fir } first start with :: the weather is quite different |

        | yeah |

        | er in Toronto in the summer I think :: the highest temperature stays at around

30 |

        | that's the highest temperature |

        | { I } once the temperature pass 20 :: we will call it summer |

        | you can see :: people wear like shirts, shorts on the street |

        | but in my hometown well I would say |

| { this year } last year { I } I went back to Hubei in summer |

| wow! |

| the summer { can } was really scorching hot |

| I guess :: the highest temperature will rate like 40 |

| I guess |

| yeah |

| { the } the first differences is the weather |

| the second difference { is } um is the people |

| er { in Chi } in Hubei it's the density |

| er you'll see :: it's very crowded on the street even on small towns |

| but in Canada { the } the country only has like over 40 million population |

| yeah |

| so the density is not |

| { you } you will feel more comfortable :: walking on the street |

| nah |

| I don't know |

| { the } they are { di } the two differences :: I can think of |

I: Okay, thank you.

Group 2 — ZR's case

I: Okay. So like, can you tell me something about your family?

ZR: | sure |

          | my dad is a business owner |

          | my mom used :: to be a university professor :: and she um is now a homemaker |

          | that's my family |

I: Do you have any like siblings?

ZR: | I do |

          | I have a sister :: and have a brother |

I: And like, how old are they?

ZR: | my sister um (1s) I'm not sure |

          | my sister is 21 |

          | my brother is 19 |

I: Okay, so, have you get married?

ZR: | yes |

          | I'm married |

I: And, er, what about like, what about your er your core family like?

ZR: | um { my } my father-in-law is a business owner |

          | my mother-in-law used :: to work for my father-in-law |

          | they used :: to run the business together |

          | but she's retired :: as I speak now |

I: Okay, so do you and your husband live abroad?

ZR: | well { I } I do |

          | he's local |

          | er so he does not live abroad |

          | yeah |

I: Okay. And so you live separately from your own father and mother, right?

ZR: | um { what do you } what do you mean? |

I: I mean that your father and your mother live in China, right?

ZR: | yes |

I: Ok. And er like, can you tell me something about your … Oh okay. So what do you usually do with your family in your free time?

ZR: | we usually go out for dinners |

| er we go to the beach together |

| we watch shows together |

| we er watch movies together |

| er we cook as a family |

| { that } that's all about it |

I: Okay, so do you like, when you compare your own family, your own Chinese family and also your husband's family, so do you think there are some kinds of difference between an American family and a Chinese family?

ZR: | um well (1s) I think :: one thing is for sure :: that love is a universal language :: whether it's a Chinese family or a US family |

| the differences um (5s) well I consider :: the biggest difference would be (3s) um boundaries |

| I think :: western families tend :: to have a { clear } clearer boundaries |

| { they tend to (3s) have a bet they } they tend :: to have a better understanding of um (2s) individualism |

| versus in a Chinese family they will always consider you as their :: you

know :: little girl or little boy |

| they will always feel somehow responsible for your behaviour or whatever ::

that you do |

| versus in a western family you're on your own |

| you're responsible for your behaviours |

| and um (1s) yeah |

| that's probably |

I: Ok.

ZR: | { in in } independence and individualism are the two main differences

between Chinese family and western family |

I: Okay, so do you have pet?

ZR: | I do not |

I: Do you want to have a pet?

ZR: | um I am not sure |

| maybe one day hehe |

| { not } not right now |

I: So you, have you ever like raised a pet in your childhood?

ZR: | I have |

| I used :: to have seven { f } golden fish |

| and unfortunately because I overfed them :: they die one by one within one week |

| yeah hehe |

I: Okay. So if you if you would have a pet in the future, what kinds of animal do you prefer?

ZR: | I probably would want a small dog |

I: Why?

ZR: | um (2s) they're cute |

| { you they evoke a sense of } (2s) um they evoke (1s) a feeling :: that { you wanna be protect } you wanna protect it |

| and I like that |

I: So do you have a lot of friends that have pets?

ZR: | I do |

| yes :: I do |

I: So they don't like have any influence on your own choice?

ZR: | well I think er :: raising a pet requires a lot of time, efforts and responsibility |

| I am someone :: who is not committed :: to stay in one place for a long time |

| I usually travel |

| and we know :: when that happens :: it's hard :: to raise a pet |

| leaving your pet with somebody else or in a pet hotel :: { is } is not most ideal :: because it's (aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa) a strange or is (aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa) a different environment :: that they have :: to get used to in a very short amount of time |

| um { and they } it's just not a great experience { for a } for a pet |

I: So what kinds of animal do your friends usually keep?

ZR: | well they have cats |

| they have dogs |

| yeah mostly these two types |

I: So do you, do you, have you ever heard of anyone that have some kinds of like unusual animal as a pet?

ZR: | not that I know of |

| no |

I: Ok. So why do you think that some people would refuse to keep a er

keep a pet?

ZR: | refuse |

| { if if well } (2s) one reason :: that I can think of :: is :: that they're allergic

{ to } to pets |

| some people are allergic { to } to hair to furs |

| and they can't be close to a dog for example |

| so that would prevent them from having one |

I: Ok, so like if you. Er, and why do you think that like somebody would, er,

would rather, like, raise a pet than raise a kid?

ZR: | well um (1s) a pet has a shorter lifetime |

| um a kid requires (1s) a lifetime of commitment |

| versus a pet lives by ten years 15 years at the most |

| I think :: that's one big factor |

| the second factor would be the amount of time and effort :: that's be required

|

| for a pet you don't necessarily :: to think about :: oh { if I need do } do I

need :: to put the pet to a language school for example :: { to } to learn some

French sure |

| you don't need :: to care about :: oh { if } if I live in the school district :: { if

my } if my kid is able :: to go to (aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa) a good school :: receive

the :: you know :: great education |

| { um you don't necessarily need to } um (2s) it just a lot less responsibility, a

lot er shorter commitment |

| and (1s) overall it's less attention, less effort :: raising a pet :: than raising a

child |

I: Okay, thank you.

Group 2 — YX's case

I: Okay. Okay. So first let's talk about the environment you live.

YX: | Okay |

         | the environment |

         | yeah |

I: So

YX: | oh |

| I live |

| right? |

I: Yeah.

YX: | okay |

| er { now } as I told you :: now I'm have already moved to er Perth in um west Australia |

| { here is quite } here you can feel the fresh air |

| yes |

| { people } I think :: { the } the environment is quite um um um :: like I say :: friendly :: I think |

| yeah |

| { compare to } I think :: compare to China :: { you can feel some people will feel } especially for some people they are very sensitive |

| yeah |

| and here you will feel :: every day you have a very good living here |

I: So what about the natural environment?

YX: | natural environment |

| er yeah here { you have } you can see a lot of the um playground nearby and a lot of { the } the core natural park nearby |

| so er kids can go there |

| { um kids } families can go there { have any } :: to have picnic :: and people they all like camping |

| they can go |

| yeah |

| and they're all free |

I: So do you live in downtown or er in the suburb?

YX: | I live in downtown actually |

| { but it's } er but here :: you know :: even { in the city } near the city { they got a very big natural } they got botanic park |

| yeah |

| em |

I: So do you enjoy the environment there?

YX: | yes |

| I think :: people they enjoy the life |

| pace is very slow |

| yeah |

| and also they got a lot of beach |

| um especially now is summer time :: so they can go the beach :: to er go

swimming, diving, surfing |

| yeah |

| a lot of activities |

| yeah |

| yeah |

I: Okay. So like, um, so how long have you been there?

YX: | er here um about five years |

I: Five years. Okay, so are you accustomed to the environment there? Very

soon after you went to Perth.

YX: | went to Perth um |

| easy for me, right? |

| it did take quite a few yeah a few days for me :: to finally settle down ::

because before I { live } work in Shanghai very, right? |

| a lot of people :: and here is very quiet |

| you will feel like :: oh { you can't find it's not } also it's not very um

convenient sometimes yeah :: if you goes somewhere working or yeah |

| { I } I personally { I like I like go to er } I don't like :: go to beach very often |

| yeah |

| and also I like :: to go shopping or personally |

| er so it did take a quite time |

| but { it's um it's very } I think :: it's a livable place |

| yeah |

| in the end you will like it |

| yeah |

I: So do you remember that about your hometown in China, what is the,

how is the environment there?

YX: | er my hometo |

| actually my hometown is in a small town in Fujian |

| er but I work in Shanghai |

| so my hometown { is } is okay |

| er not a lot of industries |

| not a lot of pollutions |

| but I think :: one thing :: you remind me |

| { like um here right } in China { we } normally we er peel any skin, right? |

| like { for } er cucumber apples |

| but here people never |

| never peel the skin |

| they say :: it's very safe

I: Oh.

YX: :: to eat all |

| yeah |

| it's one thing |

| They say :: oh you remember :: you're not in China |

| yeah |

| I think :: they seems like :: teasing us |

| like say :: oh it's not in China |

| you're very safe |

| you can eat |

| you even don't need :: to wash :: because there's no |

| yeah |

| they're very um organic :: they say |

| yeah |

| in China in Shanghai the big city I know :: um yeah people wear masks, right?

|

| there's a lot of dusts |

| yeah |

| I know :: { it's } and a lot of people of course a lot of people |

| um here you can't even |

| especially now like now the weekdays in the morning :: if you go outside ::
you can't see people working |

| only for people :: who are calling :: who { like the } for the mommies { they }
they're walking the dog :: or { walking with um } pulling { the } the { baby } er baby
er stroller in the street |

| maybe yeah |

| only for this group of people |

| no others I think |

| yeah |

I: Okay. So what about your future plan? Generally.

YX: | future plan |

| you mean :: to stay or? |

I: Like future plan, general future plan for your work, for your family, or for yourself.

YX: | yeah |

| { we } we got { our } um our permanent resident um yeah PR { two ye(ar) } er last year :: so yeah |

| { de we } we decide :: to apply { for the } um for the PR is :: because { we } we do feel :: here is very good { for for } for kids their growth um |

| because there's not a lot of pressure :: and { they } they do focus on { their } the development of kids, creativity, something yeah so |

| and also I think :: it's good for the eld group yeah :: cuz { good } the { very } um environment is quite good |

| and also hope myself um yes :: cuz my job { is now } is permanent :: so I don't think :: I will move to somewhere |

| yeah |

I: Okay.

YX: | maybe { in the } in the first ten years I will be here |

| if the kids already grow up :: if { they're inde } they're already independent ::

then { we probably we think } maybe we go the other country or other city |

| yeah |

I: So um um do your whole family move move to Perth or just your core

family?

YX: | er my family |

| er no |

| { my } my mom no |

| { my mom is the } now my mom is here |

| but he is only applying for the tourist visit visa |

| so we want :: to know :: whether { she's really } she really likes living here

the environment everything |

| so if she is happy :: then we decide :: to { apply } also apply { for } yeah for

them yeah permanent residents for them |

| yeah |

I: So like, is it easy for like your mom, the elderly to live in the community?

YX: | um not really |

| er because she can't speak any |

| { my parents my } my father can speak a little English :: but my mommy she can't speak any English |

| especially for this er suburb er { it's there are } there's Chinese :: compared to the others |

| so { she } she only feel very free and happy, relaxed :: when she meet Chinese |

| yeah |

| and talk |

| so that's why |

| yeah |

| so it's not easy { for for them } for them |

| yeah |

| but I talk to them about the benefits for { the elds the the } the age group |

| she said :: oh it's good |

| yeah |

| so I don't know :: whether she will change her mind |

I:		Okay, so er what about er what about your kids? So do they come back,

ever come back to China?

YX:		| um actually my son { my older } er my older boy um { sh } he just

came here last year |

		| yeah |

		| she came here for one year |

I:		She, she, er sorry, he

YX:			| he he sorry|

I:		he was born in … sorry

YX:				| he came here for one year |

		| but { I feel } I feel :: here it's yeah it's um |

		| because the environment like English speak environment is good for him :: to

improve |

		| er last year when he came :: he can't speak any English |

		| we didn't er teach him in China yeah |

		| cuz we want :: he came from beginning from zero um in here |

		| so now he can |

		| yeah |

| I feel :: his er English { is } is better than mine |

I: Okay, that's good.

YX: | yeah |

| age is very hard :: to improve especially for me |

| now { I don't ha } I don't feel :: my work really needs me :: to improve ::

especially a lot of Asian working with me |

| like they all from Malaysia |

| { we } um we talk a lots Mandarin :: or sometimes they talk a little bit

Cantonese or yeah |

| so yeah |

| um { so } so I feel :: { it's } it's not really help me :: to improve a lot |

| but yeah my listening improve |

| but my speaking I don't think it a lot |

| don't think it improve |

| be honest |

| yeah |

I: Okay, okay. Thank you.

Group 2 — LF's case

I: Okay, so first let's talk about pet. So do you raise a pet?

LF: | no :: I don't |

I: Have you ever raised a pet?

LF: | no |

         | no :: I don't |

I: Why?

LF: | I have never |

         | er I don't like pets |

         | it's a lot of work |

         | and I just rather to be myself and my husband and my kids |

I: Okay, so if you if you may want to keep a pet in the future, what kinds of

animal do you prefer?

LF: | I prefer something { is not } :: have no fur and er not active |

         | maybe a goldfish |

         | if you ask me :: have to choose one |

I: Okay. So do you have friends that keep pets?

LF: | ah yeah |

| I have a lot of friends |

| they have pets at home |

I: What kinds of pet?

LF: | you know |

| dogs and cats |

| and I mean :: not friend but family :: because { my uncle } my husband's aunt
she has a snake |

I: Oh, so why? Why that, why did she, why does she keep a snake?

LF: | I have no clue |

| I know that she |

| so { sh } according to my husband she like the weird animals |

| like { she use he } she used :: to have birds or something :: I remember |

I: Okay. So like, have you ever like come talk about their pets with your
friends? Like why do they want to raise a pet?

LF: | no I don't :: because I don't care |

| I don't want one |

| that's all |

I: Okay. And do you, why do you think that some peop some people would rather keep a pet than a kid?

LF: | I mean :: { it's } it's people's choice, right? |

| some people like kids :: some people like pets |

| { you know it's a lot } you know :: people have their own choice |

| they have their own preference |

| so I don't know why |

| but just like in my preference I prefer :: to have kids over pets |

| because kids grow up |

| { they } er they can learn things |

| they can control themself most of the time |

| but pet :: you know :: they're animals |

| you need :: to take care of them all the time |

| and I just don't see the needs :: I need a pet |

I: So do you have a lot of friends that um keep a pet than instead of a kid or more friends that keep a kids rather than the pet?

LF: | er I think :: most people :: I know :: they have both |

             | and yeah { I I I mean I don't I haven't } I mean :: some people they have

pets :: only maybe because they're not marry |

             | so it's really hard :: to tell |

I: So do you think that like er raise a pet would be good for kids' growth?

LF: | I guess :: yes |

             | because :: you know :: they can help the kids like learn :: how to take care of

others :: { even } even it's an animal |

             | and then { they will } :: you know :: like they learn from the pets |

             | they can get along with the pets |

             | and then they know { like the } like the way :: we take care of the kids |

             | then the kids might learn their responsibility |

             | like oh I need :: to take care of this animal |

             | I need :: to take care of the pet |

             | it must be have some benefits |

             | but it's just like not that important to me |

I: So if if in the future your kids want a pet, do you like wh do you do you,

would you give him like some animal?

LF: | I don't think :: giving my kid a pet :: just because he wants it |

| I think :: I need :: to consider the multiple factors such as expense |

| because raising a pet :: not just about you bought them from the store :: or you just like adopt them from { the } er a breeder or anything |

| { it's a lot of res } you know :: it's a lot of responsibility |

| { need to } you need :: to pay for their meal |

| you need :: to buy them insurance |

| you need :: to walk them :: if it's a dog |

| it's a lot |

| and you know :: sometimes the kid just say :: oh I want a toy :: I want a car |

| and that's it |

| but for pets { you } you need :: to take more responsibility beyond that |

| so I don't think :: I would say yeah to them |

| oh okay :: yeah :: I'm gonna give you a pet |

| no :: I don't think :: that's :: what it is |

| so { I don't think I would } I don't see :: that I would change my mind :: to have a pet |

I: Okay, so another topic about public transport. What kinds of public transport do you take er usually?

LF: | { you you } I'm sorry |

            | you mean public transport? |

I: Yes.

LF: | er so I live in suburban |

            | so there's not really any public er transport in the area |

            | so I have my own vehicle |

            | so I just normally travel by my own vehicle |

I: So there is no even no bus?

LF: | I mean :: { there was } there was bus in the downtown area |

            | I think :: it's travel multiple town |

            | but I don't need that |

            | unless er if I and my family plan :: to go to New York City or Boston |

            | that way we might consider taking the train :: because it's more convenient |

            | but in our daily life there's no public transport :: that I need to use |

            | and all I could use |

| it's :: because the area :: I live in |

| yep |

I: So do your neighbours all own a car?

LF: | yeah |

| yeah |

| { all } I believe :: { all the } all the people in the neighborhood owns a car |

| otherwise I don't see that :: { they } yeah they can travel without a car here |

I: So do you think that public transport is convenient in your city or

generally in your, in your con in America? What do you think?

LF: | so { it depen } :: like I say :: it really depends on the area |

| like if you live in a city such as er New York City :: I was just mention :: of

course :: public transport is more convenient than you owning your own er vehicle |

| but because I'm living in a suburban :: so like people just have their own

house :: and they're far away from the grocery store, pharmacy, the doctor's office

|

| so I will think :: er a car may be more convenient than the public {trans}

transport |

I: So what do you think about China's public transport?

LF: | oh it's amazing |

| because :: you know :: I've been living in China for 20 years |

| you know :: er { be er before I } when I was younger { in er was when I was } when I were a student :: { I take } I took the bus |

| I took the subway |

| I took { the tr } even the train |

| travel with friends and all that |

| and er of course :: er it's so convenient in China |

| I love it |

I: So what about, so do you think that like the express train, eh, which one is better? The express train in America or and er oh sorry or in China?

LF: | er I think :: express train is a bit better :: because they actually have stops |

| but for { air } airplane it's just like from destination A to destination B |

| there's no stop |

I: Okay.

LF: | and of course :: the express train win the airplane by the price |

I: So what do you think? Er which one do you prefer? Like the express train,

oh which one do you think is better, the express train in America or in China?

LF: | er to be honest with you :: there's no express train in America |

| like rarely |

| I took once from er Connecticut to Boston |

| er they were good |

| { I I I told you } I tell you :: { the is } the environment is better than in China ::

because more clean and { les } fewer people |

| but the price is like ten times expensive than China |

I: Oh. So it's

LF: | yeah |

| I like the America one better |

I: So what kinds of public transport do you prefer er in your daily lives? If

there are

LF: | my daily life? |

I: if there are choice

LF: | er I guess :: it will be subway |

| because it's faster |

| and then { they } they're more on schedule |

| rarely delay |

I: And if you want to go travel, do you prefer er taking a plane or a train?

LF: | oh absolutely { a plane air er } take the flight |

| { air } airplane |

I: Why?

LF: | because it's faster |

| { time } time-saving |

I: Um but there are express express train now.

LF: | um it depends |

| like { if } um it would depends on the time and the price |

| so { if if it's it's the } if the price { not the } it's not inside my consideration :: I would take the fly |

| if price really matter to me :: I probably would take the express train |

I: Okay. Okay. Thank you very much.

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