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# Students' Perspectives on Language Use Outside the Classroom in an Intensive English Program

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Students' Perspectives on Language Use Outside the Classroom  
in an Intensive English Program

Elena Shvidko

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### Students' Perspectives on Language Use Outside the Classroom in an Intensive English Program

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Master of Arts

The purposes of this study were to 1) explore student attitudes toward the English-only environment in an intensive English program, and 2) find factors that either promote or inhibit students' desire to use English in their communication with compatriots in school. Qualitative research methods employed were a) a student questionnaire (with a total of 158 participants), b) semi-structured interviews with students (total 6 participants), and c) four student focus groups (with a total of 62 participants). The study was conducted at the English Language Center (ELC) at Brigham Young University. The participants were students of four native language groups (Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, Chinese) and varied levels of proficiency.

The findings indicate that the majority of the students acknowledged the helpfulness of the English-only environment at the ELC, but recognized some factors that prevented them from speaking only English in the school building. These factors were grouped into five categories: sociocultural, linguistic, individual, psychological, and institutional. The *sociocultural* factors included peer pressure, fear of negative evaluation by compatriots, cultural communication patterns, maintaining friendship with compatriots, and need for cultural bonding. The *linguistic* factors included low language proficiency, difficulty in understanding teachers' assignments, translating habits, and linguistic differences between English and students' L1. The category of the *individual* factors consisted of the intensity of motivation and personality type. Lack of confidence, stress from speaking English, and fear of having a different personality when speaking English were categorized as *psychological* factors. Finally, the *institutional* category included physical factors (number of students of the same L1 in school/class, distance from the university campus), teacher factors (teachers' ability to motivate students, other teachers' characteristics [being sensitive to students' cultures, understanding students' individual circumstances, the ability to establish a rapport with students]), and curricular and administrative factors (poor enforcement of the English-only rule, weaknesses of speaking classes, lack of activities that promote interaction with students from other countries).

This study provides a deep understanding of the reasons why many students speak their native language once they leave the English classroom. Based on these findings, recommendations regarding the development and modification of curricula in order to improve the language-learning environment at English institutions are offered to classroom teachers and program administrators.

Keywords: [English-only, L1 use, outside the classroom, intensive English program]

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

*“Despite our English-only policies, students still slip into their L1. If they’re in a group where everyone’s language is the same, it’s virtually impossible to get them to speak in English”* (An IEP administrator, personal email correspondence through TESOL interest sections, January, 2010).

### Background of the Problem

Student language use in and outside the classroom has been a controversial topic of discussion in the field of teaching English as a second language for many years. To date, there has been little agreement in regard to what proportion of English and students’ first languages should be considered ideal to promote more successful acquisition of the target language. These debates have become topics of considerable interest in both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. Many studies (Atkinson, 1987; Atkinson, 1993a; Atkinson, 1993b; Auerbach, 1993; Butzkamm, 2003; Cook, 2001; Daily-O’Cain & Liebscher, 2009; Hopkins, 1988; Macaro, 2001; Macaro, 2009; Rivers, 2011; Schweers, 1999; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Turnbull & Daily-O’Cain, 2009) indicate that the first language (L1) is an inevitable part of learning and teaching a second language (L2). In contrast, other researchers (Chaudron, 1988; Davila, 2005; Duff & Polio, 1990; Franklin, 1990; Gorsuch, 1991; Littlewood, 1981; Tang 2002) argue that intensive exposure to the target language should be the primary goal of English learners.

In addition, this debate continues among English instructors and administrators of intensive English programs (IEP), specifically concerning students’ use of English outside of the language classrooms (e.g., in the hallways, the lunchroom, the computer lab). It is commonly believed that IEPs are designed for learning and improving language skills through immersion in

an English-speaking environment. Thus, assuming that speaking English not only in class, but also outside the classroom will help students to learn the language faster, some English programs enforce an English-only policy that prohibits using the L1 at any time within the confines of the language school. In such programs, the administration and teachers “devise elaborative games, signals, and penalty systems to ensure that students do not use their L1” (Auerbach, 1993, p. 16). On the other hand, a large number of programs do not have such a restrictive language policy. They *let* students *choose* what language to use in the hallways and computer labs; however, they *encourage* students to speak English and expect them to do so (Personal email correspondence through TESOL interest sections, January, 2010).

To set the background for the study, an informal online survey for administrators of intensive English programs in English-speaking countries was conducted from February to March 2011. The survey was sent through the online email list known as “TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) Program Administration Interest Section,” and 28 administrators completed the survey. The questions on the survey attempted to determine the policy positions of English language institutions on students’ language use within the confines of their language learning facilities (see Appendix A).

Out of 28 administrators completed the survey, 23 admitted that, regardless of the school statement in terms of language use, students continue to communicate in their native languages between classes: “We try a lot, but in the end I would say it falls short. Students continue to speak their L1,” “If students have a choice, they mostly always choose not to use English,” “One-on-one, they admit they will speak English, but overcoming the bait of speaking their own language to another L1 speaker always seems to win out.” A note of despair is heard in some responses: “It is really frustrating to admit we are so ineffective, but despite a great deal of effort,

it seems the L1 is still very evident in the classroom area,” “Enforcing [the English policy] is a nightmare,” “Even if we wanted it, it is entirely impossible to enforce an English-only policy outside of class,” “I’ve asked students why they want us to have to deal with this issue through punishment and why they cannot make the commitment to speak in English for [the] five hours a day they are in our program. They say they want to but can’t break the habit. We have not been able to figure out how to break this habit.” These comments all demonstrate that students’ language use in school is a concern for many English programs.

### **Background of the Study**

The English Language Center (ELC) at Brigham Young University (BYU) is no exception to these issues. Since its inception, the ELC, like many other language learning programs, has dealt with the issue of creating a compelling English-speaking environment. A number of strategies have been implemented in the past to force students to speak only English inside the ELC building. The majority of these strategies utilized punishing consequences for those students who used their native languages. These have included the following: losing the privilege to use the computer lab, being assigned to erase pencil marks from library books, and losing class participation points.

One of the most recent efforts to improve the language-speaking environment in the school building was the “Red/Green Cards” system based on the concept of praise (Green Cards) and punishment (Red Cards). The idea of red and green cards came from soccer rules. To reward students for using English in school, the ELC administration would organize a party for the class that collected the largest number of Green Cards by the end of the semester. In contrast, students who received Red Cards for using their L1 would lose participation points in their Listening/Speaking classes.

The language policy of using Red and Green Cards, however, did not seem to be effective and demonstrated that any system based on punishment cannot be in harmony with the very nature of learning a foreign language. Therefore, it was abandoned by the ELC after winter semester, 2009. In its place, a new concept was introduced Fall, 2009, that was referred to as the principle of Progress, Respect, and Honor. The basis of that new idea was a belief that the ELC students would have more motivation and responsibility in their use of English because of the concepts of progress, respect, and honor. These concepts are briefly described below.

*Progress.* Speaking English in school leads to progress in two directions. First, the more frequently students use the target language, the better and faster they may learn it and the more effectively they may acquire necessary language skills. At the same time, the ELC itself progresses by fulfilling its purpose, as all students improve their English.

*Respect.* The concept of respect consists of four dimensions. First, when students speak English with each other, they show respect for themselves and for their own efforts. Second, they respect other ELC students and teachers who do not share the same first language, so all can understand one another and feel comfortable. Furthermore, respect assumes being appreciative of other students' efforts whose goal is to learn the language in the English-speaking atmosphere. Finally, by using English in school students demonstrate respect for those people who sacrificed and made it possible for them to come to the United States and study English at the ELC.

*Honor.* This parameter goes hand in hand with respect. First, students honor their own word, as they all agreed to observe the principle of speaking English outside the classroom when enrolling at the ELC. They also honor efforts and sacrifices of those people who make it possible for them to learn English in this language institution. Finally, because not everybody receives a chance to be accepted to the ELC, students should honor this privilege and take full

advantage of their language learning opportunity in the program, and thus try to use English as much as possible (V. Ocana, J. Hart, personal communication, April 07, 2011).

The principle of Progress, Respect, and Honor was designed to be a positive approach to the issue of language use in school, as it was intended to draw on students' responsibility and motivation in learning the language. However, like Red/Green Cards, it did not have much success perhaps due to a lack of consistent effort from teachers and administrators in helping students follow these principles. In fact, students only briefly learned about the principle during the orientation meetings, and some of them might have noticed few posters posted on a few walls. Based on general observations of the researcher who was teaching at the ELC at the time, this principle did not improve students' language behavior in school.

As in currently stands, the ELC does not have an effectively enforced policy regarding language use. Students are expected to use English in all areas in the building except for the gym; however, many of them keep speaking their L1, and teachers do not always know how to effectively motivate students to use English while in the building. Some teachers continue taking points for using native languages, while others remind students to speak English, but the majority of the teachers simply avoid the issue.

One critical aspect missing in the ELC efforts to maximize students' English use outside the classroom is a thorough investigation of factors causing learners to speak their native languages in school. Why do students switch to their L1 the minute they leave the classroom? Why are they hesitant to communicate in English with each other? Is it a matter of motivation or low English proficiency? Or is there something else that teachers and program administrators should know? Unfortunately, to date, nothing has been done at the ELC to obtain a clear

understanding of factors that make it hard for students to speak English with others from the same L1 background.

### **Rationale for the Study**

While language use outside the classroom appears to be one of the central issues for many intensive English programs (Personal email correspondence through TESOL interest sections, January, 2010; IEP administrator survey, February–March, 2011); unfortunately, little attention has been paid in the literature to understanding those factors that cause students to speak their L1 outside the language classroom in an intensive English program. Therefore, while some IEPs use a variety of language policies and programs, like the ELC did in the past, the implementation of these programs is not supported by empirical research that reflects learners' perspectives (Christison & Krahnke, 1986). Accordingly, this research gap may contribute to the ineffectiveness of the language policies commonly implemented in IEPs (Personal email correspondence through TESOL interest sections, January, 2010; IEP administrator survey, February–March, 2011).

Students can indeed provide valuable input in regard to their language learning experiences, especially when it comes to such concepts as social interaction, culture, motivation, learning styles, and communication patterns. This should encourage researchers to conduct a detailed analysis of factors that, from the perspectives of the learners themselves, influence their language behavior. Surprisingly, research on this subject is scarce.

The most thorough study to date was conducted by Park (1998) who explored factors influencing the communication behavior of Korean students in an intensive English program. This study suggests the existence of four major factors pertaining to students' unwillingness to use English both in and outside the classroom: sociocultural, psychological, institutional, and

linguistic. However, despite the valuable findings of Park's (1998) research, applying his results to a broader population of ESL learners may be difficult since Park only focused on Korean students. Thus the topic deserves a further comprehensive and thorough investigation.

### **Purposes of the Study**

The purposes of the current study are three-fold. The first purpose is to examine student attitudes toward an English-only environment in an intensive English program. The second purpose is to identify factors that, from the students' perspectives, influence their language choices in their communication with each other outside the classroom. Finally, the study aims to provide practical suggestions for teachers and program administrators on what can be done in an English language institution to assist students in their efforts to use the target language in school.

### **Significance of the Study**

The research to date has tended to focus on homogeneous groups of IEP students (e.g., Koreans, Japanese). No attempt has been made to examine the issue from the perspectives of ESL students from other L1 backgrounds. This is the major contribution of the current study as it includes the participants of four languages: Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese. It is hoped, therefore, that the results of this research will be advantageous to the ELC, in which these four languages are the most widely represented.

At the same time, administrators of other IEPs may uncover helpful insights from this study and expand their knowledge and understanding of social, individual, psychological, linguistic, and institutional parameters of language use. The findings may also help them shape their program curricula to increase students' opportunities to use the target language outside the language classroom. It is hoped, therefore, that this research will provide a theoretical framework for the future implementation of any language policies, activities, or programs in

their institutions.

Finally, the results of the study can be presented to students of intensive English programs during their orientation meetings or in one of their classes. From these findings, learners would be able to have a better picture of the factors that affect their language behavior outside the classroom. Therefore, they may better know how to modify their out-of-class behavior in order to achieve their language learning goals.

### **Research Questions**

This research was undertaken to answer the following questions:

1. What attitudes do students of the English Language Center at Brigham Young University have toward the English-only language-learning environment?
2. What factors, from the students' perspectives, affect their decisions to use either their native languages or English outside the classroom?
3. Based on the attitudes and factors that affect their language choices outside the classroom, what suggestions do students have for improving the language-learning environment at the ELC?

### **Research Design**

The research questions determined the methods of data collection in the study. The aim of this research was to explore learners' perspectives on language use outside the language classroom in depth, or, in other words, to hear the students' voices and opinions about the factors that affect their language choices in their communication with others from the same L1 background. In order to achieve this goal, the study employed qualitative research methods. As suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative inquiry methods allow researchers to "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of



the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). Qualitative data in the current study were collected by means of a questionnaire, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and focus groups.

### **Definition of Constructs**

The following constructs must be defined for the current study.

**English outside the classroom or Out-of-class English use.** In the current study, the term *outside the classroom* is used to refer to any area within the confines of an English institution but outside specific classrooms. This does not include locations and situations beyond the campus or the building of the language school (e.g., time spent at work, interactions at home, leisure time).

**The English-only policy:** This policy is a statement that some English programs have about institutional language use. This policy usually prohibits the use of students’ native languages inside and outside the classroom and enforces administrative consequences for the violation of the policy. Whereas some programs strictly adhere to the *only* principle, other English language institutions allow students to speak their L1 in a certain area of the program building or campus.

**Compatriots:** In the current research, the term *compatriot* is defined as a person who speaks the same L1 as a student.

### **Delimitations**

The research was conducted in one English institution, the English Language Center (ELC) of Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. The particular language-teaching context of this school may have influenced the results of the study. The ELC is an intensive English program that has two tracks: Foundations and Academic, with three levels in each. Additionally, there are two other levels: Foundations Prep, which helps students acquire the basic English

skills they need to be admitted to the Foundations Program, and General Academic Prep, in which students acquire the necessary skills to be admitted to the Academic Program.

Accordingly, students come to the ELC to acquire basic communication English skills, or to develop their academic language proficiency in English. The major native languages at the ELC are Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese.

At the time of conducting this research, the ELC did not have a consistently implemented language policy. Some instructors persisted in taking off students' points for speaking their L1, as they were instructed to do with the Red/Green Cards policy; others would simply remind students to use English in the hallways, while still other teachers did not do anything. Therefore, negative comments expressed by some participants may have occurred as a result of this inconsistency and may partially be considered a "timing" issue.

Even though, this research was conducted in one specific English program, this is not to say that the results of the study cannot be applied to other English language institutions. The findings of the current research may be applicable and helpful to other intensive English programs with similar goals and student populations

### **Organization of the Thesis**

To establish a theoretical background of the problem explored in the current study, the review and analysis of existing research is presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of how this study was organized in its aim to answer the research questions, and describes the types of data collection used and the data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 addresses the results of the study from the students' perspectives. The final chapter discusses the results of the study, offers practical recommendations for IEPs, and concludes by outlining some suggestions for future research.

## Chapter 2 Review of Literature

The purpose of this study is to examine attitudes that English learners have toward the English-only environment in an intensive English program and factors that, from students' perspectives, influence their language choices in their communication outside the language classrooms. The practical aim of the study is to help intensive English programs in their efforts to maximize the language-learning environments within the confines of their language institutions.

This chapter will first provide a theoretical framework on the role of the target language in second language acquisition. It will be followed by an overview of the studies that explore benefits of L2 use beyond the language classroom. The discussion will then turn to research that look at student attitudes toward language use both in class and outside of the classroom as well as studies that examine students' perspectives of reasons why they are hesitant to speak English with each in school. This all will provide a theoretical foundation, on which the current research is built. The gap identified in the existing literature will give direction to the discussion and establish the focus of the study.

### **The Role of the Target Language in Second Language Acquisition**

**SLA theories on target language use.** The importance of target language (TL) input, output, and interaction in the process of second language acquisition has been widely investigated in the literature by Krashen (1977), Long (1981), and Swain (1985). These researchers have proposed several theoretical assumptions – each focusing on a particular aspect of developing oral proficiency in a second language.

Krashen's (1977) Input Hypothesis, which is part of the Monitor Model, emphasizes the role of input in second language acquisition. Based on this hypothesis, target language

acquisition occurs when learners are provided with input that is just slightly above their actual proficiency level ( $i+1$ ). Krashen believes that comprehensible input is a necessary element in the process of learning the second language and can be provided through one-way interaction (reading, listening, or watching television), or through two-way interaction (conversations). While Krashen acknowledges that two-way interaction is a better method of providing comprehensible input, in his opinion, it is not a necessary component since acquisition can take place without the learner's active participation in conversation.

Unlike Krashen, Long (1981) believes that proficiency gain in the process of second language acquisition is more effective through interaction. He proposes the Interaction Hypothesis that emphasizes the role of negotiated interaction between a native and a non-native speaker or between two non-native speakers. Long asserts that interaction (conversation) is both a medium of language practice and a means by which language acquisition occurs. Similar to Krashen, Long's Interaction Hypothesis does not suggest a direct role of learner production (output) in promoting second language development.

In contrast to these two hypotheses, Swain (1985) emphasizes output as a central element in his theory known as the Output Hypothesis. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that although comprehensible input is a necessary component in learning a second language, it is not sufficient because in order to successfully acquire the language, learners should be given ample opportunity for meaningful production. The results of Swain's (1985) study conducted in a French immersion program demonstrate that due to lack of opportunity to use the target language in the classroom setting, children did not achieve native-like performance. In other words, even though there was enough comprehensible input, the lack of comprehensible output impeded language acquisition.

Swain (1985) argues that in order for acquisition to occur, output has to be “pushed”, that is the message has to be “not only conveyed, but conveyed precisely, coherently, and appropriately” (p. 249). To illustrate, although the immersion students in Swain’s study seemed to develop adequate language features to be understood by their classmates and teachers, “there [was] no push [for them] to be more comprehensible than they already [were]” (p. 249). Said another way, there was no pressure for them to produce the features that would extend their linguistic repertoire.

To summarize, each of these hypotheses focuses on a different function of the target language: input received by the learner, output produced by the learner, and interaction that occurs between the learner and his or her interlocutor. However, regardless of their different emphases, these hypotheses all suggest the vital role of the target language in developing L2 competency.

**Research on the importance of target language use.** Based on these theoretical assumptions, many researchers believe that target language must be “the sole medium of communication”, suggesting that “the prohibition of the native language would maximize the effectiveness of learning the target language” (Tang, 2002, p. 36). For example, Chaudron (1988) asserts that, “the fullest competence in the TL (target language) is achieved by means of the teacher providing a rich TL environment, in which not only instruction and drills are executed in the TL, but also disciplinary and management operations” (p.121). Atkinson (1993b) suggests that, “every second spent using the L1 is a second *not* spent using English – and every second counts” (p. 12).

Furthermore, the supporters of target language use argue that this practice has positive outcomes for the learners. Duff and Polio (1990) explain that it is “challenging and fun for

students in L2 classes to have optimal exposure to the L2” (p. 162). Littlewood (1981) suggests that when language teachers use the students’ L1 for classroom management purposes, it “devaluates the foreign language as a vehicle of communication” (p. 45). As a result, learners perceive their native language as a primary tool of communication, whereas English is “relegated to an abstract exercise role” (Grant, 1999, p. 4). Therefore, some researchers point out that the use of the mother tongue in the classroom is “unthinkable” (Mattioli, 2004, p. 21), and even grammar explanation and classroom management should be done in the target language (Davila, 2005; Duff & Polio, 1990; Franklin, 1990; Gorsuch, 1991; Littlewood, 1981).

At the same time, the role that the target language plays in the development of oral proficiency is not limited to the language classroom. In fact, as Brown (2000) points out, “Few if any people achieve fluency in a foreign language solely within the confines of the classroom” (p. 1). Along the same line, Cundick (2007) suggests that “the time [the students] spend out of class is much greater than the time they spend in it”, so if they know “how to maximize their out-of-class language use”, they will “become better language speakers” (p. 88).

**Target language use and proficiency gain.** Some studies attempted to explore the impact of target language use on proficiency gain. Nevertheless, these studies brought contradicting results. While some researchers (Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995; Seliger, 1977) suggest a positive relationship between these two variables, others (Day, 1985; O’Donnell, 2004; Spada, 1986) found no such connection, and some (Freed, 1990; Yager, 1998) had mixed results (See Cundick, 2007 for a detailed discussion of these studies).

The contradictory nature of these findings may be explained by two major factors. First, in most cases, the length of the study was too short (between 4 and 15 weeks) to determine any distinct gain in proficiency. Second, tests selected to measure proficiency gain were in most

cases not sensitive enough to be able to measure small degrees of proficiency gains (Cundick, 2007). To illustrate, the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), which was used in most of these studies, is normally unable to measure slight differences in proficiency increase over a short period of time (Cundick, 2007; Freed, 1990; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004).

These limitations were attempted to overcome by Cundick's (2007) study. Cundick asked whether there is a positive relationship between learners' use of English outside the classroom and their proficiency gain. Under the concept "out-of-class language use" Cundick considered any activities outside the English classroom in which students were engaged by utilizing English, including homework, interaction with co-workers, friends, and roommates. The study found a positive relationship between the use of English outside the classroom and increase in proficiency. The results also suggest that the two most effective activities predicting proficiency gain were practicing what was learned in class and speaking English with someone else outside the classroom.

In addition, Cundick (2007) also found that the increase in language proficiency occurred when students interacted in English with non-native speakers. In her study, the participants whose native language was not widely represented in school reported 79.5% greater out-of-class use of English than those whose native language was spoken by a large number of learners. As a consequence, the former had 38.2% greater average gain in proficiency than the latter. Thus, the study suggests that "having less native language contact while learning a second language" and using the target language with other language learners "can help students increase their out-of-class language use and thus increase their proficiency more quickly" (p. 78).

Similar to Cundick (2007), a recent study by Martinsen, Baker, Dewey, Bown, and Johnson (2010), which focuses on language gain in three different learning contexts, study

abroad, service language learning, and foreign language housing, found a positive correlation between use of the L2 with non-native speakers and increase of language proficiency. Martinsen et al. (2010) found that the students who interacted with their non-native roommates in the foreign language housing demonstrated a greater language gain than those who communicated mostly with native speakers in study abroad programs.

At first glance, this conclusion might sound contradictory: It is generally anticipated that interaction with native speakers would result in a greater language gain than interaction with other language learners. Martinsen et al. (2010) provide several reasons to explain this phenomenon. First, in the study abroad environment, the students were far less fluent than the native speakers, so they were not able to speak much with them, and their communication was limited to simple tasks such as purchasing tickets, ordering meals, or exchanging greeting phrases with the members of their host families. As a result, students' interaction with the native speakers was mostly characterized as receptive rather than productive.

Conversely, the students in the foreign language housing in Martinsen et al.'s (2010) study seemed to share more similarities with their roommates in terms of the target language fluency. The researchers argue that this similarity of language proficiency levels resulted in more complex language tasks in which the students were engaged with each other on a daily basis. Moreover, such variables as similar age, cultural background, and social status, as well as the amount of time spent with each other contributed to the depth and variety of conversations that the students had in their apartments.

In summary, Cundick (2007) and Martinsen et al. (2010) provide empirical evidence of the positive relationship between the use of the target language and increase of language proficiency. Moreover, according to both studies, this correlation occurs even when language



learners use the target language with each other. As a result, some teachers and administrators of English programs believe that students who use the target language not only in class but also outside of the classroom achieve a higher level of proficiency than those who tend to communicate in their mother tongue. Therefore, some language programs enforce English-only rules that prohibit the use of native languages in class, and in some cases, outside the classroom.

### **Students' Attitudes Toward Target Language Use**

**Attitudes toward English-only classrooms.** The question of whether or not to use students' native language in class appears primarily in EFL contexts, in which learners normally share their mother tongue. As a result, the studies describing students' attitudes toward English-only classrooms focus primarily on EFL contexts.

In 1999, Grant conducted a study in foreign language schools in Japan with the purpose to examine students' attitudes toward English-only classrooms, as well as gather their suggestions on alternative language policies in the classroom. Six two-year foreign language specialty schools were included in the research. Four of the schools did not have a formal English-only policy, but the enforcement of the rule and the strictness of its implementation were up to the individual teacher. The other two schools carried out a school-wide English-only policy, according to which all instructions and communication between students and teachers had to be in English.

Grant (1999) found that students' reactions to the English-only classrooms were predominantly negative (58%). Only 30% of the participants perceived the policy positively. Grant explained, however, that the students' negative attitudes were mostly directed toward the school administrative consequences for not using English, that is punishment or scolding, rather than toward the policy per se. In fact, the majority of the participants (68%) perceived the policy

as a helpful instrument in developing their English proficiency.

Interestingly, students' reactions to the English-only environment in different schools in Grant's (1999) study varied due to the degree of its implementation. Many participants from the schools with the formal English-only policy had positive perceptions, whereas the majority of negative attitudes were observed in the schools in which the policy was employed by individual teachers. Grant explains this phenomenon with two factors. The first factor is the consistency of the rule implementation carried out in the schools with the formal policy. The second factor is the conscious choice that the learners made entering the school with the English-only environment.

Although Grant (1999) focuses his attention only on the in-class use of English, his findings make a significant contribution to the understanding of learner perceptions of the English-only learning contexts. At the same time, students' negative reactions to the English-only classrooms suggest that further alternative policies need to be explored.

One possible alternative is suggested by Reis (1996). As part of his experiment, Reis implemented a five-minute L1 (Portuguese) break in each English lesson as a result of students' negative perceptions of the English-only rule. The students in Reis' study, who were low beginning level of proficiency, viewed imposing the English-only rule in the classroom as a "restriction upon communication freedom" (p. 62). Considering their feedback, Reis created collaboratively with the students a technique that they called "Portuguese Break", during which the students discussed their performance, asked questions about communication problems, and were engaged in self-evaluation.

Reis (1996) reports that students' attitudes toward their learning process dramatically changed. Students became more involved in classroom activities, demonstrated better social

skills, higher levels of motivation and self-esteem, and surprisingly, they expressed more appreciation and willingness to speak English in the classroom. In short, the findings of this study suggest that the judicious use of students' native languages for the right purpose (in Reis' study, discussing learning and teaching process) can be turned into a "powerful pedagogical instrument" that raises "more disciplined, competent, and responsible learners" and builds "a respectful classroom atmosphere in which peer correction and self evaluation [are] much more than fashionable theoretical concepts" (p. 63).

Similar to Reis, the participants in Burden's (2000) study viewed their mother tongue (Japanese) as a useful tool in a university English language classroom in Japan. However, Burden found that college students, "while reserving the right to ask about usage" (p. 139) in their L1, felt that the class time should be mainly spent on communicative activities in the target language. Most participants (211 out of 290) thought that teachers should use English when explaining grammar, class rules, giving assignments and instructions, as well as checking for understanding. On the other hand, the majority of the participants (61%) indicated that mother tongue is needed to relax students and lower their affective filter. Based on these findings, Burden asserts that the use of students' mother tongue helps create "a supportive and open environment" and thus it suggests "a more humanistic approach... that values the students, their culture and their language" (p. 147).

Similarly, minimal use of their L1 was favored by the participants in Storch and Wigglesworth's (2003) study. This study was conducted to see if learners would use their shared L1 in performing pair activities: a text reconstruction task and a joint composition task. Along with questions about how much learners used their shared L1 as a mediating tool and what functions the use of L1 served, the study explored students' attitudes toward the use of their

native language in completing the tasks.

The results of Storch and Wigglesworth' (2003) study indicate that most participants were reluctant to make use of their shared L1. In the interviews conducted after the completion of the tasks, the students reported that they avoided utilizing their native languages while working on the tasks due to “an additional translation stage [that] would slow down the task completion” (p. 766). Another reason reported by the participants was related to the context in which the study took place and their awareness of expectations put on them in that context. The students felt that “in an ESL setting, they should maximize the use of the target language as a means of improving their English speaking skills” (p. 766). Some participants also explained that their avoidance of L1 use during the completion of the tasks was caused by “deference to the researcher” (p. 766). They acknowledged that the researcher was not able to understand them; therefore, by using English, they expressed respect to him.

However, despite the minimal utilization of their shared L1 while completing the tasks, some students in Storch and Wigglesworth's (2003) study reported that their native language “could be a useful tool” as it would “enable them to discuss [the task] in more depth and thus complete the task more easily” (p. 768). To illustrate, the students felt that they sometimes needed to communicate in their native language to discuss definitions of unfamiliar words, explain the assignment clearly and thus “gain a shared understanding”, and to assist each other in interpreting (p. 767).

To summarize, the studies of Grant (1999), Reis (1996), Burden (2000), and Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) report a similar result: L2 learners perceive their language learning process with some support of their L1. Therefore, this area deserves further exploration. Although the contexts of these studies were limited to the language classroom, their findings are important to

consider since they provide further understanding on students' perceptions of English-only learning environments. The following section of this chapter will provide an overview of studies that examined students' attitudes toward the use of English outside the language classroom.

**Attitudes toward English use outside the classroom.** Several researchers attempted to explore learner perceptions of the target language use outside the classroom (Barker, 2004; Davis, 1986; Hyland, 2004; Kang, 2006). Some of these studies were conducted in an EFL environment (Barker, 2004; Hyland, 2004), and some took place in an ESL context (Davis, 1986; Kang, 2006).

Barker's (2004) article "Encouraging students to take their language learning outside the classroom" described Japanese students' reservations expressed toward the use of English in their communication with other learners outside the classroom. Barker reports that many Japanese students did not believe that the use of English with non-native speakers was effective and helpful. In fact, the majority of the participants said they avoided communicating in English with their friends in school because they perceived such type of interaction as "the blind leading the blind" (p. 80).

Barker (2004) outlines several reasons for students' objections "to the idea of speaking English" (p. 81). First, they feared that they would "pick up on each other's mistakes" and thus worsen their English. Furthermore, the students thought that by using English with other non-native English speakers, they would never know when they made mistakes, so they would not be able to correct each other. The participants also believed that interaction with non-native peers in the target language was not beneficial in terms of improving their pronunciation. Finally, Barker reports that the "classic" reason for students' avoidance in using English outside the

classroom was the lack of language proficiency such as vocabulary and grammatical structures (pp. 81-82).

Even though, Barker (2004) collected valuable data in regard to learner perceptions of the out-of-class English use, several weaknesses must be considered. First, in his report, Barker provided no information on the methods of his experiment (e.g., questionnaires, surveys, interviews, observations). Limited data were also given concerning the groups of the participants and their proficiency levels, or other learner characteristics that might have influenced students' attitudes toward English use.

Similar to Barker (2004), Hyland (2004) was concerned with learner attitudes toward the out-of-class use of English in an EFL environment. The study examined out-of-class activities of native Chinese teachers of English in Hong Kong and found that although the participants were English teachers (supposedly highly motivated English learners), they were reluctant to communicate in English outside the classroom on a regular basis. Only 57.9% of the participants felt that English was important in their daily life. Moreover, they reported that their English use was limited to individual rather than face-to-face activities, such as writing emails, watching TV, reading newspapers, and surfing the Internet.

Hyland (2004) explains participants' avoidance of English in an interpersonal interaction as a social factor. She found three elements within the social factor that seemed to influence participants' language use. The first was environmental pressure: English teachers in China are expected to speak the language perfectly. Another element was a societal view on English in the Chinese setting: English is viewed as a more superior language than Chinese, and thus a Chinese person speaking English is perceived as arrogant and proud about his or her high competence in English. The third element within the social factor was the nature of social interaction: It is

awkward, unnatural, and even embarrassing to use English with Chinese speakers. Based on these findings, Hyland stated that in social contexts in which English is used, the role that English plays in that context and the social status of English users are important to consider when looking at student attitudes toward the use of English outside of the classroom.

A study that looked at the issue of language use outside the classroom in an ESL context was conducted by Davis (1986). The participants in her study were eighteen students of the English for bilingual students program. All subjects were from the lowest writing level in that program (based on scores from the school writing assessment). The participants were asked to write an essay on the topic: “Students in the United States who are learning English should speak English at all times. They should not use their native language at all, even at home” (p. 60).

Three participants in Davis’ (1986) study agreed with the statement. They wanted to practice English as much as possible and explained that it helped them integrate with the American culture, it had benefits for their future career, and it noticeably improved their oral proficiency. To further illustrate the last point, one participant explained that although she had studied English for eight years in Korea, she still had a hard time participating in class. This student believed that for her, the ability to speak the language well did not come from the theory and understanding of grammar, but appeared to be a result of speaking practice.

On the other hand, ten students in Davis’ (1986) study disagreed with the statement. Their common response was related to their cultural identity and family roots. According to these participants, only through their native language, could they maintain closeness to their families and culture and remember where they came from. In some students’ responses, the idea of giving up their native language almost sounded like a betrayal of their language and culture.

The results of Davis’ (1986) research made a significant contribution to our

understanding of learner attitudes toward practicing English outside the classroom; however, it has weaknesses that warrant consideration. The study only involved low proficiency learners; therefore, it is difficult to generalize the findings to a broader population of learners. In addition, the essay prompt asked the students whether or not they should eliminate the use of their native languages from all interactions with people. The researcher did not realize that many students came to the United States with their spouses, children, or other relatives who might not speak any English. It would have been practically impossible, therefore, to require the students to use only English at home. Hence, it comes as no surprise that the majority of the participants in Davis' study were defensive and strongly expressed their disagreement with this idea of not using their mother tongue. Finally, since the essay on such a complex topic for beginning learners was written in English, this questions the reliability of the study's findings.

As the overview demonstrated, Barker (2004), Hyland (2004), and Davis (1986) focused their attention on learner attitudes toward their out-of-class language use mostly in the contexts beyond the confines of the language school. And whereas Barker (2004) included in his report learners' language use in school, his observations were made in Japan, which certainly has a different context than an intensive English program in an English-speaking country. The research examining learner perceptions of language use within the confines of an IEP is scarce. We will now take a look at these studies.

### **Student Language Use in Intensive English Programs**

Little research has been done about why ESL students are resistant to communicate with each other in the target language. There are very few studies (Hwang, 1993; Park, 1998; Tomizawa, 1990) that have examined in detail factors that affect students' language use in intensive English programs. Although these studies described thoroughly each factor in regard to



learners' reticence in oral communication in English, their findings are somewhat limited for two reasons. First, the scope of these studies was focused primarily on the classroom, except for Park (1998) whose study regarded both in-class and out-of class learners' language behavior. Second, the participants in all these studies were exclusively Asian students. However, regardless of these limitations, Hwang (1993), Park (1998), and Tomizawa (1990) expanded our understanding of important factors affecting student language choices in their communication with each other. Therefore, it seems prudent to take a closer look at each of these studies.

Tomizawa (1990) conducted research that explored factors that influence Japanese ESL students' inactiveness in their oral interaction in the English classroom. The study employed in-depth interviews, a small group discussion, and questionnaires administered to the students and classroom teachers. Tomizawa describes three major categories of factors that influenced Japanese students' reticence in class: sociocultural, psychological, and linguistic. Under the category of the sociocultural factors the researcher discusses differences in instructional patterns between American and Japanese classrooms, perfectionism, being less talkative in public, conformity and competition, careful thought vs. spontaneous response, and domination of students of other nationalities in class. The psychological factors included intolerance of ambiguity, lack of confidence in using English, motivation intensity, feeling overwhelmed from speaking English, and fear of losing self-identity due to using English. Finally, linguistics factors found by Tomizawa included lack of sufficient English knowledge, lack of listening skills, and lack of discussion or communication skills.

Similar factors were described by Hwang (1993) in her study that addressed Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese students' reticence in the English classroom. Hwang found four major categories of factors that were common for all of the three groups of the students: linguistic,

cultural, social, and psychological. In addition, the researcher describes factors that were unique for the Japanese students such as group orientation vs. competition, little cultural value on oral communication, the use of bilingual dictionaries in class, and beliefs about English-learning process, and one factor unique for the Korean students such as the effect of Korean family communication patterns. Surprisingly, no unique factors were found for the Taiwanese students. The researcher also discovered two factors that appeared common for the Korean and Japanese students: certain social expectations put on women, and fear of making mistakes due to loss of face.

A few years later, Park (1998) examined factors affecting Korean students' oral communication in class and outside of the classroom. These included social, institutional, psychological, and linguistic factors with several sub-factors in each. Under the social factors Park describes peer pressure, which appeared to be the main source of Korean students' resistance to use English with their compatriots. Social norms and values, along with Korean cultural communication patterns also seemed to play a significant role in student interaction. The category of institutional factors included teacher characteristics, classroom setting, topics, unequal turn distribution, and class size. The primary focus in this category was given to the teacher characteristics due to high value and respect toward teachers in Korean society. According to the majority of the participants in Park's study, it was the teachers' responsibility to make students feel interested and comfortable speaking English in class. The psychological factors found by Park included lack of confidence in using English with other Koreans and fear of making mistakes due to fear of being judged by compatriots. Finally, the linguistic factors that made it difficult for Park's participants to use English were translating habits, lack of listening comprehension, and limited linguistic resources.

Of the qualitative, exploratory research that has examined reasons for students' reticence in speaking English, Park's (1998) study is the most informative. The researcher expanded his observations beyond the classroom by analyzing participants' personal networks and their socialization with other people in different settings in school and out of school. This validated the findings of the study and certainly provided more information on students' daily communication styles and patterns outside of the English class.

To summarize, as seen from the overview of these studies (Hwang, 1993; Park, 1998; Tomizawa, 1990), the findings regarding students' communication patterns were generally consistent. These researchers discovered the same categories of factors (i.e. social, cultural, psychological, and linguistic) with only slight differences in terms of the sub-factors. In addition, even though, Park (1998) introduced another category, institutional, some sub-factors described by Tomizawa (1990) and Hwang (1993) such as domination of other ethnic students in class, classroom participation differences between the United States and a home country, and instructional pattern differences could be categorized as institutional as well. However, these minor differences are merely terminological rather than conceptual.

Unlike these studies, Kang's (2006) research was not conducted in an English program. The participant in the study was a Korean physician who came to the United States as a visiting scholar. For 13 months, the researcher collected data on the participant's use of English through formal and informal interviews, observations, emails, and notebook memos. The findings of this case study indicate that there were two main sociocultural factors preventing the participant from using English: lack of contact with native speakers and the feeling of insecurity about speaking English in the presence of other Koreans.

A significant contribution of Kang's (2006) study was an attempt to explore the relationship between the individual characteristics of the participant and sociocultural factors. To illustrate, the participant's extroversion and high motivation helped him increase opportunities to use English and overcome to a certain degree the feeling of insecurity in the presence of other Koreans. Based on this finding, Kang argues that individual factors of English learners could help them cope with the challenges brought by socio-contextual and cultural aspects that limit learners' opportunities to use English.

In summary, the works of Tomizawa (1990), Hwang (1993), Park (1998), and Kang (2006) have extensively described a number of factors pertaining to the language choices made by Asian student in their communication in class and outside of the classroom. In addition, two of these studies (Kang, 2006; Park, 1998) have demonstrated that the context in which students learn the language plays a significant role and in many ways determines learner communication styles.

### **Summary**

This review of literature has demonstrated that a considerable amount of research has been conducted to address the role of both L1 and L2 in second language acquisition. While some scholars support the monolingual approach, others argue that learners' mother tongues are an important component in facilitating the process of second language acquisition. Some researchers attempted to explore students' attitudes toward the exclusive use of English in school, focusing primarily on the classroom environment. Several others looked at students' perceptions of English use outside of the language-learning institution, such as at work, at home, and other places in the community.

Finally, a line of researchers has focused their attention on the reasons of students' reticence to use English in school. The scope of these studies, however, is limited mostly to the language classroom, and very little research exists on how learners interact with one another outside the classroom of the language school. Furthermore, the factors found by these researchers pertain exclusively to Asian learners of English. Nevertheless, most intensive English programs have a variety of ethnic groups of students. It is beneficial, therefore, to investigate how students interact with each other in a multilingual school setting, and what factors influence their communication styles with other language learners. Finally, when exploring the factors affecting student language choices in school, it is also vital to consider the institutional parameters of an English program, since much of students' attitudes toward their use of English depends on a particular language-learning setting.

To conclude, based on the existing literature, the combination of these three components, the out-of class school environment, students from different L1 backgrounds, and the influence of a learning context (i.e. a certain language institution with its set of policies and curriculum), has not been utilized in the previous research. Therefore, they will constitute the framework for this study, which will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What attitudes do students of the English Language Center at Brigham Young University have toward the English-only language-learning environment?
2. What factors, from the students' perspectives, affect their decisions to use either their native languages or English outside the classroom?
3. Based on the attitudes and factors that affect their language choices outside the classroom, what suggestions do students have for improving the language-learning environment at the ELC?

### Chapter 3 Methods

*“Every method of data collection is only an approximation to knowledge”*(Warwick, 1973, p. 190).

This chapter will describe the instruments that were used in this study as well as explain how data were collected and analyzed in order to explore the following research questions:

1. What attitudes do students of the English Language Center at Brigham Young University have toward the English-only language-learning environment?
2. What factors, from the students’ perspectives, affect their decisions to use either their native languages or English outside the classroom?
3. Based on the attitudes and factors that affect their language choices outside the classroom, what suggestions do students have for improving the language-learning environment at the ELC?

#### **Instrument Design Overview**

The research questions posed in this study are exploratory by nature, as they attempt to provide a better understanding of factors affecting student language choices outside the classroom. In order to collect descriptive data revealing students’ attitudes and opinions, the study was conducted within a qualitative framework. Indeed, numbers and statistical analysis cannot reveal what is on learners’ minds; neither can they allow their voices to be heard (Evans, 2001). Therefore, qualitative methods seemed to best fit the purposes of this study.

Data collected in this study came from a questionnaire, six semi-structured interviews, and four focus groups. The combination of three instruments of data collection was employed in order to 1) gather rich, descriptive data and 2) ensure triangulation. Data gathered with a single instrument would be insufficient and perhaps lack depth. Furthermore, collecting data from

multiple sources helps ensure its trustworthiness. According to Patton (1990), by utilizing multiple instruments of data collection, the researcher “can build on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimizing the weakness of any single approach” (p. 245). Some of the data in the current study may be repetitive; nevertheless, this fact alone speaks to the trustworthiness of the data and the integrity of the findings discovered in this research (Evans, 2001).

**Context.** The study was conducted at the English Language Center (ELC), located in Provo, Utah. The ELC is an intensive English program operated by the Linguistics and English Language Department of Brigham Young University (BYU). The curriculum of the ELC consists of two programs: the Foundations English Program and the Academic English Program. The Foundations Program has the goal of helping students gain Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills (BICS), whereas the Academic Program focuses specifically on helping students develop and achieve Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and enter institutions of higher education in the United States (Cummins, 1979; 1981).

Each of these programs, Foundations and Academic, are divided into multiple levels. These levels are labeled A, B and C. A corresponds to the level of lowest English proficiency, B to intermediate proficiency, and C to advanced proficiency in each program. Additionally, there are two preparatory levels in the ELC curriculum: Foundations Prep and General Academic Prep.

The ELC curriculum is generally skill-based. The classes in Levels A and B of the Foundations Program consist of Writing and Structure, Reading, Oral Communication Fluency, and Oral Communication Accuracy classes. The classes in Level C include Writing, Reading, Grammar, and Oral Communication. The Academic Program offers four courses in Level A and Level B: Writing, Linguistic Accuracy, Listening and Speaking, and Reading. Level C consists

of Writing, Linguistic Accuracy, and two content-based classes that help students develop language skills as well as academic vocabulary necessary for functioning in basic university courses.

The ELC is considered to be a lab school for teachers. The classes are primarily taught by teachers currently enrolled in the BYU TESOL Certificate Program or the TESOL Masters of Arts (MA) Program. However, several instructors from the community also teach at the ELC. These instructors have completed in the past a TESOL Certificate Program, a TESOL MA Program, or programs in closely related fields.

The majority of ELC students come from South and Central America, Mexico, Asia, and some parts of Europe. In any given semester at the ELC, most students are from Spanish-speaking countries. The second most widely represented native language is Korean, and the third is Portuguese. The representation of other languages, however, varies from semester to semester. The current study was carried out during the Fall, 2010, Winter, 2011, and Summer, 2011 Semesters. Table 1 shows the distribution of student native languages over these three semesters.

Students' goals of studying English at the ELC are fairly similar. Whereas the majority plans to attend a college or a university in the United States, some learners wish to return back to their home country and continue education in a local university or pursue a career. A large number of students at the ELC plan to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and some students are preparing for the General Record Examination (GRE), the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), or the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)—the tests required by graduate programs in American universities.



Table 1

*Student Native Language Distribution by the Semesters of the Study*

Native Language	Semesters During Study		
	Fall 2010	Winter 2011	Summer 2011
Spanish	35.5% (76)	42.7% (93)	42.4% (89)
Korean	22.0% (47)	19.3% (42)	24.8% (52)
Portuguese	14.4% (31)	10.6% (23)	12.0% (25)
Chinese	7.4% (16)	9.6% (21)	5.7% (12)
Japanese	8.4% (18)	4.6% (10)	6.7% (14)
French	4.2% (9)	3.7% (8)	2.4% (5)
Russian	1.9% (4)	2.3% (5)	0.9% (2)
Ukrainian	2.3% (5)	3.2% (7)	0.5% (1)
Arabic	1.0% (2)	0.9% (2)	0.5% (1)
Armenian	0.5% (1)	0.5% (1)	0.5% (1)
Bengali	0.5% (1)	0.5% (1)	-
Italian	0.5% (1)	-	-
Nepalese	0.5% (1)	0.5% (1)	0.5% (1)
Thai	0.5% (1)	0.9% (2)	0.9% (2)
Vietnamese	0.5% (1)	-	0.5% (1)
Malagasy	-	0.5% (1)	0.5% (1)
Mongolian	-	0.5% (1)	0.9% (2)
Turkish	-	-	0.5% (1)
Total	214	218	210

**Participants.** The participants in this study were students enrolled at the ELC in the Fall, 2010, Winter, 2011, and Summer, 2011 Semesters. The description of the participants as categorized by the data collection procedures follows.

**Questionnaire.** All students enrolled at the ELC in Fall Semester, 2010, were invited to complete a questionnaire as part of their class evaluations. Out of 214 students enrolled, 158 (73.83%) completed the questionnaire. Participants' L1 is shown in Table 2.

**Interviews.** The participants for the individual interviews were strategically selected from the 158 questionnaire participants. The following requirements served as criteria for selecting the interview participants:

Table 2

*Questionnaire Participants' Native Languages*

Native Language	Number of Participants
Spanish	35.4% (56)
Korean	24.0% (38)
Portuguese	15.2% (24)
Chinese	8.2% (13)
Japanese	7.0% (11)
French	3.1% (5)
Russian	2.5% (4)
Ukrainian	1.9% (3)
Arabic	0.6% (1)
Bengali	0.6% (1)
Nepalese	0.6% (1)
Vietnamese	0.6% (1)
Total	158

1. They studied at the ELC during Fall Semester, 2010, and took the questionnaire on the use of English outside the classroom administered at the ELC at the end of that semester.
2. They agreed to meet for a discussion about English use at the ELC, which was requested in the last question on the questionnaire.
3. They were enrolled in the ELC during Winter Semester, 2011, the time when the interviews were conducted. The students that completed their studies at the ELC after Fall, 2010, or were taking a break in Winter, 2011 were not considered as potential interview participants.
4. They had to be at least in the Foundations C level of proficiency in winter semester 2011. This level corresponds to the intermediate language proficiency, which ensures adequate English oral skills necessary for the participation in the interview.
5. They had to come from one of the following native language backgrounds: Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, or Chinese. These four languages were identified as the most

representative of the whole student population at the ELC.

Following these criteria, 12 students were identified as potential interview participants. Emails were then sent to their teachers to gather their feedback about attitudes of those learners toward their studies. It was assumed that motivated learners would be willing to contribute to the improvement of the ELC, and thus would provide more valid information for the research.

This is not to say, however, that all 12 students selected from the questionnaire indicated that they had positive attitudes toward the language-learning environment at the ELC. The researcher intentionally selected for the interviews both students with positive attitudes and the ones whose reactions to the English-only environment were negative. This was done in order to have a full range of perspectives on the issue, or “a great deal about the matters of importance” (Patton, 1990, p. 181).

Based on teachers’ feedback about students’ motivation, eight students were strategically selected and contacted by the researcher with an invitation to participate (see Appendix D). Seven students responded to the email with their agreement to participate. One student out of these seven was chosen to participate in a pilot interview. Table 3 lists the demographic characteristics of the interview participants.

Table 3

*Interview Participants*

Student	Native Language	ELC Level	Gender
1	Spanish	GAP	F
2	Spanish	Academic B	M
3	Korean	GAP	F
4	Korean	Academic A	M
5	Portuguese	Academic A	F
6	Chinese	Academic B	F

Since Spanish and Korean are the most representative languages at the ELC (see Table 1), it was decided to include two students from each of these languages: a male and a female. Gender was not anticipated to be one of the variables determining students' attitudes toward language use in school, and the selection of both genders for the Spanish and Korean interview participants was simply done for the purpose of a better variety in the participant sample. Therefore, for the other two languages, Portuguese and Chinese, gender was not taken into consideration as a demographic factor for determining the selection of the participants. Quite by coincidence, both the Portuguese-speaking and the Chinese-speaking participants were females.

In terms of proficiency levels, the interview participant sample did not demonstrate a representation of all levels identified as appropriate for the interviews (i.e. Foundations C, GAP, Academic A, Academic B, and Academic C). The sample had no students from the Foundations C and Academic C levels, as none of the students from these levels met all the selection criteria. Therefore, a special effort was made to include both of these levels in the focus groups.

***Focus groups.*** The participants for the focus groups were enrolled in the summer semester of 2011. It was decided to form four groups of students based on the most representative L1 at the ELC: Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese, with seven to ten participants in each, which is an optimal number for a focus group (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Emails with an invitation to participate in focus groups (see Appendix E) were sent by the teachers of the first morning classes to all ELC students. This request resulted in the following numbers of potential participants: 29 Spanish-speaking, 19 Korean-speaking, 11 Portuguese-speaking, and 8 Chinese-speaking students.

Emails (see Appendix F) were then sent to all 11 Portuguese- and 8 Chinese-speaking students to confirm their participation. On the other hand, for the Spanish- and Korean-speaking

focus groups, 10 students were selected from those identified by the teachers, and emails (see Appendix F) were sent to them to confirm their participation. This resulted in the following number of participants in each focus group: Spanish – 9, Korean – 10, Portuguese – 9, Chinese – 7. While these were the numbers of participants the researcher recruited, the number of Korean students eventually participated in the focus group was bigger, as shown in Table 4. When the emails (see Appendix F) were sent by the researcher to the 10 Korean students from the 19 students identified by the teachers, all 10 confirmed their participation. However, on the day of the focus group discussion, 17 students showed up, most of whom were from that initial number of 19: Those students assumed that having indicated their interest to help with the research to their teachers, they committed to participate. Table 4 shows the number of participants in each focus group as well as describes some of their demographic characteristics.

Table 4

*Focus Group Participants*

Nationality	Gender		Proficiency						
	M	F	FA	FB	FC	GAP	AA	AB	AC
Spanish	5	4	-	-	-	3	2	1	3
Korean	11	6		5	4	5	2	1	-
Portuguese	4	5	2	1	2	2	1	1	-
Chinese	4	3	-	3	3	1	-	-	-

The sample of focus group participants, as noted in Table 4, warrants further discussion. First, similar to the interview participants (except for Spanish and Korean), gender was not considered as a variable for selecting the focus group participants, and is only included as additional information about the participants. Second, the proficiency levels of the Spanish- and Chinese-speaking participants were not equally represented as was initially anticipated. During the process of forming the groups, it was noticed that, among those Spanish-speaking students

identified through the teachers' emails, there were no students from the Foundations A and Foundations C classes. Furthermore, among the nine students who eventually confirmed their participation, none belonged to the Foundations B class either. Therefore, the Spanish-speaking group had only representatives from the GAP class and the Academic Program. The Chinese focus group encountered a similar problem. There were eight students on the list sent by the teachers, but none was from the Foundations A level, and there was only one student from the Academic Program, but she did not confirm her participation. As a result, the Chinese-speaking focus group only had representatives from the Foundations B, Foundations C, and GAP levels.

The inequality regarding level allocation and participant number will be acknowledged as one of the limitations of the study. Nevertheless, despite this inequality, the data are still valid. We will now turn our attention to the discussion on the data collection procedures for each of the three instruments of the study.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

**Questionnaire.** In order to gather data from a large sample of participants and obtain “representative and generalizable findings” (Kvale, 1996, p. 93), a student questionnaire (see Appendix C) was administered the last week of fall semester 2010 as part of the class evaluations. The questionnaire was administered at the ELC using the survey software Qualtrics. A total of 158 students completed the questionnaire.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine how frequently students use English compared to their native languages within the confines of the ELC building when classes are not in session. Additionally, the questionnaire sought to understand students' general attitudes toward language use in the ELC building, as well as gather their suggestions on how to improve the language-learning environment in the hallways of the school.

The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions. Students were asked to indicate and briefly explain their general attitudes toward the existing English-only rule at the ELC. They were also prompted to identify possible benefits of using the target language beyond the classroom, as well as circumstances in which the use of their native languages should be allowed. In addition, the questionnaire contained a few questions asking the students about their personal goals and motivation in terms of speaking English. The last part of the questionnaire asked students to offer some recommendations for the ELC administration to improve the language-learning atmosphere in school. At the end of the questionnaire, the students were invited to indicate whether or not they were willing to participate in an interview discussing the issue of language use at the ELC.

**Interviews.** Since most questions on the questionnaire had a multiple-choice format, the data collected with this instrument alone would lack depth and richness. Moreover, students did not always provide additional commentaries or explain their responses even when they were prompted to. Therefore, in order to clarify the questionnaire responses and to elaborate on its findings, six in-depth student interviews were conducted.

An interview is a purposeful conversation between a researcher and a participant (Kahan & Cannel, 1957; Kvale, 1996). Interviews allow a researcher not only “to enter into the other person’s perspective,” but also see “how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world...” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). In this sense, interviews, unlike surveys and questionnaires, help gather rich, descriptive data.

The interviews in this study were semi-structured. This type of interview is “neither an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire. It is conducted according to an interview guide that will focus on certain themes” (Kvale, 1996, p. 27). Each interview followed

the same protocol (see Appendix G). However, during the discussion with each participant, some slight modifications were made in terms of the order of the questions on the protocol, as well as several follow-up questions that occurred during each interview.

All interviews were conducted by the researcher at the ELC during the ninth, tenth, and eleventh week of Winter Semester, 2011. The interviews were conducted in English. All participants were scheduled for their interviews after the daily ELC classes finished, with the exception of one, which was scheduled to meet on a Saturday. The length of the interviews was between 35 and 65 minutes. Before the interview, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, after which they read and signed a consent form (see Appendix I). In addition, before and after the interview, all participants had a chance to ask any questions related to the interview process or the research.

The interviews were audio recorded using QuickTime Player. The data were then transferred on an external memory device and kept by the researcher for further analysis. Following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed. In addition to the recordings, the researcher took notes during the interviews that reflected some of her impressions throughout the discussions.

***Pilot interview.*** A pilot interview was conducted in order to 1) test the question prompts, 2) estimate the approximate amount of time needed for the actual interviews, and 3) practice interviewing skills. The interview was conducted at the ELC under the same conditions as the actual interviews. All question prompts from the protocol were asked during the interview.

The pilot interview demonstrated the need to be attentive to the interviewee's responses by asking follow-up questions in order to help the participant share additional information and insights. In this pilot interview, the question prompts were discovered to be effective, as they



seemed to elicit information necessary to answer the research questions of the study; therefore, no changes were made in the initial protocol. However, it became evident that some question prompts may be answered by participants while discussing other questions from the protocol. Therefore, it was decided to keep the protocol simply as a guide and be ready to switch the order of the questions if necessary. Finally, the pilot interview lasted 55 minutes; therefore, 60 minutes became the target for the actual interviews.

**Focus groups.** Focus group discussions were conducted after the one-on-one interviews were completed and partially analyzed. The focus groups were targeted to gather data for all three research questions of the study and to examine how responses of the group participants from each of the four L1 backgrounds would correspond to the responses of the interview participants of the same L1. Furthermore, the focus groups aimed to elaborate on the information obtained from the interviews. Four focus groups were formed from the same L1 backgrounds used in the individual interviews: Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese.

A focus group is a type of interview that has several participants, usually used in attitude research and borrowed from marketing research (Morgan, 1988). Participants for a focus group are selected based on common characteristics or background knowledge pertaining to the research (Kvale, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Topics for focus groups are often generated from one-on-one interviews (Tomizawa, 1990). During a focus group, participants are given the opportunity to openly discuss a selected topic and share their ideas and beliefs, which, as it is often the case with focus groups, “do not form in a vacuum” but normally derive from other participants’ “opinions and understandings” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 84).

The focus groups were conducted by current and former ELC teachers in order to ensure their familiarity with the program of the ELC and its objectives. These teachers acted as focus

group facilitators, and were selected from the same L1 backgrounds as the group participants.

This was done to ensure a better understanding of students' cultures and communication patterns, and provide more solidarity with the participants (Hwang, 1993). It was hoped that the selected facilitators would obtain information that would not be revealed to someone coming from a different native language background.

The focus group facilitators received brief training prior to the discussions. They were informed about the purpose of the research and given the discussion protocol (see Appendix H). The facilitators were also instructed to lead the discussion in English and keep themselves out of the conversation as much as possible, and let the students share their thoughts and opinions. The facilitators were then reminded of the informal atmosphere of the discussions and advised to position themselves as volunteers helping with the research rather than teachers.

The dates of conducting the focus groups were different due to the personal schedules of the focus group facilitators. Three focus groups, the Korean-, Portuguese-, and Chinese-language groups, were conducted at the ELC during the third week of summer semester 2011, and the focus group of Spanish-speaking students was conducted on the sixth week of the same semester.

All focus groups were conducted in English. Conducting the discussions in the students' native languages would have required additional steps of transcribing and translating since the researcher does not speak any of the selected languages. Before the discussion, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, after which they read and signed a consent form (see Appendix J). Additionally, before and after the discussions, the participants had the opportunity to ask any questions pertaining to the study. The average length of the discussions was 40 minutes.

Similar to the interviews, the focus groups were audio recorded, and the data were transferred on an external memory device to be kept by the researcher for future analysis. However, unlike the interviews, only selected segments of the focus groups were transcribed. Transcribing the discussions entirely was beyond the scope of the data collection procedures due to time constraints.

All focus groups followed the same protocol (see Appendix H) with a few slight modifications that naturally occurred during each discussion. The modifications were related to the order of the question prompts on the protocol and some follow-up questions asked by the focus group facilitators. Moreover, it was assumed that the dynamic of each group would be different; therefore, the facilitators were instructed to keep the protocol as a guide, but to remain attentive to participants' responses.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research assumes a laborious and time-consuming process of “bringing order, structure, and meaning” (Evans, 2001, p. 100). First, transcribing interviews requires hours and hours of diligent work. Second, interpretation of raw data is challenging, as it requires special skills such as analytical thinking, psychological preparedness, and the ability to understand and appropriately interpret people's thoughts and ideas. As Patton (1980) suggests, in a qualitative study, a researcher needs to be able “to make sense out of pages of interviews and whole field notes”; therefore, the process of analyzing data collected by qualitative instruments “can be overwhelming” (p. 297).

The process of data analysis for the current study was guided by the model described by Marshall and Rossman (1995): organizing the data, generating categories, themes, and patterns, testing emergent hypotheses, searching for alternative explanations, and writing the report. What

follows is the description of how the data were organized, and how categories, themes, and patterns were generated.

**Questionnaire.** To organize an enormous amount of raw data on the questionnaire, the information from the questionnaire responses was tabulated and organized according to their relation to the research questions of the current study. The open-ended questions on the questionnaire were organized by categories, themes, and patterns. The findings of the questionnaire served as the source for generating questions for the individual interviews and focus groups.

**Interviews.** The initial step of organizing raw data of the interviews was transcription. The researcher transcribed the interviews from the digital recordings as accurately as possible. In order “to protect the confidentiality of the subject[s]” (Kvale, 1996, p. 172), the names of the participants were replaced with pseudonyms (see Chapter 4).

While transcribing each interview, the researcher attempted to verbally describe the emotional conditions of the participants (e.g., *angry, excited, passionate*), so “the fixated, stable written text [would not lose] the empathically experienced, lived meanings of the original conversation” (Kvale, 1996, p. 167). For the same purpose, the interview transcripts contain verbs describing a manner of speech (e.g., *exclaim, whisper, stumble*), emotional expressions (e.g., *sigh, laugh*), and interjections (e.g., *wow, oh, ugh*).

After transcribing the interviews, the researcher analyzed the transcripts individually by the categories, themes, and patterns in their relation to the research questions of the study. Additionally, the researcher looked for common themes and patterns between the responses of the participants of the same native language background (two participants of Spanish and two participants of Korean), and between the responses of all six interview participants. Factors

affecting student language choices outside the classroom were generated based on the participants' responses as well as the findings of the previous research reviewed in Chapter 2 (Hwang, 1993; Kang, 2006; Park, 1998; Tomizawa, 1990). However, although the results of the previous studies were being considered when analyzing the interviews, the researcher had no predetermined hypotheses and was open to any outcomes.

**Focus groups.** The discussions conducted in the focus groups were not transcribed entirely because of time constraints. The researcher only transcribed selective segments, i.e. comprehensible units that contained one major idea or piece of information (Tesch, 1990). During the transcribing process, the segments were organized in their relation to the research questions of the study. In the transcripts, different students' responses were identified by the codes (e.g., Student 1, Student 2). This was done to protect students' identity. Similar to the interviews, the "emotional tone" of the conversations was included in the focus group transcripts (Kvale, 1996, p. 171).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the focus groups were conducted to clarify and elaborate on the data received from the individual interviews. Therefore, while analyzing the data from the focus groups, the researcher observed how students' responses correlated with the categories, themes, and patterns generated from the responses of the interview participants.

After the categories, themes, and patterns were identified, the researcher sorted out students' responses from the questionnaire, the interviews, and the focus groups pertaining to these categories, themes, and patterns and analyzed them based on the research questions of the study. During this stage, the researcher also looked for explanations of the analyzed data. The next chapter will present these data in the form of answers to the research questions.

## Chapter 4 Results

*“In general I think speaking English helps us a lot. However, due to the fact that we have the necessity to communicate with other people, we speak our native languages” (Questionnaire response).*

This chapter presents the results and analysis of the data collected to answer the research questions:

1. What attitudes do students of the English Language Center at Brigham Young University have toward the English-only language-learning environment?
2. What factors, from the students’ perspectives, affect their decisions to use either their native languages or English outside the classroom?
3. Based on the attitudes and factors that affect their language choices outside the classroom, what suggestions do students have for improving the language-learning environment at the ELC?

The research questions will be answered in the order indicated above and by using the data collected through the questionnaire, interviews, and focus groups. Because responses to Research Question 3 contain students’ suggestions, those results will be presented in Chapter 5 as part of the recommendations for intensive English programs.

### Interview Participant Profiles

Much attention in this chapter will be given to the six interview participants whose views and opinions will be frequently quoted in the following pages. Therefore, the discussion begins with a brief introduction of each of the participants.

**Tang: “That’s the point: just to speak more, speak more, speak more!”**

Tang is a Chinese-speaking female student from mainland China. At the time of the interview, she was in her second semester at the English Language Center, and was studying at the Academic B level. Tang is a very bright and intelligent student with an active and outgoing personality. She was determined to improve her English skills, though her motivation dropped during her second semester at the ELC. Nevertheless, Tang enjoyed studying English at the ELC because it provided her with many opportunities to make international friends. Her best friends were not Chinese-speaking students, but students from other countries. She acknowledged that, outside of the classroom, Chinese students tended to speak their L1 with each other; therefore, she avoided interacting with them and instead spent more time with other international students. The best method to improve English, in Tang's opinion, is engaging in a lot of speaking practice.

**Nayoung: "I think I am kind of a weird Korean."**

Nayoung came to the United States from South Korea in order to improve her English and subsequently apply to study at an American university. Just like Tang, Nayoung was in her second semester at the time of the interview, and had been placed in the General Academic Preparation (GAP) level. Nayoung described herself as a happy, fun, and outgoing person with a bright personality. Her goal was to improve her English as fast as possible; therefore, she made an effort to practice with everyone around her. From the very beginning, Nayoung decided to avoid interaction with Korean students at the ELC because she realized it would slow down her language improvement. She suggested that her outgoing personality is not typical for Koreans, and admitted that the other Korean students did not approve of her behavior. However, Nayoung did not seem to worry about other Koreans' opinions of her. She wanted to enrich her knowledge about other cultures, and enjoyed her experience of being friends with students from other countries.

**Natalia: “I tried to speak English with Brazilians, but I gave up.”**

Unlike Tang and Nayoung, it was rather difficult for Natalia, a female student from Brazil, to make new friends in school. At the time of the interview, Natalia was in the Academic A level, and it was her second semester at the ELC. Being very motivated and diligent at first, she wanted to follow the English-only rule in school and speak English with other Brazilian students. However, she soon realized that they were not willing to help her, but rather discouraged her by making jokes about her English mistakes. Moreover, if she talked to them in Portuguese, she felt guilty for not following the English-only rule and for hindering her language-learning goals. As a result, Natalia decided to avoid interaction with other Portuguese speakers in school.

**Jose: “I don’t see countries, I just see one society.”**

Jose is a Spanish-speaking student from Venezuela. Jose started his studies at the ELC with the Foundations C level. At the time of the interview, which was his third semester in the program, he was in the Academic B level. His objective for studying English at the ELC was to prepare to take the TOEFL and attend Brigham Young University. For Jose, the greatest benefit of studying English at the ELC was the opportunity to develop friendships with students from other countries. In fact, after his second semester in Provo, Jose went to Japan with his classmate, who then became a close friend. Jose enjoyed the opportunities to communicate with many different people from various countries and learn about their cultures and traditions. Having a strong sense of responsibility, Jose initially followed the English-only rule because he committed to do so (when enrolling at the ELC, students have to sign an agreement stating that they will speak only English in the school building). However, his attitude changed because of the inconsistency of the implementation of the English-only rule.



**Claudia: “If I want to improve English, I go to classes!”**

Another Spanish-speaking student, Claudia, originally from Mexico, was in her second semester at the time of the interview, in the GAP level. Like the other four participants introduced above, Claudia came to the ELC to improve her English in order to attend an American university. Claudia was the only interview participant with a clearly defined negative attitude toward the English-only rule. In her opinion, there was no purpose for her to speak English with her compatriots since she had ample opportunity to practice her English with native speakers outside of school. Claudia enjoyed interacting with other Spanish-speaking students at the ELC, and nearly all of her friends in school were Latin students.

**Minsoo: “Punishment is useless because we are not kids.”**

Unlike the other interview participants, Minsoo, a male student from South Korea, came to the United States to develop his English skills in order to get a better job in his country. At the time of the interview, which was his second semester in the program, Minsoo was in the Academic A level. After that second semester he returned home to Korea. Minsoo had a firm understanding of the principle of respect for other teachers and students at the ELC, which was outlined in Chapter 1 of the current research. Therefore, he diligently and respectfully followed the English-only rule. He believed, however, that without students’ understanding of the importance of using English, the language rules and strategies were useless. He also thought that the deduction of points and other punitive methods were not effective.

An understanding of participants’ backgrounds and personalities is important, as these individuals’ insights and opinions will be frequently included in the discussion. The following section will provide the description of students’ attitudes collected from the questionnaire, the individual interviews, and the focus groups. It will also describe their opinions on the English-

only learning environment at the ELC and their perspectives on factors that affect their language behavior in school.

### **Question 1: Students' Attitudes Toward the English-only Rule at the ELC**

**Positive attitudes.** The analysis of the data from the questionnaire, the one-on-one interviews, and the focus groups demonstrated that students at the English Language Center have generally positive perceptions of the English-only rule. The results of the questionnaire show that 133 students (84.2%) indicated their attitude toward the rule was “generally positive.” Furthermore, four of the six interview participants (with the exception of Claudia, who had a strongly negative attitude toward the English-only rule, and Jose, who had mixed feelings about the rule) expressed their positive perception of the English-only environment at the ELC. The same pattern was revealed during the focus groups—it seemed that the participants generally favored the rule.

Positive attitudes expressed by the questionnaire participants were primarily related to the benefits of using English in school. As seen from Table 5, the students indicated a broad range of such benefits.

Table 5

#### *Benefits of Using English in School (The Results from the Questionnaire)*

Categories of Benefits	Benefits	Number of Responses
Improving English proficiency	Improving speaking skills	146 (92%)
	Learning new vocabulary	109 (69%)
Preparing for real-world interaction	Gaining confidence in English	96 (61%)
	Overcoming fear of making mistakes	79 (50%)
Respecting other people	Helping other student practice English	90 (57%)
	Demonstrating respect to others	84 (53%)
Making friends from other countries	Making friends from other countries	109 (69%)

Interestingly enough, during the interviews and focus groups, the participants indicated similar reasons for speaking English in school. For the convenience of the discussion, these reasons, as shown in Table 5, were grouped in the following categories: 1) improving English proficiency (e.g., improving speaking skills, learning new vocabulary), 2) preparing for real-world interaction (e.g., gaining confidence in English, overcoming fear of making mistakes), 3) respecting other people (e.g., helping other students practice English, demonstrating respect to others), and 4) making friends from other countries. Students' opinions and views concerning each of these categories will be discussed below.

***Improving English proficiency.*** The comments on the questionnaire demonstrate students' understanding of the positive relationship between the use of English and the increase of language proficiency. Responses similar to the following were not uncommon: "If we do not practice our English, we will never get the fluency. That is why I know this rule is a positive rule for us." The students often mentioned that, by forcing them to speak English, the rule helped them keep their language goals in mind.

Similarly, five of the six interviewees felt that the rule helped them to remember to practice English more often. They acknowledged that they improved their speaking skills by practicing English with other students at school. For example, Nayoung said, "We came here to study English. I think it's very good...To me, I always speak English, so I improved a lot, faster than other people. So I think it's a very good rule." Another interview participant, Tang, mentioned that speaking English challenged her to learn new words and phrases: "When my friends and I have conflicts, we use English to argue. That's really difficult! But it helps me a lot!"

Natalia expressed the same idea, stating, “I love the rule! We are here to learn English, so if you want to speak Portuguese, go back to your country!” She regretted, however, that she did not use English as much as she should have. With great emotion she expressed her disappointment in herself: “I know if I only spoke English all these seven months here at the ELC, my English would have improved more. I know this and I feel bad! I feel bad because I should have improved my English!”

Closely echoing Natalia, Jose expressed his disappointment about the chances to improve his English that were lost by speaking Spanish with his friends at school. “With Spanish speakers I definitely speak Spanish. It’s so easy! But at the same time I feel like my English is not improving. It’s not improving at all!” Jose mentioned that during the winter break he went to Japan and, while there, he noticed that his English improved tremendously: “Those two weeks I concentrated all my [conversations] in English and I could finally think in English, talk in English and naturally express in English.”

Similarly, the focus group students mentioned that using English helped them to get “out of their comfort zone” and thus to increase their language skills. One of the participants from the Spanish group explained, “Sometimes when you try to say something, it can be hard, but you try hard to explain and you will remember it. But if you just keep talking in Spanish, you miss the opportunity to learn something new.”

All these comments suggest that the students understand why the English-only rule is implemented in school. Although they may not always diligently follow the rule, they have a clear awareness of its usefulness.

***Preparing for real-world interaction.*** In addition to increasing language proficiency, the students also felt that using English in school gives them another advantage: preparation for real-

world communication. For them, interacting in English with other language learners is not as intimidating as communicating with native speakers. For example, one participant from the Chinese focus group said, “It’s good to practice English with other students at the ELC because everyone is learning, so we will get used to speaking English and will not be afraid to speak it with Americans.”

Along the same lines, a student from the Spanish focus group explained that the ELC gives him a great opportunity to practice English without any fear of being misunderstood. He noticed that teachers and students in school are helpful and understanding, and if someone makes mistakes, they are patient with that person. The real world, in his opinion, is harsher, and sometimes people have little patience. Another student from the same group supported this idea with this insightful statement:

You might explain things clearly in Spanish at the ELC, but when you go outside and have the same conversation in English, you might fail because you don’t know how to keep this conversation in English, you are just not used to it.

Both of these participants said that all students at the ELC should speak English as much as possible in order to prepare for real-world communication outside of the school environment.

One Portuguese-speaking focus group participant felt that it was very helpful for her to speak English with those students who have strong accents because she could improve her listening skills. To illustrate this, she spoke of a classmate of hers with a very thick accent. Because nobody wanted to talk to that girl, the participant decided to become friends with her. She said that it was difficult to understand the girl at the very beginning, but because of her friend’s strong accent, she noticed that her own listening skills improved. Ultimately, she suggested that the ELC students should use English with other language learners in order to

improve their listening skills and better understand people with different accents—especially non-native English speakers.

As seen, students have a clear understanding of the connection between their use of English at the ELC and preparation for real-world interaction. Some participants pointed out the value of practicing the language in a safe learning environment where all students make mistakes. Others mentioned the improvement of their English skills due to practice with other language learners.

***Respecting other people.*** Besides increasing English proficiency and helping students prepare for language encounters outside the school environment, participants also acknowledged that the English-only rule helps establish an atmosphere of respect for those people who do not understand certain native languages. The Korean participants, in particular, emphasized the principle of respect. Nayoung explained that it made her very uncomfortable to hear other students' speaking their native languages, because she was not sure what they were talking about and whether or not they were discussing her.

Similarly, several students' comments on the questionnaire indicated that the learners feel uncomfortable hearing other languages in school. The following questionnaire response reflects an idea that many students expressed about respect: "When other people speak their own language, I feel like they are talking bad about me." Some students also thought that when others speak their native languages, it makes it difficult to focus on English: "It is really disturbing when other students speak their native languages. I am losing my English abilities!"

In the Spanish-speaking focus group, a bulk of the discussion was devoted to the principle of respect. The participants mutually agreed that respect for people should be the

primary reason that the English-only rule should be observed by all ELC students, no matter what each students' personal goals for learning English are. One participant said,

The English-only rule is not just for you. It's to realize that there are a lot of students here, that they must learn too, and they are paying. And if you don't speak English and they don't understand you, then it's disrespectful for them.

This participant explained that he would always speak English in school, even with beginning students, so everyone would feel comfortable. He also added that after classes he often helped students from lower levels with grammar and pronunciation.

Thus, it became apparent that students understand the function of English as a common language of communication in school and their own responsibility to respect others by using English. While some participants commented on the necessity of speaking English in order to help everyone feel comfortable, others explained that by speaking the target language they help other students at the ELC focus on their language-learning goals.

***Making friends from other countries.*** The fourth category of benefits of English use in school identified by the participants was related to opportunities for developing new friendships. They felt grateful to be able to make new friends, learn about other students' cultures and traditions, and thus enrich their experiences at the ELC. As one student stated on the questionnaire, "The main purpose of using English is communicating with other people at the ELC. The rule helps us meet new people. We need these friendships."

The interview participants also shared their experiences with making good friends at school. Minsoo, for example, met his best friend, who was from Nepal, at the ELC. Jose felt that making new friends and learning from them was perhaps the most important reason for him to speak English in school. He noted, "I really love about the ELC that they gather people from

all around the world! They come to one place and they learn together. I made lots of friends. And I don't see countries; I just see one society.”

At the same time, the students noticed that the more friends from other countries they made, the more opportunities to use English they had. Tang shared,

Last semester, I was the only Chinese in my class, so I made a lot of friends from different countries. So me, other two boys, and a Spanish girl spent the whole time after school together: we studied together, we watched movies together, we had dinner together, we went shopping, went to a grocery store, everywhere! We went to Salt Lake City and had fun. We always did things together. And we only could speak English. If you have this group of friends, you don't want to speak your language. So it's really helpful for students to have friends from different countries.

As this quote demonstrates, students appreciate the opportunity to make more friends from other countries at the ELC because of the English-only rule. On the other hand, they see friendships with people from different countries as a great opportunity to improve their English. The following comment from a Korean focus group participant is one of many comments concerning making friends in school: “Because of the English-only rule, we can make friends from other countries easily. [Speaking] Korean we can only be friends with Koreans.”

Some participants mentioned that beyond making friends from other countries, they even tried to avoid interacting with compatriots because they wanted to enrich their knowledge by learning about other cultures and traditions. Speaking English provided the best way for them to do so. As Nayoung commented, “I came here to get a different experience [from the one] I can get in Korea. In here, there are a lot of different cultures, so I can experience their cultures and also I can use English more.” From this comment, it is evident that, because she wanted to gain



a rich cultural experience and practice English, she preferred to spend time with people from other countries rather than with her compatriots. She added, though, that her behavior was not typical for Koreans, which are known for staying very close to their compatriots. As she said, “They are always together: three people always go together, or two people together even if they want to go to the bathroom, or restaurant for lunch.” She quickly added, “But I am kind of a weird Korean, I think.”

Therefore, for most students, almost in the same breath as they were saying the use of English would help them increase their language proficiency, prepare them for real-world interaction, as well as respect other students at the ELC, they expressed a huge benefit of speaking English in terms of expanding friendships with students from other countries. These friendships were shown to help students enhance their learning experience at the ELC, as well as improve their language skills.

In summary, many of the participants’ comments about the English-only rule indicated their positive attitudes toward it and their understanding of its benefits and helpfulness. The majority of the ELC students realize that the rule helps them to improve their English skills, prepare them for real-world communication, make more friends from other countries, and maintain the positive learning atmosphere at school by demonstrating respect for other students and their goals.

Nevertheless, some participants voiced their opinion against the English-only environment in school. Moreover, certain aspects of the rule seemed to receive criticism even from those participants who generally favored it. Therefore, we now turn our discussion to the students’ negative perceptions of the English-only rule at the ELC.

**Negative attitudes.** In contrast to the majority of the positive comments about the English-only environment at the ELC, only a few students expressed negative reactions. To illustrate, there were six students (3.8%) who indicated their negative attitudes toward the rule on the questionnaire. From the six interview participants, only Claudia strongly opined against the English-only environment in school, while Jose had mixed feelings. During the focus groups, several participants made negative comments about certain aspects of the rule. Though only a few students' comments were negative, they are surprisingly similar and deserve our attention.

*The ineffectiveness of the English-only rule on language proficiency.* While the majority of the participants viewed the English-only rule as a great way for them to improve their language skills, some students did not see this connection. Claudia, in particular, voiced her frustration over the fact that students were not allowed to speak their native languages inside the building. In her opinion, using Spanish did not harm her language progress due to ample opportunity to speak English on a regular basis beyond the school boundaries:

I feel like if I want to improve my English, that's why I come to classes. And I try to speak with native speakers. I feel like I do more other things, not at the ELC, but outside, and I feel like if I speak Spanish, what is the problem? I don't feel it's bad.

Claudia briefly described her daily interaction with people, and it was evident that she uses a lot of English outside the ELC with friends, roommates, and people from the local church organization. On the other hand, because her Spanish-speaking friends live far away from her place, she rarely spends time with them outside of the ELC, so she wants to communicate with them in Spanish while at school.

Similarly, the questionnaire data demonstrated that a few students had little confidence in the effectiveness of using English with other language learners in school. They did not consider

it to be a good method to improve English abilities due to students' generally low language proficiencies. One participant expressed this opinion in the following way: "I know the best way for me to learn English is not practicing with other learners but with native [speakers]. [The ELC students] are also learning and they don't usually correct my mistakes." Other students nearly mirrored this opinion: "I don't know how much you can learn from other students that most of the time speak worse than you." "It's not really effective because you both make mistakes, so you won't know."

Thus, although the majority of the participants agreed that using English outside of the classes helps them improve their language skills, a few students did not see this connection. These opinions must be taken into consideration as they expand our understanding of the reasons why some students are hesitant to communicate in English with each other.

*Teachers' reactions to students speaking their LI.* Another reason that some students had strong negative feelings about the English-only rule was the teachers' reactions to students who speak their native languages in the hallways, the lobby, and the lab. The comments on the questionnaire indicated that the students wish the teachers were nicer and more understanding. Said one participant, "English-only is important, but it has to be treated with care, not so stressful like teachers do. I don't like when teachers tell us rude to speak English."

A few interview participants also felt that some teachers are rude and insensitive, and they correct students without knowing the reason why they speak their native languages. For example, Claudia shared an experience that made her develop this negative attitude toward the rule. She was trying to explain to her friend how to use a printer in the computer lab. But because the friend's English proficiency was much lower than Claudia's, Claudia told her in Spanish how to use the printer. At that moment, a teacher was passing by, and approached

Claudia, telling her to speak English. Claudia felt that the teacher was not polite. She explained that, because the comment was made without any attempt to understand the situation, it made her angry. In the end, Claudia acknowledged that teachers should remind students to use English, but in her opinion, they first need to find out what the situation is, so they can find an appropriate solution.

Apparently, Claudia was not alone in this perspective. Several students in the focus groups shared their experiences with giving explanations in their native language about an important concept or a homework assignment to a friend, when a nearby teacher asked them to switch to English without attempting to understand the reason for their language choice. One participant in the Spanish group said that when teachers act without being aware of students' circumstances, they only discourage learners from speaking English, and she personally just wants to "close [her] mouth and not to speak at all." In the Korean focus group, one student said that when the teachers are not friendly and understanding, it affects his desire to study English: "If the teacher is mean, I don't want to speak with the teacher, I don't want to see the teacher, and I don't want to be in class."

As evidenced from the participants' comments, teachers' reactions to those students who speak their native languages in the hallways of the ELC were shown as a discouraging factor that had a negative influence on their desire to use English in school. The majority of the participants expressed their frustration over the fact that some teachers act rude and insensitive and make no effort to understand the reasons why students use their L1 with each other.

***Punishment.*** Another major factor contributing to students' negative reactions of the English-only rule was the idea of punishment, which is implemented at the ELC through deducting class points, thus potentially reducing a student's grade. To the majority of the

students, including all interview participants, the principle of implementing punitive methods was not appealing. “I think punishment is useless because [students] are not kids,” said Minsoo. Minsoo believed that most ELC students are sensible and mature adults, and thus punishment is not a proper approach to deal with the problem. Another Korean participant said, “Taking off points is not effective, and it doesn’t motivate me to speak English.” Jose commented, “Sometimes the teachers say, ‘If you speak Spanish, I will take off points from you!’ But it doesn’t hurt me! I am going up to the next level anyways!”

Moreover, punishing methods can result in “a bad relationship between students and teachers,” in the students’ opinion. Minsoo explained that when a rule concerning language use is based on a principle of punishment, it causes teachers to look for those students who speak their native languages inside the school building and at the same time, it students want to avoid teachers because of the fear of being caught. Similarly, in the focus groups, the participants strongly expressed their disagreement with the idea of teachers watching out for those students who do not follow the rule. One participant in the Portuguese group jokingly called it “Big Brother.”

Thus, the participants were very dissatisfied with the implementation of punitive methods that some instructors use to discourage students from speaking their native languages in the hallways and other areas of the school. In the students’ opinion, these punitive methods did not only appear to be ineffective, but also triggered tension in the relationship between students and teachers.

In summary, it seems that some specific aspects of the English-only rule at the ELC caused negative reactions among the participants. While only a few participants felt that the English-only environment is not helpful for them, the majority of the negative comments were

related to the methods through which the school enforces the rule, including deduction of points and the manner in which teachers approach students who speak their L1.

**Other attitudes.** Some comments that the participants made about the English-only environment at the ELC were neither positive nor negative, but they are important to consider as they may provide additional suggestions for helping students feel more comfortable using English with one another. Some of these comments were made even by those participants whose attitudes toward the English-only rule were generally positive.

***Forcing students to speak English.*** Several participants, including those who saw the positive effects of the English-only rule, strongly voiced their opinion against the idea of imposing the rule and forcing students to speak English. Answering the question on the questionnaire “Why do you think many students at the ELC speak their native languages?” 37 students (23%) selected the option “They don’t like being told what to do.” In addition, the following comments from the questionnaire nicely illustrate students’ opinions: “I think it’s not under your control. Everyone has to decide that by himself,” “This is a personal commitment. Those who want to learn faster than others, choose to speak only English. But it’s a personal choice,” “Just let people decide for themselves.” The phrases “decide for themselves”, “personal choice”, and “personal commitment” indicate that the students are well aware of their own responsibility to speak English.

These comments from the questionnaire resound with the opinions expressed by the interview participants. In Natalia’s opinion, “It’s all up to students” whether or not they will use English with each other. “It’s a personal choice,” Nayoung remarked. Nayoung’s comment perfectly defines her; she consciously made this choice, and even though her behavior was not

typical for Koreans, and other Korean students might have perceived her as strange, she kept following the rule and spoke English in school.

Tang's example is another excellent illustration of the concept that the ELC administration should not force the students to speak English. She was very motivated the first semester and followed the English-only rule. However, during the second semester, her motivation dropped, and regardless of the rule, she used a lot of Chinese. She felt that during the second semester, her perspective changed and school was no longer the first priority. Tang explained that the desire and motivation of students to use English depends on their goals and perspectives. She said,

Different students have different goals. Some students want to practice their spoken English, some students want to apply to BYU, and some students are here just for fun and make friends. After the ELC, they will go back to their own country, so they don't care! But if students really want to learn something, they will, and they will [motivate] themselves to speak English.

Tang felt confident that the administration of the school is helpless if students are not motivated to speak English, do homework, and come to class.

Along the same lines, Minsoo expressed his belief in students' maturity and their awareness of the effectiveness and need for frequent use of English. In his opinion, the school administration should not impose the rule and compel the students to follow it; instead the learners themselves must be led to develop a deep understanding of the reasons encouraging their study of English and what benefits they will receive from this study. He said, "It is important to make [students] think for themselves: 'Why should I speak English? Why did I come here? What is my purpose?' I believe students are mature to do this."

In the focus groups, the participants seemed to have opinions similar to those described by Nayoung, Tang, and Minsoo. To illustrate, a student from the Spanish focus group expressed his viewpoint in this way: “We need to find our own reason for using English. BYU or the ELC can spend millions of dollars on signs and videos, but if we don’t understand our reasons, we will never speak English!” The participants in other focus groups concurred that the administration is helpless if the students are not motivated their studies.

In short, the participants felt that the English-only rule should not be forced among learners; instead, they themselves should be free to choose. As participants’ comments demonstrated, they generally believed in students’ maturity and their understanding of the benefits they receive from frequent speaking of English.

***The unconditional character of the rule.*** In addition to concerns about personal motivation for speaking English, several students pointed out the irrationality of the unconditional nature of the English-only rule. In particular, the word *only* seemed to raise most concerns. As expressed by one questionnaire participant, “English-only rule is a good idea, but it’s not realistic. No one will do it for 100% of the time.”

Comments on the questionnaire suggest that the ELC students feel that there should be exceptions to the rule in certain occasions. The two most frequently described occasions were situations of emergency and talking on the phone with family and relatives. One student clarified “the situations of emergency” as “difficult situations of a big importance” such as problems related to health, finance, insurance, or relationships.

Therefore, regardless the participants’ general understanding of the positive impact that the frequent use of English has on their language proficiency, they thought that the rule should consider allowance to speak a native language in certain circumstances. The situations in which



students felt they need to use their L1 in oral communication with compatriots in school will be discussed as part of the response to Research Question 2 in the next section of this chapter.

**Summary of student attitudes.** To summarize, the ELC students generally have positive attitudes toward the English-only environment in school. Many participants expressed their appreciation for the rule, as it helped them to improve their English skills, prepare for authentic communication outside the school, make friends from other countries, and respect other students and teachers.

Nevertheless, several aspects of the rule and its implementation were perceived negatively. Some participants thought that the English-only rule did not help them improve their language skills. The majority of the negative attitudes, however, were directed toward the implementation of the rule, particularly the ways in which some teachers deal with students speaking their native languages in the hallways. The participants also felt that the ELC administration should not impose the rule upon the students but rather appeal to the learners' sense of responsibility and motivation. A summary of student attitudes is provided in Table 6.

Table 6

*Students' Attitudes Toward the English-only Environment at the ELC*

Types of Attitudes		
Positive	Negative	Other
1) Improving English proficiency	1) No effectiveness of the English-only rule on language proficiency	1) The unconditional character of the rule
2) Preparing for real-world communication	2) Teachers' reactions to students speaking L1	2) Forcing students to speak English
3) Respecting other people	3) Punishment	
4) Making friends from other countries		

The students' attitudes and views dealt with above provide a foundation for further discussion in the attempt to better understand the reasons why so many students continue speaking their L1s with each other once they leave language classrooms (observed by the researcher). Identifying what causes students to use their L1 instead of English is the major focus of the current research, and the learners themselves provided valuable information in answer to this question. What follows is a description of students' opinions about factors that make it difficult for them to use English outside of the classroom.

## **Question 2: Factors Affecting Students' Language Choices in their Communication**

### **Compatriots outside the Classroom**

In response to the question about the influences on students' language choices outside the classroom, five categories of factors were identified with several sub-factors in each. These categories— sociocultural, linguistic, individual, psychological, and institutional – will be discussed in turn.

**Sociocultural factors.** Sociocultural factors are described by Brown (1987) as extrinsic variables that “emerge as the second language learner brings not just two languages into contact, but two cultures” (p. 99). Cultural norms put a number of expectations on communication behavior within that particular culture. Thus, learners' communication, as well as language learning, is greatly influenced by their cultural heritage. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that several studies suggest that it is necessary for second language instructors to be aware of students' culturally specific patterns of interactions since they can affect their language learning behavior. Moreover, a lack of awareness of learners' sociocultural background on the part of the teachers might sometimes cause their negative assessments of students' behavior (Hwang, 1993; Phillips, 1972; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985; Thorp, 1991).

Five sociocultural sub-factors were identified based on the data analysis collected from the questionnaire, the interviews, and the focus groups: 1) peer pressure, 2) fear of negative evaluation by compatriots, 3) cultural communication patterns, 4) maintaining friendship with compatriots, and 5) the need for cultural bonding.

**Peer pressure.** Peer pressure seemed to be one of the factors most frequently referred to as hindering students' interaction with compatriots in English. Some participants stressed the necessity of being accepted by their compatriots. They further explained that using English with people from the same country could be perceived as conveying a sense of superiority. Said one Portuguese-speaking student, "It's just impossible to speak English with Brazilians because they will think you are stuck-up and know more than they do." Many other comments expressed by the participants during the interviews and the focus groups made it clear that speaking a native language with others from the same country is simply expected. As someone said on the questionnaire, students "do not want to look dumb by being the only one who speaks English."

Natalia, a very motivated and goal-oriented student provided the most striking example of the peer pressure factor. She came to the ELC to improve her English and prepare to take the TOEFL and the GRE. In order to achieve her goals, she wanted to speak English as much as possible, so she tried to do it with other Portuguese speakers in school. However, every time she approached Brazilian students in English, they replied in Portuguese. Natalia admitted, with regret in her voice, "I tried a couple of weeks, and then I gave up." She explained that it was not worthwhile for her to continue speaking in Portuguese with other Brazilian students due to the difficulty that such type of communication produced: "They were speaking Portuguese, and I had to think in English and translate. Oh, I was very confused!" Eventually she decided to avoid Brazilian students in school.

Many students, like Natalia, have a high motivation to use English, but their compatriots “get in the way.” Not uncommon were remarks similar to the one expressed by a Spanish-speaking participant: “It’s like: Tomorrow I really want to speak only English. But then comes my classmate and tells me something in Spanish, and that’s it!”

Peer pressure was also an obstacle for the students in their attempts to be respectful to the English-only environment. One participant said on the questionnaire, “I don’t follow 100% of this rule because of my friends who speak in Portuguese with me.” Natalia mentioned experiencing feeling of guilt each time she spoke Portuguese after classes.

On the other hand, another Portuguese-speaking participant said she was the one who discouraged motivated students from speaking English. She said that it is annoying to see new ELC students who are always passionate to learn English, and they want to speak it all the time during the lunch break, between classes, and when classes are over. She explained that, from the perspective of a returning student, she knows that such a behavior does not last long and thus she wants to show them from the very beginning “how things are.” This student shared her experience:

In the second week of classes, my classmate from Brazil came to me and asked for help.

He asked me in English, but I replied in Portuguese. He continued speaking English with me, so I just said, “Why are you speaking English with me? I am Brazilian! You are asking me for help and still you are trying to change my mind?”

This student was the only participant that admitted to discouraging students from using English in school; however, based on the statements of other participants on peer pressure, there are, in fact, others like her.

Yet another form of peer pressure related to language-use choices was brought to light during the Korean focus group. The Korean students agreed that the principle of peer pressure is actually closely related to their cultural identity. One student explained that some Korean young people go to an English-speaking country, and when they come back, they start using English with their friends and even speak Korean with an English accent. “This kind of behavior is repulsive,” he said, “and people hate this!” When asked if that situation was different from their being in America, he said, “It is the same. We believe that you remain Korean no matter where you are. And you have to maintain your cultural identity.” He then added that there are very few Korean students at the ELC that choose to interact with students from other countries in order to speak more English, but they do so at the expense of their relationship with other compatriots.

All of these examples vividly demonstrate how hard it might be for the students to use English with their compatriots. The students themselves are well aware of peer pressure, even though they might not label it in this way. Whereas some students attempt to avoid interacting with their compatriots, most, under the fear of being perceived as “ridiculous” (quoted from the questionnaire), simply choose to speak their native language.

***Fear of negative evaluation by compatriots.*** In addition to feeling pressure from peers to speak an L1, some participants said they were hesitant to speak English with their compatriots because of the fear of being judged for their mistakes and perceived as non-competent. Interestingly enough, most students felt that this fear only arises when speaking English with compatriots, and almost never when interacting with other international students or native speakers. One Brazilian participant explained:

When I speak with native speakers, they are always polite. With them, I am not afraid to make mistakes and I don't care about my accent. But if I am with Brazilians, I am so afraid to be judged! I am worried about my accent and about my words. It's because of our culture: We are critical! Brazilians always correct you if they don't understand something or if you speak wrong.

Asian students also expressed their reluctance to use English with their compatriots because "it is awkward" and they "know [that] other students are judging [them]." Said one participant of the Korean focus group, "I have no problem to speak English with native speakers, but I can't speak English with Koreans. I am afraid to make a mistake." A Chinese focus group participant echoed this sentiment nearly verbatim: "I feel incompetent and embarrassed to speak English to other Chinese at the ELC because I make lots of mistakes."

The students also felt that whereas receiving corrections from native speakers is normal and even desirable, it is embarrassing to be corrected by compatriots. To illustrate, Jose pointed out, "When you receive corrections from your friends, you feel that the relationship is kind of broken."

Therefore, one more reason that some students avoid speaking English with each other can be explained by their fear of being negatively judged by their compatriots. For the participants in this study it was rather embarrassing to make mistakes in the presence of their compatriots, so they preferred to speak their L1 instead.

***Cultural communication patterns.*** Another sociocultural factor that was shown to discourage participants' use of English is found at the intersection of language and culture. Several world cultures have certain communication patterns that seem to inhibit speakers' ability to communicate in English with their compatriots. In this study, this factor relates primarily to

the Korean culture and the relationship between young people and adults in particular. The Korean participants referred to this relationship as a major obstacle of using English with older Korean students. To illustrate, the students in the focus group explained that it is considered very rude to say *you* to an older person. Said one participant, “How can I say *you* to grandpa?” He further explained that when addressing an older person in Korean, one has to pay attention to word choice, titles, and even consider a special tone of the voice and intonation. He provided an example: “In Korean, I would tell my older friend something like ‘Sir would you please do this?’ But in English no one speaks this way, and I would have to say ‘Can you please do this?’ which would not sound appropriate.” Furthermore, the same student explained that it is required in Korea to address an older person by *brother* or *sister*, even when the age difference is not significant; however, the English phrase “What’s up, brother?” would be considered very rude and unacceptable.

Minsoo, the Korean interviewee, explained that speaking English with older Koreans seems to be impossible not only because of the absence of necessary linguistic resources, but also owing to the strong cultural influence of social rank in Korean society. He explained that older people in Korea are superior to younger people because they have lived longer and thus have more knowledge. Therefore, speaking English to an older Korean student whose language proficiency is lower means to disrespect his or her status. Minsoo gave an example: “I am only 24, and many of my friends are in their 30’s. Their English is not good, and if I speak English with them, they feel uneasy.” Although Minsoo was a motivated student and was determined to speak English in school, he could not disregard his culture; therefore, he always spoke Korean with older Korean students.

As seen, cultural norms and values appeared to be another factor that may be hindering students' interaction with compatriots in English. In this study, the Korean participants explained their need for L1 use by citing a lack of linguistic resources in the English language necessary for expressions of respect for their elders. Thus, they argued, the use of English limits cultural expression and communication.

*Maintaining the relationships of friendship with compatriots.* As evidenced in the above sections, fitting in with one's peers, compatriots, and cultural identity at school while striving to learn English was shown to be a challenging dynamic for the students in this study to balance. Accordingly, friendships appeared to be a two-edged sword for the participants. On one hand, as discussed, the students appreciated the opportunity to make friends from different countries in school and thus practice their oral communication skills in English. On the other hand, the majority of the students felt that friendships with compatriots are important, and for some of them, probably, even more important than personal language goals. Jose, for example, felt particularly strong about strengthening his relationships with other Spanish-speaking students at the ELC. He acknowledged the fact that interacting with them would get in the way of his language improvement, yet he felt that his personal goals were not as important as developing friendship with other Latin students. He said, "If I speak Spanish, it only helps me strengthen my relationship with my Spanish-speaking friends and this is crucial!" A participant in the Portuguese focus group nearly echoed him: "I know that I have to speak English, but am Brazilian, and I have to be with Brazilians because this is my culture!"

Similarly, in the Korean focus group, the students pointed out that developing solid relationships with compatriots is an inevitable element of the Korean culture, and it is certainly of a higher priority than personal goals. One participant shared, "When Korean people meet



each other for the first time, they must speak Korean to make a positive impression and build a strong relationship for the future.” He further explained, “Because our culture requires to maintain strong relationships with other Koreans, many students normally choose friendships over English.”

Claudia commented on this tendency of Asian students to mostly interact with their compatriots. Even though she noticed that many ELC students usually stay close to friends of the same nationalities, she felt that especially Asian students are unwilling to make friends from other countries. Her several attempts to become friends with Asian students had no success, so eventually she gave up the idea. She shared her experience:

In the gym, there was a table with three Koreans and two Chinese. My friend and I went there and sat there... I never eat here at the gym, I always go home [but] we said to each other: ‘Hey let’s go! They are there! Ok, let’s try!’ So we went [to their table], and everybody was like this [Claudia demonstrates someone turning away]. And my friend and I felt bad because it was really like ‘We don’t want to talk with you! What are you doing here?’ Yes, we felt really bad! So we changed the table back to other Spanish speakers.

As seen, the necessity of maintaining friendships with compatriots was shown to discourage students’ use of English in school. Although they acknowledged the negative impact that such interactions with compatriots had on their English improvement, many nevertheless felt that being loyal to their culture was much more important than their personal language goals.

***Need for cultural bonding.*** Though students generally appreciated and valued multicultural friendships, as seen, many of them also had a strong desire to maintain friendships with their compatriots, and strongly voiced what they felt was the need for communication with

friends in the L1. In fact, when this issue was raised during the focus group discussions, the majority of the students passionately expressed a need for interacting with friends from the same country in their native language in order to “feel better.” To illustrate, a Portuguese-speaking participant noted that she almost had no friends from Brazil outside of the ELC; thus, the school was the only place for her to spend time with other Brazilian students and feel close to her culture. Another student in the Portuguese focus group echoed her, “Yes I hang out with Brazilians and speak Portuguese with them. I think it’s important to maintain your culture, and you just feel better.”

Thus, the participants in this study referred to their need for bonding with compatriots as another hindrance to their English use. They expressed their strong desire to develop relationships of friendship with other students from the same country as a means to relax and feel better.

In conclusion, five sub-factors were identified in the sociocultural category: peer pressure, fear of negative evaluation, cultural communication pattern, maintaining friendship with compatriots, and need for cultural bonding. The participants provided insightful comments and examples of how each of these sub-factors influenced their language choices outside the classroom. With the presence of so many cultures and ethnicities at the ELC, the influence of these factors should not be underestimated.

**Linguistic factors.** Without question, reasons pertaining to the linguistic domain were among the most frequent participant responses when discussing why students choose to speak their L1 instead of English at the ELC. These reasons, or sub-factors, were classified into the following groups: 1) low language proficiency, 2) difficulty in understanding teachers’ assignments, 3) translating habits, and 4) differences between English and students’ L1.

*Low language proficiency.* One of the most frequently mentioned linguistic reasons for not speaking English with compatriots was inadequate language proficiency. The students said it was hard for them to express themselves fully in English because of their lack of vocabulary and insufficient grammar. Answering the question on the questionnaire “Why do you think many students at the ELC speak their native languages?” 83 students (53%) selected the option “Lower level students might not know English well enough.” In addition, in response to the question “When should native languages be allowed in the building?” 80 students (51%) selected the option “When students of lower levels cannot express themselves well in English to communicate with each other.”

When this issue was raised during the focus groups, the majority of the participants agreed that it is hard for the beginning-level students to communicate in English 100% of the time. One Portuguese-speaking participant was quite emotional in expressing her opinion regarding this topic: “How can you speak English all the time if you are Foundations A or B? I need to communicate with people! It can be really stressful! So sometimes it’s ok to say some words in Portuguese.” Another student in the same group agreed that the English-only rule should not be extended to the beginning students as she shared her experience: “When I was in Foundations B, I was not able to express myself in English, and since I could not use Portuguese at school, I just stopped talking to people. So the rule was not helpful for me at all.”

On the other hand, some participants spoke of communication in English with the students of lower levels as a waste of time. To illustrate, in the Portuguese group, one participant shared a “family example”: “My wife is from Brazil, and I tried to speak English with her, but I gave up because it’s hard. The topic that we can discuss in five minutes in Portuguese, we will spend an hour in English!”

As seen, the students' inadequacy in English unavoidably forced them to use their native language. And whether the deficiency was their own low language abilities or those of their friends in school, in both cases the students looked for understanding in order to have an adequate communication with each other.

***Difficulty in understanding teachers' assignments.*** To explain the reasons for using L1 in school, 74 students (47%) chose the option on the questionnaire "When students need to clarify unclear part of a lesson with their classmates." Focus group participants also supported this reaction. Said one student, "I speak Korean to ask my classmates about homework assignments when I don't understand it in class." Another participant in the same group said that her listening skills are weak, and she always worried about not being able to understand homework assignments correctly, so she often asked her Korean classmates to clarify the assignments for her after class.

In the Spanish focus group, the students discussed the same topic from a different angle. They explained that it is sometimes rather hard for them to understand accents of some Asian teachers, so after class, they would discuss the parts of the class they did not understand with their compatriots. Said a Spanish-speaking participant, "I want to know what the homework is, but sometimes teacher's accent is strong, so I just ask my classmates about the homework."

As seen, students' inadequacy to understand teachers' assignments forced them to use their native language, so they could discuss the unclear parts of the lesson with their classmates. Whereas Asian students' difficulties in understanding teachers could be explained by a potential lack of listening skills, Spanish-speaking participants explained this difficulty by a strong accent of some Asian teachers.

***Translating habits.*** In addition to challenges presented by deficiencies in general language production and comprehension, a few participants from the Korean focus group mentioned that because of their habit of translating Korean directly into English, they often come across situations when they do not know how to translate a certain word or an expression. However, instead of trying to look for alternatives, students choose to switch to their native language. Likewise, the participants of the Chinese focus group indicated the translation habit as a common obstacle when speaking English. One student expressed it in this way: “My biggest problem is that I don’t know how to say exactly what I want to say in Chinese. But it’s because I can’t think in English.”

Realizing that this problem exists among many second language learners, a Spanish focus group participant suggested,

Translation is not the best method to learn, even though a lot of people use it. The best way to learn English is to think in English. If we think in Spanish, we just will be stuck. But if we think in English, we will react in English.

In short, participants identified translating habits as a factor contributing to their L1 use. Not being able to think in English, but instead translating from their L1 into English oftentimes put them in situations in which translation was impossible due to their lack of linguistic resources. As a result, students switched to their L1 as the easiest option in such situations.

***Differences between English and students’ L1.*** Similar to issues that arise from direct translation between languages, several students reported a difficulty expressing themselves in English due to linguistic differences between English and their native language. An example for this is the Korean language and their use of honorifics, which was mentioned earlier. Furthermore, the students in the Portuguese focus group stated that it is practically impossible for

them to communicate with Brazilians in English because there are no equivalent Portuguese forms in English that would reflect the same degree of humor and wit. To illustrate, a Portuguese-speaking participant explained, “It’s hard to speak English with Brazilians because our language has a lot of slang and it’s so hard to have a conversation in English in the same way.”

On the other hand, a student from the same focus group asserted that there are a lot of colloquial and idiomatic expressions in English too; the problem is that many beginning-level learners simply do not know them. She shared an experience about a time when she was trying to explain a situation that happened to her in school to her roommate. She did not know a particular expression in English, so she simply paraphrased it to her roommate, and the latter helped her with the expression, which was “beating around the bush.” The student said that she was surprised to hear the same expression in English that they have in Portuguese. She concluded, “We just have to open our mouth and try to express ourselves in English, so native speakers could help us with new words and phrases.”

Thus, the differences between students’ L1 and English were referred to as a factor hindering students’ interaction in English with each other. However, some participants explained the difficulties arose not because of L1 and L2 linguistic differences, but because of learners’ lack of knowledge in the target language.

In this section, the students provided vivid examples to rationalize the use of their L1 by their inadequate second language skills. One would think that these linguistic factors may indeed appear to be a very strong reason for speaking native languages instead of English. However, in the next section, the example of Nayoung will demonstrate that motivation may

help to overcome these linguistic “shortcomings.” Thus, we now turn to a discussion of motivation and other individual factors.

**Individual factors.** Individual factors, as defined by Dörnyei (2006), are “personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by degree” (p. 42). Individual differences in second language acquisition such as personality types, aptitude, motivation, learning styles, and learning strategies predict the success in language learning and acquisition (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei, 2006; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). The current study has revealed two individual factors that have influenced participants’ language choices in their communication outside the classroom. These include the intensity of motivation and personality type and will be discussed in the following section.

***The intensity of motivation.*** The participants in this study demonstrated that motivation could be a major tool for overcoming obstacles to the use of English outside the classroom. For example, driven by their language-learning goals, some students avoided interaction with their compatriots. Others shared that in class, they tried to choose a seat next to a person who did not speak their native language, so they would not have a temptation to slip into using their L1.

Nayoung, in particular, is a wonderful example of a motivated student. Due to her desire to learn English, none of the negative factors, even peer pressure, seemed to affect her. She shared that other Korean students in school did not approve of her behavior of speaking English with Koreans and building friendships with students of other nationalities rather than with Koreans. However, Nayoung was not afraid of being ostracized by her compatriots. She explained,

I don't care! I came here to improve my English, not Korean! My Korean is pretty good, I don't have to practice it! (Laughs). And also to me, it's not a big deal not to have many Korean friends. Even if I don't have Korean friends, I have other friends!

Whereas Nayoung seemed to maintain her motivation throughout both semesters of her study at the ELC, normally, students' motivation significantly drops after a couple of months or even weeks of school. Minsoo admitted that in the second semester he "became lazy" and "did not try to speak English as much as before." A participant in the Portuguese focus group expressed similar feelings: "When I came here, everything was new and interesting. But I have been here for three semesters, and sometimes I don't have motivation to speak English."

There are certainly many reasons that students may lose their passion for study. Two interview participants explained why their motivation to speak English in school dropped. Tang was very determined to speak English during her first semester at the ELC, and she made several close friends from other countries, which gave her more opportunities to practice her communication skills in English. However, as the second semester came, her attitude changed: She started to skip classes and use Chinese in the school more frequently. She explained what happened:

At the beginning of this semester, my Spanish friend and I expected a lot from the new class, from the new teachers. But teachers are nice people, but sometimes they don't know how to teach students very well. And they cannot control the environment in the class. I think if teachers are good, they can motivate students to learn English. If teachers cannot teach students a lot of things or cannot motivate the atmosphere of the class, students will be bad.



However, it was not only teachers that negatively influenced Tang's motivation. The atmosphere in class in general was, in her opinion, discouraging:

My classmates this semester don't care about the class because a lot of them got accepted by different universities. They just come to class to have fun and joke with each other. But you know, it's not a healthy joking and it's not funny! I don't want to study in such environment.

Similar to Tang, Jose felt that the external factors such as other learners and teachers negatively influenced his motivation taking him further and further away from following the English-only rule. He felt that the issue was school-wide:

When I arrived here, I saw first a power point presentation about progress, respect, and honor. I was very surprised and I really wanted to honor this law. And the first semester I really respected, as much as I could. The next semester, I started to see that in the hallways and even inside the classrooms people started to speak Spanish, Korean, Japanese.

As evidenced, Jose came to the ELC with a strong motivation to learn English. He was determined to use it in school because of his respect to the English-only environment. At the same time, he expected all students in school to follow the rule and speak English with each other. However, Jose soon realized that the majority of the students did not seem to care about the rule. He further described, "So the second semester I started to speak Portuguese with my Brazilian classmates because I learned Portuguese. With my Mexican classmates I spoke Spanish. So with more than a half of classmates I could speak another language besides English!" Jose felt that the environment at the ELC "became weaker" and discouraged him from speaking English:

I am in my third semester now and I feel like the rule is not being strong imposed.

Everybody is speaking Korean and all the languages when you go to hallways. I think when I came here the first semester, last summer, the ELC rule was very strong. And the following semester it was weaker. And today nobody speaks English outside the class! Only if it's another person who doesn't speak your native language. That is how I feel.

As seen from participants' comments and experiences, motivation was a strong factor that influenced learners' desire to use English in school. Some participants seemed to be highly motivated and thus determined to speak the target language. Others, however, demonstrated their lack of motivation, which resulted in their frequent use of their native language.

*Personality type.* Related to varying individual levels of motivation, it became apparent during the one-on-one interviews with the participants that their willingness to use English was, to a certain degree, determined by their personality type. For example, Nayoung epitomizes an active, sociable, and outgoing student. She constantly searched for the opportunities to make new friends from other countries, and enjoyed enriching her cultural experience at the ELC by learning about other students' traditions and customs. As was previously mentioned, Nayoung made a lot of international friends, and she liked spending time with them more than with Korean students. She described herself as "a weird Korean" who did not want to be close with Korean people but wanted to gain a multi-cultural experience. Nayoung shared:

In here, there are a lot of different cultures, so I can experience their cultures, and also I can use English more. And also I think Korean people are a little bit shy to enjoy with people. And I am not (laughs). And I always hang out with my classmates from other countries. I see some Korean boys; they are just sitting on the chairs. But I have kind of

a bright personality. I just want to do something fun, happy, that's why I always do something with other people.

Another of Nayoung's personality traits that became evident through the interview was her respect for the English-only environment and other students' learning goals and efforts. Several times during the discussion, she mentioned that she wanted to communicate with other Korean students only in English because of the school rule. Nayoung explained, "When you are in school, you need to obey the rule." She was also willing to help other Korean students in their efforts to learn the language by speaking with them in English and clarifying some difficult words and grammar concepts for them. Because Nayoung improved her English through her constant effort and hard work, she wanted to make the English-only rule work for other students too.

Natalia, on the other hand, was not as extroverted as Nayoung; therefore, she did not use her chances to speak English at the ELC. She realized that interaction with compatriots assumed speaking her native language, so she tried to avoid being around Brazilian students. At the same time, she did not make any effort to become friends with students from other countries due to her shy personality.

These examples vividly demonstrate that a personality type can be another factor influencing students' desire to speak English. Unlike shy and introverted learners, sociable and outgoing students tended to seek out opportunities to speak more English.

Thus, two major sub-factors were identified in the category of individual factors: the intensity of motivation and personality type. These "personal characteristics" (Dörnyei, 2006), and especially, personality type, somewhat overlap with some of the psychological factors, the discussion of which follows.

**Psychological factors.** According to Tomizawa (1990), psychological factors include personality traits that are found “within a person” and that “stem from an individual’s psychological bases” (p. 51). In the current study, three psychological sub-factors were identified that inhibited students’ communication in English outside the classroom: 1) lack of confidence, 2) stress from speaking English, and 3) fear of having a different personality when speaking English. The discussion of these factors is presented below.

*Lack of confidence.* Lack of confidence can be an inherent trait of a learner, but might result from a negative experience. The example of the latter was Natalia—she tried to speak English with other Brazilian students at school, but when she made mistakes, they laughed at her. She felt very uncomfortable and began to avoid speaking English with the Portuguese speakers at the ELC. Interestingly enough, she did not feel unconfident or anxious when interacting with her English-speaking coworkers.

Similarly, Minsoo felt that the level of his confidence in using English varied based upon whom he talked to. With native speakers, he felt confident, as he knew they would be more “understanding to [his] accent and grammar.” However, speaking English with other Koreans and students whose language abilities were more advanced than his own made him feel uncomfortable: “I know that their English is better and I am scared that they will judge me or laugh at me.”

In the Chinese focus group, which consisted only of the beginning-level learners, the participants admitted that even in class they feel anxious. The students explained that their Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking classmates seem more talkative and confident, and oftentimes take control of class discussions. Because of that, Asian students do not feel comfortable participating in class. One Chinese-speaking student expressed his feelings this way: “I feel they

can speak better and I am always comparing myself with them. I know that my grammar is better, but they talk so much and fast, and I am scared sometimes that they will judge my pronunciation. I am really worry about it.”

Thus, it became apparent that some students felt apprehensive about using English with other students because of their lack of confidence. Interestingly enough, while participants reported a lack of confidence when speaking with their compatriots and other students whose language abilities were better, they did not have similar emotions when interacting with students from other countries and native speakers.

***Stress from speaking English.*** Perhaps even more than shaky levels of confidence, the participants unequivocally stated that stress and tiredness often kept them from speaking English 100% of the time, especially at the beginning proficiency levels. One Portuguese-speaking participant shared that the first semester at the ELC, when she was in the Foundations B level, was very stressful for her: She was not able to communicate with people because of the English-only rule in school and her low English abilities. She felt depressed from not being able to interact with people and enjoy conversations. In her opinion, the students should not be deprived of a basic human need to communicate with other people. Another Brazilian participant shared a powerful story, which did not happen at the ELC, but which demonstrates the same concept:

When I was on a mission, I made a lot of goals for me to learn English, but when I came home every evening, my brain was so tired, so I wanted just to speak Portuguese with my companion, so I could express myself! And I know that if you are in foundation levels at the ELC, it's hard, boring, and stressful.

Relieving stress was indeed a valid reason for speaking native language for several other focus group participants. Said one Spanish-speaking student, “We are humans too. We have our

life, and sometimes I come to school and I have a bad day or I am very stressed, I just need someone to talk with me in my language, not English, and when teacher says ‘Speak English’, it makes me even more mad.” In the Chinese focus group, the participants made the following comments: “We need time to relax!” “It gives headache to speak and listen only English,” “I dislike this rule during the lunch break.”

In short, stress from speaking English reported by the participants appeared to be a fairly influential factor for many of them. In order to relieve their stress and to relax, students spent some time talking to their friends in their native languages.

***Fear of having a different personality when speaking English.*** A third concern about using English with their compatriots especially expressed by the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking participants relates to a shift in identity. They felt as though they were different people when they were speaking English. “My personality is so different when I speak English, not Portuguese; I am a different person, it’s not me anymore!” said one Brazilian. Other students in the group concurred with her and explained that in Portuguese there are many colloquial expressions that perfectly reflect their personalities. As a result, when they speak English, they feel that they are losing their own “self.”

A similar idea was expressed by the Spanish focus group participants, who felt that English does not allow them to be who they really are. One participant provided a meaningful explanation:

Your language is connected with yourself. So when you are speaking only the language that you are learning, sometimes you feel that you are losing the part of who you are, and you feel really empty. So if you have a chance to speak Spanish sometimes, it is very good for you.

This principle may also be attributable to the responses that repeatedly appeared on the questionnaire: “Speaking Korean makes me feel good,” “I need Spanish because I just feel good,” “When I speak my language, I feel much better.” It is quite possible that *feeling good* means for the students the feeling of their true selves. As Tomizawa (1990) explained, with their compatriots the students “can feel recognition for what and who they really are” (Tomizawa, 1990, p. 58).

In short, the participants believed that their mother tongues are inseparable from their personalities and part of who they are. Thus, the constant use of English was almost viewed by the participants as a threat to their self-identity.

Much of the discussion thus far has focused on the factors that pertain to learners themselves: sociocultural (interaction behavior and cultural norms), linguistic (language abilities), individual (personal characteristics), and psychological (affective side of personality traits). What have not been discussed are the factors that derive from the language-learning context of the ELC, which, apparently, put certain constraints on students’ communication with compatriots in school. Hence, the discussion will now turn to the description of institutional factors.

**Institutional factors.** The English Language Center—the institutional context in which the current study was conducted, with its organization, curriculum, teaching staff, and teaching methods, was indicated as an influential parameter that determined to a certain degree students’ willingness to communicate in English outside the classroom. Seven sub-factors were identified in the in category of institutional factors. For the purpose of the analysis, these sub-factors were organized in three groups and are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

*Institutional Factors*

Factors		
Physical	Teacher	Curricular and Administrative
1) Number of students of the same L1 in school/class	1) Teachers' ability to motivate students	1) Poor enforcement of the English-only rule
2) Distance from the university campus.	2) Other teacher characteristics (being sensitive to students' cultures, understanding students' individual circumstances, the ability to establish a rapport with students).	2) Weaknesses of speaking classes 3) Lack of activities that promote interaction with students from other countries.

***Physical factors.*** As shown in Table 7, the number of students of the same L1 in school and the distance of the ELC from the main university campus were categorized as physical characteristics of the ELC that make it hard for students to use English.

*Number of students of the same L1 in school/class.* During the focus group discussions, the question was asked to the students: "What makes it difficult for you to speak English at the ELC?" Without any hesitation, the Korean students answered "Other Koreans," Spanish-speaking students said "Other Latin students," and in the same way, Brazilian and Chinese participants pointed out the number of other Portuguese- and Chinese-speaking students in school. Thus, the participants agreed almost in one voice that the number of other students of the same native language background in school was detrimental to their English improvement, and some of them wished that they were the only representative of their L1 at the ELC.

*Distance from the university campus.* Quite surprisingly, the participants also felt the lack of opportunities to practice English with native speakers. In their opinion, the problem of using native languages in school would most likely be solved if the ELC were located on campus



with a proximity to native speaking college students. One participant even called the ELC “an isolated island.”

The Korean students, in particular, were dissatisfied with the distance of the ELC from the main campus. As expressed one Korean participant, “The ELC is so far from campus, and we don’t have activities with BYU students.” Claudia gave a possible explanation for this phenomenon: since Korean students are always around their compatriots, they wish that school gave them more opportunities to interact with native speakers. It is also the reason why Korean students, in Claudia’s opinion, frequently sign up for the ELC tutors: “I think Koreans don’t like to be with other people. They are just in their circle and don’t know anyone! And they don’t have native speakers to help them. So they always go to tutors for everything!”

Thus, such physical characteristics of the ELC as its distance from the main university campus and the number of students speaking the same native language appeared to be yet another hindrance to using English. Though these physical factors can hardly be changed, there may be ways of reducing their influence and they will be discussed in Chapter 5.

***Teacher factors.*** In addition to the physical characteristics of the ELC, the participants mentioned teacher factors as another reason why they find it hard to use English in school.

*Teachers’ ability to motivate students.* Much discussion among the participants revolved around teachers’ characteristics and their influence on students’ academic success. Many of them felt that the teachers’ ability to motivate students was an important factor that either promoted or hindered their willingness to learn English and use it more outside the classroom. All participants were unanimous in this respect: Teachers who can motivate students make a difference on students’ desire to practice English and learn more. Tang remarked, “We need

good teachers, so can learn from them. Teachers have to know how to manage the class and motivate students. Teachers are very important!”

Another interview participant, Minsoo, believed that the most important teacher characteristic is passion for the teaching job:

If they have passion, they will think how they teach us more easily or fun. And they will prepare for classes. Because we always know if they prepare before coming to class. I feel that some teachers never prepare. So if teachers have passion about teaching us, students will study hard.

Two significant points stand out from this statement. First, motivated teachers will most likely prepare fun and interesting classes and make the process of learning both easier and more enjoyable for the students. Second, teachers’ passion has a positive influence on students’ desire to study and acquire more knowledge.

*Other teacher characteristics.* The ability to motivate students was not the only teacher characteristic that according to the students increases their desire to speak English. As some participants indicated, teachers should also 1) be sensitive to students’ cultures, 2) understand students’ individual circumstances, and 3) have the ability to establish a rapport with students. The discussion of these characteristics follows.

*Being sensitive to students’ cultures:* Nayoung shared a story that demonstrated a teacher’s insensitivity, which, in turn, negatively impacted a student’s academic success. In her story, one of the teachers embarrassed Nayoung’s Chinese classmate by pointing out in front of everybody that she did not belong to the LDS Church (Most students in Provo are member of this religious organization). Nayoung said that her classmate felt very uncomfortable, so she stopped coming to class. In Nayoung’s opinion, the teacher’s words were very condescending,

and she understands why her classmate reacted the way she did. She explained, “Asian people try not to embarrass each other in public.” In Western cultures, the described incident may not have had such a dramatic effect like it did on someone from an Asian culture, in which the concept of “saving face” is fundamental (Park, 1998). Apparently the teacher from Nayoing’s story was not aware of this important cultural factor.

*Understanding students’ individual circumstances:* In addition to being poorly informed about students’ cultures, some participants felt that teachers have little understanding of students’ lives outside the ELC. There is much emotion reflected in the following comment of a participant from Brazil: “Sometimes I feel like teachers don’t know that we are humans too. They just say ‘Speak English!’ But sometimes I don’t feel well and I can’t speak English, I just don’t care about English, I need to speak Portuguese!” In his opinion, teachers should be more sensitive to students’ personal circumstances (e.g., being far from families, having morning or late evening jobs).

Demonstrating the same idea, a Spanish-speaking participant shared the following experience: He was explaining something important to another Spanish-speaking student during lunchtime, and a teacher who was passing by heard them speaking and asked them to stop immediately. The student said it made him angry, so he started to argue with the teacher. He explained that he was speaking Spanish to the other student only because she was from a lower level, and he would have certainly explained that to the teacher if she had asked him. “But she just told us to stop without trying to understand the situation!” Just like Claudia, whose similar story was described earlier, this student believed that teachers should be aware of the fact that there are some situations in which the use of native languages may be necessary. Instead, he thought, “the teachers just refuse to understand.”

*Ability to establish a rapport with students:* Related to teachers' ignorance about the lives and cultures of their students, several participants raised complaints about teachers' inability to connect with them. During the focus group, one Spanish-speaking participant voiced his frustration about the fact that there are several teachers at the ELC who speak students' first languages, yet they never help students if asked to explain a word or a grammar principle. With much emotion in his voice, he added, "They just say no and it's frustrating!" In his opinion, such attitude does not contribute to building student-teacher relationships; in fact, it does the opposite. The student concluded, "When this teacher will ask me to do something, I will say no because the teacher said no earlier."

Jose offered a powerful comment illustrating the importance of a rapport between the teachers and the students: "The teachers should be more affiliating to students and see their efforts. They should develop good relationships with the students and see who they are and who put their best efforts to things she or he is teaching." Jose believed that teachers have a great power and ability to influence students' academic success: "I have had really good relations with some teachers and I really wanted to improve in the area [they taught]. For example, if it was a grammar teacher, I got along with grammar because of the teacher."

Jose further explained if a teacher succeeded in developing a rapport with students, they would want to follow teacher's counsel and instruction. His comment is insightful: "Teachers are an external factor that would change me internally." Positive teacher-student relationships, in his opinion, contribute to students' desire to follow the English-only rule: "If I have a better relationship with the teacher, and if she asks me to speak English in school, I will commit for sure!"

As evidenced, students considered such teachers' characteristics as sensitivity to learners' cultures, understanding students' individual circumstances, and their ability to establish rapport with the students as very important assets to have. The lack of these characteristics in teachers was shown to discourage students from their studies and their English use.

*Curricular and administrative factors.* Besides the teacher factors, several factors were categorized by the participants as curricular and administrative.

*Poor enforcement of the English-only rule.* Though teacher-student interaction is important to the efficacy of the English-only policy, problems with its implementation also exist at the administrative level. As someone's comment on the questionnaire read, "The rule is good but enforced poorly." This statement raises further questions, and during the interviews and focus groups these questions were answered. The participants felt that teachers are generally inconsistent in terms of the English-only rule. They said that whereas some teachers deduct students' points for speaking their L1, others hardly even know about the policy. A Korean participant's comment illustrates a common perspective: "Some teachers tell us 'Speak English', but other teachers don't care!" The feeling of confusion was equally expressed by the majority of the participants and summed up nicely by a student from the Spanish-speaking focus group: "It only causes frustration!"

In addition to teachers' inconsistency, the students also expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the rule is explained to them. To illustrate, Minsoo felt that the rule was not clearly presented at the beginning of the semester: "They just showed us a poster." In Minsoo's opinion, the administration should clearly explain the requirements regarding the use of English in school as well as motivate and encourage students to speak English.

Jose, in particular, felt very strongly about the way the English-only rule was implemented in school. According to him, every semester “the ELC environment becomes weaker and weaker.” He asserted, “Today nobody pays much attention to the rule anymore; they just say ‘English-only’ automatically, without providing any examples or explanations.” According to Jose, even though the rule still exists in school, students do not take it seriously because “there is a law, but there is no environment for the law.” To illustrate what he meant by this, Jose provided a meaningful analogy:

In [my country] we have a law of using a seat belt. But we never use it. And we are never corrected. It seems even ridiculous if you follow the law by yourself! But in the United States, I never take off my seat belt! Never! I feel that everybody is doing it, and I even feel good when I put it. Here, there is a right environment for it.

Jose’s statement is meaningful. Like many other students at the ELC, he was very dissatisfied by the teachers’ inconsistency in terms of the enforcement of the English-only rule, as well as by the lack of activities and methods through which the rule was executed. These factors seemed to lower his and other students’ motivation to use English in school.

*Weaknesses of speaking classes.* Besides spotty enforcement of the language rule by the faculty and administration, students also felt that some curriculum was not conducive to speaking more English. Overall, the participants were not satisfied with the content of oral communication courses at the ELC. In student opinions, their speaking classes do not give them enough preparation for communicating in English outside of the class and school.

First, the students felt that the emphasis in the ELC curriculum is given to reading and writing skills at the expense of listening and speaking skills. “Even in speaking class we write!” commented one participant in the Portuguese-speaking group. Another student agreed with him

and added, “I feel I can’t fluently speak with people because we have no enough speaking practice in class.” Along the same line, a Korean participant thought that students spend too much time on writing homework, which does not leave them any room for practicing speaking English in the community.

Second, the speaking classes, according to the participants, are primarily focused on teaching academic vocabulary, rather than on giving them vocabulary that they need for “real communication.” In regard to this, one Brazilian participant expressed his strong criticism: “Why do I speak Portuguese? Because I can’t express myself in English! The class teaches me only academic English, but I don’t use academic language when I talk to friends.” No less emotional was a comment of another student from Brazil: “In class we have the same topic: ‘Do you agree or disagree?’ Or we just learn ‘I think,’ ‘In my opinion.’ But nobody speaks like that! We need conversational vocabulary, so we can speak like normal people!”

In a similar vein, a Chinese participant pointed out a difficulty understanding native speakers because they use colloquial language that she never learned. Like her, several Korean participants felt that English practiced in their speaking classes is somewhat different from English used by people outside of the school.

*Lack of activities that promote students’ interaction in school.* In addition to a fresher and more effective curriculum, students also expressed a desire for more school-sponsored activities in order to get to know their peers. The interview participants noticed that ELC students spend a lot of time interacting with their compatriots and not those of other nationalities. For example, Claudia and Nayoung talked about “the Korean circle,” and other students made similar observations. The majority of the participants generally felt that the ELC lacks activities that promote interaction among the students of different levels and countries.

Thus, the poor implementation of the English-only rule, weaknesses of speaking classes, and lack of activities that promote interaction among students at the ELC were viewed by the participants as factors discouraging them from speaking English outside of the classrooms. The participants proposed a number of ideas that can be used at the ELC to increase students' interaction with each other in order to help them practice English as well learn about each other's cultures. Students' ideas and suggestions will be described as part of recommendations in Chapter 5.

As seen from students' comments and remarks, the institutional category, which includes physical characteristics of the school, teacher qualities, and curricular and administrative parameters, appeared to be quite influential with regard to students' willingness to communicate in English in school. Whereas the other categories, such as students' culture, social norms, their language ability, individual and psychological features had an internal nature, the institutional factors were of an external origin, and yet they affected students' communication behavior and even their motivation.

**Summary of the factors.** In summary, five categories of factors were identified that determined students' language choices in their interaction with compatriots: sociocultural, linguistic, individual, psychological, and institutional. Each of these categories has several sub-factors. These sub-factors are summarized in Table 8.

Furthermore, the participants provided detailed information with regard to the factors that made communication in English with each other challenging. Five categories of factors emerged from the analysis of the questionnaire, the individual interviews, and the focus groups – sociocultural, linguistic, individual, psychological, and institutional – with a number of sub-factors in each category.



Table 8

*Factors Affecting Students' Language Behavior Outside the Classroom*

Factors	Sub-factors
Sociocultural	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Peer pressure</li> <li>2) Fear of negative evaluation by compatriots</li> <li>3) Cultural communication patterns</li> <li>4) Maintaining friendships with compatriots</li> <li>5) Need for cultural bonding</li> </ol>
Linguistic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Low language proficiency</li> <li>2) Difficulty in understanding teachers' assignments</li> <li>3) Translating habits</li> <li>4) Differences between English and students' L1</li> </ol>
Individual	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The intensity of motivation</li> <li>2) Personality type.</li> </ol>
Psychological	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lack of confidence</li> <li>2) Stress from speaking English</li> <li>3) Fear of having a different personality when speaking English</li> </ol>
Institutional	<p><i>Physical factors:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Number of students of the same L1 in school/class</li> <li>2) Distance from the university campus</li> </ol> <p><i>Teacher factors:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3) Teacher ability to motivate students</li> <li>4) Other teacher characteristics (being sensitive to students' cultures, understanding students' individual circumstances, the ability to establish a rapport with students)</li> </ol> <p><i>Curricular and administrative factors:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5) Poor enforcement of the English-only rule</li> <li>6) Weaknesses of speaking classes</li> <li>7) Lack of activities that promote interaction with students from other countries</li> </ol>

These results provide a foundation for the next chapter, which presents the analysis of the data, as well as offers implications and recommendations to classroom teachers and program administrators on how to shape programs' curricula in order to improve the language-learning environment in English institutions. We now turn to the discussion of the results.



## Chapter 5 Discussion

*“I really like this topic because I do care about this place. The ELC opened many doors for me and like I said I want to do something good here. I am motivated myself and now because of your research to think about this topic. Because I am in the students’ side, I feel like I have a different perspective and I can give different suggestions”* (Jose, interview participant).

Our lengthy discussion began with the presentation of the language-learning environment at the English Language Center, as well as a description of the English-only rule enforced in school with the hope of providing students with frequent practice of the target language in order to help them increase their language proficiency. As described earlier, the rule required a 100% use of English in class and outside the classroom (except for the gym area during lunchtime). Some teachers applied penalties such as point subtraction to those learners who did not follow the requirements. However, despite these measures, ELC students continued to speak native languages with their compatriots in school. It became evident that the ELC administrators failed to investigate the reasons why students were hesitant to speak English in the hallways, and rather imposed the language-use rule with a “no tolerance” attitude. As a result, the English-only policy was rendered ineffective because it lacked an integral element: an understanding of the issue from learners’ perspectives.

As it appeared that nothing has been done in order to look at the issue of language use from the students’ point of view, the current study has attempted to take a step in that direction. Accordingly, the primary purpose of this research was to examine the factors that influence students’ willingness to use English with their compatriots outside the language classroom in an

intensive English program. The study was exploratory in nature and driven by the following research questions:

1. What attitudes do students of the English Language Center at Brigham Young University have toward the English-only language-learning environment?
2. What factors, from the students' perspectives, affect their decision to use either their native language or English outside the classroom?
3. Based upon the attitudes and factors that affect their language choices outside the classroom, what suggestions do students have for improving the language-learning environment at the ELC?

In order to address these questions, an online questionnaire was conducted at the English Language Center, in which 158 students participated. Additionally, 6 participants were selected for in-depth interviews (2 Spanish speakers, 2 Korean speakers, 1 Portuguese speaker, and 1 Chinese speaker), followed by 4 focus groups with each involving students from one of the most widely represented native language groups at the ELC (Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese).

The information provided by the students was presented in the form of personal stories, experiences, and perspectives. Students' impressions and opinions were insightful and revealing, and though not all the student responses were presented in Chapter 4, great effort was taken to introduce the most salient categories and themes that became apparent from the data analysis. Similarly, the examples and students' quotes included in the text were selected because they are representative of other comparable perspectives.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the data presented in Chapter 4: learners' reactions to the English-only environment at the ELC and factors that affect their language

choices in their interaction outside of class. In addition, this chapter will outline several methods that, from learners' perspectives, could be implemented in schools in order to help students speak English more frequently and comfortably with each other.

Data will be analyzed and described in a two-step process. First, each research question will be prefaced by a summary of the students' key responses. Then, the discussion of these responses will be supported by findings from relevant research in second language acquisition.

### **Research Question 1**

**What attitudes do students of the English Language Center at Brigham Young University have toward the English-only language-learning environment?**

**Response summary.** Responses to this question revealed that the students had generally positive reactions to the English-only rule at the English Language Center. Most students, with very few exceptions, believed that the rule had been created to help them practice English and thus improve their language skills. They believed that practicing English in a safe school environment would help them prepare for real world communication. The participants also pointed out the benefit of the rule in terms of developing friendships with students from other countries. These friendships encourage them to use English, and thus they are advantageous for their English improvement. Finally, the students felt that choosing to speak English was a demonstration of their respect for other students and teachers who could not understand their first language, as well as for other students' learning goals and efforts.

Despite the prevalence of positive attitudes, some students expressed negative reactions to the rule. These negative attitudes were primarily motivated by the way some teachers responded to students using their native languages at school. The participants felt that some teachers were insensitive as they refused to understand students' reasons for speaking in their

native languages with their compatriots. Furthermore, the deduction of class points as a penalty for using an L1 was another policy toward which the participants expressed their strong dissatisfaction. They felt that such punitive methods are discouraging and ineffective and thus should not be imposed upon language learners.

In addition, the very idea of rule enforcement seemed to be criticized by many participants. They thought that since speaking English is a personal decision of each individual learner, the administration of the ELC should by no means impose the rule upon students. At the same time, many participants believed that the maturity level of ELC students is sufficient for them to recognize the benefits of the frequent use of English, and felt that implementation of rules and consequences reduced them to being punished like children. Alternatively, they suggested, teachers and staff should make an effort to understand the reasons why students speak their native languages.

**Response analysis.** The analysis of students' responses indicated three general types of attitudes toward the English-only rule: positive, negative, and other. These three types of attitudes will be discussed below.

*Positive attitudes.* Among the positive attitudes, the participants indicated benefits of speaking English in school such as improving their skills in the target language, preparing them for real world interaction, and making more friends from other countries. The students also believed that by speaking English, the common language at the ELC, they demonstrate respect to other people.

*Improving English proficiency.* The primary benefit of the ELC English-only policy expressed by participants with a positive perception of the rule was its ability to greatly contribute to the improvement of students' language skills. Many comments on the

questionnaire and responses during the interviews and focus groups reflected students' understanding of the positive relationship between the frequent use of English and the increase of language proficiency.

This finding is consistent with Davis' (1986), Grant's (1999), and Kang's (2006) studies, in which it was shown that the participants were well aware of the positive effect that practice of the target language has on the increase of language proficiency. For example, Grant (1999) discovered that even though 52% of the participants in his study had negative reactions toward the English-only rule, the majority of the students (68%) found it to be "a beneficial tool in bettering their oral/aural English abilities" (p. 8). Similarly, the participant in Kang's (2006) study knew about the effectiveness of speaking practice; therefore, he was seeking opportunities to speak English as much as possible. Lack of contact with native speakers in the workplace caused him to search for interaction with people in stores, restaurants, and even to seek a new job at which he had ample opportunities to interact with native speakers.

Similarly, the participants in the current study acknowledged the helpfulness of the English-only rule and were generally appreciative of reminders to speak English in the school building. The majority of the participants realized that "if given an inch, [they] would take an L1 mile" (McMillan & Rivers 2011, p. 257), or, in other words, without the language rule, they would likely speak their L1 most of the time.

*Preparing for real-world communication.* Many students also felt that the ELC offers a great opportunity to safely practice their English skills and prepare them for interactions with native speakers outside of school. The participants thought that because all students at the ELC speak with an accent and make grammar mistakes, they would not "stand out" as much as in the real world. In addition, for some, speaking to learners with different accents appeared to be a

good opportunity to improve listening skills. It is quite surprising that some students viewed the ELC as a fairly safe environment in which they could gain more confidence in speaking English and even overcome their fear of making mistakes, while speaking with compatriots and advanced students caused a fear of making mistakes and even anxiety for others.

*Making new friends.* Interestingly, regardless of some participants' skepticism about the effectiveness of learner-learner interaction, the results of the data analysis indicated that most students were grateful for the opportunity to make more international friends and thus improve their language skills. Some participants said they even tried to avoid staying close to their compatriots in school and rather made an effort to develop friendships with students from other countries. Eventually, these students noticed an increase in their English proficiency.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, students gained multiple benefits from forming international friendships. A vivid example demonstrating these benefits is Nayoung: The more English she spoke, the more friends from other countries she made at the ELC. Then, the more she interacted with her international friends, the more chances she had to practice and improve her English. Several other participants in the current study reported to have observed the same pattern.

In accordance with the students' recognition of the twofold benefits of maintaining international friendships, another interesting observation emerged from the data. When asked to provide suggestions on how to improve the language-learning environment at the ELC and help students increase their opportunities to speak English, the participants almost unanimously suggested creating more "making-friends" activities in school. Thus a safe assumption can be made that most learners believe that these "making-new-friends" activities would offer them more opportunities to practice, develop, and improve their language skills.



*Respecting other people.* Another major advantage of using English at the ELC that the students indicated in their responses was the notion of respect. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the principle of respect, along with the principles of progress and honor, was introduced at the ELC in fall semester 2009. Every semester since then, the administration of the school encourages students to speak English in order to respect others in school. Several participants' comments and stories tell about an uncomfortable feeling they had when other students spoke their native languages around them. At the very least, these stories affirm students' understanding of the principle of respect.

On the whole, students' attitudes to the English-only rule at the ELC were positive, and they reflect their understanding of its benefits in terms of their language proficiency and preparation of real-world communication. In addition, participants' remarks demonstrated their understanding that the principle of respect contributed to the establishment of a safe language-learning environment in school. Finally, students referred to the opportunity to make more friends from different countries as another advantage of using English in school. The participants' comments evidenced that although they may not always follow the English-only rule, generally they are well aware of its benefits.

*Negative attitudes.* Despite the prevalent positive reactions to the English-only rule, some attitudes expressed by the participants were negative. They help better understand the reasons why students are hesitant to communicate in the target language in school.

*The ineffectiveness of the English-only rule.* As we have discussed, most of the students in the study felt that practicing English with other students in school is an effective way to increase language proficiency, while only a few participants expressed an attitude that did not support that idea. These participants' biggest concern was related to the quality of learner-

learner interaction, which, as the students felt, is not effective in facilitating improvement of language proficiency.

This notion of “the blind leading the blind” was described by Barker (Barker, 2004, p. 80) in his report on Japanese students’ objections to the use of English with each other outside of class. Barker reported that the students avoided interacting with each other not only because they could not be sure when they made errors, but also because they were afraid to “pick up on each other’s mistakes” (p. 81) and thus worsen their English instead of improving it. The students believed that spending more time interacting with native speakers of the language instead of compatriots was what improved their English abilities.

Indeed, many students do not believe they can receive much helpful feedback from another language learner, and this might sound like a valid apprehension. The literature suggests, however, that practicing English improves language skills whether students speak with native speakers or other language learners (Cundick, 2007; Martinsen et al., 2010; Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell, 1996). Therefore, it is essential that teachers make students aware of the importance of learner-learner interaction.

Moreover, students often do not realize that learner-learner communication is only one type of interaction that gives them chances to practice English, among other opportunities that they have outside of the school. Most students would probably agree that speaking English in class, whether with a teacher or with classmates, has a beneficial impact on their language proficiency. In the same way, learners should be reassured that communication with other language students outside the classroom is equally beneficial to interactions in class, and is by no means “linguistically harmful” (Pica et al., 1996, p. 80).

*Teachers' reactions to students speaking their L1.* Though some students were apprehensive about the effects of speaking English with other non-native students, participants generally expressed their desire to be supported by the teachers and the administration of the school and also wanted to be encouraged by them to speak English in the building. Most students set a goal for themselves to practice English as much as possible, yet felt that it was easy for them to lose sight of their goals and slip into their native language; therefore, they felt that it was important receive support and motivation from the administration.

The interview and focus group participants alike appreciated teachers' reminders to speak English, as long as it was done in a friendly manner. However, when discussing teachers' reactions to students speaking their L1, the students most often responded that some teachers are not very friendly in this regard: Instead of encouraging and motivating students to speak English, they embarrass students and thus make them resentful. One can only speculate that teachers do not intend to embarrass students or hurt their feelings, as their intentions are to help students by reminding them to use English in school. However, participants perceived some teachers' comments as harsh and even rude.

Several ESL instructors from the personal email correspondence of the researcher acknowledged this problem and shared their ways of reminding students to speak English. Some teachers simply approach the students and start a small-talk conversation. Others make light of the situation, using joking statements to address students speaking an L1, such as: "Wow! Your Spanish really sounds great! Why don't you work on your English?" These approaches may serve as potential solutions for addressing students in a "nicer" way, and could easily be brought up during teacher training and professional development sessions.

*Punishment.* The English Language Center, as mentioned in Chapter 1, used to have a “Red/Green Cards” system, which was based on the principle of reward and punishment. This system was created to encourage students to use more English with their compatriots in the school building, but it did not seem to be effective. The students who received red cards (punishments) would get upset because resulted in the decrease of participation points. At the same time, others would demonstratively speak English when teachers passed by in order to receive a green card (a reward). In short, the students were not motivated; therefore, the administration of the school abandoned the policy after Winter Semester, 2009.

However, even after the policy was abandoned, some teachers continued the practice of taking off students’ participation points if they heard them speaking native languages. Thus, punishment for using native languages continued to exist in school, though it was not a formal school-wide rule but rather an individual choice of teachers.

This idea of implementing punitive consequences for not using English was addressed by all participants with disapproval and criticism. The students often described such methods as discouraging and inappropriate for mature adult learners. Punishing methods, as explained by the participants, only served to make them resentful toward the rules, policies, and teachers. The participants also frequently mentioned that punishment negatively affects student-teacher relationships.

Thus, some of the attitudes expressed by the participants about the English-only rule were quite negative and were primarily directed against teachers’ reactions to those students who speak their native languages in school, as well as against punitive methods that still exist among some teachers. It also became apparent that some students did not believe that the English-only rule would help them improve their language proficiency. Although students’ positive reactions

outnumbered the comments of dissatisfaction, the latter are necessary to discuss as they contribute to our understanding of the reasons why students switch to their native languages once they leave the classroom.

*Other attitudes.* Among the attitudes that the participants expressed toward the English-only rule, were some reactions that were not categorized as positive or negative.

*The unconditional character of the English-only rule.* In spite of the many positive comments about the usefulness of the out-of-class English practice, most participants agreed that speaking English 100% of the time in school was simply not the best way to implement the language rule. Frequent comments on the questionnaire, as well as students' responses during the interviews and the focus groups were related to the necessity of using native languages in certain situations. The students believed that there are certain occasions in which the use of L1 should be acceptable; therefore, the language rule should be more flexible in order to make allowances for these occasions.

The English-only policy suggests the idea that students' L1 should be perceived as an obstacle to their progress in English—something that they should and may not use in school. Thus, if students do choose to utilize their L1, they are perceived as rule-breakers. As a consequence, L1 use is associated with negative perceptions. Some teachers perceive students' L1 almost as an enemy; they get terrified when they hear native languages in school, and some take off students' participation points. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that in such an environment students become quite protective (“This is my language, my culture, this is who I am, but you punish me for being me”), and they may even view English as something that disconnects them from their cultures causes them to lose a part of who they really are.

It is quite safe to assume, therefore, that the students' reactions to the English-only rule would have been much more positive if the rule did not have an "unconditional" nature that necessitates 100% English at school. Some of the situations that, from students' perspectives, should allow learners to use L1 will be discussed as part of the second research question of this study.

*Forcing students to speak English.* The students were quite critical of the idea of enforcement of the English-only rule. Enforcing the rule, in students' opinions, will most likely always fail because the learners themselves should be responsible for the choices they make in regard to the language use. If students are not motivated or do not see the advantages of practicing English, none of the rules can force them to use it. In addition, many participants believed that instead of imposing the rule, the school administration should find ways to positively influence students and help them see the importance and the benefits of speaking English.

It should be noted here that teachers' reminders to students to speak English are perceived differently in class and outside the classroom. The teacher traditionally controls the learning context in the classroom, along with its rules and policies. Because the teacher has a power to control the classroom environment, students generally adhere to the English-only rule—they know they *should* speak English in class and they never argue if the teacher stops them from using their L1. The classroom is the teacher's area. However, the out-of-class context is an environment in which students have control: It is their time and their area. Because the out-of-class context is perceived as "student territory," they may feel frustrated when teachers remind them to speak English there as well (as was demonstrated by some participants' stories in this

study). In other words, the classroom and the hallways seem to have a different *locus of control* (Rotter, 1966).

Thus, even those students who favored the English-only rule and acknowledged its benefits did not agree with the idea of speaking English 100% of the time. In their opinions, there are some occasions in which the use of native languages is necessary, and the administration of the school should consider those occasions and allow students to use their L1 if needed. Moreover, the participants felt that the rule should not be forced on them, but rather needs to be left as an individual choice of each student.

In summary, students' perceptions of the English-only rule are prevalently positive, which leads to the idea that the efforts that the English Language Center puts to encourage students to speak English outside the classroom have a great deal of potential. However, the extent to which the rule is implemented—in other words the “only” principle—is perceived by the learners negatively and thus should probably be rethought.

## **Research Question 2**

**What factors, from students' perspectives, affect their decision to use either their native language or English outside the classroom?**

**Response summary and analysis.** Responses to this question revealed much about the factors that deter or promote students' communication in English with their compatriots in school. Five categories of factors, with several sub-factors in each, emerged from the data collected through the questionnaire, the interviews, and the focus groups: sociocultural, individual, linguistic, psychological, and institutional (See Table 8 in Chapter 4).

**Sociocultural factors.** Sociocultural factors influencing students' communication in school contained five sub-factor: 1) peer pressure, 2) fear of negative evaluation by compatriots,

3) cultural communication patterns, 4) maintaining friendship with compatriots, and 5) need for cultural bonding. These factors seem to arise mainly from communication norms in the students' home countries.

*Peer pressure.* Peer pressure was a powerful factor that deterred students' inform interacting with compatriots in English at school. Even motivated learners "encountered enormous social influences" from their peers (Grenny, Maxfield, & Shimberg, 2009, p. 7). The interview and focus group participants alike shared the experiences that demonstrated a strong peer influence along with the importance of remaining "part of the group."

The peer pressure felt by participants arose in part from a division of ELC students into two general categories. The first category is new students, who are motivated, anxious to learn English, obedient to the English-only rule, and thus willing to speak English all the time. The second category includes returning students, who are often no longer as motivated and are tired of speaking English, but feel somewhat more experienced than the newcomers because they know "how things are." The students in the latter category often become the main source of peer pressure for new students.

By studying English at the ELC with many other students from the same native language backgrounds, individual students face a dilemma: Should they speak English with students of other nationalities and communicate less with their compatriots, and thus potentially be ostracized by their fellows due to commission of a perceived "act of betrayal" (Park, 1998, p. 64), or should they speak a native language and maintain friendship with "the circle." This choice is difficult to make because it places two important factors—the student's language-learning goals and the cultural value of friendships—at odds with one another.



The analysis of the data demonstrated that many of the study's participants chose to "sacrifice" their learning goals in order to preserve relationships with their compatriots. Only Nayoung decided to reach her language-learning goals by any means. Park's (1998) study demonstrated the same pattern: The majority of the students chose to stay close with their compatriots due to strong peer pressure and group values among Korean students. They rationalized their choice by the importance of having solid relationships with their compatriots. For them, having harmony with the group was more important than being "an English-learning machine" (Park, 1998, p. 67).

*Fear of negative evaluation by compatriots.* Similar to a desire for acceptance by a group of compatriots, the participants frequently mentioned that the fear of being perceived as incompetent front of their compatriots due to language errors was a strong obstacle to their communication in English. The students preferred to speak their L1 rather than to risk being judged by compatriots for their insufficient English knowledge.

Discussions of negative peer evaluation in the literature are primarily focused on Asian cultures and their concept of "face saving" (Hwang, 1993; Hyland, 2004; Kang, 2006; Park, 1998). For example, in Hyland's (2004) research, Chinese teachers of English were reluctant to use English due to the fear of criticism by their compatriots. Similarly, a participant in Kang's (2006) study considered peer evaluation one of the most influential reasons that kept him from using English with other Koreans. Park (1998) asserted, "Rather than losing one's face by speaking English, one would stop [talking]" (p. 66). In Hwang's (1993) study, Japanese learners did not want to speak English in class if there were other Japanese students. They were worried that other Japanese students were watching them and making negative judgments whenever they tried to speak English. Said one of the participants in the study, "I would not mind making

mistakes if there's no Japanese" (p. 97). The following Japanese saying perfectly expresses the concept of face saving: "*Tabi no haji wa kakisute*" (It is all right to be ashamed where no one knows you) (p. 98). This saying seems to be applicable to other Asian cultures as well.

In the current study, students from all four of the native language groups considered reported fear of negative peer evaluation. The participants said they felt uneasy and awkward speaking English in the presence of other students from the same L1 background. At the same time, though, they felt quite comfortable speaking with students from other countries. The analysis of students' responses indicated that the participants perceived their own nationality as being very critical to their own fellow students and quite lenient to others.

*Cultural communication patterns.* The idea of feeling apprehensive about speaking English with one's compatriots was also expressed by Korean participants who explained that speaking English with older compatriots seemed practically impossible because of the lack of linguistic resources in English, which does not allow the students to express respect and piety to their elders. The students explained that the Korean language contains necessary honorific devices that are appropriate for use when addressing older people. Using English, on the other hand, puts them in situations in which they have to violate the rules of etiquette, and this is regarded as unacceptable in Korean society.

The effects of the relationship between younger and older generations in oral communication was explored earlier (Park, 1998; Yoon, 2004). In Park's (1998) study, Korean students never spoke English to older Koreans. Park provided the following explanation: "When speaking in English with Koreans, the oldest person is always insulted because everyone can be referred as *you*" (p. 65). Yoon (2004) expanded on the Korean social models of communication and their effect on the language. He explained that in social interaction, people in Korea are

divided essentially into two groups in terms of age: “people above me” and “people not above me” (p. 195). Even one year of age difference is significant and meaningful. Accordingly, the Korean language is divided into two broad stylistic groups: *panmal* (plain, non-respectful language), and *contaymal* (polite, respectful, honorific language) (p. 194). These two language levels require that Koreans are always aware of the age difference between their interlocutors because they “can hardly say anything without choosing between options on [these] different levels” of the language (p. 193-194).

This “obsession with knowing the correct words” (Yoon, 2004, p. 194) when addressing people of a different social status is important to Koreans, so they apply the same principle to their interactions in other languages. Park (1998) explained, “Although they speak in English, they interpret what they hear based on Korean emotions” (p. 65). The English language does not provide Korean speakers with honorific forms that allow them to imply “you are someone above me” and I “acknowledge [your] higher social rank” (Yoon, 2004, p. 205). Since communication in English seems to be impossible without violating “one of the central values” (Yoon, 2004, p. 196) of Korean society, the Korean learners of English often choose to avoid interaction in English with older people. The data show that this was indeed the case with the participants in the current study.

*Maintaining friendships with compatriots.* As evidenced in the previous sections by students’ concerns about negative effects of English use on their relationships with compatriots at school, the study participants expressed strong feelings about the importance of friendships with compatriots. In the students’ opinions, speaking in one’s native language makes these relationships stronger. Although the participants realized that these friendships “harmed” their

English, many of them prioritized interaction with compatriots above their language-learning goals.

Park (1998) described the conflict between having strong personal relationships with compatriots and speaking English. He compared two categories of students in this regard. The first category was concerned with maintaining strong personal relationships of friendship with other Koreans even at the expense of their learning goals. These students did not want to be “an English speaking machine and ruin [their] relationships with other Koreans” (p. 67). Conversely, the students of the other category decided to “deviate from the group norms and values” by either avoiding Koreans or trying to use English when interacting with them. Park described that the latter were eventually “detached from the community” for being “perceived as not taking the relationship seriously” (p. 67).

Similar to negative peer evaluation, Asian cultural norms and their expectations concerning people’s communication behavior are described in the literature. Asian cultures are influenced by Confucian values that consists of four principles: *jen* (humanism), *i* (faithfulness), *li* (property), and *chih* (wisdom or liberal education) (Park, 1998). According to Park (1998), the first two principles – *jen* and *i* – are the most influential when it comes to interpersonal relationships and communication behavior. Based on the Confucian philosophy, in human relationships, a common goal takes a higher priority than individual desires. Likewise, many Asian participants in the current study admitted that they chose solid relationships with their compatriots, loyalty, and commitment to their own culture and traditions rather than actively looking for opportunities to speak English with other students.

Similarly, the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking participants in this study made insightful comments that seem to reflect the same concept of loyalty to their cultures and

compatriots. For example, Jose and Claudia pointed out that friendship with their compatriots was more important to them than speaking English. The focus group participants commented on the importance of being “Brazilian” or “Latino” regardless of the place and circumstances. As a Brazilian participant expressed, “It is important to maintain your culture.” Throughout the discussion in both groups, comments similar to these were not uncommon. Therefore, it may be safe to speculate that both Latin and Asian cultures value norms of the group more than individual goals.

*Need for cultural bonding.* In addition to a desire to maintain cultural identity by using an L1, the participants mentioned that they needed to speak their native languages with others from their own culture “just to feel better.” They felt that the ELC is an excellent place to interact with compatriots and feel close to people who share their L1 as well as similar cultural norms and values because, in many cases, they do not have these opportunities outside of the school.

Several researchers have previously described this need for cultural bonding. In their research, Martinsen et al. (2010) found that study abroad participants felt lonely in “frightening new surroundings far from home and anything familiar” (p. 57). Therefore, interacting with other fellow students in their native language was, as expressed by one participant, “a pretty good balance” providing students “safety” in the “overwhelming newness of their surroundings” (p. 57). Additionally, Coleman’s social capital theory (Coleman, 1988) explains that people tend to develop closer relationships with those with whom they have much in common. In a language institution with students from various countries, these people are normally compatriots.

In short, the participants referred to several factors of a sociocultural origin hindering the use of the target language in school: peer pressure, fear of negative evaluation, cultural

communication pattern, maintaining friendship with compatriots, and need for cultural bonding. Based on participants' insights and experiences, it became evident that these factors appear to a large part of the reasons that students do not speak English a 100% of the time. Because these factors are closely related to students' cultural norms and values, they are a necessary consideration for the school administration in the process of establishing an improved language-learning rule.

*Linguistic factors.* Linguistic factors were discovered to be strong features influencing students' communication choices at school. In this category, the following sub-factors were identified from the data: 1) low language proficiency, 2) difficulty in understanding teachers' assignments, 3) translating habits, and 4) differences between English and students' L1.

*Low language proficiency.* The most frequent linguistic factor noted by the participants was low language proficiency—insufficient grammar knowledge and lack of vocabulary. Most students were of the opinion that it is practically impossible for beginning students to speak English all the time since they do not have enough language resources to communicate with others and adequately express themselves. Some participants also commented on the stress they endured when forced to speak English at beginning levels.

The participants also found it hard to use English with those students whose language proficiency was low. To them, it seemed a waste of time to speak English to someone who has difficulty understanding and communicating, especially if they are able to communicate effectively in their native language.

Low proficiency in the target language is a valid reason for L1 use. In fact, there is a plethora of studies supporting the use of students' mother tongue in beginning-level foreign language classrooms (e.g., Cook, 2001; McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain,

2009). “With low tier students, sometimes it’s a necessary evil” (McMillan & Rivers, 2011, p. 256). On the other hand, in ESL learning contexts, language classrooms are normally monolingual due to many different students’ L1s taking place in the same class. ESL teachers are trained to provide language instruction appropriate for students to comprehend in the target language. Because of this, however, the content of the classrooms is generally limited to students’ language proficiency. In contrast, the level and quality of interaction that students face outside of the class is different from the classroom environment, and beginning-level learners are not always proficient enough to handle these types of interactions in English.

*Difficulty understanding teachers’ assignments.* A second linguistic factor noted by the students was clarification. As many participants expressed, it is very important for them to understand class content and homework assignments precisely, so if what teachers say or assign is not clear, the students often feel a need to ask a classmate who speaks the same native language for an explanation.

The Korean and Chinese participants in particular expressed a need for frequent clarification by compatriots. This may relate to the effects of the Asian educational systems, in which listening skills are not placed as an emphasis in the school curriculum (Park, 1998). Tomizawa (1990), Hwang (1993), and Park (1998) found that the lack of listening comprehension skills was a major problem for their Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese participants. Because there is so little time spent on implementing listening practice in school, students from these countries oftentimes have difficulty with comprehension when they “hear natural English” (Tomizawa, 1990, p. 129).

While Asian students may struggle to understand teachers due to their lack of listening comprehension skills, the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking participants commented on their

difficulty understanding non-native speaking teachers' accents. As a result, they, too, often engage in clarification discussions with classmates who speak the same native language.

It seems quite interesting to discover that the students would not ask a teacher to explain an unclear assignment after class, nor would they ask a clarification question during class time. Instead, they seem to prefer to discuss it with their classmates in their native language. This may be explained by either their low second language ability or by the potential embarrassment of demonstrating this "low English ability in class" (Tomizawa, 1990, p. 129). Asian students may be particularly reluctant to ask clarification questions in class because of the cultural concept of "face saving" and respect for teachers (Park, 1998).

*Translating habits.* In addition to problems with proficiency and comprehension of teachers' assignments, the participants pointed out the difficulty they have expressing their ideas in English when they do not know a certain word, phrase, or grammatical structure that is necessary to the conversation. However, instead of trying to look for alternatives to express the intended meaning (paraphrasing, substituting, changing a grammatical structure, using gestures), the students often revert to their native language.

One possible explanation of this behavior might be methods of teaching English in students' home countries. One can speculate that in most schools outside of the United States, English is still taught through either a grammar-translation method or an audio-lingual method. The former has a heavy emphasis on deductive presentation of grammar rules, reading, and translation of texts. The latter emphasizes grammar drilling and memorized dialogs, and does not encourage creativity or risk taking. Because of such strong stress on language form, students in these contexts "are often discouraged from looking for alternatives" and they do not learn how



“to develop cognitive processes for solving communication problems” (Kitajima, 1993, as cited in Hwang, 1993, p. 114).

*Differences between English and students' L1.* Linguistic differences between students' native languages and English were another factor that made it challenging for the participants to use English with each other. The students thought that these differences did not allow them to express themselves the same way in English as they would in their native tongue. These differences were mainly discussed with regard to slang and other colloquial expressions through which the students are able to accurately articulate their feelings and emotions in their first languages.

Even though the students explained these difficulties by citing the linguistic differences between their L1 and English, the actual reasons may be related to the students' lack of English proficiency or to their translating habits, both discussed in earlier. In the first case, the learners may experience difficulties of expression because they do not have adequate vocabulary to fully express the same thoughts, emotions, and feelings they freely can in their native language. In the second case, the students try to translate every single word from their L1 to English, rather than thinking in English. However, it is clear that translating word-for-word from one language into another is impossible, so it is not surprising that learners often experience a communication breakdown when utilizing that method.

In short, the participants felt that their low language proficiency, and perhaps related to this, their difficulties understanding teachers' assignments and finding ways to express themselves when unsure of a certain word or phrase were other obstacles to their use of English. Some participants also mentioned linguistic differences between English and their L1s as another factor that made it difficult for them to always speak English. However, it became apparent that

these difficulties may be caused not by the differences between L2 and L1, but rather by the students' lack of English proficiency.

*Individual factors.* Beyond the factors relating to language itself, students were often challenged in their L2 learning by facets of their own personalities. Individual factors, as defined in Chapter 4, are personal characteristics of the participants. From the major individual characteristics of learners such as personality types, aptitude, motivation, learning styles, and learning strategies studied in SLA research, the current research disclosed two factors that either promoted or inhibited students' desire to use English outside the classroom: 1) the intensity of motivation and 2) personality type. It also became apparent that these individual characteristics were able to override other factors influencing participants' communication with compatriots in school.

*The intensity of motivation.* The intensity of motivation was perhaps the strongest factor that either promoted or inhibited students' desire to communicate in English outside the classroom. Highly motivated learners looked for opportunities to speak English in school: They participated in school activities, made friends from other countries, and even avoided interaction with compatriots. On the other hand, when students' motivation dropped, like in the cases of Tang and Jose, they did not seem to put effort into increasing their opportunities to use English in school.

Motivation is certainly one of the most important aspects in second language acquisition. As Dörnyei (2007) asserts, "without sufficient motivation even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language proficiency, whereas most learners with strong motivation can achieve a working knowledge of the L2, regardless of their language

aptitude or any undesirable learning conditions” (p. 153). Similarly, Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggest that motivation is the major positive predictor of language achievement.

Moreover, motivation is a strong power that can help second language learners cope with the factors that decrease their desire to communicate in English. To illustrate, Kang (2006) suggests that due to the intensity of motivation, learners are able to overcome negative effects of individual factors (e.g., lack of confidence to use English in the presence of other compatriots) and contextual factors (e.g., lack of opportunities to use English). The example of Nayoung from the current study confirms Kang’s finding. The experiences and insights that she shared made it evident that this student is highly motivated, and her motivation was able to help her overcome negative factors, including peer evaluation and even the cultural expectation to maintain close relationships with other Koreans. Likewise, as several other participants shared, their passion to learn and practice English at the beginning of their learning experience at the ELC encouraged them to seek opportunities to speak more English in school.

On the other hand, the participants admitted that as the time went by, they felt less and less interest for school and they lost their desire to practice and improve their English. Due to this decrease of motivation, the students did not continue to seek opportunities to speak English or follow the requirements of the English-only rule.

*Personality type.* Personality type was another individual characteristic that influenced students’ desire to use English in school. Data demonstrated that extroverted participants were more willing to communicate in English in school. For example, Nayoung was constantly seeking opportunities to meet more international friends so she could improve her English. Like Nayoung, Tang and Jose made a lot of friends from other countries due to their open and outgoing personalities. On the other hand, introversion was discovered to be a trait that caused

communication apprehension in the target language. To illustrate, Natalia described herself as a shy and not very social person, and, because of that, she did not have many opportunities to interact in English in school.

Extroversion-introversion is one of the major personality dimensions (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1985), and among other personality characteristics, it is “of primary interest” in SLA research (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996, p. 9). According to Dewaele and Furnham (1999), extroversion-introversion is a trait that is more interesting for researchers than other personality characteristics because it is relatively easy to measure. Furthermore, Dörnyei (2006) asserts that there are “obvious commonsense relationships between extraversion and language use” (p. 44). This is indeed demonstrated by the findings of the current study: Extroverted participants actively tried to search for opportunities to interact in the target language.

Thus, the intensity of motivation and personality type were evidenced to be strong factors determining students’ decisions to use either English or their native language in school. Highly motivated and sociable learners tended to have more frequent interactions in English. However, having a social and outgoing personality did not always assume students’ willingness to interact in the target language. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, Claudia was very active, talkative, and social; nevertheless, she made a lot of Spanish-speaking friends in school and always spoke Spanish with them. Likewise, during the second semester of their study at the ELC, Jose and Tang, extroverted learners, having lost their motivation to learn English, made a lot of friends from the same L1 background and interacted in the native tongue with them. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that along with a social and outgoing personality, students must have a strong motivation to learn the language in order to experience increased success.

***Psychological factors.*** Psychological factors, similar to individual factors, relate to personal characteristics of the participants. Unlike the individual factors, however, the psychological factors are defined in this study from the affective (emotional) side of participants' behavior (Brown, 1987). They combine both participants' individual characteristics and their "feelings about [themselves] and about others with whom [they] come into contact" (Brown, 1987, p. 100).

Three psychological sub-factors emerged from the data analysis: 1) lack of confidence, 2) stress from speaking English, and 3) fear of having a different personality when speaking English. These factors were also identified in past research (Hwang, 1993; Hyland, 2004; Park, 1998, Tomizawa, 1990). Unlike these studies, however, which mostly focused on the Asian learners of English, the current research found that these psychological factors pertain to students of other nationalities as well.

*Lack of confidence.* Several study participants reported lack of confidence in speaking English. These students were hesitant to communicate in English because of the fear of being judged for their mistakes in pronunciation and grammar. Interestingly enough, participants reported this lack of confidence regarding both the interaction with compatriots, and also communication with other students whose speaking abilities were perceived as more advanced.

In the literature, lack of confidence is discussed in its relation to the concept of self-esteem, which "consists of perceptions of confidence in the L2 as well as an absence of anxiety about learning and using the language" (Seyhan, 2000, p. 46). Self-esteem is not a homogeneous phenomenon. Brown (1987), for instance, distinguishes three levels of self-esteem: global (student's personal judgment of worthiness), situational (learner's self-perception in different life

situations, such as school, work, and social interaction), and task self-esteem (student's personal attitudes toward himself in a particular class, or while performing a task or an activity).

The lack of confidence described by the participants in the current study can be primarily related to task self-esteem, according to Brown's classification. Indeed, none of them reported a consistent fear of making mistakes when communicating with people in English (global self-esteem) or being afraid to use English in school or at work (situational self-esteem). Instead, the participants reported a low self-evaluation only when speaking English with certain students. Whereas some students developed this low task self-esteem as a result of a negative experience (Natalia), others were simply afraid of negative judgments or criticism (Minsoo).

*Stress from speaking English.* Almost all participants reported experiencing stress from speaking English, especially when they were in the beginning levels. They complained that due to having limited language skills, it was stressful and even taxing for them to use English all the time. Some students asserted that regardless of the level of proficiency, it is sometimes necessary to speak their native language in order to relieve stress and relax.

A number of researchers support the use of L1 for these reasons by emphasizing its importance as an affective tool (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Brooks & Donato, 1994; Mattioli, 2004; McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). For example, Duff and Polio (1990) stated that "low-level learners should not be forced to produce the L2 prematurely" (p. 163) because it causes stress and exhaustion. Similarly, McMillan and Rivers (2011) viewed the use of mother tongue by classroom teachers in EFL contexts as "a humorous rapport-builder [that] prevent[s] extreme levels of stress caused by severe communication breakdown" (p. 255).

In the present study, the participants were studying in an environment where the use of native languages was prohibited both in class and outside the classroom, except in the gym

during lunchtime. It comes as no surprise, therefore, beginning learners in particular felt stressed and overwhelmed by being forced to communicate only in their L2. While they may not experience this stress and exhaustion in class, where the level of L2 input and output is limited to students' language proficiency, the interaction with other learners outside of the class normally requires more linguistic resources than these students possess.

The data demonstrated that the students felt they occasionally needed to have "L1 breaks" in order to relieve stress. Some students even said they felt more stress because of the feeling of guilt for breaking the rule. These finding appears rather surprising: As mentioned above, the ELC students are allowed to communicate in their native languages in the gym during lunchtime. However, some participants found this "exception" to the rule quite amusing: In their opinion, being allowed to speak their native language in the gym but not in the hallways and the lobby is not logical. A safe assumption can be made, therefore, that the students view the use of native languages as a matter of purpose and reason rather than a matter of location. In other words, the participants thought they should be allowed to use their L1 as need arises despite the time and location.

*Fear of having a different personality when speaking English.* In addition to participants' reports of stress while speaking English, some students explained that interacting in English was awkward for them because English did not reflect their real personality. They felt quite uncomfortable with the way that they were represented in this language. Some students even said they were losing a "part of who [they] are" because of the use of English.

Research describes the development of a different personality as a normal phenomenon in the process of second language acquisition. Brown (2007) explains, "As human beings learn to use a second language, they also develop a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting – a second

identity” (p. 72). Zukowski (1997) described an example of a language learner who said, “I am Brazilian in Portuguese – wild, untamed, happy, alive, laughing and ignorant of life’s troubles. In English, I’m, I’m, I’m...boring...” (p. 73).

Similar to the learner in Zukowski’s (1997) article, the participants in the current study were unhappy with the representation of their personalities when they spoke English with other students and especially with their compatriots. Brown (2007) asserts that such dissatisfaction with one’s persona in a new language frequently occurs at the beginning stage of learning and “can easily create within the learner a sense of fragility, a defensiveness, and a raising of inhibitions” (p. 72). Many learners may even experience an “identity crisis” (p. 73). Based on students’ comments (see Chapter 4) and their perceptions of themselves in English, it is quite possible that some of the participants in the current study (essentially beginning learners of English) encountered such identity crises, and thus, in order to protect their first language egos, chose to speak their native language with each other.

As seen, there were several factors influencing students’ language use that can be categorized as psychological. The participants reported lack of confidence when speaking English with students from the same country and those with more advanced language skills. Many of them also felt stress because of the requirement to use English all the time both in and outside of class at school. Finally, some students were afraid to lose part of their true identity because they felt that they were almost different people when they were communicating in English. Thus, in order to protect their self-identity and relieve stress, the participants often reverted to their native languages.

***Institutional factors.*** Institutional factors, unlike the other four categories, pertain to the context in which the language learning occurred for the participants in this study. The learning



atmosphere of the English Language Center, along with its curriculum, teaching methods and activities, were a powerful factor affecting students' willingness to practice English in school. Nearly every participant pointed out at least one feature of the ELC that influenced his or her language use in school. From students' many comments, seven sub-factors were identified in this category and grouped as follows: physical factors (distance from the university campus; number of students of the same L1 in school/class), teacher factors (teachers' ability to motivate students; other teacher characteristics), and curricular and administrative factors (poor enforcement of the English-only rule; weaknesses of speaking classes; lack of activities that promote interaction with students from other countries).

*Physical factors.* One interesting issue students had with the ELC did not relate to its curricula, teachers, or policies, but rather the location of the school itself. The ELC is located about three-fourths of a mile from the main university campus. Such a location, in students' opinions, does not allow them to interact with college students on a regular basis. The participants felt that if the ELC building were on campus, they would have more chances to practice their English with native speakers instead of speaking their native languages with other ELC students. Moreover, many participants did not like the fact that the ELC has several large bodies of students who share L1 backgrounds. Students felt that this demographic distribution is a factor in creating an environment where use of L1s is almost inevitable.

Even though there is a fairly diverse representation of ELC students with regard to native languages, the participants in the current study were recruited from the most commonly represented first language backgrounds in the school (see Chapter 3). It is understandable, therefore, that being surrounded by the speakers of the same language, these students felt that they are more "tempted" to slip into their native language than others. Indeed, with nearly 50

Korean speakers and 90 Spanish speakers enrolled at the time of sampling, it would have been much more challenging for Korean- and Spanish-speaking students to communicate in English than for someone from, for instance, Vietnam or Turkey, who would have had far fewer compatriots at the ELC. More connection with the university campus would certainly help solve this problem.

*Teacher factors.* Another institutional factor affecting students' learning experiences at the ELC was its teachers. In fact, for the majority of the participants, teachers were one of the most influential factors affecting their desire to speak English at school. The students felt that their own motivation to study could either rise or drop depending on teachers' ability to motivate learners. For a few of them, unfortunately, some ELC teachers were not able to provide enough "passion" and motivation, so students' desire to speak English gradually faded.

In many cultures, and especially in Asian culture, a teacher is viewed as a role model, as someone highly positioned and greatly respected—oftentimes even more than parents (Park, 1998). Therefore, it is logical that even in the U.S., Asian students would expect their teachers set an example, to have "passion" for their work, and to provide motivation.

Furthermore, the participants felt that teachers' possession of such characteristics as being sensitive to students' cultures, understanding students' individual circumstances, and willingness to build relationships of trust with the students had an impact on students' motivation to learn the language and even their desire to come to school. All interview participants acknowledged the strong influence that teachers have on their decision to use English in the hallways of the ELC building. Their many comments can be represented by Jose's insightful remark: "I believe teachers should have a better relationship with the students. And the

advantage of this relationship is when they persuade us to speak English, we take it as a personal commitment.”

Indeed, understanding students and their individuality is a vital characteristic of a teacher. As Goldstein (2004) said, “We do not teach in a vacuum” (p. 66). This is especially true about teaching English as a second language. An ESL teacher is put in circumstances that require a daily dealing with different individuals, personalities, and ethnicities that carry along with them an echo of their cultures and unique traditions. Students need to feel, therefore, that their cultural identities are appreciated. And, when they do, they often demonstrate higher motivation and self-esteem, become more involved in classroom activities, and exhibit better social skills both in and outside the classroom.

*Curricular and administrative factors.* The participants felt that ELC’s administrative weaknesses somewhat influenced their desire and ability to speak English outside the classroom. Most of all, the students expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the English-only rule was enforced. They felt that teachers were inconsistent: Whereas some teachers always try to remind students to speak English, others simply ignore the issue. In addition, several teachers continue to deduct points for speaking an L1, as was necessitated by the “Red/Green Cards” system. Such inconsistency has caused frustration and confusion about expectations for the students.

This inconsistency in implementing the rule may also be a source of the aforementioned peer pressure, as well as students’ decrease of motivation: When new students come to the ELC each semester, they are usually highly motivated and determined to improve their English skills, and thus they try to speak English all the time, but the returning students, knowing that the rule is not strongly implemented, discourage them by showing them “how things are.” At the same

time, new students lose their motivation after realizing that the implementation of the rule in school is not as consistent as they may have expected it to be.

Another drawback mentioned by the participants in this category was related to the ELC curriculum. In students' opinions, teacher talk (the language that a teacher uses in class when giving instructions) in oral communication classes takes most of the class time, and students do not have enough opportunities to practice their speaking and pronunciation. Moreover, the majority of the participants felt that in class they learn "unnatural" phrases such as "I think," and "in my opinion," which, according to them, they rarely use outside of the class. Based on students' comments, they do not learn enough "real world" conversational vocabulary to allow them to speak casually with each other outside the classroom.

Finally, the participants expressed their desire to have more activities that would help them make new friends at the ELC. The students seemed to know very little about each other's cultures, and thus they felt uncomfortable interacting with students of other ethnicities. It is also possible that knowing so little about other cultures and traditions results in students forming stereotypes about one another which are often inaccurate (e.g., "Asians are not fun, they just study," "All Latin students just like to party.") As a consequence, students do not feel they can relate to each other, which in turn makes them more likely to stay close to their "ethnic circle" and use their native language instead of English.

As evidenced, the factors in the institutional category have an external character that contributes to students' reticence to use the target language with one another. As the results demonstrated, oftentimes these contextual factors negatively affected students' motivation and discouraged them from speaking English. Therefore, despite the fact that little can be done in order to change some of these factors (e.g., distance from the main university campus, the

number of students speaking the same native language), there can certainly be methods implemented that would minimize the influence of these factors. Some of these methods will be described in the next section of this study.

Students can provide perspectives about their learning institution that administrators and faculty may not otherwise be aware of. As evidenced in this section, the students demonstrated true interest in and attachment to their school and language learning endeavors by offering helpful critiques and suggestions regarding the factors influencing their language choices as they interact with each other in school. Their comments and opinions help us deepen our understanding of many variables that need to be considered while discussing the issue of language use in school and, even more importantly, while implementing language rules and policies.

### **Research Question 3**

**Based on the attitudes and factors that affect their language choices outside the classroom, what suggestions do students have for improving the language-learning environment at the ELC?**

Having increased our understanding of the reasons why many students speak their native languages at school instead of English, the current study provides a number of suggestions for classroom teachers and the administration of the English Language Center. The participants themselves offered various suggestions that, from their perspectives, would improve the language-learning atmosphere outside the classroom. These recommendations were collected with the goal of answering Research Question 3, which so far has not been discussed in this study. These suggestions are grouped in four following categories: 1) administrative

improvements, 2) academic innovations, 3) classroom practices, and 4) extra-curricular activities.

The summary of these suggestions is demonstrated in Table 9.

**Administrative improvements.** Some of the suggestions that the participants made can be viewed as administrative since they require changes on the administrative level.

**Abandoning the “only.”** Because speaking English 100% of the time seems to be unrealistic, nearly all participants suggested that the ELC abandon the *only* part of the English-only rule. While not proposing any specific alternative, the students emphasized the idea of having a more flexible and humanized approach that would allow for reasonable uses of L1.

Table 9

*Students’ Suggestions for the Improvement of the ELC Language-Learning Environment*

<b>Suggestions</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Administrative improvements	1) Abandoning the “only” 2) Clarity and consistency in implementation of a language rule 3) Establishing unity in keeping a goal common to all students in school 4) Building positive peer influence 5) Providing cultural training to teachers 6) Implementation of motivating techniques by classroom teachers 7) Organizing a student council.
Academic innovations	1) Student study-buddy program 2) Supplemental classes 3) Activities with native speakers and BYU students 4) Speech contests.
Classroom practices	1) Building a teacher-student rapport 2) Putting students of the same L1 in small group activities 3) Clarity in explaining homework assignments.
Extra-curricular activities	1) “Making-new-friends” activities 2) Cultural activities 3) Interest clubs 4) School activities during the lunch break.

This idea of replacing the English-only rule, which is unconditional by definition, with a language plan that considers the support of L1 should be thoroughly discussed by the ELC administration. As an example, they could take the concept of “English-mainly” (McMillan & Rivers, 2011) and create an environment where the underlying principle would be the increase of a weekly amount of English for the students in the Foundations Program, as well as a reduced weekly amount of L1 usage for the students at the Academic levels. The administration would have to decide whether students would receive a certain time period for speaking or a certain number of minutes to use, but the idea of this concept would be to allow the use of a native language for specific purposes. While giving the students permission to use their L1 judiciously, this approach would also encourage them to speak English as much as possible. Moreover, since this method allows for the use of students’ native languages, it is hoped that the learners would feel that their needs are understood and their efforts appreciated.

***Clarity and consistency in implementation of a language rule.*** The participants expressed a desire that all teachers at the ELC would be consistent in terms of the implementation of the language rule. Therefore, the rule concerning language use in school with its meaning, purposes, and implementation needs to be clearly formulated on the administrative level and then appropriately presented both to the ELC students and the teachers. In addition, new teachers should become familiar with the expectations placed upon the students in terms of language use in school. It is also important that the ELC administration be aware of personal philosophies of the individual teachers with regard to the use of students’ mother tongues, so it can be ensured that all teachers remain consistent and follow appropriate protocol.

***Establishing unity in keeping a goal common to all students in school.*** “I wanted to speak English, but I was alone against all students.” This remarkable and quite emotional

statement from Jose, the interview participant, does not necessarily demonstrate students' unwillingness to use English, although that may certainly be the case. Instead, it may demonstrate a current lack of unity and support among the students. However, students' desire for solidarity became evident through their suggestions for the ELC, such as a student study-buddy program, interest clubs, and a student council. Therefore, once the rule is clearly formulated and explained to the students, the ELC administration needs to make sure that all learners in school are united in their efforts to use more English. The administration should strive to instill in students a spirit of cooperation and solidarity.

***Building positive peer influence.*** Developing positive peer influence is would be one way to establish this sense of unity among the students. The findings of this study indicated that peer pressure seemed to have a strong discouraging influence on students' motivation to use English. In response to the question concerning what would help students to feel less discouraged by other learners, the participants of the Portuguese-speaking focus group suggested that students should be responsible for their use of English to *each other* rather than to the administration and the teachers.

There are multiple methods that the ELC can implement to build positive peer influence. Fun and motivating activities, out-of-class group projects, awards, and small competitions—these and other ideas were given on various occasions by the participants to emphasize the importance of positive peer influence. By putting these and other suggestions into practice, the ELC would increase “effective social motivation” in school, the key of which is “to get peer pressure working for [the learners] instead of against [them]” (Grenny et al, 2009, p. 7).

***Providing cultural training to teachers.*** The participants viewed the teachers' ability to understand and appreciate students' cultural backgrounds with their norms and customs as a



necessary characteristic. They suggested that the teachers strive to become familiar with students' cultures and get to know students on a more personal level.

In order to achieve this level of understanding, the ELC administration could provide a cultural workshop during which the teachers would receive a brief orientation to the student cultures that are commonly represented at the ELC. Information about these cultures and traditions, along with social norms and expectations, could be shared by non-native English speaking teachers and by those teachers who had a teaching or living experience in students' countries.

***Implementation of motivating techniques by classroom teachers.*** According to the majority of the participants, those teachers who understand the principle of motivation and know how to apply it in their classrooms succeed in increasing learners' confidence, encouraging daily English use, and raising interest in American culture. On several occasions, the participants commented on the need for teachers to implement successful motivational strategies and activities in the classroom, which would inspire and encourage students. The ELC administration should, therefore, equip teachers with a list of motivational techniques and hold them accountable for implementing those techniques in classrooms. Teachers could also share the most successful techniques during regular teacher trainings.

***Organizing a student council.*** The idea of organizing a student council at the ELC was discussed enthusiastically by the participants of the Spanish-speaking focus group. The students felt they would be more unified, proactive, and motivated if there were a student council in charge of organizing and running academic and extra-curricular student activities, attending to select matters of school business, and facilitating communication between the students and the

school administration. By empowering the students and giving them a certain degree of authority, the ELC administration would significantly impact students' motivation.

In short, all these examples demonstrate that the ELC students have a fairly clear vision on how to improve the language-learning environment in school on the administrative level. Moreover, not only did they point out some noticeable weaknesses of the English-only rule such as its absolute character, which permits no use of L1, but they were also able to see such less vivid features as teachers' lack of cultural knowledge and the implementation of motivational techniques.

**Academic innovations.** Related to the administrative improvements suggested by the participants, academic innovations were believed to be yet additional factors that would improve the academic environment at the ELC and provide students with more opportunities to use English.

***Student study-buddy program.*** Both the interview and focus group participants suggested having a study-buddy program at the ELC, in which the ELC students would help each other with English, including homework and class assignments. While the participants acknowledged the importance of the study-buddy program that the ELC currently has, in which students interact with college students learning their native language, they were of the opinion that a program consisting solely of ELC students would be particularly beneficial. First, they viewed this program as the way of getting students of different levels to interact with each other and thus enlarge their social connections within the school. The participants also believed that through this program, the students would be able to help each other learn English. To illustrate, a few Spanish-speaking focus group participants mentioned that they felt very motivated when

they helped lower-level students with the questions they had about grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation.

Given these advantages, the ELC administration may find it very helpful to organize a student study-buddy program in school. Through this program, the students of lower levels would be able to learn from the experience of higher level-students, and higher-level students would improve their English communication skills by teaching students of lower levels. The program would certainly contribute to students' English language development, as it would increase learners' opportunities for interaction with each other and help them develop new friendships.

*Activities with native speakers and BYU students.* Even though the participants' views of the current study-buddy program at the ELC were generally favorable, they expressed a desire for more interaction with native speakers as part of their class activities and assignments. Nearly all interview participants, as well as several of those who participated in the focus groups, suggested that the teachers should take advantage of the out-of-class context, which provides ample opportunity for the students to interact with native speakers and supplies teachers with creative teaching ideas.

The ELC teachers can certainly think of some ways they can increase students' interaction with native speakers. The center of the BYU campus is located three-fourths of a mile from the ELC building and thus has the potential to be an excellent source of language-learning activities. To illustrate, oral communication teachers could take their class on campus and have students do short surveys or simple interviews with college students. The same idea could be easily implemented in a writing class as well: After conducting a survey or interviews, students could write a summary about it or even an essay on a given topic. In addition, there are

a variety of student services and resources on the BYU campus, such as museums, galleries, frequent student events and workshops, student clubs and associations, and volunteer opportunities that teachers could creatively use in order to enhance their classes with authentic interaction and engaging language-learning tasks.

The ELC administration could also organize a BYU campus tour for the students in order to help them become familiar with the university and its resources. Minsoo, the Korean interview participant, noticed that many ELC students feel intimidated by the university campus and students, so a tour or an orientation to the campus and its facilities would be very beneficial. This could be organized at the beginning of the semester as part of the program's conventional opening social. As an alternative, classroom teachers could familiarize students with the campus by creating a variety of interactive activities for their lessons, such as information gap activity in which students would have to identify certain places on campus, or a scavenger hunt.

*Supplemental classes.* Although the interview and the focus participants generally appreciated their classes, they felt that the school should offer an expanded curriculum for the students. Participants suggested a variety of subjects for potential classes: pronunciation, vocabulary, American culture, world culture, etc. The Asian focus group participants especially stressed the importance of supplementary practice of pronunciation and English vocabulary, whereas the Spanish speakers and Brazilian students felt that a culture class would help to fill in the gap in their knowledge of American culture and other world cultures. They felt that not only teachers, but also students themselves need to be culturally competent in order to expand to friendships beyond their compatriots.

At the time the interviews and focus groups for this study were conducted, there was only one supplemental class at the ELC. The school administration attempted several times to offer a

number of supplemental classes, including several of those that were mentioned by the participants. However, out of all the supplemental classes offered by the administration, students generally expressed their interest only in a TOEFL preparation course. Thus, because only a very small number of students were interested in other classes, the TOEFL preparation class became the only supplemental course available. However, starting in Winter Semester 2012, the ELC has instated a pronunciation class taught by a professor from the BYU Linguistics department. The course has become highly popular among ELC students.

*Speech contests.* An interactive activity suggested by the participants themselves as a way of increasing their opportunities to practice oral communication skills was the idea of speech contests. In such speech contests, students would prepare speeches of various styles and present them in front of an audience. Some participants in the study feared they did not have necessary academic skills and sufficient vocabulary that they would need for college and a future career. In their opinion, speech contests would help them improve in these areas. The students also mentioned that interaction among the students of different levels would be another benefit of the speech contests.

Given these advantages of speech contests, the ELC should consider organizing them as they take minimum effort to prepare and carry out. For instance, they could be conducted by the students from the Academic Program or by BYU interns. Occasionally, former ELC students, BYU students, or other guests could be invited to participate. The contests could be organized during lunch breaks or after classes.

As seen from these suggestions, students are interested in the improvement of their English through academic activities in school. They believe that activities with native speakers integrated by teachers in their lessons, as well as supplemental classes, a study buddy program,

and even speech contests would not only give them more opportunities to use English, but would provide them with meaningful activities in the academic setting.

**Classroom practices.** In addition to the changes on the school level, the participants offered some suggestions that can be implemented in the classrooms.

***Building a teacher-student rapport.*** Nearly every participant mentioned the importance of positive interactions between teachers and students and the development of teacher-student relationships based upon trust and respect. The students said they want to see teachers as their friends, supporters, and individuals they can trust and look up to. The students would like all teachers to be friendly, helping, and understanding—not only in class but also outside the classroom. For Jose, the Spanish-speaking interview participant, one of his teachers became such a person:

I trust her. I come to play volleyball with her and we laugh. So if she asks me personally to follow the rule, with her—I would. I would apologize for all these times I have been doing wrong and spoke Spanish in her class. And if she asked me, it would be like a commitment for me.

Because relationships with their teachers can have such a profound effect on students' learning experiences, ELC teachers should put more effort into developing a rapport with their students in order to motivate them to speak English and be engaged in the learning process. They can do this by respecting each student individually, valuing his or her cultural heritage, and being sensitive to any cultural, social, cognitive or other differences. They should also express their firm belief in students' abilities, but at the same time set high expectations for them. In addition, regular and proper feedback opens the door to students' trust and respect for the teacher. Finally, the ELC administration could organize a "getting-to-know-my-teacher" activity where

teachers would introduce themselves to students on a more personal level, talk about their hobbies and interests, and share personal experiences.

***Putting students of the same L1 together in small group activities.*** When organizing group activities, classroom teachers often feel hesitant about placing learners from the same first language background in one group. As a result, students rarely receive a chance to speak English with their compatriots in class. Because of this, they do not have sufficient chances to become more comfortable to speaking English with compatriots or to overcome fear of making mistakes in front of other students from the same L1 background. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that outside of class many students follow the same pattern that they have developed in the classroom and rarely, if ever, speak English with their compatriots.

In order to help students overcome their fear of making mistakes, and to some degree peer pressure, the ELC administration and teachers should create “the mood of speaking English among compatriots naturally” (Park, 1998, p. 148). This starts with setting up a comfortable atmosphere in class, as well as facilitating positive interpersonal relationships among the students. The learners should realize that making mistakes is a natural and inevitable component in the process of language learning, and that in fact, making mistakes is inextricably connected with making progress. Thus, in order to help students feel comfortable speaking English with their compatriots, teachers should incorporate more activities that would allow students from the same country or first language background to participate in the same group.

***Clarity in explaining homework assignments.*** Another important consideration for teachers is that some students struggle to understand explanations about homework due to their lack of listening abilities. Thus, teachers should consider other modes of assigning homework to students. A Korean-speaking participant proposed a helpful idea during a focus group

discussion: She suggested that teachers prepare small pieces of paper for each student with a short and clear explanation of a homework assignment. Another suggestion was a class website or online blackboard on which homework assignments could be posted. Even a measure as simple as sending an email would help teachers ameliorate the problem of students' lack of understanding.

As trivial as these strategies may look to teachers, their significance is apparent, as demonstrated by the findings of this study. The implementation of these and other strategies would hopefully help prevent students' confusion about homework assignments and thus serve to minimize discussions about their homework assignments after classes, which are usually carried out in their native languages.

**Extra-curricular activities.** The suggestions discussed thus far are related to the improvement of the learning environment of the English Language Center. In addition to these suggestions, the participants offered several ideas for the improvement of the social atmosphere in school.

***“Making-new-friends” activities.*** The findings of the study indicated that the students at the ELC want to have more activities that promote the creation of friendships with students from other countries. Based on the participants' comments, it became evident that not only do the ELC students feel that such activities would unite them with each other and add a fun element to their language-learning experience, but they also believe that these activities would encourage them to practice English with their peers beyond the classroom and help them attain their personal goals.

The administration of the school, therefore, should carefully plan and develop such extra-curricular activities in order to encourage students' interaction with each other. As it currently



stands, the ELC does not offer very many extra-curricular activities that would focus on the students' language improvement. One regular activity that the ELC normally holds every semester is a dance party that provides no incentive for the students to use English. It comes as no surprise, then, that during the dance activities, the students interact primarily with their friends from the same country.

Therefore, in addition to the dance parties, there should be more "language" activities, such as the student study-buddy program suggested by the participants or activities that would involve native speakers. When carefully planned and implemented, these activities would offer the students the opportunity to interact with other learners from different countries and thus improve their language skills through fun and engaging language tasks.

***Cultural activities.*** Cultural activities were by far the most frequently mentioned type of extra-curricular activities proposed by the participants. Many of them admitted their ignorance with regard to world cultures. This ignorance, in students' opinions, oftentimes caused stereotypes and kept them from making friends from, as Claudia phrased it, these "strange and mysterious" cultures.

By organizing cultural activities, the ELC administration would help students learn about other learners' cultures, traditions, and customs—in other words, they would be helping to develop students as ethnographers. This, perhaps, could eliminate the stereotypes. In addition to that, these cultural activities would give students a chance to present their own customs and traditions, which would make them feel that their cultural inheritance is appreciated. Finally, when preparing a cultural performance, students would have a chance to work side-by-side with their compatriots, which would certainly give them a feeling of connection to their own cultures.

***Interest clubs.*** Similar to the cultural activities that would unite the students and provide them with many opportunities to learn about different aspects of each other's cultures, organizing interest clubs would add a tremendous variety to the out-of-class learning environment of the ELC. They would give students the opportunity to exchange their ideas and interests, make friends with similar hobbies, learn from each other, and enjoy time spent communicating in and practicing English.

Several participants expressed their interest in a book club, during which members would get together to discuss an interesting book and share their ideas with one another. Other ideas that the participants proposed were a cooking club, a speaking and communication club, a service club, and a club for those who like to dance. The most important aspect of organizing these interest clubs, in the students' opinion, is that they themselves could organize and run those clubs with some minor help and support from the administration. According to the participants, these clubs would help the students connect with each other, increase their motivation, and engage them in communication in the target language.

***School activities during the lunch break.*** Another great opportunity to offer motivation and interaction to the students at the ELC is at lunch, as the length of the lunch break is 1.5 hours. Whereas some students live close to the school building and usually go home to eat, others do not have such an opportunity. The current ELC tutoring program, which runs during the lunch break, offers another great chance for students to practice their English skills. However, the participants felt that the ELC should have more activities during lunchtime.

For example, speech contests or meetings of interest clubs mentioned earlier could be held at lunchtime. Natalia, the Portuguese-speaking interview participant, gave another suggestion: playing American radio stations or music through the loudspeaker system. The

music would create a fun atmosphere in school and set up a tone for the environment in which practicing English would be more natural. Playing movies during lunchtime was another activity mentioned by several participants.

Thus, the suggestions outlined by the students in the category of extra-curricular activities demonstrate their desire to improve the school environment beyond the classroom and enhance their own learning experience at the ELC. These suggestions can give the school administration ideas for further consideration and exploration.

In summary, the participants offered a number of practical suggestions that, in their opinion, would improve their learning experience at the ELC and help them feel more motivated and comfortable using English. These suggestions demonstrated that the ELC students desire to learn the language in an enjoyable and stress-free atmosphere. It is hoped, therefore, that these suggestions will be considered by the ELC administration, and that the development and implementation of a future language plan in school will be based on the understanding of learners and their needs. As said by one participant in this study, “It shouldn’t be a stress of the policy, but it can be a fun of the policy!”

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The previous section provided a number of specific ideas that the participants offered to improve the language-learning environment at the ELC. However, some IEPs may find these suggestions irrelevant to their particular environments. Therefore, this study also attempts to describe several general principles that could be utilized by English institutions in their attempts to maximize the use of the target language within their own confines:

1. *Providing opportunities for meaningful use of English outside the classrooms.* The classroom environment provides students with rich opportunities to practice English

- in various activities. Since the classroom is perceived as a learning area, most students develop a habit of speaking English in class. Therefore, it would behoove school administrations to create an out-of-class environment that would also be perceived as a learning area. In other words, the out of class area would be an extension of the classroom, though perhaps less formal and much less structured.
2. *Maintaining students' motivation.* The data of this study suggest that students' motivation most often drops as a result of the influences of their environment. As Grenny et al. (2009) assert, "No matter how motivated and able individuals are, they'll still encounter enormous social influences that [may] discourage [their] behavior" (p. 7). In order to prevent this, it is important for the school administration to implement both classroom motivational strategies and out-of-class interactive activities for the students (both mentioned earlier).
  3. *Changing teachers' attitudes toward students' L1.* Teachers and administrators should let students know that their cultural identity is appreciated and their mother tongue is valued. Organizing a cultural fair can be one way to achieve this. At such fairs, students would be given the opportunity to present their own culture and provide an explanation of traditions and customs to teachers, administrators, and other students. Another idea would be to organize lectures for college students (if applicable) who learn foreign languages. IEP students would give the lectures in their native languages.
  4. *Giving students opportunities to make decisions.* The different locus of control (see p. 111) makes it impossible to use the same *top-down* principle of implementing the language use rule outside the classroom. The context outside the classroom should

follow the *bottom-up* principle; in other words, the decision making process should be governed by students themselves. This can be achieved in multiple ways, one of which was suggested by the participants in this study—the organization of a student council.

5. *Giving learners opportunities to speak English without violating their cultural norms.*

One way to achieve this is to create an on-going school role-play, preferably for the entire semester, in which all students would pretend to be somebody else, and they would act their role in English when the classes are not in session. Such identity change is part of Suggestopedia, a method that was developed by Lozanov (1979).

This technique allows learners to adopt a new target-language personality, including a target language name, family, occupation, and lifestyle.

### **Limitations**

Despite the informative results, this study is not without its limitations. These limitations may have an impact on the interpretation of the findings and, as such, are addressed in the sections below.

Unlike some of the previous researchers (Hwang, 1993; Park, 1998; Tomizawa, 1990) that conducted interviews with the participants in their L1, both the interviews and focus groups in this study were conducted in English. Indeed, conducting the interviews and focus groups in the students' native languages would have provided much more insightful and rich data; however, this would also assume a considerable increase of time investment and involvement of additional resources since the researcher does not speak any of the students' languages. The interview participants might have also been more open to someone who speaks the same L1 due to the

familiarity with their culture. The researcher attempted to compensate this limitation by involving focus group facilitators from students' L1 backgrounds.

Another potential language-related limitation of this study is related to the proficiency levels of the participants. Because the data were collected in English, beginning-level students were eliminated from the individual interviews. Only considered students whose language proficiency was intermediate and above were selected for the interviews in this study. Moreover, by analyzing the focus group discussions, it was observed that it was primarily the advanced students who led the discussions, whereas the beginning students more often remained silent.

Several limitations also arise from the manner in which the focus groups were conducted. First, the focus groups were unbalanced in terms of participants' language proficiency. Whereas the Chinese focus group, for example, consisted only of the students from the Foundations Program and one student from the General Academic Prep Program, the Spanish-speaking group's participants were all from the Academic Program. This may explain the rather slow pace of the Chinese-focus group compared to the others: The participants simply did not have enough language resources to fully express their thoughts concerning the topic at hand.

Furthermore, the number of participants in each group was not equal. It was anticipated that there would be up to 10 participants in each focus group in order to provide some diversity in opinions and at the same time give each participant an opportunity to express his or her view. The Korean group, however, exceeded this number with 17 participants, most of whom were male students. Because of this, only several students actively participated in the discussion, while the rest either chatted with neighbors or simply did not demonstrate much interest in the discussion. As a result, the dynamic of the Korean focus group was somewhat different from the rest of the groups, and while some Korean participants provided valuable insights in the

discussion, the majority of the students in the group may not have taken the conversation seriously.

In addition to the unequal number of the participants and the uneven distribution of proficiency levels of in the focus groups, the study was also limited to participants of only 4 native languages. Whereas these languages, Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese, were identified as the most commonly represented at the ELC, some other languages such as Japanese, Russian, and French are represented in school almost every semester by at least several students. Due to time constraints, however, participants of these languages were not included in the research, even though they may have provided additional and valuable data.

The last limitation worth mentioning rests in the context in which the study was conducted. All participants were students of the ELC. As a result, the ELC learning environment may have produced the specific student attitudes that have been described in previous discussion. Although the findings of the study may be applicable to many other language institutions, the results would have been relevant to a broader range of programs if the current research included participants from several English-learning institutions.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The purpose of this study was to examine factors that affect students' language behavior outside the classroom in an intensive English program. The study found a number of important factors that enlarge our understanding of students' motives, and thus may be helpful in improving the language-learning contexts at English-learning institutions and in allowing students to speak English more often and more comfortably. Nevertheless, the issue of students' interaction outside the classroom merits further investigation.

For example, a future researcher could replicate this study with other language groups and see what factors, especially the ones that have a social and cultural origin, are discovered, and which factors are the same as the ones found in the current research. Only students of four L1 backgrounds (Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese) participated in the interviews and focus groups of this study. Whereas these languages are typical for many intensive English programs, other native languages may be represented at a higher frequency in some institutions. For example, the data collected from the survey for IEP administrators conducted by the researcher prior to this study demonstrated that the largest L1 group within many programs was Arabic. The second most frequently represented language was Chinese. Even though Chinese students were included in the current study, the number of Chinese speakers at the ELC is not high—in fact, it is the fourth largest L1 group in school. Therefore, conducting similar research in programs that have a majority of Chinese speakers may result in different findings.

Another replication study could be conducted in a program that is different from the ELC in terms of language policies, curriculum, and facilities. Along with the exploration of other factors, this study could primarily investigate the impact of the institutional factors on students' desire to use English in school. Student attitudes toward that particular learning context might cause a different language behavior than the one discovered in the current study.

Further research could also explore in much more depth any of the factors found in this study. Each of the five categories described here, along with several sub-factors, provides room for both theoretical and practical investigation. Future researchers may find it interesting to compare the influence of any of these factors on students of different language groups or different L2 proficiency levels.



Another comparative study could be carried out to describe students who usually use English in school in comparison to those who mostly rely on L1 in their communication. A researcher could investigate learners' individual characteristics that render them either "English-users or "native language-users." The current study attempted to describe how motivation could help learners cope with negative effects of peer pressure, cultural norms, and other factors. However, this topic could be explored in greater depth. Besides motivation, there are other individual factors (e.g., learning styles, language learning strategies, personality traits, language learning goals) that make it either easier or harder for students to use English with compatriots.

Interesting results could be found in a study comparing attitudes and language behavior of students who are new in a language program with those of returning students. The findings of the current research demonstrated that new students are generally more motivated and diligent in observing school rules, whereas returning students tend to lack both motivation and the desire to speak English in the hallways. Alternatively, a future researcher could conduct a case study by investigating a possible change of attitudes and language behavior of a student throughout the course of his or her study at an English-learning institution.

Finally, a more practical approach could be taken by creating a language plan for an intensive English program that would motivate students to use English in school. Even though the current research attempted to offer a number of suggestions, further development is needed.

## **Conclusion**

This study began by presenting a dilemma: Many students that come to intensive English programs are well aware of their ultimate goal to acquire the English language fast and successfully; nevertheless, they continue speaking their native languages with other compatriots in school. They do so even if the school has an English-only policy—a rule that prohibits using

native languages inside the school building. English program administrators ask questions such as, “Why do students speak L1 instead of the target language with their compatriots at school? What are the reasons that affect their language behavior once they leave the language classroom?”

The study attempted to answer these questions as it examined learner attitudes toward the English-only environment at the English Language Center and explored factors that either promote or inhibit learners’ desire to use English when communicating with compatriots. The study also offered a number of practical suggestions that can be implemented in intensive English programs in order to improve their language-learning environment and help students speak English more often and more comfortably.

Through qualitative methods of gathering data (a questionnaire, individual interviews, and focus groups) the study collected insightful and informative comments that facilitate understanding of the issues from learners’ perspectives. It was revealed that the ELC students generally had positive attitudes toward the language-learning environment at school; nevertheless, the unconditional nature of the English-only rule and its inconsistent implementation at the school caused some negative reactions among the participants. Furthermore, the analysis of student responses demonstrated that there were a number of factors that influenced their daily communication with compatriots at school. These factors were grouped into five categories depending on their nature: sociocultural, linguistic, individual, psychological, and institutional. Thus, according to the findings of this research, it became evident that the issue is extended beyond teachers’ general assumption that students do not speak English due to mere lack of motivation, but rather that their language choices have deeper roots—most of which are of social and cultural origins.

The participants also offered multiple practical suggestions that, from their perspectives, should be implemented at the ELC in order to improve its language-learning environment. It is hoped that these suggestions will be taken into consideration by the ELC administration while creating a language plan for the institution. As for other intensive English programs, each IEP is to decide whether or not to allow students to freely speak their native languages in the hallways. A positive response to this question begs further questions—such as how often, how much, and with what purpose. However, as the results of this study indicate, the use of the mother tongue at some extent is unavoidable for nearly all language learners. After all, allowance of students' native languages in the hallways does not necessarily mean a complete elimination of English.

In conclusion, the findings of the study demonstrated that the problem of the English use in school appears to be not only an element of the out-of-class learning environment, but also an element of classroom practices, teaching methods, and extra-curricular activities. In other words, the use of English is woven into the entire curriculum of the ELC. Therefore, the issue of language use in school should not be viewed as a policy issue, like it has always been at the ELC, but as a curriculum issue. The same principle applies to any other English program that would take the findings of this study as a theoretical framework for creating a language plan that promotes students' English use both in class and outside of the classroom.

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## Appendix A

### Survey for IEP Administrators



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#### INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in the following survey that focuses on out-of class (inside the school building) use of English in intensive English programs. Assuming that using English not only in class, but also around classroom will help students to learn the language faster, some IEPs enforce an "English-Only policy" that prohibits using L1 at any time within the confines of the language school. Others let students choose what language they prefer to use around classrooms. The purpose of this survey is to determine your institution's position on English use at your language learning facility. The survey will take about 10 – 15 minutes.

#### RISKS/BENEFITS

Though there are no known risks, answering these questions will provide valuable insights about language policies in Intensive English Programs, their effectiveness and challenges, and reports on which language students use inside the buildings of their language schools.

#### PARTICIPATION

Involvement in this research is completely voluntary.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

The survey is completely anonymous with no identifying information unless you choose to provide it.

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Elena Shvidko by email at [elenashvidko@gmail.com](mailto:elenashvidko@gmail.com).

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AS RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research projects, you may contact the IRB Administrator, A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, 801-422-1461, [irb@byu.edu](mailto:irb@byu.edu).

Please click "Next" in the lower right corner to begin the survey and to indicate your willingness to be a research participant.

---

Intensive English Programs are designed to help students effectively acquire language skills. Assuming that using English not only in class, but also outside the classroom (**inside the school building**) will help students to learn the language faster, some IEPs enforce an "English-Only policy" that prohibits using L1 at any time within the confines of the language school. Others let students choose what language they prefer to use in the hallways and labs; however, they encourage students to use English and expect them to do so. The purpose of this survey is to determine your institution's position on L1 use at your language learning facility.

---

1. How long have you been working in your current administrative position?

---

- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11 -15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 - 30 years
- 31-40 years
- More than 40 years
- Other (explain):

2. How long have you taught English as a second or foreign language?

---

- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years
- Other (explain):

3. How long has the program you currently work in been in existence?

---

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

4. What is the focus of your IEP?

---

- English for General Purposes
- English for Academic Purposes
- English for General and Academic Purposes
- English for Specific Purposes
- Other (explain):

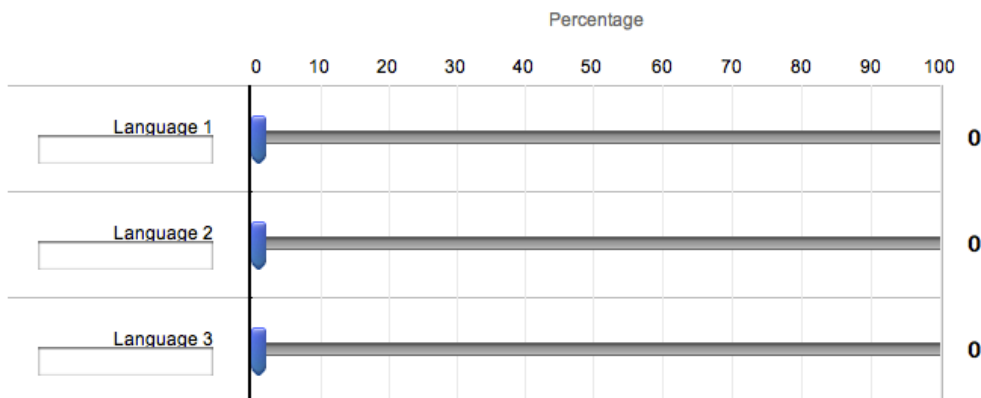
5. On average, how many hours of English classroom instructions do students receive per week in your program?

---

6. On average, how many students are enrolled in your program each enrollment period?

---

7. Please indicate the three largest L1 groups within your program and their percentage of the entire student body (drag the slider to the appropriate percentage):



8. Select and complete the statement that best describes your program:

- Our program DOES have a formal English-Only policy (REQUIRED ENGLISH USE). Please describe your policy:
- In our program, it is expected that students will use English in class and around classrooms (EXPECTED ENGLISH USE); however, we do NOT have a formal English-Only policy because
- Our program does NOT have a language policy because
- Our program has ANOTHER language policy (rather than "English-Only"). Please describe your policy:

9. How long has your program had its current English-Only policy?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than 15 years
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

10. Is there any area in the school building/on school campus (i.e.lunch room, lobby) where students can use their L1?

- Yes. Explain:
- No. Explain:
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

11. Select one category for each of the following statements:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost always	Always
When classes are in session, students in the classrooms speak English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When classes are NOT in session, students in the building/on campus speak English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. The students who tend to speak L1 around classrooms are (Check all that apply):

- Lower level students
- Higher level students
- Students of a prevalent L1 group (explain):
- It is impossible to make a distinction.
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

13. In your program, are there administrative consequences for those students who do **NOT** follow the English-Only policy?

- Yes. Explain:
- No. Explain:
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

14. What sources or materials (website, pamphlets, handbooks, orientation meeting etc.) does your program use for students to become aware of the English-Only policy?

15. Who enforces the English-Only policy in your school? (Check all that apply)

- Administration
- Teachers
- Staff
- Students
- All
- Other (explain):
- Comments:



16. Please indicate which describes students' attitudes toward the English-Only policy:

- Strongly positive  
 Positive  
 Somewhat positive  
 Somewhat negative  
 Negative  
 Strongly negative

17. Does your institution offer any extra-curricular activities which are designed to help students practice using English?

- Yes. Explain:  
  
 No. Explain:  
  
 Other (explain):  
  
 Comments:

18. Besides the English-Only policy, are there other methods, strategies, or activities that your institution uses to encourage students to speak English around classrooms?

- Yes. Explain:  
  
 No. Explain:  
  
 Other (explain):  
  
 Comments:

19. Briefly describe why your program established its current English-Only policy:

20. Considering the reasons described in Question 19, indicate how effective your current English-Only policy is:

- Very effective  
 Effective  
 Somewhat Effective  
 Neither Effective nor Ineffective  
 Somewhat Ineffective  
 Ineffective  
 Very Ineffective  
 Other (explain):  
  
 Comments:

21. Please feel free to add any other comments about language policy issues that have not been covered in this survey and that would help us understand your school language policies and practices:

---

22. Please write your email if you would like to receive results of this survey. Thank you!

---

9. How long has your program had its current position on English use?

- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than 15 years
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

10. In terms of using English ***IN CLASS***, which of the following best describe your program? (Check all that apply):

- 
- All students ARE REQUIRED to use English all the time in class.
  - All students ARE ENCOURAGED to use English all the time in class.
  - Students are NOT ENCOURAGED to use L1 in class.
  - All students may OCCASIONALLY use L1 in class.
  - Only students of LOWER levels may occasionally use L1 in class.
  - Other (explain):
  - Comments:

11. In terms of using English ***AROUND CLASSROOMS*** (this includes hallways, labs, restrooms etc), which of the following best describe your program? (Check all that apply):

- 
- All students including lower levels, MUST speak English at all times around classrooms.
  - All students ARE ENCOURAGED to use only English around classrooms.
  - All students may OCCASIONALLY use L1 around classrooms.
  - Only students of lower levels may occasionally use L1 around classrooms.
  - Students ARE FREE TO CHOOSE whatever language they prefer to speak.
  - Other (explain):
  - Comments:

12. Is there any area in the building/on school campus (i.e.lunch room, lobby) where students can use their L1?

- Yes. Explain:
- No. Explain:
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

13. Select one category for each of the following statements:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost always	Always
When classes are in session, students in the classrooms speak English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When classes are NOT in session, students in the building/on school campus speak English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. The students who tend to speak L1 around classrooms are (Check all that apply):

- Lower level students
- Higher level students
- Students of a prevalent L1 group. Explain:
- It is impossible to make a distinction.
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

15. In your program, are there administrative consequences for those students who tend to speak their L1 around classrooms?

- Yes. Explain:
- No. Explain:
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

16. What sources or materials (website, pamphlets, handbooks, orientation meeting etc.) does your program use to encourage students to use English around classrooms?

17. Please indicate which describes students' attitudes towards the expectation put on them to use English around classrooms:

- Strongly positive
- Positive
- Somewhat positive
- Somewhat negative
- Negative
- Strongly negative

18. Does your institution offer any extra-curricular activities which are designed to help students practice using English?

- Yes. Explain:
- No. Explain:
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

19. Are there other methods, strategies, or activities that your institution uses to encourage students to speak English around classrooms?

- Yes. Explain:
- No. Explain:
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

20. Briefly describe why your program established its current position on English use:

21. Considering the reasons described in Question 20, indicate how effective the current position on English use in your school is:

- Very Ineffective
- Ineffective
- Somewhat Ineffective
- Neither Effective nor Ineffective
- Somewhat Effective
- Effective
- Very Effective
- Other (explain):
- Comments:



12. The students who tend to speak L1 around classrooms are (Check all that apply):

---

- Lower level students.
- Higher level students.
- Students of a prevalent L1 group (explain):
- It is impossible to make a distinction.
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

13. Does your institution offer any extra-curricular activities which are designed to help students practice using English?

---

- Yes. Explain:
- No. Explain:
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

14. Are there any methods, strategies, or activities that your institution uses to encourage students to speak English around classrooms?

---

- Yes. Explain:
- No. Explain:
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

15. Briefly describe a reason/reasons for choosing **NOT** to have a language policy in your program:

---

16. Please feel free to add any other comments about language policy issues that have not been covered in this survey and that would help us understand your school language practices.

---

17. Please write your email if you would like to receive results of this survey. Thank you!

---

9. Briefly describe your program's position on students' use of L1 ***IN CLASS***:

10. Briefly describe your program's position on students' use of L1 ***AROUND CLASSROOMS*** (this includes hallways, labs, restrooms etc):

11. How long has your program had its current language policy?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than 15 years
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

12. In your program, are there administrative consequences for those students who do not follow the policy?

- Yes. Explain:
- No. Explain:
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

13. Select one category for each of the following statements:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost always	Always
When classes are in session, students in the classrooms speak English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When classes are NOT in session, students in the building/on school campus speak English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. What sources or materials (website, pamphlets, handbooks, orientation meeting etc.) does your program use for students to become aware of the language policy?

15. Who enforces the policy in your school (check all that apply)?

---

- Administration  
 Teachers  
 Staff  
 Students  
 All  
 Other (explain):  
  
 Comments:

16. Please indicate which describes students' attitudes toward the language policy:

---

- Strongly positive  
 Positive  
 Somewhat positive  
 Somewhat negative  
 Negative  
 Strongly negative

17. Does your institution offer any extra-curricular activities which are designed to help students practice using English?

---

- Yes. Explain:  
  
 No. Explain:  
  
 Other (explain):  
  
 Comments:

18. Besides the policy, are there any methods, strategies, or activities that your institution uses to encourage students to speak English around classrooms?

---

- Yes. Explain:  
  
 No. Explain:  
  
 Other (explain):  
  
 Comments:

19. Briefly describe why your program established its current language policy:

---



20. Considering the reasons described in Question 19, indicate how effective your current language policy is:

---

- Very effective
- Effective
- Somewhat Effective
- Neither Effective nor Ineffective
- Somewhat Ineffective
- Ineffective
- Very Ineffective
- Other (explain):
- Comments:

21. Please feel free to add any other comments about language policy issues that have not been covered in this survey and that would help us understand your school language policies and practices.

---

22. Please write your email if you would like to receive results of this survey. Thank you!

---

**Appendix B**Invitation to Participate in an Oral Interview  
(For students)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (student name),

My name is Elena Shvidko and I am a TESOL MA student at Brigham Young University. How are you? How is school going for you this semester? I hope that you like your classes, and learning English is fun and interesting for you.

The reason why I am writing you this email is that I need your help. Dr. Norman Evans (who is a professor at BYU Linguistics Department) and I are working on some research looking at student attitudes towards English use outside the classroom at the English Language Center. Your opinion may provide important data that will help the ELC in the future to create a language-speaking plan helping students to utilize English outside the classroom in a most effective way.

I need just one hour or less of your time at a time that is convenient for you so I could ask you some questions about your attitude towards out-of-class English use at the ELC. I would really appreciate your help.

Right now all I need is a brief reply to this email indicating that you will or will not be able to participate in the interview. If you are willing to participate, please indicate which dates and times are better for you and we will set up an appointment.

I am looking forward to your reply.

Thanks,

Elena Shvidko

## Appendix C

### Invitation to Participate in a Focus Group

(Sent by classroom teachers)

Dear students,

A graduate student at Brigham Young University is doing some research about student attitudes towards language use outside the classroom at the ELC. Her research will help the ELC create an effective language-learning environment.

She needs to organize a group discussion with several students of your native language to ask you about how you use English at the ELC building. The discussion will be held at the ELC on May 18<sup>th</sup> at 10.45 am.

After the discussion, the ELC will provide a lunch for all participants.

Please let me know whether or not you will be able to participate in the group discussion on the date indicated above. The participation is completely voluntary, and it is not going to affect your academic standing in class.

This is a great chance for you to improve the learning environment in our school!

Thank you!

Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**

## Invitation to Participate in a Focus Group

(For students)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (student name),

My name is Elena Shvidko and I am a TESOL MA student at Brigham Young University. Dr. Norman Evans (who is a professor at BYU Linguistics Department) and I are working on some research looking at student attitude towards language use at the ELC building.

Your teacher said that you would be willing to participate in a group discussion that we will have at the ELC with some other students of your native language.

The discussion will be held at the ELC on \_\_\_\_\_ at 10.45 am.

We will also provide a lunch after the discussion.

Please reply to this email and let me know whether or not you are still able to participate in the group discussion on the date indicated above.

Thank you,

Elena Shvidko

## Appendix E

### Student Questionnaire




---

#### INTRODUCTION

This survey examines your attitude towards language use outside the classroom at the English Language Center. Most of the questions are multiple choice, and the survey should take 5-10 minutes to complete.

#### RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It is not expected that there will be any harm or discomfort as a result of your participation. However, if you wish to withdraw from the survey, you may do so at any time and you do not to give any reasons and explanations for doing so. If you choose to withdraw from the survey, you may do so without affecting your academic standing at the English Language Center or your grades.

#### BENEFITS

There are no known benefits to you; however, your participation in this study may provide valuable insights about learners' perception of the language policy at the ELC which will be important for the future design of a language-speaking plan at the ELC.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

There will be no reference to your identification in reporting this research and you are free to withhold any identifying information that is asked in this survey.

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH

If you have questions regarding this study you may contact Troy Cox at (801) 422-5755, [troy\\_cox@byu.edu](mailto:troy_cox@byu.edu).

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AS RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research projects, you may contact Christopher Dromey, Ph.D, Chair of the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects, 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; phone, (801) 422-6461; email, [christopher\\_dromey@byu.edu](mailto:christopher_dromey@byu.edu).

**BY CLICKING "NEXT". YOU ARE INDICATING YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH.**

---

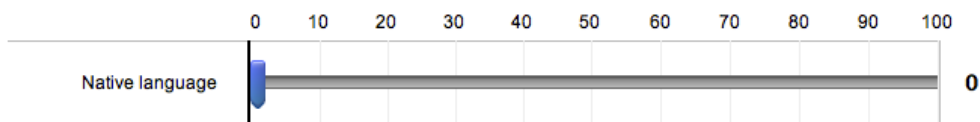
Please indicate your native language:

Please select your level:

- Foundations Prep
- Foundations A
- Foundations B
- Foundations C
- Academic Prep
- Academic A
- Academic B
- Academic C



6. What percentage of native language should be acceptable at the ELC building?



7. When should use of native languages be allowed in the building? (Check all that apply)

- When students of lower levels cannot express themselves well enough in English to communicate with each other.
- When it is awkward or unnatural for students to use English because of their relationship with each other (parent-child, husband-wife, girlfriend-boyfriend etc).
- When students need to clarify unclear parts of a lesson with their classmates (grammar, vocabulary, instructions, difficult concepts, etc.).
- When students want to relieve their stress.
- There is NO need for students to use their native language in the school building.
- Other reasons:
- Comments:

8. Why do you think many students at the ELC speak their native languages? (Check all that apply).

- It is easier and faster for them to express themselves in their native language.
- Lower level students might not know English well enough.
- They do not want to lose their cultural identity.
- They feel awkward speaking English with friends from the same native language background.
- They get tired of English in classes.
- They do not understand the importance of using English outside the classroom.
- They are not motivated.
- They don't like being told what to do.
- Other reasons:
- Comments:

9. What are the most important reasons for YOU to speak English in the ELC building? (Check all that apply).

- I will improve my speaking skills.
- I will learn more vocabulary.
- I will demonstrate my respect to other students and teachers around who do not speak my native language.
- I will be able to make new friends from different countries.
- I will overcome fear of making mistakes in English because all students in school make mistakes.
- I will gain confidence in speaking English.
- I will help other students at the ELC to practice and improve their English.
- My parents/My sponsors paid a lot of money for me to learn English in the US.
- I think NONE of these reasons are important for me.
- Other reasons:
- Comments:

10. Please indicate which of the following statements best describes your view:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There should be some administrative consequences (taking off points, giving more homework, etc.) for those students who speak their native languages in the building.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There should be some rewards (extra credit, treats etc.) for those students who always speak English in the building.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. What resources should the ELC use to encourage students to speak English in the building? (Check all that apply)

- Fliers/Posters
- Weekly reminders (through email)
- Special school assemblies (meetings)
- Regular reminders from teachers
- Other:
- Comments:

12. What out-of-class activities should the ELC offer to help students practice English in the building?

13. What is your personal goal in terms of using English in the ELC building?

- I want to speak English more than now.
- I want to speak English the same as now.
- I want to speak English less than now.
- Other:

14. Would you be willing to meet for a short interview to talk more about your position on language use at the ELC?

- Yes
- No

15. Please feel free to add any comments/questions/suggestions that you have about the English-Only policy at the ELC. Thank you!



## Appendix F

### Interview Protocol

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name),

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. Before we begin, I would like to remind you of what my purpose is. I am interested in finding out what student attitudes are towards English use outside the classroom in the building of the English Language Center. I will be tape recording our conversation to capture all of your good ideas. When we finish, I will type up your comments and then destroy the tape. Your name will never be mentioned or included in what is written.

Do you have any questions?

[Turn tape recorder on now]

#### Demographics/Introductions

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself (where you grew up, time in U.S.).
2. How long have you been at the English Language Center?
3. What level are you at the ELC now?

Grand tour question: We are here to talk a little bit about your experience at the English Language Center. Tell me what your language learning experience at the ELC has been like.

Major questions:

1. Some people like to study English in their home countries, but other prefer to go to English-speaking countries. What made you decide to come to the United States to learn English?
2. The administration of the English Language Center has been always trying to encourage students to use English in the building. Please tell me what you know about the English-only rule that we currently have at the ELC.
3. Let's imagine that I am a person who has never been to the ELC before. What languages can I expect to hear in the hallways if I come to your school between or after classes?
4. Can you tell me about an occasion when you spoke your native language at the ELC? Why do you think you used it?
5. Can you remember ever being discouraged to speak English at the ELC? Tell me a little about this experience.
6. Speaking a foreign language all the time is not easy. I understand that sometimes students feel a need for speaking their native languages. Can you please describe a situation when you think it would be absolutely necessary for students to speak their native language with other students at the ELC?
7. Leaving your home country far away from family and friends must have been a tough decision. Now tell me about your friends that you have at the ELC and time you spend together.
8. Let's imagine for a few minutes that we have a perfect language-learning environment at the ELC. What could be changed in the school the way we have it now to make it your "dream school"?

9. What advice would you give to ELC teachers that are trying to encourage students to use English at all times in the ELC building?
10. Let's imagine that you are a director of the English Language Center. What activities/rules/policies would you have in the school to encourage students to use English in the hallways, by the vending machine etc?

[Turn tape recorder off]

Do you have anything to say about what we discussed during this interview?

Thank you again for your help!

## Appendix G

### Focus Group Protocol

Dear students,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group. Before we begin, I would like to remind you of the purpose of this study. The researcher is interested to find out what student attitudes are towards English use outside the classroom in the building of the English Language Center. This discussion will be tape recorded to capture all of your good ideas. When we finish, the researcher will type up your comments and then destroy the tape. Your names will never be mentioned or included in what is written.

Do you have any questions?

[Turn tape recorder on now]

The English Language Center is designed for students to be immersed in a language-speaking environment in and outside the classroom. It should be a place in which students feel comfortable using English all the time. We want students to develop effectively their English skills, respect other learners and teachers in the school, and honor the principles and rules of this institution. Therefore, the administration of the ELC expects students to speak English with each other in classes, hallways, and elsewhere at the building.

**Introductory question:** What are some benefits of using English all the time in school?

*RQ1: What attitudes do students of the English Language Center have toward the language-learning environment?*

1. Let's discuss the language-learning environment that we currently have at the ELC.
2. Let's discuss the current ways the ELC deals with native language use in the building.

*RQ2: What factors, from students' perspectives, affect their decision to use their native language or English outside the classroom?*

3. Based on your observations or your own experience, why do students speak their native language to each other?
  - 3a. Do you feel comfortable to speak English in class?
  - 3b. Do you feel comfortable to speak English with native speakers?
4. Let's brainstorm a few possible situations when use of L1 in students' communication would be necessary or helpful?
5. What or who makes it difficult for you to speak English in the building?
6. What or who helps you to speak English in the building?

*RQ3: Based on the attitudes and factors that affect their choices of language outside the classroom, what suggestions do ELC students have to improve the language-learning environment at the ELC?*

7. Let's brainstorm some things that can be done at the ELC to improve its language-learning environment and to help students speak English in the building.
8. What should the teachers and the administration of the ELC do if students still use their L1 in the building?

[Turn tape recorder off]

## Appendix H

### Consent to Participate in Research (For interviews)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Elena Shvidko (TESOL MA student at Brigham Young University) is doing a project about student attitudes about out-of-class language use and language policies in English programs. Dr. Norman Evans (Teacher at BYU) is helping her with this project.

#### **PROCEDURES**

With this letter, you agree to spend about 30-40 minutes in an interview discussing the English-only policy at the English Language Center and student attitudes towards the policy. The interview will be tape-recorded.

#### **RISKS/DISCOMFORTS**

Your agreement to come to the interview is voluntary. You do not have to do this if you do not want to. There is very little risk for you to take part in the interview. If you do not feel comfortable answering questions in the interview, you may leave at any time without giving any explanations. It will not affect your grades at the English Language Center.

#### **BENEFITS**

Your answers during the interview may be helpful for a future design of a language-speaking plan at the ELC.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your name will not be made known to other people, and only the researcher will work directly with the information you provide. If the researcher uses direct quotes from the interview in a written study, you will never be recognized by name or other descriptions. Recorded responses will be kept safe until the research is finished (about 4 months). Then all recordings will be destroyed.

#### **COMPENSATION**

You will receive no compensation for the interview.

#### **QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH**

If you have questions about this study, you may contact Elena Shvidko by email at [elenashvidko@gmail.com](mailto:elenashvidko@gmail.com) or Norman Evans at [norman\\_evans@byu.edu](mailto:norman_evans@byu.edu).

#### **QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS**

If you have questions regarding your rights in this research project, you may contact the IRB Administrator, A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, 801-422-1461, [irb@byu.edu](mailto:irb@byu.edu).

I have read, understood and received a copy of the above agreement and desire of my own free will to take part in this study.

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Today's Date

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Your Signature

## Appendix I

### Consent to Participate in Research (For focus groups)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Elena Shvidko (TESOL MA student at Brigham Young University) is doing a project about student attitudes about out-of-class language use and factors affecting learners' language choices outside the classroom. Dr. Norman Evans (Teacher at BYU) is helping her with this project.

#### **PROCEDURES**

With this letter, you agree participate in a one hour-long group discussion with several other students from the same native language background talking about the language-learning environment at the English Language Center. The discussion will be tape-recorded.

#### **RISKS/DISCOMFORTS**

Your agreement to come to the group discussion is voluntary. You do not have to do this if you do not want to. There is very little risk for you to take part in the discussion. If you do not feel comfortable answering questions in the discussion, you may leave at any time without giving any explanations. It will not affect your grades at the English Language Center.

#### **BENEFITS**

Your answers during the discussion may be helpful for a future design of a language-speaking plan at the ELC.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your name will not be made known to other people, and only the researcher will work directly with the information you provide during the discussion. If the researcher uses direct quotes from the discussion in a written study, you will never be recognized by name or other descriptions. Recorded responses will be kept safe until the research is finished (about 4 months). Then all recordings will be destroyed.

#### **COMPENSATION**

The ELC will provide a complimentary lunch after the group discussion.

#### **QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH**

If you have questions about this study, you may contact Elena Shvidko by email at [elenashvidko@gmail.com](mailto:elenashvidko@gmail.com) or Norman Evans at [norman\\_evans@byu.edu](mailto:norman_evans@byu.edu).

#### **QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS**

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I have read, understood and received a copy of the above agreement and desire of my own free will to take part in this study.

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Today's Date

Your Signature