Chapter 4

Research Findings

In this chapter, the findings are presented with the aim to understand Singapore students' Chinese language learning strategies. Data was collected from two schools on the Special Assistance Plan (SAP) program and the survey was conducted during October 2009. Arrangement was made to carry out the survey after the school's year-end examination, so as to avoid any unnecessary disruption to the planning of the school or inconvenience caused. Since the objective of this research focuses on the contextual influences on language learning strategies of Chinese learners in the Singapore context, teacher-in-charge was also reminded to exclude students from China. This is based on the assumption that students' exposure to Chinese Language learning in the China context would be different from those who experienced it in the Singapore context. Although two Chinese students claimed they were Malaysians, they were enrolled in Singapore schools since Primary One. Hence, they were not excluded in the survey.

Two days were used in the data collection. On the first day, students completed the three instruments (questionnaire, SILL and translation task) within the planned one and half hour. However, on the second day, the semi-structured interview session took up approximately three hours, which was less than the planned five hours. The maximum of five hours for the second day was planned as such because the time used for each student was approximately 45 minutes during the pilot survey. The differences could be attributed largely to the planned interview guide (See Appendix G), which had certainly enabled in facilitating the questions asked and maintaining the focus of the interview. Although two students were not eloquent enough during the interview, the researcher was able to elicit information from them with reference to the interview guide. And since they were not as expressive as compared to the other students interviewed, the time used was relatively lesser. Eventually, the average time used for each student was approximately 20~30 minutes.

4.1 Findings

The findings in this chapter will consist of three main sections corresponding to the three phases that were carried out in the survey; that include (i) questionnaire and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) instrument, (ii) translation task and (iii) interview. The report of findings for Phase One and Phase Two will give us the background information and characteristics of the research participants in Singapore. This is followed by another report from the responses elicited at Phase Three. The research findings in this chapter will be further analyzed under the discussion section in Chapter 5.

Next, we shall look at the findings from the questionnaire and SILL.

4.1.1 Questionnaire and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

In this section, the overall findings from the two SAP schools are presented. The findings for School A and School B are also represented in tables and graphs (See Appendix J, K and L) . It is hoped that the overall findings would provide us the general background knowledge and characteristics of those students in the SAP schools surveyed.

4.1.1.1 Questionnaire

In total, there were 60 students from the two schools who participated in the survey. There were altogether 21 boys and 39 girls as shown in Table 4.1.

	School A	School B	Total
Male	7	14	21
Female	20	19	39
Total	27	33	60

Table 4.1: Number of research participants

Table 4.2 shows that there were more students in School A whose most familiar language was Chinese as compared to School B. A graphic representation showed that 56% and 44% of them in School A were most familiar with Chinese and English respectively. The same percentages were revealed in School B but they showed the contrary results (See Graph 4.1 in Appendix J). The overall results show that there were an equal number of students whose familiar language was English and Chinese respectively.

	School A	School B	Total
English	12	18	30
Chinese	15	15	30
Total	27	33	60

Table 4.2: Students' Most Familiar Language

In Table 4.3, majority of them showed that they spoke English and Chinese at home. This was 58.3% as shown in Graph 4.2 (Appendix J). And only one student expressed that Chinese and Dialect were spoken at home. It seems to show that the mixing of English and Chinese at home is rather common among the students.

	School A	School B	Total
English	3	3	6
Chinese	5	4	9
English & Chinese	15	20	35
Chinese & Dialect	0	1	1
English, Chinese & Dialect	4	5	9
Total	27	33	60

Table 4.3: Language(s) spoken at home by the number of students

The following findings will enable us to gain a further understanding in addition to the earlier results reported. It consists of three parts which correspond to the questionnaire design; that is background of language use, language appraisal, and language attitude and language motivation.

Background of Language Use

The figures shown in the tables here are in percentages and all graphical representations can be found in Appendix J. Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 show data on "*Language that the following persons use most often to the students*" and "*Language that the students use most often to the following persons*" respectively, and the findings shall give an overview on the characteristics of the two schools surveyed.

In Table 4.4(a), students expressed that their grandparents do not use English with them. Only 4% of them claim that their friends or classmates use Chinese to them. Dialect is used more by grandparents (20%). The use of "Others" by friends or classmates in school is high (60%). This is particularly in the case of mixing English and Chinese (58%) as reflected in Table 4.4(b). Table 4.4(b) also shows that the mixing of Chinese and Dialect by grandparents is high (40%).

	Grandparents	Father	Mother	Siblings	Friends (I)	Friends (O)
English	0%	23%	25%	32%	36%	37%
Chinese	35%	48%	50%	29%	4%	17%
Dialect	20%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Others*	42%	25%	24%	33%	60%	46%

Table 4.4(a): Findings on Background of Language Use

Friends (I): Friends/Classmates (In School) Friends (O): Friends/Neighbors (Outside School)

*Note: See Table 4.4(b) for details.

	Grandparents	Father	Mother	Siblings	Friends (I)	Friends (O)
CD	40%	2%	2%	0%	0%	2%
EC	2%	23%	20%	33%	58%	42%
ECD	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	2%

Table 4.4(b): Findings on Background of Language Use

CD: Chinese & Dialect EC: English & Chinese ECD: English, Chinese & Dialect

When Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 are compared, there is not much difference between the language those people used to the students and the language that the students use to them However, Table 4.5(a) indicates that 65% of the students use Chinese to their grandparents while 35% of them express that their grandparents use Chinese to them. It is also to note that while 23% of them claim that their fathers use English to them, 18% of them use English to their fathers.

	Grandparents	Father	Mother	Siblings	Friends (I)	Friends (O)
English	0%	18%	22%	32%	38%	38%
Chinese	65%	49%	47%	30%	3%	15%
Dialect	14%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Others**	19%	28%	31%	32%	59%	47%

Table 4.5(a): Findings on Background of Language Use

** Note: See Table 4.5(b) for details.

	Grandparents	Father	Mother	Siblings	Friends (I)	Friends (O)
CD	17%	0%	2%	0%	0%	2%
EC	2%	28%	27%	32%	57%	43%
ECD	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	2%

Table 4.5(b): Findings on Background of Language Use

The use of "Others", that is the mixing of languages (particularly the mixing of English and Chinese) is quite high in the communication between the students and their friends or classmates in school. Comparing this, we see that there is a relatively lower percentage of mixing languages (particularly the mixing of English and Chinese) in the communication between the students and their friends or neighbors outside the school. Also, the mixing of dialect into Chinese is not found in the communication between the students and their friends or classmates in school.

The use of English, Chinese or "Others" are rather fairly distributed in the communication between the students and their siblings. In the communication with their fathers and mothers, the use of Chinese is relatively higher than English as well as "Others". Although grandparents most often use "Others" (particularly the mixing of Chinese and Dialect) as compared to Chinese (that has a slightly lower percentage), students most often use Chinese to their grandparents.

Table 4.6 shows another finding on background of language use, focusing on students' language habits (See Appendix J for Graphs-Graph 4.5(a)-4.5(d)).

When asked about the students' language habits on listening to music, there are more students who "always" listen to English music than Chinese music, which is 34% and 26% respectively. However, there are slightly more students who "often" listen to Chinese music than English music, which is 33% as compared to 31%. Table 4.6(a) also seems to show that there are more students who listen to Chinese radio than English radio. There are 25% of them who "always" listen to Chinese radio and 31% of them who

"often" do so. In comparison, there are 20% of them who "always" listen to English radio and 21% of them who "often" do so.

	Music (CD, DVD)		Radio	
	E	C	E	C
Always	34%	26%	20%	25%
Often	31%	33%	21%	31%
Sometimes	25%	21%	29%	17%
Rarely	7%	18%	24%	18%
Never	3%	2%	6%	9%

Table 4.6(a): Findings on Background of Language Use
E: English C: Chinese

Table 4.6(b) shows that students' reading is predominantly English. Their exposure to English reading is mainly from books, followed by comics, magazines and newspapers, as seen from those who answered "always" which is 49%, 38%, 30% and 28% respectively. Compared to reading in Chinese, those who expressed that they "rarely" and "never" read Chinese books have a total of 49%. As shown in Table 4.6(b), it is obvious that those who expressed that they "always" or "often" read in Chinese are far lower than those who read in English.

	Newspapers		Magazines		Books		Comics	
	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
Always	28%	16%	30%	9%	49%	6%	38%	4%
Often	32%	13%	29%	13%	35%	12%	22%	8%
Sometimes	27%	38%	24%	19%	10%	33%	18%	25%
Rarely	13%	28%	13%	38%	6%	41%	20%	37%
Never	0%	5%	4%	21%	0%	8%	2%	26%

Table 4.6(b): Findings on Background of Language Use

Table 4.6(c) shows a higher percentage of students who "always" watch Chinese TV programs (47%) than English TV programs (13%), and also a higher percentage of those who "always" watch English movies (34%) than Chinese movies (6%).

	TV Programs		Movies	
	E	C	E	C
Always	13%	47%	34%	6%
Often	46%	45%	42%	36%
Sometimes	35%	6%	20%	46%
Rarely	6%	2%	4%	10%
Never	0%	0%	0%	2%

Table 4.6(c): Findings on Background of Language Use

In view of these findings, we could also make a reference to the statistics on TV viewership in Singapore (See Appendix M). There are 6 TV channels- *Suria* (Malay Programs), *Central* (English and Tamil Programs), *Channel 5* and *CNA* (Central NewsAsia) which are both English programs, and *Channel 8* and *Channel U* which are both Chinese programs. From the Local free-to-air (FTA) market share, we see that Chinese programs have already taken up an average of 67.1% and English programs only an average of 18%. Not only the Chinese programs have taken up a bigger share of the market, its TV viewership is also rather high. Looking at the Prime-Time (7-11pm) ratings for ages 4 and above, the Chinese TV viewership is 13.5% higher than the English TV viewership. Also, the weekly reach for ages 4 and above is also higher in the Chinese programs than English programs. [1] While Chinese seems to be the choice for TV viewership, English is obviously the choice for movie goers. Referring to Singapore's top grossing movies (See Appendix N), from year 2005 to 2007, the movies are predominantly English. In 2007, 881 (a Singapore film) is the only movie that has a mix of Mandarin and Hokkien. [2] Based on these statistics, it seems that the choice for Chinese and English in TV and movies are determined by the market, which in turn could have an effect on the students' habits of language use.

	Surfing Internet		Emails/Letters	
	E	C	E	C
Always	77%	2%	62%	0%
Often	21%	6%	30%	6%
Sometimes	2%	24%	3%	12%
Rarely	0%	38%	3%	42%
Never	0%	30%	2%	40%

Table 4.6(d): Findings on Background of Language Use

In regards to the language used for surfing internet, emails or letters, English is obviously the dominant language. While Table 4.6(d) shows that there is no student who "always" uses Chinese for emails or letters, it also shows that there is no student who "rarely" or "never" uses English for internet. The predominant use of English in internet is obvious, since English ranks number one in the top ten internet languages, which has approximately 478 millions of users. [3]

Overall, we see that students listen more to English music and Chinese radio and their reading is predominantly English. Also, they watch more Chinese TV programs and English movies. And English is predominantly used for surfing internet, writing

[1] *Central* which has a mix of English and Tamil programs is not taken into consideration for comparison purposes here. Only *Channel 5* and *CNA* which are solely English programs and *Channel 8* and *Channel U* which are solely Chinese programs are referred.

[2] Singapore Film Commission. Facts and Figures. http://www.sfc.org.sg/main.html

[3] http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm. Top Ten Languages Internet Statistics were updated for Sept. 30, 2009

emails and letters. In addition to the language habits, the findings on language background also reflect students' use of languages with different people. In this aspect, we see Chinese is most often used to grandparents and parents, English and Chinese are rather equally used to their siblings, including the mixing of English and Chinese. However, this is more prevalent in the case of communication with friends inside and outside the school, and it is also evident that English is used more than Chinese.

Language Appraisal

When students are asked to appraise their language proficiency in four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing, Table 4.7(a) shows that, except for speaking, there are more students who expressed that they are "excellent" or "very good" at listening, reading and writing in English than Chinese. It also seems to show that there are more students in this survey who feel that they are proficient in the languages, since few of them expressed that they are "fair" or "poor" in the four language skills. There are, however, more students who feel that they are "fair" with reading and writing in Chinese than English. No students feel that they are "poor" in English or Chinese listening. Also, no students feel that they are "poor" in English speaking and Chinese writing (See Graph 4.6(a) in Appendix J).

	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
Poor	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	2%	2%	0%
Fair	6%	6%	9%	4%	5%	15%	5%	17%
Good	26%	34%	42%	39%	25%	44%	45%	54%
Very Good	44%	39%	32%	34%	44%	33%	40%	25%
Excellent	24%	21%	17%	20%	24%	6%	8%	4%

Table 4.7(a): Findings on Language Appraisal-Level of Proficiency (Total)

Based on Table 4.7(a), the figures shown below take into account those who expressed "excellent", "very good" and "good" at the four language skills in English and Chinese.

Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
94%	94%	91%	93%	93%	83%	93%	83%

From the figures above, we see that most students in this survey are bilinguals who are proficient in English and Chinese. However, the findings show more students are proficient in English reading and writing than Chinese, with a difference of 10%. Overall, the percentage of students who feels that they are proficient in the two languages is rather high.

Next, we shall look at the findings on students' language appraisal on the level of difficulty in four language skills. Students are asked to rate the level of difficulty based on a Likert Scale of 1 to 5, whereby "1" is very easy and "5" is very difficult. From Table 4.7(b), reading in English seems to be "very easy" to the students which has a percentage of 43%. This is followed by listening in English which is 41%, and it seems that this is relatively easier as compared to listening in Chinese which is 37%. Only 11% of them feel that reading in Chinese is "very easy". At a Likert scale of "3", writing in Chinese has the highest percentage, followed by reading in Chinese, speaking in Chinese and speaking in English which is 44%, 35%, 32% and 29% respectively (See Graph 4.6(b) in Appendix J).

	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
1	41%	37%	29%	31%	43%	11%	17%	12%
2	34%	39%	39%	35%	39%	37%	46%	30%
3	20%	19%	29%	32%	13%	35%	26%	44%
4	5%	3%	0%	2%	5%	15%	7%	9%
5	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	4%	5%

Table 4.7(b): Findings on Language Appraisal-Level of Difficulty (Total)

Based on the findings for Likert Scale "1" and "2" combined, the following seems to show that reading in English is the easiest, which has a percentage of 82%. On the contrary, writing in Chinese seems not easy to the students as it has the lowest percentage as compared to the other language skills in English and Chinese. Reading in Chinese has a slightly higher percentage than writing in Chinese, 48% and 42% respectively. And these two language skills have significant difference when they are compared to English. In short, reading and writing in Chinese are relatively difficult as compared to the rest of the language skills in English and Chinese.

Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
75%	76%	68%	66%	82%	48%	63%	42%

Since this survey focus on students' Chinese language learning strategies on reading and writing, the findings on language appraisal on English and Chinese, have revealed that students find themselves more proficient in English reading and writing, and that English reading and writing is easier than Chinese. If this is the case, then it would make this research more relevant and significant. Because we shall look into the Chinese language learning strategies; particularly on reading and writing, the two aspects of language skills that are difficult even for SAP students, in the hope that this might be a reference for other students learning the Chinese language and also for us to understand how these SAP students learn Chinese.

Language Attitude and Language Motivation

The findings on language attitude and language motivation for individual schools can be found in Appendix K. Below are overall findings from the survey.

When asked to rate their present level of interest in learning English and Chinese, there is not much difference in attitudes towards English and Chinese. Most students are fairly interested in English and Chinese, which is 55% and 59% respectively. There is a difference of only 4%. While 30% of them express that they are most interested in English, 27% of them feel that they are most interested in Chinese, a difference of only 3%.

	English	Chinese
Most Interested	30%	27%
Fairly interested	55%	59%
Not so interested	14%	12%
Least interested	1%	2%

Table 4.8: Findings on Language Attitude-Level of Interest (Total)

The computation of mean, standard deviation, median, mode and range in the following tables would enable us to know the general tendency of the SAP students' attitudes and motivation towards learning English and Chinese in this study.

Referring to the questionnaire in Appendix D, Question 13 asks the students' language attitude towards English and Chinese. Items 1-3 are positive statements and Items 4-8 are negative statements. As such, the values on the Likert scale have to be adjusted for Items 4-8. That is to say, the response "Strongly Disagree" has a value of 1 and the response for "Strongly Agree" has a value of 5, and these values for Items 1-3 will not be adjusted. However, the values for Items 4-8 have to be changed. Hence, for Item 4-8, "Strongly Disagree" will have a value of 5 and "Strongly Agree" will have a value of 1.

The total score will reflect the degree of positive attitude towards learning English and Chinese. Since a positive statement with a response "Strongly Agree" has a value of 5, the 8 statements will have a total score of 40, and the higher the score, it shows that the student has a more positive attitude. The score range for the 8 statements will be 8-40. The degree of attitude will be indicated by the total score as follows;

Degree of Attitude	Total Score
Strongly Positive	More than 32
Moderately Positive	24-32
Negative	Less than 24

The findings are shown in Table 4.9. It appears that some students show a more negative attitude towards Chinese (with a score of 19) than English (with a score of

21). With reference to the items in the survey, the findings would imply that there are some students who do not really enjoy learning Chinese and think it is not so important to study it. They might not want to learn Chinese as much as possible and might choose to spend their time on other subjects and not Chinese. They might also hate Chinese and think that learning the subject is boring and a waste of time. It is likely that they will give up Chinese in future since they are not interested in it.

Also, looking at the mean, median and mode on the language attitudes, the score for English is slightly higher than Chinese. The mean scores for English and Chinese are 32.3 and 31.4 respectively. It means that students show a strongly positive attitude towards learning English and a moderately positive attitude towards learning Chinese.

Overall					
	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Range
English	32.3	4.28	33	33	21-40
Chinese	31.4	5.39	32	32	19-40

Table 4.9: Findings on Language Attitude towards the Learning of English and Chinese

Next, Table 4.10(a) shows the findings on the degree of motivation towards learning English and Chinese whereas Table 4.10(b) shows the findings on three components in the motivation survey; that is instrumental, integrative and identity.

The 9 statements will have a total score of 45 and the score range will be 9-45. The degree of motivation will be indicated by the total score as follows;

Degree of Motivation	*Total Score*
High	More than 36
Moderate	27-36
Low	Less than 27

As reflected in Table 4.10(a), it shows that the students have a moderate motivation towards learning English and Chinese; with a mean of 35.87 and 35.63 respectively. These figures show that with slight incentives or further encouragement, high motivation can be achieved. However, there are some students who show low motivation to study Chinese (with a score of 21) when compared to English (with a score of 25).

Overall					
	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Range
English	35.87	4.29	36	35	25-45
Chinese	35.63	4.8	36	36	21-45

Table 4.10(a): Findings on Language Motivation towards the Learning of English and Chinese

The following distinguished three components in the motivation survey; instrumental, integrative and identity. The total score will be 15 and the score range will be 5-15. The degree of the motivation can further be indicated as follows;

Degree of Motivation	Total Score
High	More than 12
Moderate	9-12
Low	Less than 9

It is evident from Table 4.10(b) that there is a high motivation to learn English and Chinese for instrumental purposes, which has a mean of 13.23 and 12.7 respectively. This means that students would study English and Chinese mainly to pass examination, get a good job and study overseas in future where the languages are used.

There is a high identity motivation for studying Chinese (a mean of 12.05) but the level is lower when compared to instrumental motivation. As indicated in the survey, this identity motivation for learning Chinese would mean that they feel closer to Chinese. They think Singaporean Chinese should speak Chinese and they feel proud to speak Chinese as a Singaporean Chinese. In addition to this, students give the least score (a mean of 10.89) on studying Chinese for integrative purpose; that is to study the languages for making friends, knowing about the history and culture. Overall, the motivation to learn English and Chinese is basically instrumental, particularly more for English as compared to Chinese.

Overall						
Motivation	Language	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Range
Instrumental	English	13.23	1.39	14	14	10-15
	Chinese	12.7	1.43	13	12	9-15
Integrative	English	11.1	2.15	11	11	4-15
	Chinese	10.89	2.53	11	11	4-15
Identity	English	11.53	2.29	12	12	7-15
	Chinese	12.05	2.17	12	14	7-15

Table 4.10(b): Findings on Language Motivation towards the Learning of English and Chinese

From Table 4.8, we understand that most students are “fairly interested” in English and Chinese (55% and 59% respectively), followed by those who are “most interested” in English and Chinese (30% and 27% respectively). However, from Table 4.9, it reveals that students show a strongly positive attitude towards English and a moderately positive attitude towards learning Chinese. And since they are “fairly interested” in English and Chinese, it might explain for their moderate motivation towards the learning of both languages. However, the three components in the motivation survey further reveal that students have a high instrumental motivation to learn English and Chinese.

4.1.1.2 Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

The table used to understand the frequency of strategy use in the *SILL* is shown in Chapter 3 (Refer page 54). Table 4.11 and Figure 4.1 show the overall *SILL* score for the different strategies and there is not much difference in the average score for different strategies, however the findings indicate that Compensation Strategies (with a score of 3.65) have a high frequency and they are generally used by the students as compared to the rest of the strategies that have a medium frequency. Memory strategies have the lowest score among the strategies (with a score of 2.97).

Part	Strategies	Descriptions	Score	Frequency
A	Memory	Remembering more effectively	2.97	Medium
B	Cognitive	Using your mental processes	3.18	Medium
C	Compensation	Compensating for missing knowledge	3.65	High
D	Metacognitive	Organizing and evaluating your learning	3	Medium
E	Affective	Managing your emotions	3.01	Medium
F	Social	Learning with others	3.23	Medium

Table 4.11 Overall *SILL* Score for Different Strategies

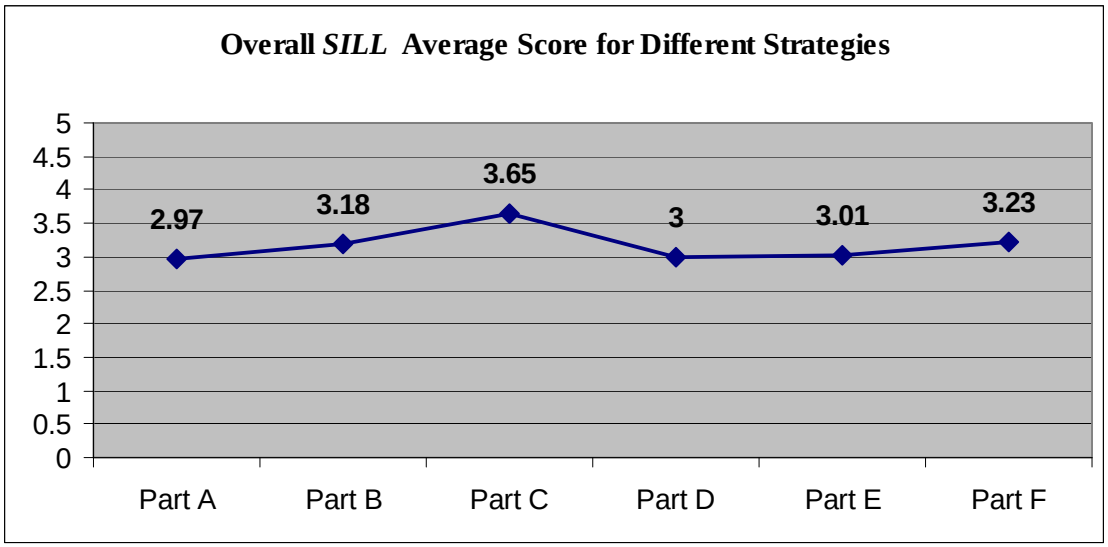

Figure 4.1 Overall *SILL* Average Score for Different Strategies

Referring to Part C in the *SILL* questionnaire that the group of SAP students had responded, the use of compensation strategies would mean that they often make a guess from the text when they do not understand all the characters (or words) they had read. They would also often read without looking up every unfamiliar word and ask the other person to tell them the right word if they cannot think of it. In addition to this, they would also often find a different way to express the idea when they cannot think of the correct expression to say or write. Or they would often try to find words or expressions in English and translate it if they find that they do not know the right ones in Chinese.

Compared to the rest of the strategies, memory strategies that help them in learning the new character or material have the lowest score. However, it is to note that there is still a medium frequency; meaning that they sometimes use the strategies. No strategies have shown a low frequency.

The overall SILL score above would enable us to understand the strategies often used by the group of SAP students surveyed. However, given the linguistic situation in Singapore and the diverse language background of the students, a qualitative data would be seen as needed to complement the above findings. The main objective of this study is to gather qualitative data on Chinese language learning strategies use in the Singapore context, and the secondary aim is to identify the patterns of learning strategies use by SAP students in Chinese language, particularly on reading and writing.

12 students were selected for the qualitative part of the survey. The questionnaires were first separated into two groups based on gender, and then further sorted out by taking into account their most familiar language and the language(s) they spoke at home. This is to ensure a fair distribution (as much as possible) of the group before they are randomly selected.

The table and graph for individual student's profile of results on *SILL* can be found in Appendix O. However, we shall first take a look at the overall SILL average for individual student as shown in Figure 4.2. The result is used for comparison purposes and its ranking order is reflected in Table 4.12.

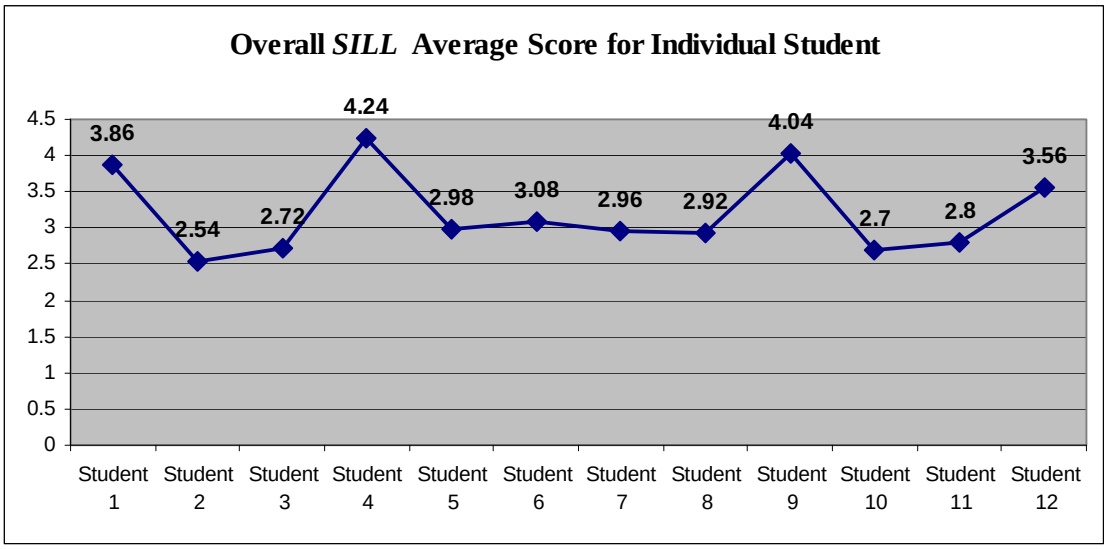

Figure 4.2 Overall *SILL* Average Score for Individual Student

From Table 4.12, it shows that all the four students (Student 1, 4, 9 & 12) who show high frequency in Chinese language learning strategies expressed that their most familiar language is Chinese. These four students also show that they speak Chinese at home, even though one of them speaks English and Hokkien in addition to Chinese, and

another speaks English in addition to Chinese. 3 out of 4 students who have high frequency of Chinese language learning strategies use are females. 6 out of 12 students show the highest score for compensation strategies. 4 students have the lowest score for metacognitive strategies and another 4 have the lowest score for memory strategies. This does not mean that all students "never or almost never used" the strategies. But it can help us to make a comparison on the frequency use of strategies among the students. As we can see from the table, those who have the lowest score for memory strategies show that Student 4 has a high frequency use (with a score of 4.1) while Student 6 and 10 have a low frequency use (with a score of 2.3 and 2.18 respectively). Compared to them, Student 3 has a medium frequency use (with a score of 2.5). As for the lowest score of metacognitive strategies, only Student 9 has a high frequency use (with a score of 3.6) and Student 12, 7 and 11 all have a medium frequency use (with a score of 3.1, 2.7 and 2.6).

Ranking in Descending Order*	**Sex**	**Most familiar language**	**Language(s) you speak at home**	**Overall *SILL* Average Score**	**Frequency**	**Strategies with Highest Score by Individual Student**		**Strategies with Lowest Score by Individual Student**	
Student 4	F	C	C	4.24	High	Affective	4.6	Memory	4.1
Student 9	F	C	ECD(Hokkien)	4.04	High	Cognitive	4.54	Metacognitive	3.6
Student 1	F	C	EC	3.86	High	Social	4.3	Affective	3.4
Student 12	M	C	C	3.56	High	Compensation	5	Metacognitive	3.1
Student 6	M	C	EC	3.08	Medium	Social	4.3	Memory	2.3
Student 5	M	E	EC	2.98	Medium	Memory	3.2	Affective	2.8
Student 7	F	E	E	2.96	Medium	Compensation	4	Metacognitive	2.7
Student 8	F	C	C	2.92	Medium	Compensation	3.8	Social	2.3
Student 11	M	E	ECD(Hakka)	2.8	Medium	Compensation	3.75	Metacognitive	2.6
Student 3	F	E	E	2.72	Medium	Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective & Social	3	Memory, Cognitive	2.5
Student 10	M	E	E	2.7	Medium	Compensation	4.25	Memory	2.18
Student 2	F	E	EC	2.54	Medium	Metacognition	3	Cognitive	2.3

Table 4.12 Overall *SILL* Average for Individual Student: Ranking Order

***** Note: Ranking in descending order is based on overall SILL average score.

Some students who used compensation strategies expressed that Chinese is their most familiar language and the language that they speak at home, whereas some expressed that it is English. Also, there are some who expressed that their most familiar language is English, and use not only English at home. Even though the results reveal the highest score for compensation strategies, how do we explain the use of compensation strategies in view of the students' most familiar language and the language(s) that they speak at home?

4.1. 2 Translation Task

Before gaining an insight to their language learning strategies use, a translation task was given to the students to elicit their responses towards English and Chinese. Then, the interview which follows, aims to find out the patterns of language learning strategies use by this group of SAP students in the Singapore context.

Students were given two texts to translate, one from English to Chinese, and the other from English to Chinese. According to the students' responses in the pilot survey, the two texts do not vary much in terms of difficulty level. When the group of 60 students was asked on their choice of text for translation, the actual survey showed that 61.7% of them chose to translate from Chinese to English and 38.3% of them chose to translate from English to Chinese.

In the earlier chapter, I have mentioned that students' L1 and L2 in the Singapore multilinguistic environment can differ because of different exposure to the languages. Even though the group of SAP students who are regarded as high ability students and they study both English and Chinese at first level, it is unlikely for them to have a balanced disposition towards the two languages. Hence, the translation task would assumingly enable us to ascertain students' L1. Another assumption is that, if the translation task L2→ L1 has less difficulty than L1→ L2, then perhaps we could say that L1 is the students' most familiar language. And from Table 4.13, it seems to show that most students' familiar language is English, which is based on the results from translated text and not what the students had reported.

		Most familiar language	Language(s) you speak at home	First choice of text to translate	Translated text
Student 1	F	C	EC	E	C
Student 2	F	E	EC	C	E
Student 3	F	E	E	C	E
Student 4	F	C	C	C	E
Student 5	M	E	EC	E	C
Student 6	M	C	EC	E	C
Student 7	F	E	E	C	E
Student 8	F	C	C	C	E
Student 9	F	C	ECD(Hokkien)	C	E
Student 10	M	E	E	C	E
Student 11	M	E	ECD(Hakka)	C	E
Student 12	M	C	C	C	E

Table 4.13 SAP students' language background and language choice

If L2→ L1 would assume that L1 is the familiar language, then students would find it easier to translate from L2 text into L1. In the following 5 statements are reasons why the students chose Chinese text first and translate it into English. The statements were from students who had expressed that their familiar language is English in the questionnaire. [4]

[4] All students' statements are quoted as it is, unless otherwise stated.

> Because from Chinese translate to English is easier. Writing in English is easier. The Chinese content is easier. At home, speak usually Chinese, but occasionally English. More confident in English, not so confident in Chinese. (Student 2)

> Because the content here is easier to translate as compared to the English one, I can understand what they are trying to say then it's easier to translate. You can directly translate. But then the English one, you have to think a bit more. Reading Chinese is easier than writing. (Student 3)

> Because it's easier for me to translate into English because my writing in English is much better than Chinese, so although it was easier for me to read the English but then to translate into Chinese is a bit hard for me, so I did this first. (Student 7)

> Writing in English is easier because the idea flow more easily when I think in English. Reading the Chinese text isn't difficult. Writing in Chinese, you have to remember quite a lot of Chinese characters because every word in Chinese is different, unlike the English language 26 letters only. (Student 10)

> I just feel more comfortable. English text is easier. But my Chinese is very poor. I get A for PSLE [Primary School Leaving Examination], but normally I don't get As. Now failed. Writing in English is easier. Reading in English is easier, don't translate into Chinese, because Chinese writing is difficult. (Student 11)

Similarly, 2 students whose familiar language is Chinese chose English text first and translate it into Chinese.

> At first I read the passage right, I felt the passage is easier to translate into Chinese because I think I am better in Chinese. I prefer to translate into Chinese and write in Chinese. (Student 1)

> Because I think my Chinese is better but then I see the Chinese word is a lot, then I think the English is easier to translate first. The English content is easier than the Chinese content. (Student 6)

Based on the above statements, L1 associated with 'familiarity' would suggest that students are comfortable and confident with L1, and finding it easier than L2. In other words, they would feel they think better in L1 and able to express them well. For those students who expressed that their familiar language is English, no one said that reading Chinese is difficult. In these cases, it could imply that indeed "recognition is usually considered an easier task than the generation of the same information" (Green 1998). As in the case of Student 3 whose familiar language is English (L1), she felt that the Chinese content (that is reading) is easier to translate as compared to the one in English. Also, Student 6 whose familiar language is Chinese (L1), felt that the "English content is easier than the Chinese content".

In addition to the above, the level of difficulty in the writing systems as perceived by the students is another factor influencing their choice. That is to say, although reading English is easier, and students could have chosen to translate it first,

they were hesitated to write in Chinese because they felt writing Chinese is difficult. As pointed out by Student 10 who commented that "Writing in Chinese, you have to remember quite a lot of Chinese characters because every word in Chinese is different, unlike the English language 26 letters only".

In so far, we have come to understand that L1 is the language that the students are familiar with. Hence, students could find it easier to translate a L2 text into L1. However, further findings as summarized in Table 4.14 shows that L1 is not necessarily the language that the students are familiar with.

Number of students	Most familiar language	First choice of text to translate	Translated text*	
5	E	C	E	Familiar language = L1
2	C	E	C	Familiar language = L1
1	E	E	C	Familiar language≠ L1
4	C	C	E	Familiar language≠ L1

Table 4.14 SAP students' familiar language and L1

*Note (1): Assuming translated text as L1 based on Green's (1998: 29) explanation.

#Note(2): Meaning of symbols

"=" means "same"; "≠" means "not the same"

Only 1 student whose familiar language is English chose the English text first and translated it into Chinese.

> Because I feel that I can understand English better, so it's easier for me to translate into Chinese because can just use simple words. Just like direct translation like that. I think the Chinese content is easier. (Student 5)

Student 5 has the highest score for memory strategies with a medium frequency use (See Table 4.12). Memory strategies could have helped the student acquired a certain number of Chinese characters and facilitated his Chinese reading. And this could also explain why he is able to use simple Chinese words or characters to express what he had read in English. The reason why the student thinks the Chinese content is easier might be due to the familiarity of the situation (which is the content) and not the language. And this would also explain why he had said his familiar language is English and not Chinese, and that he can understand English better. If this is the case, then the most familiar language is not L1 which has been assumed to be the language used for the translated text (Familiar language ≠ L1).

4 students who expressed that Chinese is their most familiar language had chosen the Chinese text first and translated it into English. Their comments are shown below.

> I thought it would be easier actually from Chinese to English then when I do already halfway, actually I thought it is very hard but cannot regret anymore so I continue writing. Read in Chinese is easier. (Student 4)

> I feel that it's easier to translate Chinese to English. The text, Chinese is easier. (Student 8)
>
> That is because I think it's easier to translate. The Chinese text is easier. That's because when Chinese text translate in English, some of the sentence structure you can just very easily translate it but then from English to Chinese is very difficult, because you have to restructure the whole sentence. (Student 9)
>
> Because translating English is easier. Because mostly in our school, we speak in English. So English is more familiar and Chinese is our second language. Chinese speaking family but I prefer English. Reading in English is easier. English is easier to pronounce. Chinese, if you don't know the *Hanyu Pinyin,* then you cannot pronounce. (Student 12)

Based on the above, we see that Student 5 who expressed his most familiar language was English, chose English text first and translated it into Chinese. And there are 4 students whose most familiar language are Chinese, chose Chinese text first and translated it into English. What is significant is that these 4 students whose familiar language is Chinese and speak Chinese at home, show a preference to choose Chinese text and translate it into English. They could have felt that writing and translating the text into English is easier. It could also show that they do not have a strong command of Chinese; the language that they feel they are most familiar. If L1 is the most familiar language, it is natural to think that it will be the language that the students will use to translate the text. However, the result shows otherwise. Contextual factors could have influenced their language use and also their language learning, thus affecting their literacy. This will be further analyzed in Chapter 5.

Student 4 seems to feel she had made 'the wrong choice' because she thought that "it would be easier actually from Chinese to English" but regretted. However, she had eventually completed the task. Also, though Student 12 had expressed that Chinese is the most familiar language in the questionnaire, he commented in the interview that he is more familiar with English since it was used mostly in school and pointed out that Chinese is a second language. He further said that he prefers English even though he comes from a Chinese speaking family. Here, it seems to imply that there is a strong influence of school environment over home environment.

In sum, the findings show that 9 out of 12 students had chosen the Chinese text first and translate it into English, despite having half of the group whose most familiar language is English and another half is Chinese. If L1 is assumed to be the language which students use when they translate the text, and also the language that the students feel more comfortable with, then majority of them had chosen English. It is to note that the above findings had shown the difficulty in defining L1 in a complex linguistic situation in Singapore but it concludes that English is the L1 for majority of the SAP students in this group. We shall further discuss this in Chapter 5. Next, the interview aims to find in-depth on how this group of SAP students uses their Chinese language learning strategies.

4.1. 3 Interview

In this section, the strategies mentioned by the SAP students during the interview are compiled and listed in the tables. The compilation work was done with reference to the framework proposed by Oxford (1990) and the framework was mentioned in Chapter 3 (See Figure 3.5). However, due to the nature of this study, we shall see that the meanings in some of those identified strategies mentioned in the interview were different from those listed in the original framework. This will be explained along with the findings below. The response[5] was elicited with an interview guide (See Appendix G) that helps to deepen our understanding in addition to the SILL questionnaire (See Appendix E).

Memory strategies

	Memory strategies	No. of students
1	Placing new words into a context	10
2	Using *Hanyu Pinyin* [6]in memory	8
3	Associating	5
4	Using imagery	2
5	Reviewing well	1
6	Observing physical response	1

Table 4.15 Memory Strategies used by the students

Most of the students place new words into a context as one of the memory strategies. In the following, Student 4 explained how she remembers the meaning of a new character (word).

> Sentence construction (造句) I think it is better to memorize the meaning and know when to use. Teacher gives the sentences. Because sometimes if you know the meaning, you might not know how to use it. Because sometimes I use it wrongly. That's why it's better to have a sentence for you. (Student 4)

3 students had mentioned about the use of vocabulary handbook On the other hand, 4 students had mentioned about the use of dictionary so that they could look for examples in sentence construction that would help them in remembering the meaning. Two of the comments are quoted as follows.

> Then, we got extra materials in reading like vocabulary handbook (词语手册) [7], then the handbook inside also got meaning so you can refer to see (参考) which one is better and then we write on another paper, then the words also. (Student 6)

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[5] The interview was conducted in English and the response was transcribed as it is. The grammar was not corrected but the mixture of Chinese was translated. Chinese words were quoted in round brackets ( ) in order to retain the meaning closest to what the student had said. Box brackets [ ] are used to add information so as to make the meaning of the sentence clearer.

[6] *Hanyu Pinyin* （汉语拼音）is a Chinese phonetic.

[7] 词语手册 (*Ciyu Shouce*) is a vocabulary handbook used along with the textbook in schools.

> I'll construct a sentence so that I can remember. I'll go check the dictionary first because dictionary also have like a few sentences or those vocabulary (词语) with other words so I'll remember. (Student 12)

One student also mentioned how he learns and places new words in context through reading newspaper.

> The school gives newspapers [联合早报][8] every Wednesday. So I'll read the papers and I'll try to read (朗读) a couple of articles. So after that, I read it then I understand why the sentence is phrased in that particular manner. It's a subscription. I read those section I'm interested in, for example, food and lifestyle. I know how to write a better composition because the sentence is phrased in that way so I'll see if I can put it into my composition. (Student 10)

8 students expressed that they use *Hanyu Pinyin* to memorize the Chinese characters. For example, one student said that "I see *Hanyu Pinyin*, I get an image of the word. Just memorize it together" (Student 11). However, 5 students learn the characters by associating. Here are two comments about this strategy;

> I don't really use the *pinyin* to remember the character. Sometimes they say a word, some words got to do with like if it is like you use your hand, then there will be like the radical of a hand (提手旁). So if like you forget then you remember you have to use your mouth, so you write with a *kou* (口), then can remember. (Student 3)

> Because a lot of the words they are like a lot of those words that we learn like they have some of the characters are same as others that we've learnt before and, their pinyin is about the same also, so like if we can remember the words that we've learnt last time, so we can remember it easier. Just like some words you just have to add on the radical (偏旁). (Student 5)

2 students use imagery and this is related to the nature of the writing system, as we shall see from their comments below.

> I will try to look for the characters to represent something. Example, let say the word fish (鱼), I will try to look for ways in how it would look like a fish.(Student 2)

> Some of them [words] which are like evolving words (变形字). They originate from the picture so from the picture *yue* (月) , it looks like a crescent moon, so it is easier to remember. (Student 9)

Only 1 student shows that she is reviewing well because she said she "try to revise everyday" (Student 9). And instead of using physical response as a memory strategy; meaning "physically acted out a new expression" (as mentioned by Oxford 1990: 43), one student learns by observing physical response.

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[8] 联合早报 (*Lianhe Zaobao*) is a Singapore-based Chinese newspaper.

> Most of the time, because when we watch television programs or movies, then the expression right they will acted out also, so you basically know what the expression means so I think it's also quite efficient for learning.(Student 5)

The strategies such as using *Hanyu Pinyin* in memory, associating and using imagery, are all related to the nature of the Chinese writing system and thus the response elicited will certainly be different from those strategies used in English language learning.

Cognitive strategies

	Cognitive strategies	No. of students
1.	Formally practice writing systems	12
2.	Translating	10
3.	Practicing naturalistically	9
4.	Taking notes	6
5	Getting the idea quickly	6
6	Analyzing Chinese characters	6
7	Repeating	2
8	Highlighting	1

Table 4.16 Cognitive Strategies used by the students

All students expressed that they formally practice the writing systems. Referring to some of the comments below, we see that students have used cognitive strategy to complement memory strategy. This is because it is necessary to practice (cognitive strategy) in order to remember (memory strategy) the Chinese characters, so that one can read and write well in that target language.

> [If the characters are too complicated][9], then I will keep on practicing until I remember. (Student 2)

> [For the Chinese characters] keep writing a lot of times. English words actually you don't need to remember. You need to remember the sound and pronounce it and write it down easily, no extra strokes anyway. (Student 6)

> For the character, I'll write down repeatedly, after some time, I'll just get used to it, and I remember the word. (Student 10)

Most students also use translating strategy. Some comments are shown below.

> Like when sometimes when we do like composition, then if I cannot think of the Chinese characters to use, to describe, then I'll firstly think in English first, then after that translate it back to Chinese. (Student 5)

> I'll translate it to English first, think of an English word that replace that expression then I will find a simpler Chinese word to write down. (Student 9)

[9] [ ] is used to show missing information.

> I check the meaning of the word using the Chinese dictionary. And if I cannot find it, I'll use the Chinese to English dictionary, so at least I get the meaning in English, then I know the rough meaning of the word then translate back to Chinese again.. (Student 10)

9 students "practice naturalistically" by watching Chinese television programs, reading and doing assessments. Below shows some quoted comments on how students "practice naturalistically"[10].

> I read more story books and do more assessments. (Student 3)

> Normally I watch Taiwan shows, they have the Chinese subtitles. It will be easier to remember. But it will be the Traditional Chinese characters (繁体字). Then, I go and check what is the Simplified ones(简体字). (Student 4)

> I just memorize all the meanings of the words, and then like learn how to use them, and then do a lot of assessment. (Student 7)

> TV is just one of the ways I use to learn Chinese. If I see the question in composition is similar to the title and expression, I'll try to put it to my composition. Example, 'The happiest day'(最快乐的一天) , so I'll listen to the expression, then I'll try to put it in my writing. Sometimes there are some episodes where the characters are very happy. (Student 10)

6 students mentioned about taking notes and another 6 students talked about getting the ideas quickly. Here are some of the comments.

> First read it briefly first, get an understanding, then after that for each paragraph right, then you just read then you get the main message then you write it[the main point] on the side. (Student 6)

> Find the main point (重点), and write those Chinese characters that you don't know into the notebook, then look up the words by yourself. (Student 8)

> I'll read the text once. Get the rough meaning of the text. At least know what the text is talking about, then I'll check the words that I don't know or read. (Student 10)

There are also 6 students who analyze Chinese characters. The following shows some comments on how they analyze them.

> The radicals (边). There are two different sides. So you can remember one of the sides, then another one, so you can remember easier. (Student 4)

> Different parts put together. Example *huai* (坏)is *tu* (土)plus *bu*(不). (Student 8)

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[10] Oxford (1990: 45) 'Practice naturalistically': *Practicing the new language in natural, realistic settings,* as in participating in a conversation, reading a book or article, listening to a lecture, or writing a letter in the new language.

> I'll try to remember the word by separating it into different simpler parts that I know. For example *ying* (赢) to win, is *wang*(亡) *kou*(口) *yue*(月) *bei*(贝) *fan*(凡). (Student 9)

> I remember the parts of the words up and down, left and right. I also remember the radical (部首) of the word. Then, from there, after I get the shape (形), slowly I remember. (Student 10)

2 students use the cognitive strategy of repeating:

> I will read the whole thing until I know what is happening in the passage. (Student 2)

> Then, you read the text two, three times, then you will remember the word already. (Student 4)

And one student uses highlighting said that "I'll just read through first and then highlight those words that I have never come across before" (Student 5).

Oxford (1990: 45) defined 'Practicing Naturalistically' as 'practicing the new language in natural, realistic settings' and I regard 'watching Chinese television programs and 'doing assessment' as ways to put the language skills into practice; in which they were not mentioned. Although one may question the 'natural, realistic settings' for 'doing assessment', I see the latter as creating the exercises that are closest to the settings in order for the students to apply their language skills; in another words a 'simulated' settings.

Compensation strategies

	Compensation strategies	No. of students
1	Adjusting or approximating the message	5
2	Using synonym	5
3	Using linguistic clues	4
4	Avoid expression totally	2
5	Getting help	2

Table 4.17 Compensation Strategies used by the students

Some of the comments below shall reveal how the students adjusted or approximate the message.

> I sometimes paraphrase it. (Student 1)

> I try to use like a simple expression that has about the same meaning, that's all. (Student 5)

> I'll change it to an easier one to understand. (Student 10)

Some students mentioned the word 'substitute' which is equivalent to "using a word that means the same thing (synonym)" as mentioned by Oxford (1990: 51). For those who use this strategy, they said that:

I use a substitute. When I don't know, I don't use the sentence. (Student 1)

I would think of other words related to the answers I want to express. (Student 2)

For the idioms, you can think of another one because there are a lot of similar meanings. (Student 4)

From the response, we see that Student 1 either "use a substitute" or "don't use the sentence". Similarly, Student 4 also "avoided expression totally". She said that, "Sometimes, I'm not sure how to write but I don't dare to write because maybe it will minus marks. If I am not sure, then I will forget it. I won't write".

Besides that, 4 students' comments seem to suggest that they are using linguistic clues to guess the meaning of Chinese characters. For instance, one student said that "If I don't know how to read, I just *tikam*[11] (guess) like see the radical (偏旁)"(Student 11).

For the other 2 students who get help, one said that "I ask teachers or friends the *pinyin* of the character" (Student 3).

Thus far, we have talked about direct strategies. As we have seen, students can mix different direct strategies such as the case of Student 1 and Student 4. There are also cases whereby there is a mix of direct and indirect strategies. The compilation here is merely to report the strategies students have used and through some of response, see how they used them. Next, we shall look at indirect strategies from their response.

Metacognitive strategies

	Metacognitive strategies	No. of students
1	Self-evaluating	12
2	Overviewing	5
3	Setting goals	3
4	Self-monitoring	2
5	Paying Attention	1

Table 4.18 Metacognitive Strategies used by the students

I would like to point out 'self-evaluating' here put emphasis on how the students perceive their performance in test or exam; another way of evaluating their progress. When asked if they check their general progress of Chinese learning, even though Student 6 said 'no' and Student 7 said 'not really', they have shown great concern for their performance.

I compare with the previous test and the other tests to see how well I do. (Student 6)

[11] *tikam* is a Malay word for 'guess' in English.

> I will compare [the marks] and see like what area I can improve on. Sometimes, when I see my grade drops, then I'll panic then I'll just like try to do better in the next test. (Student 7)

Generally, students check their performance in test or exam as their progress evaluation.

> I don't really want to fall behind (退步), you know. If I do well for my test, I will show my mum, then after that I will be very proud. Then, she will give me some encouragement, so I will do better the next time. (Student 1)

> Because our school we have like small test regularly, like once a week or once every two weeks like that, so like I'll see my grading like if I have improved or not doing well (deproved). If I improve, then continue to work hard. But if I don't do well (deprove), then I try to find out what is wrong, and continue to study hard. (Student 5)

Although there are 5 students who said they 'overview'[12], some of the response seems to reveal their 'lukewarm' attitude.

> Sometimes, I will revise the topic that the teacher would want to cover. Because I would know what the teacher would want to teach beforehand. Sometimes I don't really have time to revise beforehand, sometimes I am too lazy to revise. (Student 2)

> I will read at home sometimes. If I am free, then I will read the notes that the teacher gave us so you will be more familiar when teacher tells us. (Student 4)

On the other hand, when asked why some of them do not "overview", their responses were as follows.

> When you pay attention to what the teacher says, then it is not very difficult. (Student 3)

> Just see what the teacher is going to give us, then you just learn from there. (Student 6)

> Because we don't know what the teacher is going to teach next. (Student 8)

Although Student 10 also points out why he does not really prepare; reason that he might share with Student 8, he still read the textbook beforehand to get an overview.

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[12] Oxford (1990: 138) originally used 'Overviewing and Linking with Already Known Materials' but students' response only showed "overviewing". The explanation by Oxford is "*overviewing comprehensively a key concept, principle, or a set of materials* in an upcoming language activity and associating it with what is already known. This strategy can be accomplished in many different ways, but it is often helpful to follow three steps: learning why the activity is being done, building the needed vocabulary, and making the associations. The question asked in the questionnaire was "Do you prepare the lesson before the teacher teaches in the class? If yes, how does it help you to learn?" I have categorized the answer 'revise' under 'overview' and not 'review (well)'. For the latter, Oxford (1990: 42) had meant it to be 'structured reviewing', which is "*reviewing in carefully spaced intervals*, at first close together and then more widely spaced apart".

> Sometimes I really don't know what the teacher is going to teach. So because the teacher doesn't tell you what is going on for the next lesson, I don't really prepare. But I'll just flip through the textbooks, to try and get an idea of what the teacher is going to teach next. (Student 10)

And while there is one student who mentioned about paying attention (Student 3), there are two students who self-monitor (Student 10 and 11).

> I receive the marks, I get the test papers back, I learn from the mistakes. (Student 10)

> If I get very poor results, I just tell myself to pass and remember the words. (Student 11)

In addition to this, when students were asked if they would set goals for Chinese learning, for instance, how proficient they want to become or how they might want to use the language in future, here are some of the comments quoted below.

> No. My goal is to pass exam very well. My mother said that Chinese is very useful in future. When you go out to work, Chinese is very useful. Because as a student, I think one of my part is to really pass my exam with flying colors. (Student 1)

> No. I learn Chinese because of exams. If you learn Chinese, you can enjoy the Chinese culture but I don't have anything to like aim for next time in Chinese. I only like Chinese history, Chinese culture, and Chinese shows, all these things, that's why I learn Chinese. (Student 6)

> No. I think Chinese is actually very very very important. English is also very important because now China's economy is very good so everybody is like learning Chinese very eagerly so Chinese is actually very very very important, it'll be in good use in future also. So you don't have to have a goal to motivate you. You have to learn it for your own good. (Student 9)

On the contrary, there are three students who were specific about how they set goals.

> For exam, I would set a target grade like let say I get B4 for Chinese for mid-year exam, I will set to maybe B3 for Chinese during SA2. [13] (Student 2)

> For a test, I will set certain score for this test, try to go higher up again, say 5 marks or 10 marks higher than this test. I set to motivate myself and to study harder. Because I know if I study harder, maybe I can get a higher score than what I'm getting now. (Student 10)

> Yes. Because like I felt that this component is very weak, some components very weak, so I'll try and improve on it. Then, I will like set goals that I must reach this target. So that when my Chinese comes to total, it'll be better. (Student 12)

[13] "SA 2" means "Semester Assessment 2". Examination for the first half of the year is called Mid-year examination or Semester Assessment 1. And Examination for the second half of the year is called Year-end examination or Semester Assessment 2.

The above metacognitive strategies show how student organize and take charge of their learning. Next, we shall look at their affective and social strategies.

Affective strategies

	Affective strategies	No. of students
1	Making positive statements `	11
2	Rewarding yourself	5

Table 4.19 Affective Strategies used by the students

The findings show that most of the students do make encouraging statements to themselves. Below are some of their comments.

> Yes, I do. Like I always paste some notes such as 'Work Hard, Don't Be Lazy'. I will paste them in my room so when I see them, I will start studying. It helps to motivate me. (Student 1)

> Yes, I will say myself *xia ci zai nu li* (下次再努力) means 'try harder next time' and make sure I win who who who, so that I maintain the position. During like spelling, if actually I get 98 [marks] but if I get (deprove to) 90, I will see why I did not do well (deprove so much) and I try to learn better the next time. (Student 4)

> Yes. If I don't really get a good grade for tests, then I will tell myself that this is only one test, there are still a lot of tests to come, so like I still have space for improvement. If I do well, then I just tell myself to continue work hard. (Student 5)

> Yes. For example, out of the blue when I am doing my homework, I'll just say *jia you* [14] (加油) Because when sometimes I feel very very very stressed, I just keep myself motivated.(Student 9)

> Sometimes. Like say that next time I must do better. Then, I'll say that if my friends can do it, so I also can. (Student 12)

One student felt that positive statement does not help him.

> I don't really use encouraging statement because if I motivate myself, somehow I just don't get motivated if I use encouraging statement. Sometimes, I just motivate and motivate, then the mind just turn off. (Student 10)

Besides that, there are 5 students who said that they reward themselves. Some students said that:

> Sometimes. Maybe go out with my friends and relax myself from Chinese exam, but not for English. I think my English is quite good, so I think I would be able to do well in exams. (Student 2)

[14] "*jia you*" means "Work Harder" in Chinese.

> I will go out with friends to like relax, just relax a bit. (Student 5)
>
> I'll give myself a treat. Sometimes I go out with my friends. If I done exceptionally well, pass their [parent's] expectation, then they'll give me a treat. (Student 10)

And Student 11 said he "play games" to reward himself. Below are some of the comments from students who do not reward themselves.

> No. But I will tell my mother and she will 'Ok lor, very good'. I wait for the end of year exam, and I see what position I get and then I tell my mother. She will reward me, buy what I want. (Student 4)
>
> No. My parents will just be very happy. Then they will tell me to keep it up. It's good to see them being happy. (Student 7)
>
> No. They [my parents] sometimes treat me to eat something. (Student 8)
>
> No. Actually I don't because I think if I do well, It's supposed to be done well. I don't think I should be rewarded. Because we are Chinese, then it's natural we do well in Chinese, so if you do well, we don't even have to be rewarded, because it should be like that. (Student 9)

Instead of rewarding themselves, it seems that parents are the ones who reward their children. Student 9 seems to feel a strong sense of Chinese being able to speak Chinese language.

Social strategies

	Social strategies	No. of students
1	Asking for clarification[15]	12
2	Cooperating with peers	9
3	Cooperating with proficient users	7
4	Developing cultural understanding	4

Table 4.20 Social strategies used by the students

All students have asked for clarification. When asked who they normally ask for help when they encounter problems in Chinese learning, 4 mentioned about parents and 7 mentioned about mothers. That is to say, 11 of them have looked for their mothers for help. Some of them said:

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[15] As Oxford (1990: 145) had pointed out, 'asking questions' is "*the most basic social interactions*, and it helps learners get closer to the intended meaning and thus aids their understanding" (Emphasis is mine). She had further explained it as follows;

> "It also helps learners encourage their conversation partners to provide larger quantities of "input" in the target language and indicates interest and involvement. Moreover, the conversation partner's response to the learner's question indicates whether the question itself was understood, thus providing indirect feedback about the learner's production skills."

> My mother. She will guide me through and tell me my mistakes so next time, I will do better. (Student 1)
>
> My mum. She'll just explain or tell me everything about what she knows about the word or something like that, then she'll go into detail then teach me how to use it. When we talk, we speak in English, but she is very good in Chinese. It just like when I need help, I just go to her. (Student 7)
>
> My mother. Every time I ask her the meaning of the words. (Student 11)

Also, their responses seem to show that the strategies had been directly used by their parents and indirectly influence them, as we shall see from the comments below.

> He [My father] makes me write down the vocabulary (词语) in a book, it's something like a word bank. So when the composition exam is coming, I'll just check it. He scans through the textbook, he highlights the important phrases, the phrases he thinks it'll come out in the exam, so he'll highlight then I copy it down in the book. (Student 10)
>
> I'll ask my parents. Because they know me well, then they know how I can remember well so they tell me the meaning, then after that they show me how to write the word. After an exam, they will check my progress and my homework and they'll tell me what went wrong and tell me not to be so careless in the next semester. (Student 12)

Student 10 shows that his father had used overviewing and highlighting to guide him; strategies that his father could have indirectly taught him, and then the student also used the strategy of notetaking for his learning. On the other hand, Student 12 show that his parents' act of checking his progress and work, could have indirectly taught him about self-evaluating. Also, when his parents pointed out his mistakes, he is learning to self-monitor because he is taught to learn from the mistakes.

Besides asking their parents for help, 4 mentioned about teachers, and another 4 mentioned about classmates and friends, while 3 mentioned about siblings. Only one student mentioned about her tutor.

> I would usually ask my parents for help. They'll explain it to me until I understand but sometimes like some Chinese words are difficult to explain so I would maybe sometimes I would ask my teacher. I don't really ask my brothers and sisters. I have tutor only for Chinese, one time a week, two hours each time. (Student 2)

9 students said that they learn by cooperating with peers; either studying with a friend or having a group study. Some comments show they have a system in organizing their own study group, such as Student 9 and Student 10.

> Sometimes, go to library to find books. Sometimes, I will do my assessment books. So if we don't know, we can ask each other. (Student 8)

> Somewhere near the end of the year, actually I organize mass studying. Then, it's like all of us gather at one place, then we study together. About 5 in a group. Sometimes when I wanted a mass study, I'll see who is online on MSN then I'll ask them if they want to come. I'll just send the message down in my class. (Student 9)

> Sometimes I go out with my friends, study a little bit of Chinese. We pass it down through the class relay system, so those who are interested, they just go. (Student 10)

At the same time, we also see one study group consists of a few students from China.

> Powerpoint presentation, we will group with like a few China students, then it's easier to work also. In my class, I got 5 or 6 students from China so it's quite easier to communicate. (Student 4)

As Student 4 had expressed that Chinese is her familiar language and the language she spoke at home, she could have felt easy to communicate with the students from China. In addition to this strategy, there are 7 students who expressed that they cooperate with proficient users. From some of their responses as shown below, we shall also see the SAP students' attitudes towards the Chinese native speakers.

> Like my classmate, she is from China. Then, sometimes I would converse with her in Chinese. Then sometimes she needs to like improve her English, like she needs to practice her [English] oral, then she would speak to me in English. But sometimes when I'm practicing for my Chinese, we'll converse in Chinese. For average Singaporean, I'll use English with them because their Chinese, their level is not as high as the Chinese from China because sometimes, you know, Singapore we speak in broken Chinese. (Student 2)

> I practice on oral, sometimes when they talk, some words you don't understand, then you can ask them. Their English are not very good, so is like you have to talk to them in Chinese. So very hard to communicate with them in English. (Student 3)

> Like we have fun with like poems or things like *san zi jin* (三字经). Then, you can like memorize it together and say out. For the poems, you can modify the poems for fun. We can make it very funny, they make everybody laugh. We do it with the China students, Taiwan students all these. They are very clever. They just have the talent, they know how to like make the poem into a very funny way. The poem is still the same, it's just that we say it in a funny way. (Student 6)

However, there are those who have reasons not to cooperate with the Chinese native speakers, as shown in the following comments:

> I don't make friends just to practice Chinese. If I do so, they might think you are leeching on them. I tried that, they didn't get very friendly, I felt quite disappointed. I just want to learn Chinese from them and they just think I'm making use of them so that I can do well in my exam. So after a while, I just gave up.(Student 10)

> I make friends with them but with Chinese [learning], the student from China in our class, his Chinese is just as bad. He also fails. (Student 11)
>
> In my school, there is those Chinese group, then they always like keep bullying other people. Some of them, their Chinese is not very good also.(Student 12)

While there are those who show negative attitudes, for those who learn from the Chinese native speakers, it is also a way to learn about Chinese culture and its language, like the case in Student 6. The other 3 students seem to develop cultural understanding in the following ways:

> I like Chinese [language] because I find it is very interesting, like the arts thing. Like make tea. I am in the Chinese orchestra also. (Student 1)
>
> Join *guzheng*[16] （古筝）. For my CCA, they usually speak a mixture of English and Chinese. But the song's name is always in Chinese, then usually underneath they'll provide the English title of the song. So the Chinese word helps me to improve my Chinese also because I'll know the English one then I'll know the meaning to the words. Like currently I am learning one song called *feng shou luo gu* （丰收锣鼓）, in English it's called 'Harvest of drums'. *Feng shou*（丰收) is 'harvest' in English, then *luo gu* (锣鼓) I think should be 'drums'. (Student 2)
>
> When we are P5 [primary 5], we went on an immersion program to Shanghai. It's about 7 weeks. In my class, I make a lot of friends, then I got their MSN, then we chat. (Student 9)

Oxford's (1990: 147) original meaning of 'developing cultural understanding', is '*trying to empathize with another person through learning about culture*, and trying to understand the other person's relation to the culture'. The empathy shown is focused on the person. The purpose of developing cultural understanding is to understand from another person's point of view, so as to achieve successful communication. Contrary to this, we understand from the above response that students develop cultural understanding through their participation in cultural activities, which indirectly helps them to learn the Chinese language. In other words, we could perhaps say that they are trying to learn the language through learning about culture; the focus is on the language and not the person.

With reference to Oxford's proposed framework, the interview had attempted to elicit the response from the students and helped us to understand their Chinese learning in the Singapore context. As a result, we have seen that some of the strategies and its meaning derived could differ from those defined by Oxford. In view of the findings from the questionnaire, the SILL and the interview, this paper aims to give an insight into the SAP students' learning of Chinese language in a complex linguistic environment like Singapore. Its discussion and implication will be the focus in the next chapter.

[16] "*guzheng*" is "zither" in English.