THE HONG KONG
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
香港理工大學
Pao Yue-kong Library
包玉剛圖書館

Copyright Undertaking

This thesis is protected by copyright, with all rights reserved.

By reading and using the thesis, the reader understands and agrees to the following terms:

1. The reader will abide by the rules and legal ordinances governing copyright regarding the use of the thesis.
2. The reader will use the thesis for the purpose of research or private study only and not for distribution or further reproduction or any other purpose.
3. The reader agrees to indemnify and hold the University harmless from and against any loss, damage, cost, liability or expenses arising from copyright infringement or unauthorized usage.

If you have reasons to believe that any materials in this thesis are deemed not suitable to be distributed in this form, or a copyright owner having difficulty with the material being included in our database, please contact lbsys@polyu.edu.hk providing details. The Library will look into your claim and consider taking remedial action upon receipt of the written requests.

Pao Yue-kong Library, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong

http://www.lib.polyu.edu.hk

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Department of English

The development of a framework for the evaluation of a self-access language learning centre

Bruce James Morrison

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February, 2003

Pao Yue-kong Library
PolyU • Hong Kong

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduces no material previously published or written nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

_____ (Signed)

Bruce James Morrison (Name of student)

Abstract of thesis entitled: The development of a framework for the evaluation of a self-access language learning centre

submitted by Bruce James Morrison

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in February, 2003

Abstract:

The study aims to bring together theory, methodology and practice from the fields of programme evaluation, educational evaluation, English language learning and teaching, learner independence and self-access learning. These, together with research findings from the data collected in the study, have been used to develop a framework for the evaluation of self-access language learning centres.

Such a framework is needed for the following reason. Evaluation is recognised as a central element in the development of any educational entity and there is at present no research-based construct designed for the evaluation of self-access language learning centres. This framework has been developed for the evaluation of Hong Kong self-access centres but it is intended that its construct should be sufficiently generative to be applied to other self-access language learning contexts, and sufficiently dynamic to develop in the light of on-going changes within the field.

Research objectives & research questions

The study has five main objectives. These are to:

i) identify the defining pedagogical and systemic characteristics of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre;
ii) identify potential rationale, content and methodology for the evaluation of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre;
iii) examine existing evaluation constructs for elements that could contribute to the development of self-access language learning centre evaluation;
iv) propose a framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre;
v) suggest areas for further research to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the evaluation of self-access language learning centres.

Research approach & methodology

The main emphasis is on qualitative research methodology based on naturalistic enquiry. *Grounded Theory* is the underpinning methodology. Grounded Theory is defined as "an initial, systematic discovery of the theory from the data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 3) which "emerges from the bottom up...from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are inter-connected" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:3).

Data collection

The sixteen study participants were selected as fulfilling the roles of various types of Hong Kong self-access language learning centre stakeholders. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and post-interview e-mail questionnaires.

Results

As a result of the study findings, and derived from the data obtained from the data collection process introduced above, I have developed two theoretical constructs: a self-access language learning centre "mapping" and an evaluation framework.

In the light of the lack of a theoretically-informed description of what actually constitutes a self-access language learning centre, I identify the need for a descriptive construct that I refer to using the metaphor "mapping". It is intended that a mapping of a particular centre then provides the focus upon which an evaluation can be based.

The second construct is a multi-level evaluation framework which has three foci: decisions to be made, actions to be taken and issues specific to the evaluation context. Central to the evaluation framework is the four-stage evaluation process which consists of : mapping the target centre, planning the evaluation itself, conducting the evaluation and then conducting a meta-evaluation.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). Qualitative Research for Education. MA, USA: Allyn & Bacon

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. New York: Aldine Publishing.

Acknowledgements and dedication

I would like to thank all those who acted as participants in this study together with Prof. Liz Hamp-Lyons for her insights, Lindsay Miller and Mary Spratt for their kind suggestions, and Peter Johnson for his eagle eye.

The thesis is dedicated to Fay, Robb and Andy with special appreciation to Danny for his unyielding support and company on long walks in the hills of Sai Kung that enabled sanity to be maintained.

Table of contents

Dedication and acknowledgements i
Abstract iii
Table of contents v
List of tables x
List of figures xi
List of appendices xii

1. Introduction
1.1 Background to the study 1
1.1.1 The need for a SAC theory 2
1.1.2 The need for a SAC evaluation framework 3
1.1.3 Two theories 4
1.2 Researcher interests & concerns 4
1.3 An initial definition of key terms 6
1.4 Study objectives 7
1.5 Organisation of the thesis 7

2. Literature review
2.1 Introduction 11
2.2 From English language teaching to English language learning 12
2.3 The self-access language learning center 14
2.3.1 Underlying concepts 14
2.3.2 Self-access language learning 21
2.3.3 Self-access language learning centres 25
2.3.4 Conclusion 29
2.4 Programme evaluation 30
2.4.1 Introduction 30
2.4.2 Historically situating the discipline 32
2.4.3 Major approaches to programme evaluation 36
2.4.4 Six issues 46
2.4.5 Conclusion 55
2.5 Language programme evaluation 55
2.5.1 The early development of language programme evaluation 56
2.5.2 Large-scale language programme evaluations of the 1960s & 1970s 57
2.5.3 Evaluation in English for Specific Purposes in the 1980s & 1990s 58
2.5.4 Recent trends 59
2.5.5 Conclusion 63

2.6 Evaluation of self-access language learning centers 64
2.6.1 Introduction 64
2.6.2 Evaluation of elements of the SAC operation 65
2.6.3 SAC evaluations 68
2.6.4 Efficiency & effectiveness as SAC evaluation foci 71
2.6.5 Conclusion 71
2.7 Existing evaluation constructs 72
2.7.1 The purpose of an evaluation (WHY) 75
2.7.2 The focus of an evaluation (WHAT) 75
2.7.3 The evaluation methodology (HOW) 76
2.7.4 Additional elements 76
2.7.5 Conclusion 77
2.8 Conclusion to chapter two 78

3. The study, approach & underlying methodology
3.1 Introduction 81
3.2 The study approach 83
3.2.1 A naturalistic approach 83
3.2.2 Qualitative research 84
3.2.3 Quantitative procedures within a qualitative approach 87
3.2.4 Generalisability, validity & reliability: quantitative concepts re-defined 87
3.2.5 Theoretical & practitioner knowledge: the value placed on experience 89
3.2.6 Researcher role & point of view 90
3.3 The study methodology 91
3.3.1 Grounded Theory 92
3.3.2 Theory 94
3.4 Research ethics 95
3.5 Conclusion 96

4. The research process: from thematising to data recording
4.1 Introduction 99
4.2 Overview of the process of data collection & analysis 100
4.3 Stage one: thematising 103
4.3.1 The content 103
4.3.2 The rationale 103
4.3.3 The methodology 104
4.4 Stage two: data collection design 105
4.4.1 Participant selection 105
4.4.2 Research instruments 111
4.5 Stage three: data collection 116
4.5.1 Interviews 116

4.5.2 Follow-up e-mails 118
4.5.3 Post-interview e-mail questionnaire 118
4.6 Stage four: data recording 119
4.6.1 The interview data 119
4.6.2 The post-interview e-mail questionnaire data 120
4.7 Conclusion 121

5. The research process: from data analysis to data recording
5.1 Introduction 123
5.2 Stage five: data analysis, interpretation & reduction 124
5.2.1 Recording first impressions: the impression memo 127
5.2.2 Initial coding of interview transcripts 128
5.2.3 Data checking: follow-up e-mails 132
5.2.4 Mindmap entries 133
5.2.5 NUD*IST/NVivo entries 135
5.2.6 The mindmap re-visited 139
5.2.7 The NVivo coding re-visited 141
5.2.8 Comparison & synthesis of the NVivo & mindmap analyses 144
5.3 Stage six: development of the SAC mapping & the evaluation framework 152
5.3.1 Mapping 152
5.3.2 Development of the initial SAC mapping 155
5.3.3 Checking the initial SAC mapping 155
5.3.4 Development of the evaluation framework 160
5.4 Conclusion 160

6. Developing a mapping for a SAC: an analysis of the data relating to the definition of a SAC
6.1 Introduction 163
6.2 The SAC defined in terms of existing educational facilities 164
6.2.1 The SAC in relation to the library 164
6.2.2 The SAC in relation to the "traditional" teacher-centred classroom 168
6.2.3 Conclusion 174
6.3 The SAC defined in terms of being a physical center 174
6.3.1 The SAC as a facility for SALL 174
6.3.2 The SAC as a resource center 177
6.3.3 SAC elements 178
6.4 The SAC defined in terms of the learning process it supports 188
6.4.1 The role of the SAC in the learning process 189
6.4.2 The role of the SAC learner in the learning process 203
6.4.3 The role of the SAC teacher in the learning process 220
6.5 Conclusion 227

7. Developing a framework for evaluation: an analysis of the data relating to the evaluation of a SAC

7.1 Introduction 229

7.2 Why evaluate a SAC 230

7.2.1 Possible evaluation audiences 230

7.2.2 Evaluation as an administrative requirement 232

7.2.3 Possible functions of an evaluation 233

7.2.4 Implications 239

7.3 What to evaluate in a SAC 240

7.3.1 The scope of an evaluation 241

7.3.2 SAC stakeholders 243

7.3.3 SAC systems, facilities & resources 246

7.3.4 Efficiency & effectiveness 250

7.3.5 Efficiency 250

7.3.6 Effectiveness 255

7.3.7 Learning gain 264

7.3.8 Implications 273

7.4 How to evaluate a SAC 274

7.4.1 Approach 274

7.4.2 Data collection & analysis 280

7.4.3 Who evaluates? 298

7.4.4 Implications 306

7.5 Conclusion 307

8. SAC mapping & evaluation framework

8.1 Introduction 311

8.2 The SAC mapping 311

8.2.1 SAC mapping components 314

8.2.2 Conclusion 319

8.3 The evaluation framework 319

8.3.1 Developing the evaluation framework 320

8.3.2 A framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC 322

8.4 Conclusion 328

9. Conclusion

9.1 An end-of-year SAC vignette 329

9.2 Summary of study 330

9.3 Summary of study results 332

9.3.1 Study objective one 332

9.3.2 Study objective two 332

9.3.3 Study objective three 334

9.3.4 Study objective four 334

9.3.5 Study objective five 335
9.4 Implications of the study 337
9.4.1 Theoretical implications 337
9.4.2 Practical implications 338

References 341

Appendices 369

List of tables

Table	Topic	Page
1	Worked example 7 - NVivo coding framework relating to area of focus *Existing educational facilities*	143
2	Post-interview e-mail questionnaire - summary of responses	156
3	Examples of the operation of individual learners' IL skills	205
4	Terms used to describe the SAC teacher and her role	221
5	Indirect stakeholders identified as potential evaluation audiences	231
6	Perceptions of aspects of a SAC from the learners' perspectives	244

List of figures

Figure	Topic	Page
1	Literature review sources	11
2	The seven ages of evaluation theory development	34
3	A taxonomy of approaches to evaluation	38
4	Features of evaluation approaches and models	46
5	Evaluative research of elements within a SAC	66
6	Eleven programme evaluation constructs	73
7	Naturalistic study (Owens, 1982)	84
8	Qualitative data analysis processes (Miles & Huberman, 1994)	86
9	Ethical frameworks & aspects of research (Flinders, 1992)	95
10	The PhD data collection, analysis and reporting process	102
11	Interview participant roles	107
12	Areas of focus for post-interview questionnaire	114
13	The interview data recording process	120
14	Post-interview e-mail questionnaire data recording process	121
15	Overview of the collection, recording, analysis and theory development stages of the study	126
16	Worked example 1 - Impression memo for Andrew Morrall	128
17	Overview of the study coding procedure	129
18	Worked example 2 - Open coding of part of interview transcript for Andrew Morrall	131
19	Worked example 3 - Part of follow-up e-mail to Andrew Morrall and response	133
20	Pre-conceived mindmap categories	134

21	Part of mindmap section focusing on defining a SAC	134
22	Example NU*DIST/NVivo nodes	137
23	Worked example 5 - Part of NVivo-coded interview transcript for Andrew Morrall	139
24	Primary mindmap categories relating to defining a SAC	140
25	Primary mindmap categories relating to evaluating a SAC	141
26	Worked example 6 - Mindmap coding framework (Definition of SAC) *SAC v library*	141
27	NVivo areas of focus relating to the definition of a SAC	142
28	NVivo areas of focus relating to evaluating a SAC	142
29	Summary of process of summarising and synthesising interview data	145
30	Mindmap & NVivo SAC definition data - Areas of focus & points of reference	146
31	Mindmap & NVivo SAC definition meta-framework	147
32	Mindmap & NVivo SAC evaluation data - Areas of focus & points of reference	148
33	Mindmap & NVivo SAC evaluation meta-framework	149
34	Worked example 8 - Consolidated Mindmap and NVivo analysis for category *SAC v library*	151
35	Data analysis stages of the study	161
36	Summary of evaluation-related interview and post-interview e-mail questionnaire data	308
37	Hong Kong SAC mapping	313
38	A framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC	323
39	Framework elements 1 - *Decisions* and *Key questions*	324
40	Framework elements 2 - *Actions*	325

List of appendices

Appendix	Topic	Page
1	Examples of evaluation models and approaches	369
2	Interview consent form	371
3	Interview study profiles	373
4	Interview frameworks	379
5	Interview follow-up e-mails	381
6	Post-interview e-mail questionnaire	389
7	Mindmap	393
8	Definition of SAC: Mindmap categories	395
9	Evaluation of SAC: Mindmap categories	397
10	Definition of SAC: NVivo nodes	401
11	Evaluation of SAC: NVivo nodes	407
12	Definition of SAC: Mindmap & NVivo data	413
13	Evaluation of SAC: Mindmap & NVivo data	419
14	Initial SAC mapping	427
15	Post-analysis feedback request letter	429
16	Post-analysis NVivo feedback data	431
17	Mission statements of four Hong Kong SACs	453

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

The past ten years have seen a rapid expansion of the tertiary education sector in Hong Kong with an increase of 21.9% in full-time tertiary enrollment from 1994 to 1998 (Kwan, 2002). There are now seven universities, four of which have English as the official medium of instruction. However, in Hong Kong, English is not only perceived as a medium of instruction but, given its recognised importance as the first language of global trade, English language proficiency is also seen as a goal in itself. The development of students' English and Putonghua language proficiency has been recognised as a high priority by the University Grants Committee (UGC). Additionally, the development of independent learning skills, with particular reference to the use of Information Technology, has been made a priority by the Hong Kong Education & Manpower Bureau (Kwan, 2002). In this regard, with the assistance of funds ear-marked for language enhancement, the Hong Kong universities have each set up at least one *self-access centre* dedicated to language learning.

Although the centres have developed independently and in different ways, there has been a fairly high degree of consultation and sharing of experiences. Partly as a result of this, they have been the focus of research into various aspects of self-access and independent language learning (cf. Farmer & Sweeney, 1994; Ma, 1994; Morrison, 1995; Fitzgerald et al, 1996; Klassen et al, 1998), as well as one large-scale study that examined both students' and teachers' perceptions of five of these centres (Gardner & Miller, 1997).

In addition to self-initiated research projects, annual evaluation reports are mandated by the funding body (the UGC). The centres, as an increasingly accepted feature of the Hong Kong language learning environment, have to compete with other language education programmes and initiatives within increasingly constrained budgets. In this environment, it is inevitable that evaluation is increasingly emphasised, not least as comprising part of the budget apportionment process.

Evaluation has played a vital role in education in general for more than one hundred years (Madaus, Stufflebeam, & Scriven, 1983). In English Language Teaching (ELT), it has been a major concern for over twenty years (Strevens, 1977; Stern, 1983; Beretta, 1992; Alderson & Beretta, 1992; Lynch, 1996). In contrast, however, it is only recently that attention has been paid to the evaluation of self-access language learning centres (SACs) in Hong Kong, or elsewhere. Previously, SAC evaluations tended to be undertaken solely as an administrative necessity which was summative in nature, and narrowly focused on accountability in terms of statistics of usage and cost-effectiveness. Apart from the increased recognition and recent concerns regarding funding referred to above, the recent interest in evaluating more broadly both SACs and self-access language learning (SALL) may also be due in part to the degree of educational maturity that studies in the area have attained.

1.1.1 The need for a SAC theory

As I will show in this thesis, SACs are based on a view of education that focuses on the central role of the learner in the learning process. However, researchers (Kershaw, 1993; Miller & Gardner, 1994) have pointed out that the tenets upon which many SACs are founded and operate have undergone little systematic research. In many countries, SACs have been, and continue to be, established in response to either the availability of funding for "alternative" educational initiatives or demands for cost-cutting (or both), rather than in the light of a proven track record.

Crucially, there exists no coherent theory of the operation of a SAC. Benson (1994) outlines the bones of what may constitute a theory of *self-access* that he argues would need to "define how the organization of learning resources and environments interacts with the process of learning" (Benson, 1994: 7). Gardner & Miller (1999) explore in detail the various aspects of running a SAC. They consider, amongst others, the relationship between the learner and the environment, the roles of the SAC learner and various types of SAC (in the form of a typology). There has been, however, no single theoretical construct that presents a systematic view of a SAC that explains its operation in terms of its constituent elements: in other words, a construct that plausibly explains how a SAC works. The lack of such a theory, I suggest, is problematic in that any evaluation undertaken within the type of evaluation framework that I argue below is needed,

will need to be able to identify clearly the elements of the SAC operation that are to be evaluated.

1.1.2 The need for a SAC evaluation framework

There are two main reasons why an informed framework for the evaluation of SACs is needed. Firstly, unlike other educational entities where the central role of evaluation has long been recognised, there has been little evaluation of SACs and even less which has been conducted in a systematic manner. Gardner (2002: 48) rightly suggests that "evaluation has taken a backseat in the development of SALL". The development of a systematic, research-based framework for the evaluation of SACs is important because:

- evaluation as a central developmental element in language learning programmes has been recognised by researchers (cf. Sheerin, 1991; Gardner & Miller, 1994, 1999) and is implicit in much of the self-access literature which describes centres and then proposes future developments based on elements of that description (Ma, 1994; Lee, 1996; Gardner & Miller, 1997); and,
- funding bodies are increasingly demanding more than simple cost-effective, budget-focused accounting from funded initiatives (Weir & Roberts, 1994).

If we are to argue that SACs provide an effective and efficient alternative or complement to the more traditionally accepted modes of language teaching, it remains a serious concern that there is no research-based framework specifically developed for the evaluation of SACs. SACs differ in many respects, both pedagogically and administratively, from other educational entities such as schools or language programmes and, therefore, frameworks developed for such entities are not necessarily appropriate for the evaluation of SACs.

A research-based evaluation framework that addresses the needs and expectations of a SAC's stakeholders would be of value in three main ways. It would:

- address central questions concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of the SACs in which it is applied;
- provide developmental support and greater face validity for those centres; and,
- be instrumental in promoting SALL as an effective and efficient mode of language learning.

1.1.3 Two theories

The development of such a framework for the evaluation of SACs in Hong Kong was initially the main aim of this study. As the study progressed, however, and for the reasons indicated above, it became clear that there was also a need for the development of a theory that explains the operation of a Hong Kong SAC. While the SAC theory has not directly informed the evaluation framework, the two constructs emerged from the same set of data and shared common concepts. This can be seen, for example, in the centrality of the learner to both constructs.

1.2 Researcher interests and concerns

Within the wider context of a need for a SAC evaluation framework, this study has also grown out of a number of real and immediate concerns relating to my involvement in the on-going development of one Hong Kong SAC: the Centre for Independent Language Learning (CILL) of the English Language Centre at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

My role in the CILL is that of co-ordinator and I have been closely involved in the development of the Centre since its inception. The primary role of the co-ordinator is to ensure that the Centre operates effectively, both pedagogically and administratively. It is through fulfilling this role that my interest in SALL has developed.

As co-ordinator, an increasing concern has been to demonstrate that the CILL is providing a valuable, effective and efficient means for students to improve their English. This concern emanates primarily from three sources. Firstly, there has been increasing pressure from the funding stakeholders (the UGC) to demonstrate effectiveness. Secondly, I believe it is important for all the staff at the Centre to be able to say with confidence that the Centre is effective. Finally, I believe we owe it to the students who entrust us with their language learning dreams to be able to tell them with full confidence that using the centre can help them achieve their goals. This concern then led me towards an interest in the field of evaluation in general and language programme evaluation in particular.

When starting to consider the question of evaluating a SAC (as opposed to a language learning programme, for example), however, the issue of what to

evaluate to which I alluded in the previous section became a concern. In a SAC, the question of what to evaluate is not easily addressed either in macro terms focusing on the centre or in micro terms focusing on individual learners. Imagine a centre where one day a SAC teacher can protest in his diary:

> Not more! In a day when we have introduced over 150 new members to the mysteries and wonders of independent language learning in the CILL; commented in over 160 diaries; found materials suitable for oral presentation practice, business report writing, pronunciation of voiced and voiceless plosives, checking the use of the present perfect simple and continuous, and identifying topic sentences; helped uncountable first-year students plan a programme of study that you suspect will get no further that the drawing board; and yet another learner asks you to edit their assignment. Now, a class teacher arriving with a group of 22 potential new members five minutes before closing is not wildly appreciated.

and can later that semester lament:

> The centre is painfully, gapingly empty except for the engrossed learner at the computer who on closer observation is manfully attempting to overcome the might of Microsoft's ancient Roman army in his re-fighting of Julius Ceasar's Mesopotamia campaign.

Imagine a centre where there is no homogeneity in terms of the aims, learning styles and linguistic levels of individual learners: where Ming, Tommy, Anna, Serena and Virgil might be said to be "typical" learners.

> Ming has come in every day for three weeks, religiously watches a movie a day, writes some new phrases in her learning diary accompanied by comments such as "nice movie" or "interesting" and then never comes again.
>
> Serena, whose English is intermediate level, has come in on average once a week for about a year. She checks her e-mail, and then continues to work her way through an elementary grammar, writing summaries of each chapter in her Learning Diary, asking no questions and commenting each time simply that she has made varying degrees of "progress".
>
> Tommy had a problem with report writing. He came and spoke to the CILL teacher who looked at one of his reports and suggested some materials to look at and that he write another draft report for the CILL teacher to look at. He wrote extensive notes in his Learning Diary about report structure, commented on how helpful the teacher was and never came back again.
>
> Anna is a very focused, diligent student who has been coming to the Centre twice a week for about 90 minutes for nearly two years. With help from the CILL teacher, she has drawn up a study plan that sets out a series of linguistic goals and target dates for their achievement. At the beginning of each session, she first reviews her work the previous session, identifies the session aim and keeps systematic notes in her learning diary.

> While she is clearly a highly independent learner, she also consults the teacher at the Help Desk whenever she has a problem or question that she cannot answer.
>
> Virgil is an intense student who comes in irregularly with a piece of writing and a list of questions to discuss with the CILL teacher. He spends as long as he can with the teacher, returning if other points arise or his session is interrupted by other learners, spends a few minutes making notes and then leaves.

It is this pedagogical and human diversity within the CILL, and the need to evaluate somehow its interaction with the centre, that was the catalyst for this study. However, I hope that the resulting evaluation framework, because of commonalities in the underlying nature of the SACs, might be applicable to a wider spectrum of centres both within and beyond the confines of Hong Kong.

1.3 An initial definition of key terms

There are two terms that, as reflected in their use in its title, are central to the study. I present here initial and broad, working definitions of these terms. The terms, and their attendant concepts, are more fully examined in the literature review in chapter two.

Evaluation

Evaluation can be viewed as a developmental or judgmental tool. In this study, the term is defined in relation to the individual viewpoints and experiences of a centre's stakeholders that combine to construct the reality of the centre.

Thus, the term *evaluation* will generally refer to **an attempt to examine the extent to which the operation of a self-access language learning centre reflects the needs, wants and expectations of the stakeholders**.

Self-access language learning centre

A self-access language learning environment could range from a high-technology, purpose-built centre to a corner of a school classroom with a box of learning materials.

In this study, the term *self-access language learning centre* will refer to **a centre with a set of language learning facilities and resources where the**

learner studies independently with varying degrees of guidance. Moreover, I only consider self-access **language learning** centres.

1.4 Study objectives

The study has five main objectives. These are to:

i) identify the defining pedagogical and systemic characteristics of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre (chapters six and eight);

ii) identify the potential rationale, content and methodology for the evaluation of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre (chapter seven);

iii) examine existing evaluation constructs for elements that could contribute to the development of a self-access language learning centre evaluation framework (chapter two);

iv) propose a framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre (chapter eight);

v) suggest areas for further research to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the evaluation of self-access language learning centres (chapter nine).

1.5 Organisation of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, in **chapter two** I provide a review of the relevant literature. In so doing, I aim both to situate the study in theoretical and methodological terms, and to address the third study objective in terms of identifying existing evaluation constructs that might contribute to the development of a SAC evaluation framework. It primarily focuses on literature relating to the three areas of evaluation, language learning and teaching, and independent learning. Within the discussion of the programme evaluation literature, a number of methodological issues are highlighted and then discussed in the following three chapters.

In **chapters three, four and five**, I outline the study framework and identify the, generally chronological, six stages of the study process. Additionally, I provide details of the process that are designed to allow the reader to better make their own judgments regarding issues relating to the trustworthiness of the research process and the resulting products. In **Chapter three,** I explain the rationale for the overall approach I have taken to the study and the underlying methodology I have employed. The rationale is explained with particular emphasis on my involvement as researcher in the study process and the various issues that this involvement raises. In **chapter four**, I discuss the first four stages of the study, focusing upon data collection and analysis. **Chapter five** provides a detailed account of the last three study stages in which the data was coded. I include a worked example that follows a piece of data through the entire process of data analysis and representation, as well as an explanation of my use of the *mapping* metaphor in addressing study objective one.

Its is in **chapters six and seven** that I present the study findings. These findings derive from data from the semi-structured interviews and subsequent e-mail questionnaires that are described in chapters four and five. In **chapter six**, I present the study findings relating to the definition of a SAC as outlined in study objective one which relates to the identification of the defining characteristics of a Hong Kong SAC. Through the analysis, I present the data in terms of: other existing educational facilities, its being a physical centre and the learning process it supports. This analysis subsequently informs the development of the SAC *mapping* that is introduced in chapters five and fully described in chapter eight. In **chapter seven**, the analytical focus is on data relating to developing the evaluation framework as outlined in study objective four. In the chapter, I examine data relating to the purpose, focus and methodology of a SAC evaluation. The analysis informs the development of the evaluation framework proposed in chapter eight.

Throughout the study, same data often inform the analysis regarding both the definition and evaluation of a SAC. This is reflected in repeated references to, and alternative interpretations of, any one particular piece of data in both chapters six and seven. My interpretation of the data is, where appropriate, related to both the relevant literature and my own experience.

In **chapter eight**, bringing together the implications derived from the data analysis of chapters six and seven, I address two major study objectives (one and four)

and introduce the two major constructs deriving from the study: the SAC mapping and the SAC evaluation framework. Finally, **in chapter nine**, I conclude the study by reviewing first the major issues raised and their implications, before addressing study objective five by suggesting directions for future research into the evaluation of SACs.

Chapter 2

Literature review - informing the study

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the literature relevant to the five study objectives presented in chapter one, section 1.4. In so doing, I aim to provide a theoretical framework within which I will consider issues relating to the definition and evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC, as well as identifying areas of potential for further research.

The three overlapping circles in Figure One below graphically represent the three areas of study that I draw upon for this literature review and my main foci within these areas. The figure is not intended to suggest that the areas are equivalent either in scope or establishment, but rather to highlight some of the inter-connections between and within the main and sub-literatures reviewed.

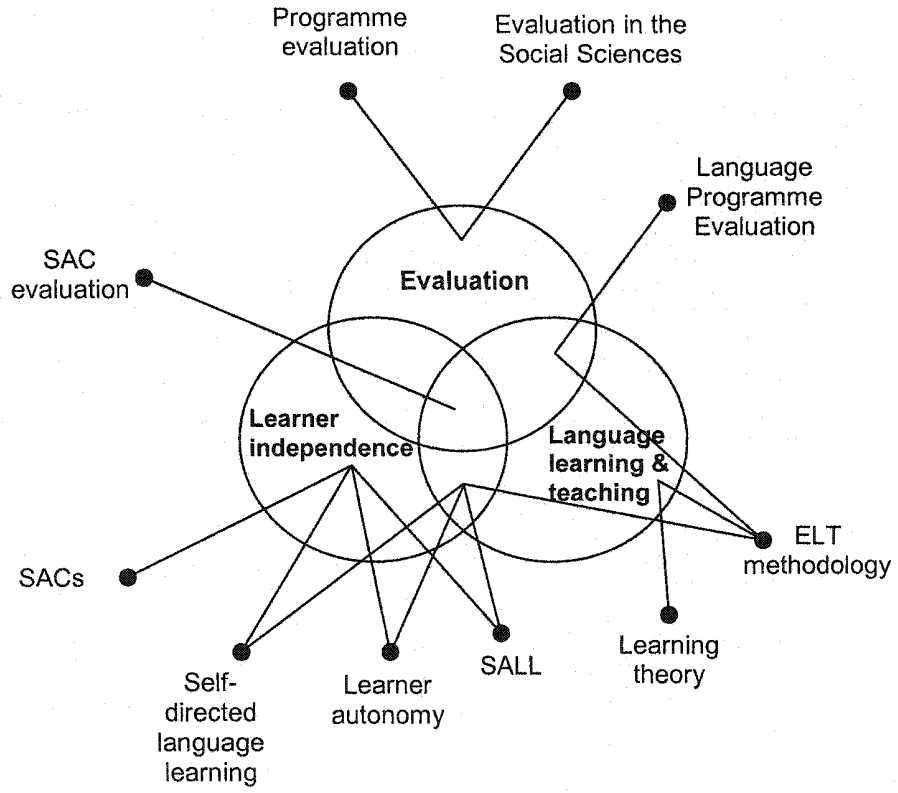


Figure 1: Literature review sources

With reference to Figure 1, in the first three sections of this chapter, I draw upon literature from the disciplines of Applied Linguistics and Education. In particular, I focus on that which relates to language learning and teaching, and that relating to the more focused area of learner independence. From this review, the notion of self-access emerges and is discussed in section 2.3. Following this, in section 2.4, in order to provide the wider study context, I consider literature from the discipline of Evaluation, specifically that relating to programme evaluation in the Social Sciences. In section 2.5, I then focus in on the area of language programme evaluation that draws upon theory and practice from the disciplines of both Applied Linguistics and Evaluation, before considering the limited literature relating directly to the evaluation of SACs. In the final section of this chapter, I highlight eleven existing evaluation constructs that I feel are of particular relevance to the primary objective of this study: the development of a framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC.

Issues I introduce in this chapter, I further discuss in subsequent chapters with reference to the literature. Those relating to research methodology are considered in chapters four and five; those relating to SALL and SACs in chapter six; and those relating to programme evaluation in chapter seven.

2.2 From English language teaching to English language learning

Stern (1983) identifies five sets of variables, all focusing on the learner, that affect language learning. These are the learning process, learner characteristics, the social context of learning, learning conditions and learning outcomes.

Prior to the 1970s, research in language learning and teaching focused primarily not on the learner but on teaching methods (Palmer, 1923; Hornby, 1950; Billows, 1961). It was in the 1970s and 1980s with the rise of the Communicative Approach in English language teaching (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Breen & Candlin, 1980; Littlewood, 1981; Brumfit, 1984) that the focus began to switch to the learning process, curriculum design and the individual learner. Richards & Rogers (1986) suggest that this was in response to the very limited role the learner played in the Audio-Lingual method which had dominated English language teaching (ELT) for the preceding 20 years. There was increasing recognition of the wider role that the learner should play in the language learning process (Johnson & Paulston, 1976; Nunan, 1988). The notions of the learner-

centred curriculum and classroom (Nunan, 1988), learning strategies (Rubin, 1975; Naiman et al., 1978; Stern, 1983) and learning skills (Rivers, 1972) became increasingly central to ELT pedagogy. There was, thus, an increasing emphasis on the learner as an individual which resulted in the emergence of more humanistic approaches to teaching such as The Natural Approach (Terrell, 1977) and Community Language Learning (Curran, 1976) and a greater recognition of the centrality of the learner in the ELT process.

This change in focus developed against the background of studies on learner characteristics (Naiman et al., 1978; Diller, 1981); individual learner differences and individualisation (Geddes & Sturtridge, 1982; Brookes & Grundy, 1988); the role of the teacher (Strevens, 1977; Geddes & Sturtridge, 1982); and the changing socio-political environment of adult education as reflected in the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project (Holec, 1981). Many educators (e.g. Dickinson, 1987; Nunan, 1988; Wenden, 1991; Aston, 1993) have argued for a more learner-centred approach to language teaching with learners taking more responsibility for their own learning and for a focus on the development of effective learning strategies (Cohen 1998; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991).

Despite the teacher-focused trends that prevailed until the late 1970s, educationalists from as early as the beginning of this century (e.g. Dewey, 1916) have recognised the importance of the notion of learner autonomy or independence. This recognition reflects wider Western philosophical and political views that the notion of autonomy lies at the core of Western democratic society (Benson & Voller, 1997; Benson, 2001). Both in the U.S.A. and in Europe, the concept of the independent learner has been a major influence in the work of educationalists such as Knowles (1975, 1980), Boud (1988a), Holec (1981, 1985a, b), Tough (1979) and Trim (1984). In many cases these writers have been influenced by more radical liberational concepts of informal education which lie outside the present institutionalised structure, and which aim to empower students to search for alternative ways to knowledge (e.g. Rogers, 1969; Freire, 1970; Illich, 1971). In the U.S.A., some of these alternatives have included *andragogy* (Knowles, 1980), *self-regulated learning* (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989) and *self-directed learning* (Knowles, 1975; Brookfield, 1985a, b; Candy, 1989). In Europe, the focus has tended to be on *individualisation* (Geddes & Sturtridge, 1982; Brookes & Grundy, 1988), *learner independence* and *learner autonomy* (Moore, 1973; Holec, 1981, 1985a; Dickinson, 1987), *self-organised learning* (Harri-

Augstein & Thomas, 1991), *resource-based learning* (Beswick, 1977; Noble, 1980), and *self-access* (Dickinson, 1987; Sheerin, 1989).

2.3 The self-access language learning centre

In this section, I start by examining some of the concepts used to explain and discuss language learning in the context of the paradigmatic shift, introduced above, from a primary focus on language teaching to one that emphasises the process of language learning. From this starting point, I continue by situating the discussion more squarely within the context of learning within a self-access learning environment before, finally, discussing the literature relating explicitly to the SAC itself.

In doing so, I contrast learning-centred notions that describe **ways** of learning (sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2) with SAC-centred notions of **the place** where the learning activity occurs (section 2.3.3).

2.3.1 Underlying concepts

Gremmo & Riley (1995) argue that the increased interest in the notion of autonomy in language learning has primarily been a reaction against the behaviourist principles which underpinned language learning and teaching prior to the rise of the Communicative Approach in ELT in the 1980s. Certainly, as introduced in section 2.2 above, the last twenty years have seen the related terms *learner autonomy*, *learner independence, self-directed learning* and *self-access* become "buzz-words" in ELT (Little, 1991: 2). Together with terms such as *self-instruction, self-study, self-regulated learning* and *self-organised learning*, they have been used in different, and sometimes confusing, ways. Some writers have, for instance, used the terms *learner autonomy* and *learner independence* synonymously (Sheerin, 1991:144; Ho & Crookall, 1995:236), while Gremmo & Riley (1995) refer to both terms separately but interchangeably when describing their origin in language teaching. Boud refers to *autonomy* as "an approach to learning" and then as something to be "fostered" (1988b: 23) which suggests something rather more organic than an approach. Dickinson warns that *learner autonomy* and *self-directed learning* could be seen as "two labels for the same phenomenon" (1978: 10). Hill (1994), in a "State of the art" article, reviews work in the areas of *autonomy*, *self-access* and *distance learning* under the umbrella term

self-managed learning. Little (1991) highlights the problem of all the terms becoming simply synonymous with a teacher-less approach to learning when he asserts that:

> Perhaps the most widespread misconception is that autonomy is synonymous with self-instruction; that it is essentially a matter of deciding to learn without a teacher.
> (Little, 1991:3)

In this next section, I will first discuss the concepts of *learner independence* and *learner autonomy* which have been central to the development of self-access as a mode of learning. I will then continue by briefly introducing three related concepts which, although not so widely referred to in the SALL literature, serve to illustrate the widely-recognised shift in education that I have identified above: away from pedagogy and towards a more learner-focused view. Finally, I will introduce *resource-based learning* as an approach to learning which underlies SALL and the development of SACs.

i) *Learner independence*

Learner independence has been defined in a number of ways. Moore (1973), for example, perceived it as a synonym for distance learning. However, it is commonly seen as a capacity for activating knowledge and abilities central to the learning process. Holec refers to it as the capacity to "take charge of one's learning" (Holec, 1980:3), while Dickinson (1995) highlights the need for learners to take "active" responsibility for the learning process. Inter alia, being independent means that learners define their learning objectives, identify the means to achieve them, and monitor and evaluate their own progress. Sheerin (1997: 57) sees it as a means to the end of effective learning and refers to it as "a complex construct of dispositions and abilities". She points out that learners will, at different stages in the learning process, be more or less teacher independent or dependent. Similarly, it seems logical to suggest that different individual learners will activate different aspects of independence in different ways, and to different degrees at different times.

While the independent learner is generally perceived as a positive role model, Rowsell & Libben (1994: 669) caution that the role is not an easy one particularly in the light of the fact that adults are "not naturally good independent learners". They argue that:

> Independent learners are often pedagogically and communicatively isolated.
> (Rowsell & Libben, 1994: 669)

Their research into the learner behaviour of thirty undergraduate university students learning a foreign language without any pedagogical support led them to the conclusion that teaching input was desirable. It should be noted, however, that their implied definition of an independent learner, i.e. one learning in isolation with no pedagogical support, is not one generally shared in the literature. Indeed, many SACs, while encouraging the development of learner independence, do so by providing considerable pedagogical support.

ii) *Learner autonomy*

Benson (2001, 2002) and Gremmo & Riley (1995) link increased interest in the concept of autonomy in language learning with an increase in the emphasis on communication, the shift from behaviorist assumptions and the development of the Communicative Approach to ELT. More specifically, Benson states that "the theory of autonomy in language learning is generally held to have emerged from the Council of Europe Modern Languages project" (Benson, 2002: 4).

Dickinson's view of *learner autonomy* as a complex notion which includes "the learner's active and independent involvement in their own learning" (i.e. *learner independence*) (Dickinson, 1995: 165) is supported by Little (1991), Ho & Crookall (1995) and Littlewood (1997). Little, reflecting Holec's (1985a) view of autonomy as being a "capacity" rather than a behaviour, refers to *autonomy* as being not a single identifiable behaviour, but rather a "set of conditional freedoms" within which the learner has the "capacity" to choose whether or not, and by how much, to seek guidance (Little, 1991: 4-5). Ho & Crookall refer to the term as "not easily defined in a concrete and tangible manner" but as one which can be characterised as requiring "certain kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Ho & Crookall, 1995: 236). These they identify as self-knowledge with regard to the learning agenda, learning management skills (for example, time management), and knowledge about the learning process and the target language. Littlewood, using Candy's (1989) definition of the autonomous person as displaying "moral, emotional and intellectual independence" (Littlewood, 1997: 59), identifies three kinds of autonomy relevant to ELT: autonomy as a learner, a communicator and as a person. Implicit in these four definitions is the notion that autonomy is not "a steady

state achieved by certain learners" (Little, 1991:4). Learners will be autonomous in some areas at some times and to some degree, depending on a number of factors related to both the learner and the learning context.

Benson (2001), echoing writers such as Dewey and Illich, recognises the political and transformative nature of autonomy, and emphasises different aspects of learner control and the social consequences these involve. He argues that a simple definition of autonomy in language learning involves control at three interdependent levels: the management of learning, the learning content and the cognitive processes. The identification of these three levels of control, together with Crabbe's (1993) recognition of the economic potential of the learner, rather than the state, being responsible for her own learning, point towards the central importance of the expectation and active encouragement of learner autonomy in the context of a SAC. In order for the learner to learn effectively within the SAC, such control, at some level is surely a pre-requisite, while, from the funder's point of view, it is unlikely that the economic potential has gone unnoticed. While Tudor (1996) suggests that learner autonomy is often "grafted onto" language learning programmes, subsequent to their initial development, the SAC predicates upon the notion of the learner both exploiting and increasing her existing level of autonomy.

Finally in this section, and of particular relevance to the SAC context, is the distinction Littlewood (1999) makes between two types of autonomy. The form of autonomy I have discussed up to this point, he refers to as *proactive autonomy*, but he perceives a second kind as a step on the way to the first which he labels *reactive autonomy*. The importance of reactive autonomy, which relies on some form of teacher control or initiation, in the Asian context lies, he argues, in its having been nurtured in Asian educational traditions. This notion of reactive autonomy also seems to reflect the type of autonomy that is encouraged in many SACs and is reflected in many of the comments made by participants in chapter six.

iii) *Self-directed learning, self-organised learning and self-regulated learning*

Self-directed learning

In the United States, the term *self-directed learning* has a long history (Knowles, 1980, Brookfield, 1985b, Candy, 1989; Gremmo & Riley, 1995), and "fits squarely into the framework of emancipatory adult education" (Hammond & Collins, 1991: 13) drawing upon nineteenth century concerns for self-

improvement and self-education. Gremmo & Riley (1991) perceive both self-directed language learning and *autonomy* in language learning as having their roots in the emergence of minority rights movements, the reaction against behaviourism, the growth of a non-scholastic approach to language learning, the dramatic increase in student numbers, and the tools provided by technological developments. Knowles (1980, 1984) uses the term *andragogy*, which he contrasts with *pedagogy*, to describe:

> ...the most important learning of them all - for both children and adults - ...learning how to learn, the skills of self-directed enquiry.
> (Knowles, 1980: 41)

Despite its radical beginnings, self-directed language learning has for the past two decades been a feature of the mainstream U.S. post-secondary education system (Mezirow, 1985; Garrison, 1992; Brookfield, 1993) and has enjoyed wide acceptance:

> There is no area of research in adult education which has received as much attention and has had so many proponents.
> (Garrison, 1992:140).

While it lacks a coherent theory, probably due, in part, to problems of multiple and sometimes conflicting definition, Garrison suggests that there is agreement that it includes "the notion of some personal control over either or both the planning (goals) and management (support) of the learning process" (Garrison, 1992:140). Thus, self-directed language learning, like *learner independence*, refers to a behaviour "where the learner assumes increasing responsibility for his or her learning" although he or she "does not necessarily undertake the implementation of these decisions alone" (Kohonen, 1992: 23). Additionally, the learner can decide the degree and type of control she wishes to exercise over the learning process and thus, while a degree of learner autonomy can be seen as a goal or product of self-directed language learning, the goal is not necessarily complete autonomy. Conversely, the behaviour can be seen as being determined by the degree of learner autonomy and/or the degree to which this capacity is exercised. Holec contrasts self-directed learning as "a skill, an ability, a know-how" with *autonomy* as "a capability, a potential" (1985a: 188).

Self-organised learning and self-regulated learning

Although not widely recognised in the language learning or self-access literature, Benson (2001) see the fields of self-organised learning and self-

regulated learning as potentially valuable for the insights they might yield into the complexities of the cognitive and affective processes activated in the development of learner autonomy.

The development, by Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991), of the concept of the *learning conversation* as a facet of self-organised learning has, however, attracted the attention of those involved in SACs. Reflecting Littlewood's (1999) notion of *reactive autonomy* (section 2.3.1, ii), Harri-Augstein and Thomas suggest that self-directed learners are unlikely to develop as autonomous learners without dialogue with skilled teachers, and this has served to reinforce the view of the teacher having a key role to play in the SAC.

The concept of self-regulated learning has derived mainly from the work of Schunk and Zimmerman (for example, Schunk and Zimmerman, 1998; Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989). They refer to self-regulated learning as a "self-directive process through which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (Schunk and Zimmerman, 1998: viii). In his open-ended, cyclical model, where the learning process is expressed in terms such as "forethought", "performance control" and "self-reflection", Zimmerman (1998) echoes elements of the SALL process (Little, 1989; Martyn, 1994; Gardner & Miller, 1999). These include the operationalisation of such meta-cognitive strategies as "planning for a language task" and "self-evaluating" (Oxford: 1990).

iv) *Resource-based learning*

The approaches to learning outlined above share a common element, a focus on the learner. Additionally, they tend to assume the learner's interaction with an information and/or learning resource other than the teacher in her traditional role. That resource may be textual (paper or screen), aural (recorded or real-time) or human interactional (face-to-face or virtual, teacher or non-teacher). Benson (2001: 113) uses the term "resource-based approaches" to describe approaches to increasing learner autonomy that include *self-access, self-instruction* and *distance learning*. He refers to *resource-based learning* as an approach where the focus is upon "the learner's interaction with learning resources".

Toffler's (1970) notion of a "knowledge explosion" has been cited as an

argument for the development of resource-based learning (Beswick, 1977). Certainly, it seems logical to perceive this development in the wider context of the increasing speed of social change; of the perceived need for "learning to learn" (Bruner, 1960); and a questioning of traditional schooling itself (Illich, 1971). Clark (1982), however, charts the origins of resource-based learning back to the post-World War Two expansion in education which was later spurred on in the West by the success of the U.S.S.R. in the Sputnik programme in the later nineteen fifties. Likewise, but perhaps less convincingly, Prostano & Prostano (1987) interpret the development of *school media centres* in the 1970s (where libraries were to provide explicit, focused support for education) in the context of the West attempting to keep pace technically and educationally with the U.S.S.R..

A problem with the use of the term *resource-based learning* is the variety of ways and contexts in which it has been defined in the past thirty years. While in the 1970s and 1980s definitions and descriptions focused on the collection and accessing of resources (e.g. Plymouth Polytechnic, 1975; Beswick, 1977; Noble, 1980; Atherton, 1980; Clark, 1982), the focus in the 1990s widened to include such references to resource-based learning as a:

- set of integrated strategies utilising specially designed resources (Ryan et al., 2000);
- "philosophy of education" manifesting itself as "a variant of distance education", and a means of inculcating "information literacy" (Centre for Staff Development, University of Western Australia, 2000);
- way of freeing teachers from lecturing in order to increase tutorial time (Jackson, 1997);
- way of "teachers and librarians working together...to plan, teach and evaluate instructional units" (Jackson, 1997:3); and,
- way for learners to develop independent learning skills (Laverty, 1998).

Increasingly, resource-based learning has also been closely associated with the developments in information technology, a "new literacy" (Breivik, 1998) and their application to learning (Staples, 1995; Jackson, 1997; Breivik, 1998; Ryan et al., 2000; Race, 2001).

Ryan et al. (2000: 30) suggest, with I feel some justification, that resource-based learning has perhaps become "an umbrella term" which "is perhaps too general for some purposes in that it blurs important distinctions...". It certainly makes it difficult to define (Healey, 1998: 8). While to an extent equating

resource-based learning with distance-learning (as do Pearson & Ford (1997) quoted in University of Western Australia, Centre for Staff Development, 2000), Staples (1995) comments that resource-based learning seems to be any way of learning without a teacher. I believe, however, that the term has a legitimacy in that its broad, inclusive brush has marked an important paradigmatic shift in education. In that context, I feel Beswick's (1977) assertion that resource-based learning is based on:

> ...the assumption that the student will learn from his own direct confrontation, individually or in a group, with a learning resource or set of resources, and activities connected with them, rather than from conventional exposition by the teacher.
> (Beswick, 1977: ix),

provides indications of the germ from which SALL was developing. Indeed, in the descriptions of early resource-based learning systems and resource centres with their aim of exposure and practice with multiple and diverse resources (Laverty, 1998), we can see the groundwork upon which the present-day self-access centres have been built (Atherton, 1980; Noble, 1980).

2.3.2 Self-access language learning

There is a generally assumed link between learner autonomy and SALL, whereby a self-access approach is seen as a natural way of nurturing autonomy in learners. The development of self-access as a concept is, however, not so directly connected to the notion of learner autonomy as might be inferred from such an assumption (Benson & Voller, 1997:9; Benson, 2002). There is indeed no necessary logical connection between autonomous learning and self-access, and no evidence that a self-access mode of learning will, in itself, help develop learner autonomy (see 2.3.3 (ii) below).

In this section, I shall consider first the development, and then the definition, of the term *self-access* before going on to introduce self-access as a mode of learning.

i) *Development of self-access*

The history of self-access can be examined from two viewpoints: either as evolving from a resource-based learning approach, or as a product of the wider developments taking place in language learning in the 1960s and 1970s. The evidence points to it having roots in both.

The technological roots of self-access have been traced back, and compared, to the development of the language laboratories of the 1950s and 1960s (Reinders, 2000a; Gremmo & Riley, 1995; Kershaw, 1993) which, although based firmly on behaviourist theories of language learning, did, like the SAC, allow for an element of individualisation (Geddes & Sturtridge, 1982; Dickinson, 1978). Individualisation in the form of language laboratory-based programmed learning gave way to interest in individualisation in relation to the development of learner autonomy (Smyth, 1978; Tumposky, 1982; Brookes & Grundy, 1988). The move in the 1970s away from the language laboratory catering solely for highly-controlled, lock-step, whole class-focused learning activities (Dakin, 1973) aided the development of "learning resource centres" (e.g. Plymouth Polytechnic, 1975; Atherton, 1980; Raddon & Dix, 1989). In these resource-focused learning centres, often housed in adapted, previously under-utilised, non-teaching areas, we can clearly see the emergence of elements of the modern-day SAC.

Sheerin (1991), on the other hand, traces the term *self-access* back to the work of educational philosophers such as Rogers (1969) and Illich (1971), to the developments in language learning and teaching noted in the sections above, as well as to advances in educational psychology. Benson (1994) highlights questions of ideology and control while considering SALL in a socio-political context. In particular, however, Sheerin (1991), and Benson (2002), trace much of the practical origins of self-access language learning primarily to the Council of Europe's work and the setting up (in the late 1960s) of the Centre de Recherches et d'Applications en Languages (CRAPEL) by Yves Chalon, one of the members of the Council of Europe Modern Languages project. It was at CRAPEL (Riley & Zoppis, 1985) and the University of Cambridge (Harding-Esch, 1982) that two of the first SACs were established.

ii) *Self-access*

The term *self-access* has been widely used, for example, in book titles and chapters such as "Self-Access" (Sheerin, 1989), "Establishing Self-Access (Gardner & Miller, 1999) and "Autonomy and self-access" (Benson, 2001). However, these authors and others when defining or describing *self-access* tend to use the term adjectivally: for example, a *self-access centre* or a *self-access approach to learning*. It is only used detachedly as a rather ill-defined, pedagogical concept (Benson, 2001) or seemingly in reference to a noun-

phrase as, for example, in Sheerin's (1989) phrase "setting up *self-access*" referring to the setting-up of a *self-access* **centre**. I will generally use the term adjectivally in conjunction with referents such as *language learning* or *centre* since I feel that it is only in conjunction with such nouns that, in most cases, it serves as a meaningful descriptor of educational entities rather than as an abstract, pedagogical concept.

iii) *Self-access language learning*

I use the term *self-access language learning* (SALL) to refer to a learner's individual and unique interaction with the various elements of the self-access language learning environment (Gardner & Miller, 1999). In this, it is distinguished from the other types of learning previously discussed since the term is used with specific reference to the learner's interaction with situated facilities (of whatever type and level of technology) that have been designed with that purpose in mind. Clearly, however, the SAC co-ordinator would hope that self-access language learners would develop the skills and capabilities of the autonomous, independent and self-directed learner, and indeed provide encouragement for them to do so. One would expect the learning process to at least be one in which learners take "more responsibility for their learning than in teacher-directed settings" (Gardner & Miller, 1997: xvii). It is this wide definition of SALL which focuses on the learning context as well as on the learning process itself that will provide the focus for this study.

The growth, in recent years, of a self-access approach to language learning can be seen in the increasing number of SACs throughout the world, particularly in Europe, South America and South-east Asia. The increasing interest is also reflected in:

- books (including Sheerin, 1989; Little, 1991; Gardner & Miller, 1994, 1997, 1999; Pemberton et al., 1996; Benson & Voller, 1997; Morrison, 1999; Benson & Toogood, 2002);
- papers in international language teaching and linguistic journals (including Sheerin, 1991; Aston, 1993; Kenny, 1993; Miller & Rogerson-Revell, 1993; Piper, 1994; Klassen, 1998; Clemente, 2001; and a special edition of System, 1995);
- international conferences (Cambridge University, 1993; The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology, 1993; King Mongkut Institute of Technology, Thailand, 1996; Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliqué (AILA) congresses, Finland 1996, Japan 1999 and Singapore 2002; as well as special interest groups focusing on related issues at the annual IATELF and JALT conferences);

- professional organisations such as the Hong Kong Association for Self-Access Learning and Development (HASALD), the AILA Scientific Commission on Learner Autonomy and various *Special Interest Groups* such as, for example, the New Zealand-based SACSIG;
- e-mail lists such as AUTO-L, PLAN and SMILE and various websites (Ref. Benson, 2001); and
- specific references to self-access language learning in published English Language Teaching material (e.g. Shepherd et al., 1992; Revell & Sweeney, 1993; Sinclair, 1996; Taylor & MacFarlane, 1997).

The increasing acceptance of self-access as a valid mode of language learning can be seen partly as a reflection of the move towards a more learner-focused approach to language education that encourages the development of greater learner autonomy: in Sheerin's (1997) terms the "ideological" goal of self-access. It is also, however, partly the result of three other developments that reflect what Sheerin sees as the "pragmatic" goals of a self-access approach. Firstly, there has been a global increase in the demand for, and commercialisation of, the learning of English as it has become the international language of commerce and technology (Gremmo & Riley, 1995; Sturtridge, 1997). Secondly, Sturtridge makes reference to some of the same factors discussed above (section 2.3.1, iv) in relation to the growth of resource-based learning. In particular, she refers to "the information explosion" and "the electronic revolution" (Toffler, 1970; Sturtridge, 1997: 66) as factors. Institutions have set up resource centres to bring together the increasing variety of technological aids available. These centres often also fulfill a role as learning centres (McDevitt, 1996; Drew & Ottewill, 1998) and in some cases developed from existing language laboratories (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). Thirdly, as Heuring (1997) has pointed out, and as is discussed in the following section, the SAC can be seen as a proto-typical post-industrial educational structure designed to meet the needs of institutions that have to deal with increasing student numbers at different stages in the life-long learning process. Knowles's (1980) reminder that the time-span for major cultural and technological change is, for the first time in history, shorter than the average life-span, reinforces the need for flexible educational structures that allow for continuing, self-directed learning. This has led Benson (1994) to suggest that the philosophy of a self-access approach to learning has tended to take second place to practical issues such as funding and student numbers. This is reflected in views that the SAC is seen as potentially a cost-effective way of addressing the changing further education environment (McDevitt, 1996; Drew & Ottewill, 1998).

2.3.3 Self-access language learning centres

The question of what actually constitutes a SAC is (as introduced in chapter one) one of the foci of this study and is, in turn, one of the two foci of the data analysis and is discussed in detail in chapter six.

The notion of a SAC has also already been briefly introduced in section 2.2.3 (iii) above. In this section, I present, from a historical perspective, an overview of the global development of SACs, before discussing the question of defining what a SAC actually is.

i) *Global development*

Heuring (1997) cites Toffler's (1980) attributes of post-industrial society when proposing that the self-access centre is a proto-typical, post-industrial educational system. As such, and as introduced previously in section 2.3.2, she argues the role of self-access in education is growing, and will continue to grow, in importance and stature as it is recognised as one way of meeting the global society's need for an increasingly, well-educated, flexible workforce. Already, an increasing acceptance of self-access as an effective mode of learning has led to great investment, in both human and financial terms, in SACs in a large number of countries. The majority of these centres have the development of learner independence either as an explicit aim or as an implicit enabling goal.

As Gardner & Miller (1999) point out, self-access in various forms and with varying degrees of impact has been introduced in many parts of the world and in a variety of educational contexts. As noted in section 2.3.2 (iii), its increasing influence can be seen in the proliferation of books, papers, conferences and study materials as well as in the number of self-access language learning initiatives that have been set up around the world. Benson and Voller observe that: "Self-access resource centres remain an important part of the language education scene, and it is likely they will continue to do so in the future" (1997: 12).

As noted in section 2.3.2 (i), amongst the first SACs to be set up were those in Europe, with well-known examples being the Open Access Sound and Video Library at the University of Cambridge (established in 1966) and the Centre de Researches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL)

(established in 1974). With the impetus gained from the work of the Council of Europe (Holec, 1980; 1981), they were followed in the 1980s and 1990s by centres set up by the British Council and other, independent language school operators (for example, Eurocentres, ref. O'Dell, 1992) to supplement existing language teaching operations in Western and later Eastern Europe. Additionally, a number of European universities (for example, the University of Bologna, Italy; the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain; the University of Lyons, France; and the University of Helsinki, Finland) developed SACs and have been involved in associated research.

The influence of the British Council and European self-access proponents such as Philip Riley and Lesley Dickinson can be seen in the rapid development of interest in self-access in South-East Asia. Countries in the region have pursued differing approaches. Hong Kong and Singapore, for example, firstly set up SACs in the tertiary sector and before turning to the primary and secondary sectors. In Malaysia and Thailand, the emphasis developed from the teacher training colleges out into the primary and secondary sectors. Malaysia set up a nation-wide network of SACs in their twenty-eight teacher education colleges with a *National Self Access Centre* in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. Initial approaches to funding have also varied with Hong Kong and Singapore investing heavily in a few high-technology oriented SACs, while Malaysia and Thailand have pursued a lower-cost option in the development of numerous self-access "corners" and dual-purpose study rooms. Self-access language learning environments can also be found in Burma, Cambodia, China and Vietnam.

In Australia and New Zealand, a major impetus for the setting-up of a variety of types of SAC has been immigration from other parts of Asia, in particular China and Vietnam. Most of these centres focus on helping migrants develop the English language skills necessary for them to function effectively in the workplace.

In South America, the British Council and the National Autonomous University (NAU) were involved, separately, in introducing self-access facilities in Mexico. The NAU developed a start-up package designed to enable all eighty Mexican universities to set up SACs. Interestingly, this initiative, from its inception, focused on the learning of French as well as English and involved Marie-Jose Gremmo from CRAPEL in Nancy, France as well as English-speaking self-

access practitioners. There are also a few, small, self-funding SACs in Brazil with evidence of growing interest seen in a number of published papers focusing on SALL issues (for example, Fernandes & Nicolaides, 2002).

Interestingly, although there are numerous IT-focused, multimedia language learning centres in the U.S.A., and (as noted in section 2.3.1, iii) the notion of *self-directed learning* is well-established, the concept of *self-access* specifically is not familiar there. To my knowledge, there are no learning centres that are designated as SACs.

ii) Towards a definition of a SAC

According to Gardner & Miller, the term *self-access centre* is generally used to refer to a pedagogical system that is designed to allow learners direct access to learning resources and is often located in a "dedicated facility in which users can study independently with varying degrees of guidance" (Gardner & Miller, 1997: xvii).

Building upon this, and my initial definition in chapter one, section 1.3, I use the term *self-access language learning centre* to refer to a place with a system of learner-accessed language learning facilities and resources (both human and non-human) where the learner studies independently with varying degrees of guidance. These resources may include support systems (both human and non-human based), technology, structured learning opportunities (for example, learning workshops), opportunities for both individual and group focused modes of learning, and learning materials. This extended definition reflects both Sheerin's (1997) "pragmatic" and "ideological" goals of a SAC (as introduced in section 2.3.2 above). It also contrasts the SAC to both a library, in terms of the SAC's learning opportunities, and the "traditional", teacher-centred school classroom, in terms of the SAC's flexibility with regard to different modes of learning (as discussed in chapter six).

Many SACs actively and explicitly guide students in the development of independent learning skills (e.g. Holec, 1985a,b; Martyn, 1994; Cotterall & Reinders, 2002). However, the definition I use for this study deliberately places only a secondary emphasis upon the development of independent learning (IL) skills. I feel we should consider carefully what the role of a SAC can and should be, and we should be ready to distinguish, in Kershaw's (1993) words, the "fads" from the "facts". Benson (2001), Benson & Voller (1997), Sheerin

(1991, 1997) and Littlewood (1997) have pointed out that there is no necessary causal link between a SAC and the promotion or development of learner autonomy through encouraging self-directed language learning strategies: "Self-access, then, is not the same as self-direction" (Sheerin, 1991: 144). Referring back to the discussion of SALL in section 2.3.2 above, the approach of CRAPEL can be seen as one example of a SAC within which there is such a flexible learning environment. CRAPEL's approach to learner autonomy and self-directed learning is based on the learner having three options:

1. The choice of the acquisition of autonomy as an objective
2. The choice of self-directed learning with support as a means of reaching this objective
3. The choice of making self-direction possible but not obligatory

(Holec, 1985a:190).

Various studies have described SACs in different countries and certain common elements can be identified. Blaker & Burns (2000), for example, investigating 22 SACs in Australia, England, Hong Kong and New Zealand discovered a number of commonalities. These included the observations that the SACs:

- are generally separate entities and not part of a library (72% of respondents);
- include both open-plan and enclosed areas (64%);
- tend to be less than 200 square metres in size (72%);
- open at least 40 hours per week (68%); and;
- are operated with a permanent staff of less than three (77%).

The differences that Blaker & Burns discovered, they tend to ascribe to financial rather than pedagogical factors. Their findings would seem to also generally reflect the SACs in Hong Kong and others elsewhere with which I am familiar. It would seem that despite geographical and cultural differences, there is a notion developing of what a SAC is, or should be. Such commonality might include the encouragement of learner autonomy, systematic storage of, and access to, materials, the provision of a SAC teacher or counsellor, and certain design features (Miller, 1992; Gardner & Miller, 1997 & 1999; Reinders, 2000b; Kwan, 2002).

However, while some commonality can be identified, it is important to remember that the notion of SALL, and thus a SAC, predicates on choice and

individualisation. In Asia, questions have been raised concerning the generally assumed connection in the West between SACs and the development of learner autonomy for students in non-Western cultures. While not attacking the concept of the SAC, Riley (1988), Farmer & Sweeney (1994) and Jones (1995), referring to centres in Cambodia, Vietnam and Hong Kong, have suggested the need to be culturally sensitive and to allow knowledge of each particular cultural context to inform their development.

What is clear from my experience, is that each SAC is unique in terms both of its constituent elements and the way in which these interact with the individual learner and with each other. One of my concerns in this study is, within the Hong Kong context, to reflect such diversity while at the same time looking for commonality in terms of the provision of a definition as an evaluation focus.

2.3.4 Conclusion

Self-access as a mode of learning is a developing area that is still defining itself in relation to other ever-changing areas within the disciplines of Applied Linguistics and Education. As such, it is hardly surprising that there should be some lack of clarity and consistency in the use of related terms. Clearly, however, there are common, defining threads that are emerging as the concept of self-access moves into the mainstream in education throughout much of the world.

It is generally recognised that self-access has developed from changes that have occurred within the disciplines of Applied Linguistics and Education, as well as from wider changes in technology and in society itself. The literature clearly presents a picture of an area that has as its foundation the notions of individual learner choice, control and management of the learning process, together with the attendant responsibility that these imply. It also recognises the centrality of resources (and the learner's patterns of interaction with these) to the learning process. It is, therefore, necessary for any SAC definition and evaluation framework to reflect these features.

2.4 Programme evaluation

2.4.1 Introduction

Central to this study is an examination of existing theories and models of programme evaluation, and their potential application (either in whole or in part) to the pedagogical and situational context of the study. Despite a number of books, journal articles and evaluation reports published in the last fifteen years, the amount of literature focusing on evaluation in the field of language learning and teaching (as discussed in section 2.5 below) remains relatively small. By contrast, the discipline of evaluation has been examined and discussed at great length with relation to various other disciplines such as, for example, Education, Business and Sociology.

Evaluation, when considered as "a decision about the significance, value, or quality of something, based on a careful study of its good and bad features" (Sinclair, 1995) is central to, and as diverse in its various forms as, all human undertakings (Scriven, 1991). As Rea-Dickens & Germaine (1992) recognize, mankind has always been involved in processes of evaluation both simple (deciding, for example, if one should eat this fruit or that) and complex (such as those decisions related to relationships and emotional judgment).

Formal evaluation has a history stretching back at least 2000 years to personnel selection in China, through the Age of Reform in Britain, large-scale U.S. Federal government evaluations after World War Two, the U.S. "Great Society" social programmes, to today's increasing demand for programme accountability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Madaus et al., 1983b; Madaus & Stufflebeam, 2000; Worthen & Sanders, 1987). Evaluations have, amongst other things, been conducted on school systems, social reforms, defence spending, AIDS prevention programmes and educational curricula. In the light of such diversity, it is not surprising that the scope of the discipline is panoramic as evidenced by the large number of evaluation models that have been developed, each with very differing views of evaluation, goals, methods and techniques (Ref. Appendix 1 for some examples).

The act of evaluation itself has been defined in a range of ways, including:

- in terms of objectives:

  > The process of evaluation is essentially the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are actually being realised...
  > (Tyler, 1949: 105);

- in terms of judging the "value" or "worth" of a programme:

  > Evaluation is the determination of the worth of a thing. It includes obtaining information for use in judging the worth of a program...
  > (Worthen & Sanders, 1973: 19);

- in terms of stakeholder interests:

  > Evaluation is a mechanism for reality-testing stakeholder assumptions.
  > (Patton, 1986:156);

- as a developmental tool that is seen as an integrative part of a programme or curriculum:

  > ...the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of the curriculum...
  > (Brown, 1989:223);

- and in terms of individual "empowerment":

  > ...the use of evaluation concepts, techniques and findings to foster improvement and self-determination...to help people help themselves...
  > (Fetterman, 1997:382).

I review the major developments in this complex discipline in order to provide an informed conceptual framework within which I might then conduct my discussion regarding the possible use of existing programme evaluation models in the evaluation of a SAC. I briefly situate the discipline historically with reference to wider socio-philosophical issues that are of particular relevance to the discussion (in chapter three) relating to the approach and underlying methodology of this study. I then identify six major approaches to evaluation and some of the models that characterise them, in order to contextualise later discussion of language programme evaluation in section 2.5 below, and chapters seven and eight. Finally, I discuss six issues that I see as central to the nature of educational evaluation studies and which, to a large extent, have guided both the analysis reported in chapter seven and the development of the evaluation framework reported in chapter eight.

The following six questions, central to programme evaluation, are based on those of Nevo (1986). They underpin this review and provide guidance for the PhD study as a whole:

1. What is evaluation?
2. What are the functions of the evaluation?
3. What data are necessary for the evaluation process?
4. Who is the target audience of the evaluation?
5. What methodology should be employed in the evaluation?
6. Who should undertake the evaluation?

2.4.2 Historically situating the discipline

In this section, I outline the historical development of evaluation theory in terms of, firstly, seven identifiable "ages" and, secondly, four philosophical schools of thought that can be seen to have influenced this development. In the following overview, I aim to introduce some key themes in the development of the discipline, some of which will then be discussed further in section 2.4.3.

Seven ages of evaluation
As illustrated in Figure 2 (following), Madaus et al. (1983b) and Madaus & Stufflebeam (2000) identify seven "ages" in the development of evaluation theory.

The first, in the 19th century, the *Age of Reform*, was, in many ways, a product of the industrialisation of both Europe and the U.S.A.. It was characterised by the impressionistic, informal evaluation of social reforms undertaken in Great Britain and school evaluations in the U.S.A.. Following this, the rise of the social sciences, the emergence of a scientific approach to management in business and industry, and the need for screening tests for World War One draftees were among the factors that led to the wide-scale development of tests to evaluate personnel that characterised the *Age of Efficiency and Testing* from 1900-1930. The *Tylerian Age* (1930-1945) reflected the behavioural, scientific outlook of the time with Tyler (1949) defining evaluation in descriptive terms as being a process to determine whether measurable objectives were being achieved.

The *Age of Innocence* (1946-1957) marked a rather ineffective period characterised by a more technical approach to evaluation (Madaus et al., 1983b). The development of large-scale evaluation projects marked the *Age of Expansion* (1958-1972) with the late 1960s and 1970s seeing a spate of evaluation models

being developed, including Stake's "Countenance Model" (1967, 1975), Stufflebeam's CIPP (1971), and Scriven's "Goal-free Evaluation" (1971a, b).

The *Age of Professionalisation* (1973-1983) witnessed the emergence of evaluation as a profession. Evaluation design reflected an increased questioning of the objective perspective of the Positivist paradigm and the rejection of the notion of science being "value-free". Evaluation theorists and practitioners such as Dressel (1976), Popham (1972), Scriven (1971a, b) and Worthen & Sanders (1973) defined evaluation in terms of determining the "worth" or "value" of a programme. The process of professionalisation is reflected in the current state of the discipline, which is in turn seen in, for example:

- the range of professional publications such as *Evaluation*, *Evaluation Review*, *Evaluation & Program Planning*, and *Evaluation & Research in Education*;
- the number of degree and non-degree programmes offered in evaluation at universities and training institutes worldwide;
- the number of evaluation-related professional organisations;
- the continuing development of professional standards (for example, *The Joint Committee on Standards for Evaluation* and U.K. *The Office for Standards in Education*); and,
- the setting up of professional discussion forums such as *EVALTALK* (the American Evaluation Association e-mail discussion list), *GOVTEVAL* (an international e-mail forum for those involved in public sector evaluation) and the *EVALTALK* World Wide Web site.

Finally, Madaus et al. (1983b) perceive the last two decades as marking the *Age of Expansion and Integration*. In 1980, Cronbach & Associates called for:

> ...a reformation in evaluation, a thoroughgoing transformation...to facilitate a democratic and pluralistic process by enlightening all the participants... (Cronbach & Associates, 1980: 1);

and this was to signal a change in how the process of evaluation was viewed. There has been an increasing emphasis in the 1980s and 1990s on the systematic collection of a wide range of data, collected according to varied methods and research designs with stakeholder participation (e.g. Patton, 1986, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). This trend reflects increasing acceptance of a constructivist world-view (Candy, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) which rejects the existence of a single objective "reality". Evaluation now tends to be defined in terms of being a process of negotiation with the product as a starting point for further negotiation. In this, evaluation is seen as a multifaceted, developmental, interpretive, strongly context-dependent process that

involves stakeholders at all stages. It has also provided the philosophical basis for the development of evaluation theories with their commitment to honesty, fairness and social justice (Chelimsky & Shadish, 1997).

As indicated in Figure 2 (below), Shadish et al. (1991), examining the period which spans the last three of these "ages", further identify three "stages" in the development of evaluation theory in the social sciences. They suggest that the first of these, characterised by the work of evaluators such as Scriven (1967) and Campbell (1963), involves the search for an underlying "truth" about a programme and emphasises a scientific approach to evaluation. The second stage (e.g. Stake, 1975) focuses more on the users of the evaluation and is characterised by a much wider and diverse range of alternative evaluation tools. The work of Cronbach (1982) and Rossi (1979), reflecting Madaus et al.'s final "age", is presented as an example of the third stage that is described as a period of attempted integration of the approaches of stages one and two.

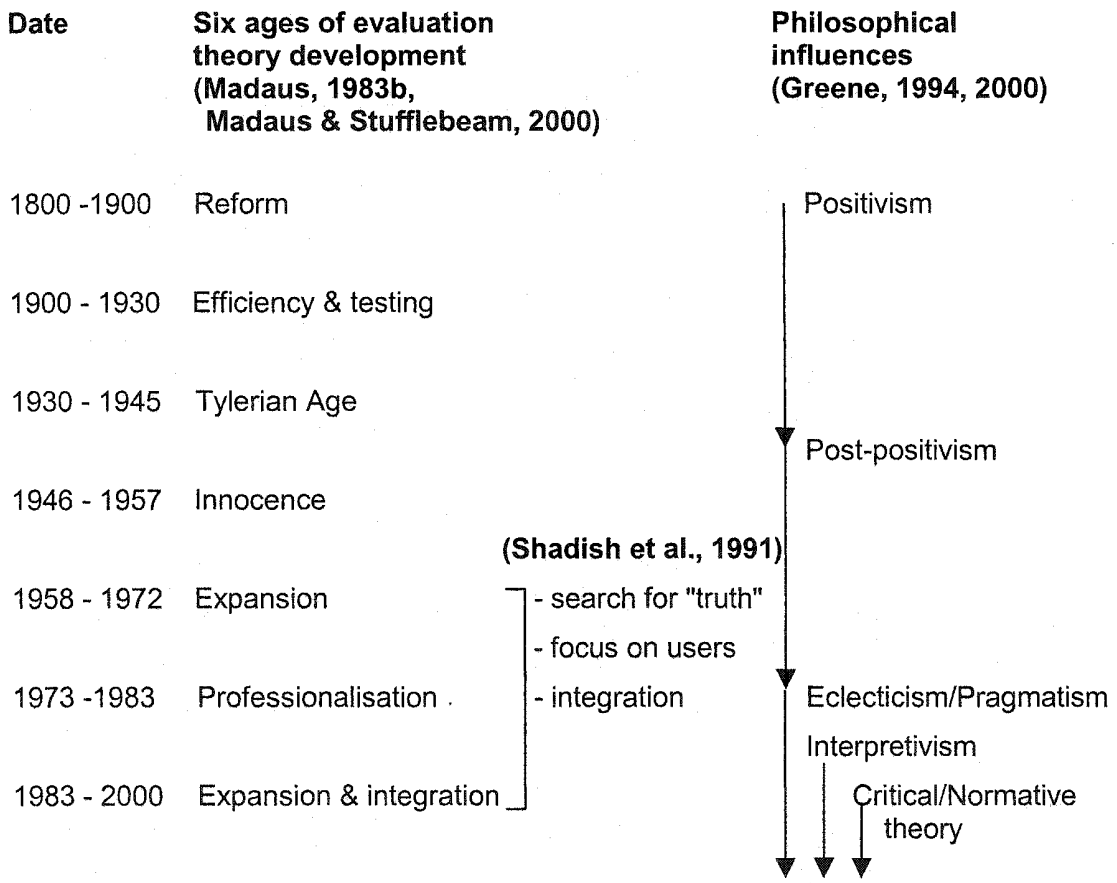


Figure 2: The seven ages of evaluation theory development

Four philosophical schools of thought

One can see reflected in the "ages" identified above and approximately indicated in Figure 2 the influence of the four philosophical schools of thought that Greene (1994, 2000) identifies as historically influencing programme evaluation.

1. The influence of *positivism* and later *post-positivism* emphasises the measurement and judgement of programme effectiveness and cost-efficiency, and is seen in many of the evaluations and the literature up to (and including) the 1970s. The evaluator is to be independent from the programme and employ experimental or quasi-experimental methods, most often to make "go/no go", "fund/not fund" decisions.

2. *Eclecticism* or *pragmatism*, referred to by Greene as "taking off the white lab coat" (Greene, 1994:534) or by Denzin & Lincoln as "blurred genres" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a: 15), was a response to the perceived inability of experimental science to provide the practical data necessary for informed decision-making. Evaluators tend to select the method that is felt appropriate to the particular programme rather than adhering to a particular philosophical stand-point and focus on providing the information needed for ensuring programme quality.

3. Guba & Lincoln's *Fourth Generation*, or *Responsive Constructivist*, evaluation model (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) with its grounding in a multiple-reality, constructivist view of knowledge (Candy, 1989; Fishman, 1992) clearly falls within the genre of *interpretivism*. In these models, qualitative methods such as case studies, observations and interviews are employed to evaluate the programme with reference to the stakeholders' point of view.

4. The fourth, emerging school which seeks to place evaluation in a new political context is a *critical/normative* one. The chapter titles in the table of contents of the 1997 book "Evaluation for the Twentieth Century" (Chelimsky & Shadish, 1997) give an idea of the concerns of the approach with the emphasis on openly ideological enquiry and issues such as justice, minority rights, empowerment and democracy. It is subjectivist with no separation between the evaluator and the evaluated, it recognises "truth" to be contextually determined, and "is also dialectic, for the process of meaning construction transforms the constructors" (Greene, 1994: 536). Its influence can be seen,

for example, in the clear identification of women's issues in reports for non-governmental organisations such as the British Council or UNDP.

2.4.3 Major approaches to programme evaluation

Having, in the previous section, considered evaluation in general and from a historical perspective, in this section, I discuss some of the major approaches to programme evaluation in particular, and their identifying features.

Various classifications of approaches in evaluation have been developed (e.g. Alkin, 1972; House, 1983; Worthen & Sanders, 1987; Brown, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Polland, 1989; Nunan, 1992; Shadish et al., 1991; Stake, 2000; Stufflebeam, 2001) and there are clearly differences and over-lap both in interpretation and classification. In Figure 3 below, with reference to five existing taxonomies (Worthen & Sanders, 1987; House, 1983; Brown, 1989; Stake, 2000; Stufflebeam, 2001), I attempt to group together into six overarching approaches some of the major evaluation models, their proponents and their identifying features. It is recognised that the explanatory power of a taxonomy can be weak in that there is a danger that certain issues can be overlooked and certain individual approaches cannot be conveniently categorised. As evaluation becomes increasingly diverse in its operation (Chelimsky & Shadish, 1997), it becomes increasingly difficult to overview the discipline meaningfully but briefly: Stufflebeam's (2001) taxonomy, for example, lists twenty-two evaluation approaches. The difficulties can be illustrated in the case of classifying Patton's (1986) *Utilization-focused* model which in involving users in the evaluation process, reflects a Responsive approach, while his "concern for how decision-makers...will use evaluation... findings" (Patton, 1987: 254) clearly reflects a Decision-facilitation approach. However, I believe that this table, within the context of this study, serves as a summarising overview of some of the major themes which have informed the development of the discipline of evaluation. It will also inform the development of the evaluation framework that is to evolve from this study. I use *approach* as a broad, descriptive, organisational term and *model* as the operational term.

The six major approaches, which are identified in terms of their impact on the ongoing development of the discipline, are listed in the first column of the taxonomy in Figure 3 with an example of a model or models that could be included within such an approach in column 2. Column 3 lists some of the types of

methodological tools commonly used in such evaluations, and column four summarises some distinguishing features and aims for each approach.

Approach	Example models & proponents	Example evaluative tools	Features
Systems	System model - Rossi et al.. (1979, 1999) - Scriven (1991)	Cost benefit analysis	Investigates how components of a programme interact and have implications for planning. **Aims**: measurement of effectiveness and efficiency.
Objectives/goals	Tylerian model - Tyler (1949) Discrepancy model - Provus (1971)	Behavioural objectives Achievement tests Discrepancy analysis	Evaluator identifies and classifies programme goals, states specific objectives, assesses performance and compares analysis of results with objectives. **Aim**: measurement of degree of achievement of objectives/goals
Goal-free	Goal-free model - Scriven (1971a, 1971b)	A variety - qualitative and quantitative	Evaluator examines what happens in a programme with ref. to participant needs - not programme goals. **Aim**: description and judgement of degree to which programme effects are meeting participant needs
Decision-facilitation	CIPP model - Stufflebeam (1971) UCLA model - Alkin (1969) Theory-based evaluation - Weiss (1997, 2000), Chen & Rossi (1989)	Surveys Questionnaires Interviews	Four foci: context, input, process and product. **Aim**: provision of information for decision-makers.
Expert	Professional Review Panels - Worthen & Sanders (1987) Educational Connoisseurship - Eisner (1976)	Panel review	A critical review by a panel of experts (internal and/or external). **Aim**: improvement of standards and/or accreditation/certification
Responsive	Responsive model - Stake (1975, 1977) Transactional model - Rippey (1973) Illuminative model - Partlett & Hamilton (1977) Naturalistic evaluation - Guba (1987), Guba & Lincoln (1981, 1997) Process model - Patton (1986) Participatory model - Alderson & Scott (1992), Cousins & Earl (1995a,b) Utilization-focused model - Patton (1986, 1997), Ginsberg (2001) Empowerment evaluation - Fetterman (1997) Realistic Evaluation - Pawson & Tilley (1997)	Observation Case studies Interviews Focus groups	Qualitative, participant-oriented approach with emphasis on description from varied data sources recording multiple realities. **Aims:** these will vary but will generally be developmental and include illuminating problems from the participants' viewpoints.

Figure 3: A taxonomy of approaches to evaluation

i) *Systems approach*

The *System* model (Rossi, Freeman & Wright: 1979) focuses heavily upon the economic factors influencing programme planning. It sets out to answer questions relating to policy-makers' concerns such as whether a programme is cost-effectively reaching the target population. The emphasis is on "hard", quantitative data (Ho, 1993) which is used to judge the success of the programme in cost-benefit terms rather than the quality of the process. Weiss (1972) argues that a weakness of such an approach is that the breakdown of the programme into systemic elements does not permit an overall judgment of the programme as a whole.

ii) *Objectives/goals approach*

First developed by Tyler (1942, 1950) in the context of the positivist paradigm, the objectives/goal approach involves the identification of explicit, measurable programme objectives, and compares and validates these against performance data to determine the extent to which they have been achieved. Provus (1971) later developed the model with a view to facilitating the evaluation of educational programmes in the U.S. public school system. His *Discrepancy* model identifies the programme standards, determines if a gap exists between them and performance, and then uses that information to change either the standards or the performance.

Worthen & Sanders (1987) argue that the strength of an objectives/goals approach lies in its simplicity, it being easily comprehended and implemented. There are, however, a number of objections, for example, the problem both of defining and interpreting objectives (Stenhouse, 1970), and dealing with "complex" or "unpredictable" outcomes (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977: 25). Finally, (and crucially when considering evaluation in the context of a SAC), the model ignores unplanned outcomes (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977; Worthen & Sanders, 1987).

iii) *Goal-free*

Scriven's (1971a, b) *Goal-free evaluation* model takes issue with Tyler's pre-ordinate, objectively-focused approach in order to suggest that:

> It's the evaluator's job to look for effects the experimenter (or producer etc.) did not expect or notice. The so-called 'side effects', whether good or bad, often wholly determine the outcome of the evaluation.
> (Scriven, quoted in Partlett & Hamilton, 1977: 135)

Patton (1986) suggests that Scriven wants the evaluator to avoid becoming involved in the task of identifying, often ill-defined and vague programme goals, and instead to focus on whether the actual effects of a programme effectively meet users' needs. Despite this seemingly antithetical approach to evaluation, Worthen & Sanders (1987: 75) suggest an objectives/goal oriented approach and a goal-free approach are "not mutually exclusive" and can be used to "supplement one another" to ensure a well-rounded evaluation. Although represented by a single model, the historical importance of this approach is in the effect that the notion of an non objectives-focused evaluation has had on the development of the discipline.

iv) *Decision-facilitation/management-oriented*

Included in this approach are three models, two of which (the CIPP and UCLA models) are similar in nature while the third (theory-based evaluation) is very different but shares a similar aim, that of assisting administrators in making informed decisions regarding improvements to be made to the programme.

In the *Context, input, process and product*, or CIPP, model (Stufflebeam, 1971; Stufflebeam et al., 1971), evaluation is a "process of delineating, obtaining and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives" (Stufflebeam et al., 1971: 43). Within the model's four evaluation types, the process evaluation focuses on programme implementation through the use of tools such as observation and interviews, while the product evaluation considers the extent to which programme objectives have been achieved (Alderson & Beretta, 1992). Worthen & Sanders (1987) identify Alkin's (1969) UCLA model as a development of the CIPP model.

In *Theory-based evaluation*, deriving from work by Weiss (1972), Wholey (1979, 1987), and Chen and Rossi (1980, 1983), the evaluation is based on the programme theory: "the construction of a plausible and sensible model of how a program is supposed to work" (Bickman, 1987: 7). The aim of such an evaluation is, in the light of the programme theory, to determine the reasons for its success or failure and provide decision-makers with suggestions for its improvement (Stufflebeam, 2001). It thus serves both judgmental and developmental functions.

A potential problem with this approach to evaluation can be seen in the development of the programme theory and the underlying assumption that the

variables within the programme can be related in a cause-effect manner. Chen (1990) reports disagreement among evaluators concerning this issue and Stufflebeam (2001: 39) dismisses theory-based evaluation on the grounds that "doing it right is not normally feasible". However, using Weiss's (1997) definition, the model would seem to be of potential value to SAC evaluation in the light of a lack of a commonly recognised set of evaluation parameters for, or indeed even a clear understanding of, the processes at work in such centres since:

> Theory-based evaluation examines the conditions of program implementation and mechanisms that mediate between processes and outcomes as a means to understand when and how a program works. (Weiss, 1997: 41)

Chen & Rossi (1989) argue that evaluations are more likely to be useful if they are based on programme theory rather than on evaluation design and/or methods. Lipsey & Pollard (1989: 317) contrast the theory-based approach to an "atheoretical or 'black-box'" approach which, given its pre-ordained nature, may overlook critical programme features. This view supports that of Wholey (1987):

> In the absence of clear theory that is grounded both in program reality and in the expectations of those who have greatest influence over the program, it is difficult to design evaluations that will be sufficiently relevant and conclusive to be used to improve program performance. (Wholey, 1987: 79)

It is this view of programme theory as supporting formative evaluation functions that Rogers et al. (2000) see as an important feature of the use of a programme theory-based approach to small-scale evaluations.

Chen and Rossi (1989: 301), referring to Lipsey & Pollard (1989), identify three sources for the development of programme theory: prior research, programme-focused research and the identification of stakeholders "implicit program theory". Similarly, Pawson & Tilley (1997) stress the need for evaluators to pay close attention to the programme mechanism, context and outcome, while Dahler-Larsen (2001) argues that including **emergent** contextual factors in the evaluation is also important. Thus, he suggests a lesser focus on the programme itself and that more sensitivity be shown towards the interaction between the programme and its context.

v) *Expert*

The two evaluation models I have included as examples of this approach are *Professional review panels* (Worthen & Sanders, 1987) and *Educational connoisseurship* (Eisner, 1976).

The *professional review panel* is widely used and takes a number of forms including formal or informal, and ongoing or ad hoc (Worthen & Sanders, 1987). It can also include an accreditation element such as that provided for language schools in the U.K. by the Accreditation Unit of the British Council. Such an evaluation often takes the form of the external panel verifying a self-report conducted by the institution under review (Stufflebeam, 2001).

The notion of *connoisseurship* evaluation, initially developed for the field of art criticism (Stufflebeam, 2001; Worthen & Sanders, 1987), is based upon the notion of the evaluator's expertise in the area of the evaluation. Rossi & Freeman (1993) argue that this dependence on the evaluator's expertise raises questions concerning the reliability of such evaluations. Addressing this point, Krushner (2000) argues that the evaluation audience should have confidence in the evaluator as a "portrayer" but not as a judge of the significance of her portrayal. Rossi & Freeman (1993) continue despite their misgivings, however, to explain that cost implications and/or urgent need, particularly for small-scale programmes, may sometimes make this type of evaluation the most practicable.

vi) *Responsive/participative*

Although I have included in this approach a number of different models, there are common themes informing them all. This commonality is perhaps best illustrated by Hamilton et al.'s (1977: 235) description of some of these models having " a family resemblance, not an enclosed orthodoxy guided by tacit uniformity of practice". This "resemblance" is expressed by Stecher & Davis (1987), quoted in Ho (1993), in terms of:

> ...the only meaningful evaluation (being) one that seeks to understand an issue from the multiple perspectives of all people who have a stake in the programme.
> (Stecher & Davis, 1987: 36)

Responsive evaluation

A responsive approach is naturalistic and participative, and aims to *respond* to the needs and questions of a non-specialist audience by understanding a programme from different perspectives.

Worthen & Sanders (1987) and Stufflebeam (2001) both trace the development of *Responsive Evaluation* back to the early work of Robert Stake. Stake's (1967) *Countenance model* had no pre-specified evaluation design but rather aimed to evolve in the light of "the unfolding concerns of the stakeholders" (Alderson & Beretta, 1992: 16). Stake (1975, 1983) further developed the notion of a less formal, client-centred approach based on equity and fairness which is "responsive" to the realities of the programme and the views and perspectives of the stakeholders rather than being pre-ordinate in design (Figure 4, following). Some of the models that have further developed this approach are listed as examples in Figure 4. These include *Participatory evaluation* (Alderson, 1994; Alderson & Scott, 1992; Huberman, 1995), Patton's (1986, 1987, 1997) *Utilization-focused evaluation* and the notion of *Naturalistic (*or *Constructivist) evaluation* (Guba, 1987; Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stufflebeam, 2001).

Participatory evaluation

While a participatory approach to evaluation is one that has recently been more widely embraced, it is by no means a new idea. In addition to John Dewey emphasising the need for teachers and students to be involved in the process of school research, Tyler, the "father" of the objectives approach, in 1942, stressed in his sixth "assumption" underlying the practice of evaluation the need for:

> ...the participation of teachers, pupils and parents...[in evaluation since] they all have a stake in the educational program...Finally, the development of an increasing degree of self-evaluation is in itself a major goal of democratic evaluation.
> (Tyler, 1942: 497)

According to Alderson (1994), an evaluation is participatory when:

> ...the decision-making and planning...as well as its execution and reporting, is shared amongst all those involved in the project being evaluated, as well as by an outsider commissioned for the purpose.
> (Alderson,1994: 2)

Cousins & Earl (1995c) and the Charities Evaluation Services (1998), stress that the amount and depth of participation, and control by participants, depends on various factors including their expertise, availability and ability to disseminate feedback. Gregory (2000) supports both these views when she identifies the **active** involvement of **all** stakeholders in the design, data interpretation and utilisation stages of the evaluation as key to success. This last factor reflects the importance placed on the effective utilisation of evaluation findings (Cousins & Earl, 1995a) and is an issue further discussed below with reference to Patton's (1978) *Utilisation-focused* model.

Gregory (2000), with reference to Flynn (1992) identifies "four key arguments" that support the notion of a participatory approach to evaluation, in that it:

- is ethical in so much as people have the right to control their own lives;
- is expedient since involving stakeholders lessens the possibility of their wanting to subsequently interfere with the findings;
- includes expert knowledge which is vital to inform decisions; and,
- motivates, since participation in the decision-making process is more likely to lead to effective and efficient implementation.

There have, however, been a number of criticisms of a participatory approach focusing on issues including: a lack of evidence of successful implementation (Gregory, 2000); the degree of subjectivity (Worthen & Sanders, 1987); the cost in terms of evaluator and other participants' time (Charities Evaluation Services, 1998; Worthen & Sanders, 1987); and the raising of unrealisable expectations (King, 1995; Charities Evaluation Services, 1998). Huberman (1995) refers to participatory evaluation as "a noble but elusive construct" (104) and one in which "the evaluation may matter less than the collaboration established during the evaluation - the linkages" (110).

Utilisation-focused evaluation

Patton's *Utilisation-focused evaluation* (1978, 1986, 1997) was developed in response to the perceived problem of the under-use of evaluation findings (Chelimsky & Shadish, 1997; Owen & Rogers, 1999), and:

> ...begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use; therefore, evaluators should facilitate the evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that is done, *from beginning to end*, will affect its use.
> (Patton, 1997: 20)

As with the participatory model, it requires active involvement of the programme users, and recognises their multiple and varied interests: it is this type of active involvement that Gregory (2000) is sceptical always occurs. Patton (1986) sees three stages in such an evaluation: identifying the programme users, defining the evaluation focus, and then selecting the evaluation methodology. He stresses that utilisation-focused evaluation is "not a formal model" but rather "a creative and responsive set of options" (Patton, 1987: 254).

Forss et al. (2001) extend the notion of utilisation to include the evaluation use that occurs during the evaluation process itself, arguing that this would cost-effectively increase the utility of the evaluation. This concept is reflected in the title of a paper by Hopkins & West (2002): "Evaluation as school improvement". Within the context of U.K. school focused evaluation, they argue that for an increasing focus on "evaluation **for** school improvement" and "evaluation **as** school improvement", and less on "evaluation **of** school improvement" (Hopkins & West, 2002: 97 - my emphasis).

Naturalistic evaluation

Guba & Lincoln (1989), emphasising their view that evaluation is not the scientific process that has been assumed in earlier approaches, propose their *Fourth generation evaluation* based on a responsive approach and a constructivist or interpretivist methodology which focuses explicitly on stakeholder claims, concerns and issues.

While the four examplars of a responsive/participative approach discussed above and the others noted in Figure 3 above differ in a number of ways, their "resemblance" is in their pluralistic, flexible, non-excluding approach which can be seen as reflecting a more realistic view of a complex reality. There has been an increasing acceptance of the value of an eclectic approach that can include the widest range of viewpoints, interests and appropriate methods (Chelimsky, 1997; Cook, 1997; Schalock, 2001; Stufflebeam, 2001). Although certain more recent evaluation models such as *Empowerment evaluation* (Fetterman, 1997) and *Realistic evaluation* (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) can be specifically identified, they can generally be viewed as developments of the models that have been grouped together under the "responsive" label. Rather than representing new approaches to evaluation, they can be seen as developments reflecting a changing socio-

political context. A further development, that of *self-evaluation* is discussed in section 2.4.4 (iii) below.

Although the actual relationship between the various approaches and models is complex, they can be seen as in Figure 4 below as generally progressing from the more pre-ordinate, less consensual, more efficiency-based and more objectively-focused to the more responsive, more consensual, more developmental and more subjectively-focused (House, 1983).

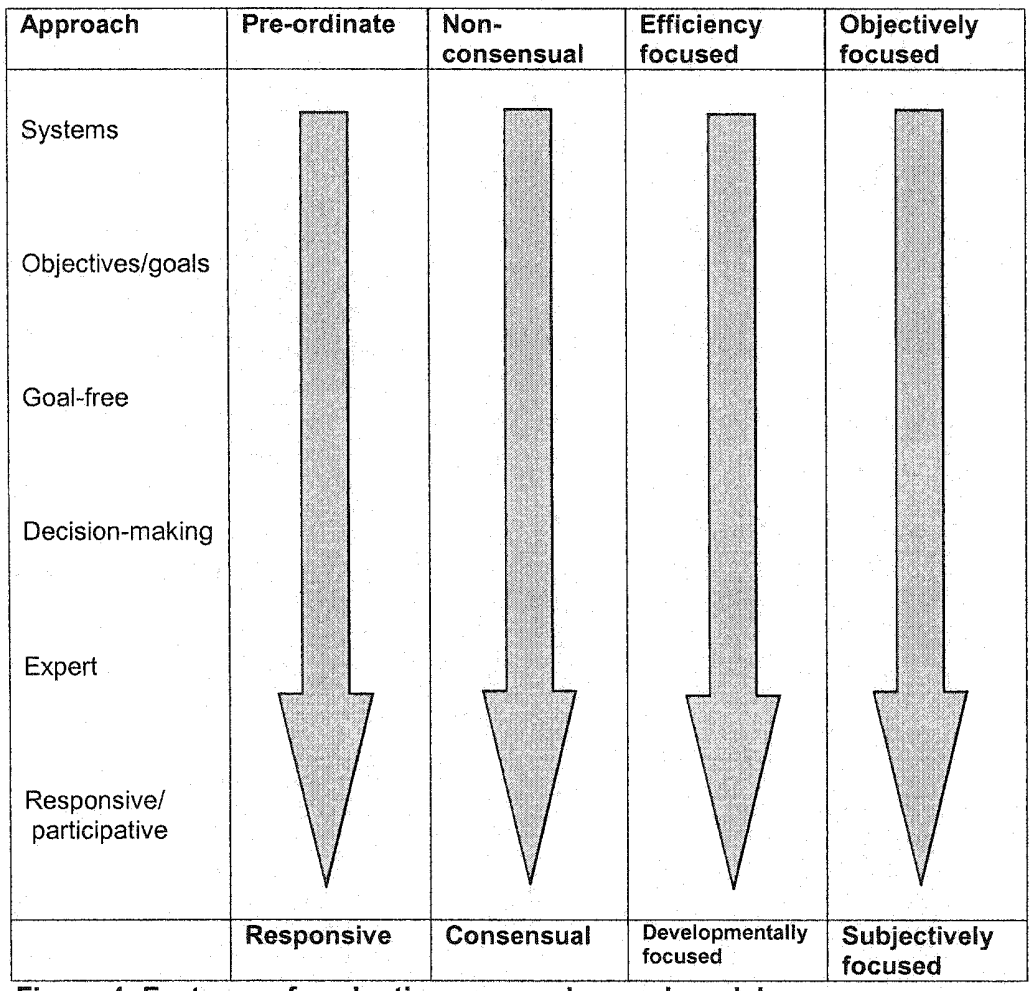


Figure 4: Features of evaluation approaches and models

Identification of the features summarised in this figure is necessary in the consideration of potential approaches and models for the evaluation of the SAC.

2.4.4 Six issues

A number of issues central to the process of evaluation have been identified in various ways. These have been in the form of: key questions (Nevo, 1986),

standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994, Stufflebeam, 2001), "basic types of evaluation" (Clark, 1999), evaluation functions (House, 1986), pairs of dichotomous terms (Stake, 1976; Holt, 1981; Worthen & Sanders, 1987), and Parlett & Hamilton's (1977) spoof "seven principal cardinals of educational evaluation". I shall briefly focus on six pairs of terms which identify issues that I perceive as being of particular relevance to the development of the study data collection procedures, the structure of the discussion of data in chapter seven and the development of a SAC evaluation framework. These six issues address the following questions:

- what is the function of the evaluation?
- who is the evaluation for?
- What is the focus of the evaluation?
- what methodology will be used?
- who will evaluate?
- what is the role of the evaluator?

i) *Formative/summative* (what is the function of the evaluation?)

The increasing tendency towards the adoption of a more naturalistic approach to programme evaluation research has been reflected in more emphasis being placed on the formative (or *developmental*) role of programme evaluation. A formative role is one which "regards the programme as fluid and seeks ways to better it" (Cronbach & Associates, 1982:12), whereas a summative (or *judgmental*) role is one which "determines whether or not a programme has been successful" (Lynch, 1996: 22).

Cronbach (1980) and Scriven (1997) remind us that the distinction refers to the **role** that an evaluation plays and not to the type of evaluation process itself. Stake (1977) suggests that the formative/summative distinction reflects the difference between what programme insiders and outsiders want to know. The insiders are generally more concerned with formative, developmental aspects rather than achievement or the impact of the programme:

> When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guests taste the soup, that's summative.
> (Stake, 1977; quoted in Patton, 1997: 69)

In a similar vein, Genesee (2001) identifies a formative role for informal evaluation scenarios, while the more formal evaluations (with guests) tend to be summative in function.

However, the formative/summative distinction has been seen as over-simplistic by some (e.g. Cronbach, 1980; Chambers, 1994; Rea-Dickens, 1994; Patton, 1996). A number of researchers have pointed out, that it is the purpose of the evaluation, as perceived by the various stake-holders, to determine at which point on the formative-summative continuum the evaluation should be focused (Brown, 1989; Beretta, 1992; Alderson & Beretta, 1992; Weir & Roberts, 1994). Kiely (1995: 24) reflects the concern to satisfy stakeholder expectations when he talks of "development evaluation" that has both formative functions, such as to "empower all participants", and summative functions that are necessary for decision-making.

The distinction, however, allows for the role of an evaluation to be perceived differently by different groups and argues for evaluation parameters to be clearly defined at an early stage. This is particularly important since an evaluation identified as *formative* may raise expectations of a resulting number of small-scale decisions, whereas a *summative* evaluation will probably be "fairly large-scale and may result in sweeping changes" (Brown, 1989: 229).

ii) *Pre-ordinate/responsive* (who is the evaluation for?)
As introduced in section 2.4.3 (vi), a *responsive* evaluation "is responsive to the questions of non-specialist audiences" (Partlett & Hamilton, 1977: 145). It is thus contrasted with a *pre-ordinate* approach such as that seen in Tyler's (1949) *Objectives* model, or Rossi et al.'s (1979) *System* model where the evaluation design is pre-determined by specialists for presentation to a specific, specialist audience. A responsive evaluation is particularly designed to inform a developmental decision-making process and is thus aimed to serve the interests of those who are involved in the running and development of the programme.

A responsive evaluator identifies stakeholders, discovers their needs and expectations, and then designs an evaluation to fit within these parameters. Guba & Lincoln, (1989: 38), suggests that their *Responsive constructivist* model "determines parameters and boundaries through an interactive, negotiated process that involves stakeholders". The move towards a more responsive approach to evaluation is not, however, without its critics. Fishman (1992), critiquing Guba & Lincoln (1989), suggests that such an approach is:

> ...politically naïve and, operationally, almost endless as one proceeds around the circle of respondents again and again in the search for consensus.
> (Fishman, 1992: 269).

iii) P*rocess/product* (what will the evaluation focus be?)

Over twenty years ago, writing in the context of U.K. school self-evaluation, Holt (1981) suggested there was an increasing focus in educational programme evaluation on the development of teacher professionalism (Ref. section 2.5.4 below). In so doing, he suggested there was a move away from the Tylerian objectives-based model of evaluation towards a more holistic, interpretative, context-based approach which would focus less upon the programme product and more upon the programme's underlying processes. This move has since been widely recognised (e.g. Long, 1984; Brown, 1989; Borich, 1990; Rea-Dickens, 1994, 1998).

A product evaluation centres on "whether the goals (product) of the program were achieved" (Brown, 1989: 231), while a process evaluation focuses on what is going on in the programme that leads to those goals. The goal of a process evaluation is primarily to:

> ...inform decisions pertaining to procedural design or implementation and to make adjustments and refinements that seem to be called for from monitoring the program.
> (Borich, 1990: 33)

A key word here is "monitoring" which emphasises the ongoing nature of the process evaluation. Stufflebeam et al.. (1971) saw this type of evaluation as one component of his *Context, Input, Process and Product* (CIPP) evaluation model.

Clearly the process/product distinction to an extent mirrors that between the *formative* and *summative* evaluation functions discussed in (i) above. Summative evaluations will tend to base their judgments upon the programme outcomes, whereas a formative evaluation will examine ways that the programme processes should develop to ensure their improvement. While a shift can be seen in educational programme evaluation practice away from a product focus towards a process focus, unless evaluation is to lose its judgmental function entirely, it seems reasonable to assume that both foci are needed in order to produce a balanced evaluation with high utilisation potential. As Chelimsky (1997: 12) points out, "information on what has

happened in, say, the implementation of a program, is indispensable for an evaluation of its results".

iv) *Pragmatic/theoretical* (what methodology will be used?)

Until about twenty-five years ago, the majority of evaluations were based upon a quantitative or quasi-quantitative methodology (see this section, below) that emphasised the importance of scientific validity and that focused on measurement of the achievement of objectives, effectiveness and efficiency (e.g. Tyler, 1949; Provus, 1971). Reflecting this, evaluation was seen as theory-driven: driven that is by "a systematically stated and tenable set of propositions about the empirical world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992: 33). Validity was seen in positivist, scientifically-focused terms as outlined by Le Compte & Goetz (1982: 43) who state that what is necessary is "demonstration that the propositions generated, refined or tested match the causal conditions which obtain in human life".

More recently, there has been an increasing tendency for evaluators to work within a *constructivist* (Candy, 1989; Schwandt, 1994) or *interpretivist* (Greene, 1994, 2000; Schwandt, 1994) framework (as discussed below) where the evaluator "seeks to understand contextualised meaning" (Greene, 2000: 986). The resulting preference for a responsive (rather than pre-ordinate) approach to evaluation, has led to the adoption of a more pragmatic, pluralistic approach to evaluation methodology. This, in turn, has allowed for the accommodation of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Harris, 1990; Sechrest & Sidani, 1995). Despite this, validity is still a central concern since the evaluation audience must be convinced of the validity of an evaluation's findings if that evaluation is to achieve its purpose. However, reflecting a more naturalistic viewpoint, validity is now often viewed in terms of being "a label applied to an interpretation or description with which one agrees" (Smith & Heshusius, 1986: 9), or "the notion of how we establish the veracity of our findings" (Lynch, 1996: 41).

As a result of this conceptual shift, the *Paradigm Dialogue* (Cronbach, 1982; Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 1994; Guba, 1990; Sechrest & Sidani, 1995) or *Paradigm Wars* (Gage, 1989) that have been a central issue in the discussion of programme evaluation for many years have, to an extent, been moved out of the discussion spotlight (Cook, 1997). However, whether one's approach is theory-driven or more pragmatic, it is clear that the choice or construction of

the research paradigm will influence the way in which the researcher attempts to ensure that her findings are accepted as "valid". Following Patton (2002: 69) who feels that the debate is part of "our methodological heritage", knowledge of which can strengthen an evaluator's strategic approach to an evaluation, I will briefly outline the arguments.

Qualitative/quantitative: the paradigm dialogue

A *paradigm* has been defined both in terms of being a "**systematic set** of beliefs together with their accompanying methods" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 15 - my emphasis), as well as "a **loose collection** of logically held-together assumptions, concepts or propositions" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992: 30 - my emphasis). I shall use the term to refer to a basic, but loose, set of shared beliefs and concepts that inform a set of methodological principles.

Lynch (1991) characterises the debate as being between the quantitative paradigm that "stems from *positivism* which takes an objective perspective", and the qualitative, *naturalistic* paradigm which has its background in *phenomenology* and *interpretivism*, and where:

> ...reality is mind-dependent and behaviour is socially constructed, with no externally existing foundation against which to measure or validate our knowledge claims.
> (Lynch, 1991:85)

The debate which has been conducted in numerous publications and conference presentations, has in the view of some researchers drawn the distinction between the two paradigms (upon which the corresponding methodologies are based) more clearly than is justified (Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Smith & Heshusius, 1986; Sechrest & Sidani, 1995). Greene (2000: 985) argues that "this naming obscures important differences among evaluative approaches that rely on qualitative methods".

A number of researchers have suggested that despite there remaining a strong association, although perhaps not a logical interdependence (Reicharcht & Cook, 1979), between the choice of research paradigm and methodological approach, research techniques reflecting a mixed methodological approach can be used (Reicharcht & Cook, 1979; Firestone, 1987; Guba, 1987;). Reicharcht & Cook continue by asking the question: "must one choose between the paradigms?" (Reicharcht & Cook, 1979:18).

They suggest that there is the possibility of a methodological accommodation between the two.

Others (Candy, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Allison, 1993; Riley, 1996) suggest a shift towards a new *constructivist* paradigm. Constructivism is based upon the notion that the human world is unlike the physical world around us and that humans have developed the ability to interpret and construct reality (Patton, 2002). Rather than representing one single theory, constructivism presents a "cluster of perspectives" with which "individuals try to give meaning to, or construe, the perplexing maelstrom of events and ideas in which they find themselves caught up" (Candy, 1989:97). Greene (2000), more recently, looks beyond constructivism towards more politically and ethically focused approaches.

The evaluator's choice or construction of paradigm will influence her approach to research. However, Sechrest & Sidani (1995) present a pragmatic methodological view that reflects an increasing acceptance of the complex realities of the objects of evaluation and their relationships with the evaluators:

> Methodological pluralism is an absolutely necessary strategy in the face of overwhelming cognitive limitations and biases inherent in mental processing and responding.
> (Sechrest & Sidani, 1995: 80)

Reicharcht & Cook (1979) suggest two further reasons that support the use of a multiple methodological approach to evaluation. Firstly, they argue that the multiple purposes of (and, it can be added, audiences for) an evaluation suggest that a single methodological approach is unlikely to satisfy the various needs of the evaluation; and secondly that each methodology informs and builds upon the other. Additionally, as discussed in chapter five, they can serve as methodological triangulation tools (Denzin, 1970; Keeves, 1997b) by allowing the evaluator to check assumptions and findings derived from one set of tools against those derived from the other.

v) *Internal/external* (who will evaluate?)
A programme can be evaluated by *internal* evaluators or by *external* consultants who have been referred to as "jet in, jet out" evaluators (Alderson & Scott, 1992), or both. An internal evaluator would be a programme *stakeholder* (someone who has a vested interest in the programme). In an educational context, this might include a member of the programme staff, a

representative of the funding body or a student taught on the programme. An external evaluator would be a non-stakeholder: someone who has no direct connection with the programme, and is employed only to carry out and report on the evaluation.

Discussion regarding the benefits of internal and external evaluators has tended to focus on two issues that were implicit in the previous discussion relating to *Participatory evaluation* in section 2.4.3 (vi) above: objectivity and credibility. It has been argued that a relatively uninformed external evaluator will have no vested interest or particular perspective to influence their reporting (Worthen & Sanders, 1987; Weir & Roberts, 1994). They are, therefore, more likely to highlight issues which the programme team has either not identified or chosen to ignore. For these reasons, external evaluators can be seen as more credible to the evaluation audience and thus often seen as particularly appropriate in a summative evaluation on the basis of which large-scale funding decisions are to be made. Conversely, an internal evaluator, with her experience and in-depth knowledge of the programme and its development, will be aware of aspects of the programme that the external evaluator will not necessarily be able to observe over the limited duration of the evaluation.

Some researchers have, however, questioned the enhanced objectivity and, therefore, the additional credibility of the external evaluator (e.g. Cronbach, 1980; Scriven, 1991; Alderson, 1994). Alderson, proposing a *participatory* approach to evaluation, reflects a constructivist view when he argues that individuals will interpret "reality" differently. He goes on to suggest that this factor, and its value in terms of programme and individual staff development, means that insiders should be involved in programme evaluation. In the context of school-based evaluation, Simons (2002) proposes insider evaluation in the form of "school self-evaluation". She argues that such an approach, which has the three purposes of informing decision-making, adding "value" to the school and establishing public confidence in the school, demonstrate a school's public accountability.

In the context of a constructivist approach to evaluation, the use of insiders seems to be implied by Stufflebeam's (2001) assertion that a constructivist evaluation requires full evaluator/stakeholder agreement and co-operation in all stages of the evaluation. Alderson (1994) reporting Allison (1993) proposes that:

> ...what is needed is to take account of multiple perspectives - of participants or stakeholders with acceptability and success being matters of degree, and related to users in context.
> (Alderson, 1994: 3)

He continues, however, by examining the qualities of internal and external evaluators and suggests that they bring different but equally valid experiences and views, and can act as both stimuli and checks on each other. It is with this in mind that he believes that both should be involved in the evaluation process. This view is shared by Nevo (2002: 14) who contends that, although "everybody seems to hate external evaluation while nobody trusts internal evaluation", both fulfill different but necessary roles. He, therefore, proposes the involvement of both in the evaluation process.

vi) *Descriptive/judgmental* (what is the role of the evaluator?)

Whether the role of the evaluator is simply to describe a programme for others to interpret and make changes on the basis of their analysis, or to actually make judgements for the decision-makers to act upon, or to act as "an active-reactive-adaptive problem solver" (Patton, 1986: 106), the role clearly relates closely to the identified functions of the evaluation introduced in (i) above.

Another important factor in deciding the role of the evaluator will be the decision as to who is going to evaluate the programme. Holt identifies three potential evaluator roles:

- the *bureaucrat* who "accepts the values of the bureaucrats that hire him and simply aims to leave behind a satisfied customer";
- the *autocrat* who "insists that his advice is taken in devising and interpreting the evaluation"; and,
- the *democrat* who "tries to be an 'honest broker' presenting data without recommendations".

(Holt, 1981: 21)

While the choice of evaluator does not necessarily limit their role, it would, for example, be difficult to imagine a student-participant evaluator fulfilling a autocratic role.

Evaluation is basically judgmental in nature and, as such "is a political activity, (which) cannot be neutral - except in its methods - and (which) will always be controversial" (Murphy, 1995: 23 - my parentheses). Thus, in order to avoid the purpose of the evaluation being misinterpreted, to avoid any resulting tensions within the programme and to ensure the greatest credibility in the

eyes of all stakeholders, it is essential that evaluator roles be clearly and unambiguously defined.

2.4.5 Conclusion

In examining the field of programme evaluation in terms of its historical development and major approaches, I have aimed to highlight some of the issues potentially most pertinent to both SAC evaluation in general and this PhD study in particular. The issues, that emanate from the underlying questions outlined at the end of 2.4.1, are those that inform my data collection approach and methodology, the subsequent data analysis, the presentation of evaluation-related findings in chapter seven, and finally the development of an evaluation framework in chapter eight. They are:

- the choice of overall approach that the evaluation is to take, underpinned and informed by a philosophy appropriate to the evaluation context;
- the focus of the evaluation and the degree to which it is to be formative or summative in function;
- the importance of the evaluation audience;
- the choice of methodology to be employed; and,
- the choice and role(s) of the evaluator(s).

I consider these issues further in relation to language programme evaluation in the following section and in relation to the evaluation of SACs in section 2.6. They can also be seen reflected in the three evaluation foci questions identified in section 2.7.

2.5 Language programme evaluation

Weir & Roberts (1994) define a *programme*, within the ELT context and in contrast to a *project*, as "any educational activity offered on a continuing basis" (Weir & Roberts, 1994:3). In the consideration of language programme evaluation, I am using Stake's (1976) wider definition that includes the content, method and framework of a "learning system" and would therefore include those entities (such as SACs) that could not be referred to as "activities".

Clearly, the developments and issues outlined in the previous section relating to programme evaluation in general have impacted, and will continue to impact, upon language programme evaluation. This can, for example, be seen in the discussion in language programme evaluation of the formative/summative

distinction outlined in section 2.4.1 (i) above (Long, 1984; Brown, 1989; Nunan, 1992; Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992; Weir & Roberts, 1994; Rea-Dickens, 1995; Lynch, 1996).

In this section, I review the literature specifically relating to developments in the field of language programme evaluation. In the first two sections, I focus on the early development up to, and including, the large-scale language programme evaluations of the 1960s and 1970s. While Mitchell (1990: 9) refers to language programme evaluation as being "relatively fragmented", the 1980s and 1990s did witness clearly identifiable developments in the area of *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) which I consider in section 2.5.3. Finally, in section 2.5.4, I focus on two more recent, major trends: a more naturalistic approach and the increased integration of evaluation into the professional practice of language teaching.

2.5.1 The early development of language programme evaluation

Rea-Dickens (1994) characterises language programme evaluation as generally being confidential and informal in nature, and only reported within institutions. While this has undeniably been generally true, a number of researchers (Hopkins, 1989; Mitchell, 1990; Beretta, 1992; Alderson & Beretta, 1992; Rea-Dickens, 1994, 1995; Lynch, 1996) have tracked the development of programme evaluation in language education and identified evaluations that provide milestones in the historical development of the field.

Beretta (1992) and Lynch (1996) both identify the early 1960s as the years when language programme evaluation began truly to evolve. This may be true in terms of evaluations that explicitly evaluate aspects contributing to successful **language** learning and **language** teaching. However, in 1942, Tyler was already describing it as "old stuff to the readers of the Journal [of Educational Research]" when he presented his "statement" on evaluation in education (Tyler, 1942: 492 - my parentheses). Both Murphy (1995) and Worthen & Sanders (1987) see modern educational evaluation as developing in the U.S.A. in the 1950s, while Rea-Dickens (1994) reports a parallel development in test-based language programme evaluation in the U.K.. In the U.S.A., the development resulted from the passing of the National Defence Education Act that was itself part of the wider reaction to the perceived superiority of Russian technology as exemplified by the Sputnik space flights (Hopkins, 1989; Worthen & Sanders, 1987). These evaluations focused on many aspects of education, language learning and teaching being one.

2.5.2 Large-scale language programme evaluations of the 1960s and 1970s

The evaluations conducted in the U.S.A. in the 1960s and 1970s tended to be summative in nature and focused on the product of the programme by mainly comparing the effectiveness of different teaching materials and methods (Beretta, 1991; Lynch, 1996). These evaluations included large-scale studies such as the Pennsylvania Project (Clark, 1969; Smith, 1970); Keating's (1963) language laboratory project and the Colorado Project (Scherer & Wertheimer, 1964). The Pennsylvania Project, which was a four-year project involving over 1,000 subjects, set out (but failed) to confirm the superiority of the Audio-Lingual teaching method. Keating's project, with 5,000 subjects, compared teaching methods in the teaching of French in language laboratories. The Colorado Project, a two-year project with about 225 subjects, again compared language teaching methods but this time in the teaching of German.

All the projects reviewed by Beretta (1991) and Lynch (1996) were either experimental or quasi-experimental in design. A lack of control over variables, such as the teacher, the lesson delivery and the subjects, meant that in none of the evaluations were the results conclusive (Mitchell, 1990): indeed Beretta refers to the results from the Pennsylvania and Colorado projects as being "virtually uninterpretable" (1992: 7). The 1980s saw ongoing discussion of language programme evaluation (e.g. Long, 1984; Beretta & Davies, 1985; Beretta, 1986) that focused largely on questions of validity and started to question the inherent superiority of experimental research design. There was also a growing realisation that "in the real world of education, such experimental designs are frequently unacceptable on political-social grounds" (Mitchell, 1990: 7).

In the U.K., in the 1960s and 1970s, much language programme evaluation was related to the work of the Schools Council's programme of national curriculum development and evaluation (Hopkins, 1989; Rea-Dickens, 1994), and, in the 1970s, that of CARE. CARE, established by Lawrence Stenhouse in Norwich, England in 1972, was active and influential in the U.K. in promoting and legitamising an alternative approach to curriculum evaluation (Hopkins, 1989; Rea-Dickens, 1994; Stenhouse, 1980). Other U.K. evaluations tended to reflect the orthodoxy in the U.S.A.. Green (1975), for example, attempted to control a range of learner variables in order to identify the effect of language laboratory use on a language learning programme at York University from 1967 to 1970.

2.5.3 Evaluation in English for Specific Purposes in the 1980s and 1990s

Mackay & Palmer (1981) identified the need for a model of evaluation that:

> ...has as its purpose the provision of those in authority with information which can be used in making decisions about improving or modifying the program. (Mackay & Palmer, 1981: 107)

They were referring to the evaluation of projects in the field of *English for Specific Purposes*, particularly in *professional* contexts where accountability to funders is a primary concern. Evaluations of such projects are the focus of books by Weir & Roberts (1994) and Alderson & Beretta (1992): in particular, the evaluation of ESP projects funded by the British government through the Overseas Development Agency. Weir & Roberts see 1985 (the year in which British assistance for foreign governments was projectised) as being pivotal since the agencies that henceforth were to provide the language training were to be held directly accountable for the effectiveness and efficiency of their projects. This led to a perceived increase in the importance of evaluation in such projects and a subsequent increase in their number. However, nearly ten years later, Potter (reported in McGrath, 1995) believed that "it is still fairly uncommon to find project designs that have built-in evaluation strategy" (Potter, 1994). This assertion of a lack of factoring evaluation into programme design is, in my experience, still applicable today in the wider English language teaching and learning context.

Much of the project-related evaluation of the 1980s and 1990s was summative in nature, due perhaps in part to the rising influence in the U.K. at that time of the notion of the market economy (Weir and Roberts, 1994). However, Weir & Roberts, reporting on an ODA-funded project in Paraguay, Kiely et al (1994) and Ieronymidis (1995) reporting on aspects of the British Council/ Thames University Project Development Support Scheme in central and eastern Europe, and Alderson & Beretta (1992) include reports of evaluations in the 1990s with more developmental foci. This signalled a widening of the scope of language programme evaluation from a narrow focus on accountability to the inclusion of programme development (Germaine & Rea-Dickens, 1995; Murphy, 1995; Pennington, 1998). However, this is not to suggest that all evaluations conducted pre-1990 were narrowly summative in nature as a brief consideration of two examples can illustrate. Nunan's (1989) description of a collaborative evaluation of the Australian Adult Migrants Education Program yielded data to address both the summative and formative objectives of the evaluation. A second, earlier example

is reported in Rea (1983). The evaluation in question, conducted at the University of Dar es Salaam, included elements of both summative, product-focused evaluation, and process evaluation conducted primarily through observation and subsequent descriptive reporting.

2.5.4 Recent trends

In 1994, Rea-Dickens suggested that for evaluation in ELT to be effective there will be a greater emphasis on qualitative factors, and:

> ...we will see a stronger integration of evaluation into practice, as part of an individual's professionalism and an increase in collaborative activity where teachers (and other relevant practitioners) are actively engaged in the monitoring process.
> (Rea-Dickens, 1994: 84)

In 1998, in their analysis of four large-scale language programme evaluations conducted in the early 1990s, Rea-Dickens & Germaine (1998b) highlighted four aspects common to those evaluations:

- a range of motivations for the evaluations;
- a relationship between the evaluation aim and the role of the (external) evaluator, and a subsequent effect on the type of involvement of the programme stakeholders;
- an attempt in all four evaluations to control variables; but also,
- a move away from dependence on tests in the direction of triangulation of data sources through the use of multiple evaluation tools.

In the last three of these aspects, I would suggest they reflect one of two major trends, that have characterised language programme evaluation in the last fifteen years: a move towards employing more naturalistic, participatory approaches. The other major trend that can be identified as defining language programme evaluation in the last decade (also Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1998b) is an increased integration of evaluation into the professional practice of language teaching.

i) *Naturalistic approaches to language programme evaluation*
Hopkins (1989) credited the influence of Stenhouse (1975) in critiquing the Tylerian objectives-focused model with having a "godfather-like influence" upon the development of alternative approaches to language programme evaluation in U.K. education in the 1970s. The move in U.K. educational

evaluation from a primary concern with measurement and prediction towards more naturalistic concerns with description and interpretation (Hamilton et al., 1977), had a concomitant effect on the emerging area of language programme evaluation.

In the field of English language learning and teaching, Long (1984) criticised the dominant experimental approach to language programme evaluation for its exclusive focus on outcomes and its tendency towards intervention into the learning and teaching process. In a similar vein, Allison (1993a), in the context of a Hong Kong tertiary evaluation report, critiqued the widespread application of a narrowly-defined notion of *efficiency* being applied to the evaluation of language enhancement programmes arguing rather the need for a "multi-dimensional view of accountability. Long's criticism, together with discussion generated by the evaluation of the Bangalore Project (Beretta & Davies, 1985; Greenwood, 1985), began to focus greater attention on the processes involved in a language programme rather than its products (section 2.4.4 (iii) above). This, in turn, led to discussion of the lack of evaluation of classroom activity, together with the lack of an easily-interpreted presentation of the programme and its evaluation.

A number of programmes adopted a more formative evaluation framework (e.g. Henning, 1982; Beretta & Davies, 1985) but they continued to work within the positivist tradition. Mitchell (1990) reports that attempts at a naturalistic approach, in both the U.K. and U.S.A., generated much criticism. Despite this, evaluations such as those conducted by Ullman & Geva (1985) on a French language programme in Ontario, by Mitchell (1992) on a Gaelic programme in the Western Isles of Scotland and by Alderson & Scott (1992) on an ESP programme in Brazil, can be seen as attempts to bring a more naturalistic approach to language programme evaluation that would provide insights to inform future programme development.

However, as Lynch (1996) points out, none of these evaluations could be described as fully reflecting a naturalistic perspective. He argues, with reference to these and his own *Reading English for Science and Technology* project at the University of Guadalajara (Lynch, 1988, 1992), for the adoption of a pragmatic approach utilising a combined quantitative and qualitative methodology (also Ullman, 1990; Beretta, 1992; McGrath, 1995), with a combined formative and summative focus. In the development of his Context-

Adaptive model (Lynch, 1988, 1996), he builds upon developments in language programme evaluation to develop:

> ...a flexible, adaptable heuristic - a starting point for enquiry....that will constantly reshape and redefine itself, depending on the context of the program and the evaluation.
> (Lynch, 1996:3)

The adaptive nature of the model can be seen in Lynch's (2000) use of the model in a very different context from that within which it was originally conceived: an evaluation of a computer assisted language learning project.

The model has been criticised for reinventing existing and well-used models from the business world (Meinke, 1990) and for being too context-restrictive and internally focused (Swales, 1990). However, it can be seen as an attempt to develop a model for the evaluation of language programmes that attempts both to accurately describe and adapt to the target programme context, and to present findings that can be judged by comparison to other settings.

In another attempt to conceptualise an approach to evaluation that is both flexible and realistic, Pennington (1998: 181) proposes a "new model" which recognises "people, things and processes that are in a state of constant flux and development". Similar to Lynch's model but less focused upon a curriculum, it emphasises multiple sources informing the needs analysis/goal setting stage of the evaluation and lists various factors to be considered in the evaluation design. It remains to be seen, however, how the various factors inter-relate and how such a model might actually be put into operation. Perhaps the closest language programme evaluation has come in practice to a naturalistic approach can be seen in attempts at participatory evaluation as discussed in (ii) below.

ii) *Integration of evaluation into the professional practice of language teaching*
An increased integration of evaluation practice into all aspects of language teaching and learning over the last decade is particularly reflected in two aspects of evaluation practice. These are: the increasingly participatory nature of language programme evaluation; and a greater emphasis upon quality management which tends to lead to all levels of a programme being more visible to its stakeholders (Kiely, 2001).

Participatory evaluation

Alderson (1994) defines an evaluation as being participatory when:

> ...the decision-making and planning of an evaluation, as well as its execution and reporting, is shared amongst all those involved in the project being evaluated, as well as by an outsider commissioned for the purpose. Alderson (1994: 2)

The notion of participatory evaluation is not unfamiliar in educational programme evaluation. The associated notions of *institutional self-study* (Dressel, 1976), *school self-evaluation* (Hopkins, 1989), programme *self-assessment* (Davis, 1998) and *Programme-Based Review* (MacKay et al., 1998) are indicative of the interest that has also been shown in such an approach.

A move towards a more participatory approach to evaluation in ELT can be seen in a number of evaluations including those reported in Alderson & Scott (1992), Kiely & Murkowska (1994); Murphy (1995), Blue & Grundy (1996), Darasawang (1996), Mackay et al., (1998) and Clemente (2001). While the degree and depth of participation varies, Rea-Dickens & Germaine note that there is, overall, a "greater democratisation in evaluation and the more active involvement of many of those who are affected by the innovation being evaluated" (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1998b: 15). They highlight three advantages to be gained from such an approach: easier data collection, increased professionalism and greater contribution from participants to the programme being evaluated.

As Alderson recognises, however, such an approach has its critics. Lewkowicz & Nunan (1999), reporting on an evaluation of an intensive English language programme in Hong Kong, outline six factors that limit to a participatory approach. These include conflicting agendas, differing perceptions of the final report and misinterpretations among the participants. The findings seem to confirm Rea-Dickens's (1998) observation, emphasising the central importance of evaluation management, and in particular that such management needs to include the management of people, tasks and (importantly) communication.

Quality management

I use the term *quality management* here to refer to a concern to transparently promote the quality of a programme, its processes and its products. A current feature of the evaluation of many ELT programmes is the integration of such quality management, in the form of evaluation, into the professional practice of the programme.

Tribble (2000) perceives this integration in terms of it involving teachers and learners in the evaluation process with the goals of informing educational change and raising levels of professionalism. It can be seen to do this through increasing ownership and concomitant accountability, and promoting the development of quality. In a similar vein, Rea-Dickens (1998) identifies evaluation as serving to raise self-awareness, facilitate staff development, aid in curriculum development and raising accountability.

An example of such integration can be seen in MacKay et al.'s (1998) report of the use of a participatory approach (referred to as *Programme-Based Review*) to the evaluation of a British Council-sponsored project in Indonesia. The integration of evaluation into professional practice can also be seen in the SAC and SALL related evaluations discussed in section 2.6 below.

2.5.6 Conclusion

In this section, I have outlined the development of language programme evaluation and have identified two main strands. First, there has been an increase in both the amount of evaluation activity as well as the perceived importance of evaluation to learning programmes. Secondly, reflecting in part trends in the discipline of evaluation as a whole, there has been a change in approach and methodology in terms of a shift away from an experimental or quasi-experimental approach towards a more naturalistic one. This, in many cases, has been realised in an eclectic methodology which utilises various evaluation tools and the triangulation of data sources.

Finally, we should perhaps return to Rea-Dicken's (1995) assertion that evaluation in ELT has been generally confidential and informal in nature, and only reported within institutions. While this is still true and has undoubtedly limited the literature available, a large number of language programme evaluations has been

conducted throughout the world. Examples in the U.S.A. and U.K. have been quoted above. We can also see the results in, amongst others:

- accreditation by professional bodies in the U.K. such as The British Council and BASCELT;
- evaluation reports such as those produced by national educational bodies, the Overseas Development Agency (and subsequently the Department for International Development) in the U.K. and the British Council; and,
- the amount of discussion that takes place both in print and in various forums both formal and informal.

2.6 Evaluation of self-access language learning centres

2.6.1 Introduction

Dickinson (1987) suggested that little had been done to investigate the effectiveness of "self-instruction" in language learning. Gardner & Miller in 1999 suggested that little more had been achieved with regard to SALL. Despite the fact that various researchers (Holec, 1985b; Henner-Stachina & Holec, 1985b; Gardner & Miller, 1997; Karlsson et al., 1997; Sturtridge, 1997; Gardner, 1999, 2002; Sinclair, 1999; Morrison, 1999, 2002) have recognised the importance of evaluation to the development of SACs and SALL, and the fact that a number of evaluative studies have been conducted, I suggest that the situation remains much the same today. This is clearly the case with regard to evaluation of SACs.

There seems to be agreement that a primary reason for the lack of evaluation is the nature of the SAC itself. Riley (1996) identifies the difficulty of undertaking research into self-access in general by using the metaphor of "the blind man and the bubble": the man knows about bubbles and is intrigued but, because he does not have the appropriate tools to investigate them properly, they burst when he touches them. Star (1994) and Gardner (1999), suggest that it is the inherent nature of the SAC and its systems that hinders evaluation. Gardner identifies five specific aspects of the SAC that cause problems for the evaluator (Gardner, 2002: 62-63):

- the complexity of self-access systems (as reflected in chapter six);
- the uniqueness of self-access systems (as reflected in chapter six);
- the difficulty of data collection (due to the individualised study patterns of SAC students and the need to avoid intrusion into the learning process);
- the difficulty of data analysis (particularly with reference to the control of variables, as discussed below); and,

- the identification of the purposes of evaluation (improving *learning* rather than *teaching*).

Some SAC-focused studies have been carried out that are research rather than evaluative in focus. Davies et al. (1991), for example, investigated the behaviour of learners time-tabled to work in a SAC. They focused primarily on the activities in which the learners engaged as well as secondarily investigating learners' perceptions of the purpose and usefulness in terms of their language learning. In two studies of SACs in the U.K., McDevitt (1996) presented a history of the development of a SAC at the University of Abertay, Dundee; while Drew & Ottewill (1998) discussed SACs in an open-learning context, and argued for the need for integration between the SAC and other learning components including the classroom and assessment.

This is not to say that some type of evaluation of SACs has not taken place: many SACs have to provide evaluative annual reports to their funding bodies but few of these reports are in the public domain. However, informal feedback and personal experience suggests that, in Hong Kong at least, most of these reports may be truly evaluative in only the most cursory of manners, focusing primarily on number-counts and any positive features of the programme that might help to ensure continued funding.

2.6.2 Evaluations of elements of the SAC operation

The relevant literature has tended to focus on evaluation of certain elements within a SAC, rather than on the overall operation of a centre. As can be seen in Figure 5 below, these elements have included:

- learning gain (Klassen et al., 1998; Rauechakul,1996; Wan, 1994);
- learner training (Wardrop & Anderson, 1992; Ma, 1994);
- learner strategies (Farmer, 1994; Kwan, 2002; Moulden, 1990);
- learner needs and attitudes towards SALL (Deteramani et al., 1999);
- learner resistance to SALL (Tsang, 1999);
- the orientation process (Fitzgerald et al.., 1996; Star, 1994);
- timetabled SALL sessions within a taught general English programme (Davies et al., 1991; Lin, 1992);
- the use of learning diaries (Martyn, 1994); and,
- teacher attitudes within a SALL environment (Clemente, 2001).

Study	Function	Focus	Design	Data collection
Henner-Stachina & Riley, 1978	Formative + summative	Learning gain	Insider, non-participatory: 3 case studies	Interviews
Gremmo, 1988	Formative + summative	Learning gain Learner strategies	Insider, non-participatory: 19 respondents	Questionnaire
Davies, Dwyer, Heller & Lawrence, 1991	Formative + summative	Learner activities Learning gain	Insider, non-participatory, 40 respondents	Observation Questionnaire
Wardrop & Anderson, 1992	Formative + summative	Learner training for listening comprehension	Insider, non-participatory: 15 interviewees	1st Interviews Student exam. of materials 2nd interviews
Ma, 1994	Formative	Learner training	Participatory: 30 participants	Focus groups
Star, 1994	Formative	Orientation process Learning materials	Insider, non-participatory: 69 respondents	Pre- and post questionnaires
Martyn, 1994	Formative	Use of learning diaries	Insider: 107 diaries initially examined	Document analysis over three years
Farmer, 1994	Formative + summative	Learner strategies	Insider, non-participatory: 171 respondents	Questionnaire
Wan, 1994	Formative + summative	Learning gain Learner strategies	Insider, non-participatory: 68 respondents	Questionnaire Interviews Document search
Fitzgerald et al., 1996	Formative + summative	Orientation process	Insider, non-participatory: 114 respondents	Questionnaire
Rauechakul, 1996	Unclear	Learning gain (listening skills)	Insider, non-participatory	Comparison of student grades pre and post setting up of SAC
Klassen et al., 1998	Formative + summative	Learning gain	Insider, non-participatory: 718 students, 46 student interviewees, 9 counsellor interviewees	Pre and post tests Questionnaire Interviews
Deteramani & Chan, 1999	Formative	Learner needs Learner attitudes	Insider, non-participatory, 585 respondents, 27 interviewees	Questionnaire Interviews
Tsang, 1999	Formative	Learner resistance to SALL	Insider, non-participatory: 40 students, 12 teachers (number of interviewees unclear)	Questionnaire Interviews
Clemente, 2001	Formative	Teacher attitudes to self-directed learning	Insider, fairly participatory: 15 teacher participants	Questionnaire Informal discussion
Kwan, 2002	Formative + summative	Learner activities Learner strategies	Outsider, non-participatory: 20 students	Questionnaire Observation Interviews

Figure 5: Evaluative research of elements within a SAC

In Figure 6 above, I summarise evaluation studies that have been conducted on elements of the SAC operation. In the second column, it can be seen that, with the possible exception of Rauechakul (1996), all the studies had a formative function that suggests that they were conducted as part of the centres' developmental cycle.

The foci, as seen in column three, are varied but all identify one discrete element of the SAC's operation. *Learning gain* would seem to be an obvious starting point in evaluating a SAC, as evidenced perhaps by the fact that six of the evaluations identify this as a focus. Wan (1994) reports that the Malaysian student teachers surveyed perceived benefits both in terms of gains in linguistic proficiency (although not in speaking and listening) and with regard to feeling they had "gained a sense of independence in learning English after using the SAC" Wan, 1994: 11). One of the earliest published evaluations is a case study report consisting of three case histories of learners using the facilities at CRAPEL (section 2.3.3, I) by Henner-Stachina & Riley (1978). Each case history focuses on how the learner approaches his language learning at the level of individual language items and the level of success they encountered. Again at CRAPEL, Gremmo (1988) reports on thirty-six EFL students studying at the CRAPEL SAC (section 2.2.3, i). From the nineteen replies to her short questionnaire, she reports that the learners felt they had improved linguistically but reported few gains in the development of IL skills.

However, those involved in the development and running of a SAC will identify with observations by Henner-Stanchina & Holec (1985a), Sturtridge (1997) and Morrison (1999) concerning the difficulty of evaluating the success of a centre in terms of learner performance or progress. This is because of the complexity of a self-access learning environment in terms of the large number of learner variables that make it impossible to attribute any improvement directly to use of the SAC (Star, 1994). Rauechakul (1996) notes a 42% improvement in the listening scores of students after the setting-up of a SAC but how this improvement can be directly attributed to the students' attendance at the SAC is unclear. Klassen et al. (1998) attempt to compare a group of students learning in a self-access mode with a control group learning in a more traditional classroom setting. They found, however, that in terms of overall gain the results from implementing a pre-test/post-test methodology were insignificant. Their claim, that at least both groups showed improvement, might be explained either by a maturation effect (as they

point out) or extraneous variables other than the SAC and the English course (or both).

Column four highlights the fact that, while the studies vary in scale, they are all, with one exception, conducted by insiders, normally the SAC co-ordinator or a SAC teacher. This emphasises the inherently developmental nature of these studies and, I would argue, is to be expected in centres that have been widely considered to be experimental in nature. The data collection tools indicated in column five are varied. Interestingly, eight of the fifteen use more than one collection tool in order presumably to provide a degree of data triangulation.

2.6.3 SAC evaluations

In this section, I first outline two difficulties that I encountered in researching SAC evaluations, before going on to discuss two evaluative research reports.

i) *Difficulties encountered*

I encountered two main difficulties when researching whole-SAC evaluations (as opposed to evaluations that focus on specific elements within a SAC, as considered in section 2.5.2 above).

The first relates to their dissemination. SAC evaluations have tended (as is the case, and noted previously in section 2.5.1, for language programme evaluation in general) to be intended for internal institutional readership (cf. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2000, 2001, 2002). In addition, apart from often being unavailable to the general public, such reports have tended to be fairly narrow in focus, concentrating on issues of accountability and efficiency rather than development and effectiveness (Gardner & Miller, 1997: 6). They have normally been produced in response to demands from funding bodies and have reflected a concern to ensure continued or increased funding rather than being perceived as being a part of the centre's developmental process. Furthermore, if the results have been publicly disseminated at all, this has tended to be via conference presentations and/or non-formal publications. Two examples of this can be seen in the work of Dickinson and McCafferty. Dickinson, acting as consultant to the country-wide Malaysian Self-Access Project (section 2.3.3, i), conducted an evaluation of the project in September 1994. However, to the best of my knowledge, with the exception of internal reports, the results were only disseminated via conference presentations (e.g.

presentations by Dickinson "Who's afraid of autonomy? Self-Access Learning in South East Asia", and Ghani, D.A "The Malaysian Self-Access Project: an Evaluation", at Thai TESOL 1995).

Similarly, the only public record of the pioneering work of McCafferty, in the early 1980s, in the form of internal reports for the British Council, is, to my knowledge, an undated mimeograph (McCafferty, undated). A final point to note with regard to dissemination is that some SAC evaluations are available but not in English (Riley, 1996: 256).

The second difficulty I encountered relates to the nature of the evaluations reported in the documents that have been made available. The only widely-available, large-scale evaluative SAC study is that of Gardner & Miller (1997), and that cannot really be considered an evaluation. Despite a set of recommendations and one evaluative aim (see (ii) below), it is primarily a research study of four Hong Kong SACs with no direct evaluative function.

Lastly, there are other published evaluation reports which have focused on the evaluation of aspects of learning related to SALL but which do not directly focus on a SAC. These have included, for example:

- Beeching (1996) which evaluates a structured self-study system based upon the use of a published language course and study manuals which set out learning action plans and included diary pages for learner reflection and record;
- Karlsson et al. (1997) which reports on the *Autonomous Learning Modules* (ALMS) Project at the Helsinki University Language Centre; and,
- Harding-Esch (1982) which evaluates the operation of the (pre-SAC) *Open Access Sound & Video Library* at the University of Cambridge.

In sum, there is, to my knowledge, no publicly-available report of an evaluation of the operation of a SAC in Hong Kong (or indeed elsewhere). However, in the next section, I consider two reports that are, for different reasons relevant to this literature review.

ii) *Two reports*

Gardner & Miller (1997)

In the largest-scale, published study focusing on SACs in Hong Kong, Gardner & Miller (1997) surveyed four SACs focusing on the centres' structures, users, materials, learner perceptions and overall effectiveness. The study, although not specifically designed to evaluate any individual SAC, undoubtedly had an evaluative element. It served a formative function by disseminating the results to those involved in the operation of the Hong Kong SACs for their action and a summative function in that it was a published study of an initiative into which millions of Hong Kong dollars of public money had been invested.

In their study, they interviewed five SAC managers, ten SAC teachers and one hundred SAC users. They received completed questionnaires from 541 SAC users and 58 SAC teachers. The study had four aims:

- to collect information about the setting-up and development of the SACs;
- to evaluate how effective the SACs were at promoting learning gain;
- to discover how learners actually utilised the centres; and,
- to disseminate the resulting information to SAC professionals.

Among their many conclusions and recommendations, they observed that research into the effectiveness of SACs and self-access learning will need to:

> ...explore more creative ways of measuring and of describing instead of relying on number-counts and dubious uses of statistics. It will undoubtedly require some kind of cross-referencing between users' and tutors' perceptions of effectiveness.
> (Gardner & Miller, 1997:122).

Reinders (2000a)

In an unpublished internal report for the Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, in the summer of 1999, Reinders (2000b) presents a learner's perspective of an English language proficiency programme on which learners are expected to make use of the SAC. While the study is not in itself an evaluation of the SAC, his investigation focuses on the development of the learners' autonomous learning skills and investigates the learners' understanding of SALL-related concepts. It also identifies factors that may "enhance or hinder successful implementation of SALL" (Reinders, 2000a: 2). In doing so, he, in effects, evaluates a number of aspects of the operation of the SAC.

In his findings, he identifies a number of issues relating to the success of the SAC in supporting the learner in her learning. These include the need for:

- a thorough introduction to the resources;
- efficient resource access systems;
- on-going professional, human support;
- integration of SALL into the curriculum; and,
- the raising of students' awareness of IL and effective strategies for its implementation.

2.6.4 Efficiency and effectiveness as SAC evaluation foci

Gardner & Miller (1999) recognise two distinct purposes in SAC evaluation, previously identified by authors such as Esch (1989) and Star (1994). The first is to examine the extent to which learning is enhanced while the second focuses on the management of a centre's resources, both human and non-human, which is necessary to ensure such an enhancement. This leads Gardner & Miller, in their development of a six-step guide to the evaluation of a SAC, to focus on what they describe as the "two key elements in measuring the success of self-access facilities" (Gardner & Miller, 1999: 228): effectiveness and efficiency. They do, however, recognise that the two terms are not as mutually exclusive as sometimes portrayed and that there is "an important interaction between them and an important overlap" (Gardner & Miller, 1999: 225). In recognising the complexity of the relationship between them, Gardner & Miller reflect Sizer's (1982) concern that they are "elusive concepts in higher education" (Sizer, 1982: 67). While recognising the importance Gardner & Miller place on the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency in the evaluation process, I take these concepts as starting points from which the present study begins its journey.

2.6.5 Conclusion

As outlined above, perhaps due to the inherent nature of the SAC and its systems, there are few SAC-focused studies which are truly evaluative in nature. There are fewer still that can be said to be "SAC evaluations" and those are not in the public domain.

There are, however, both published evaluations of aspects of a SAC's operation (such as learning gain and learner strategies), and unpublished, internal

evaluations. In this short section, I have summarised some of focused studies and discussed, in particular, two reports, one published and one internal. Together, these different types of study, I feel, best contribute to an understanding of the SAC evaluation context.

2.7 Existing evaluation constructs

Apart from providing the theoretical framework within which this PhD study is to operate, this chapter aims to meet the study's third objective, namely to "examine existing evaluation constructs for elements that could contribute to the development of self-access language learning centre evaluation". In this section, I consider existing evaluative constructs that I argue are directly relevant to this study.

Only Gardner (1999, 2002) and Gardner & Miller (1999) have proposed in any detail how we might proceed in practice when evaluating a SAC. Moreover, when discussing the actual conduct of the evaluation, they suggest only minimising disruption. However, numerous examples of evaluation in form of:

- *models* (Brown, 1989; Lynch, 1988, 1996);
- *frameworks* (Gardner & Miller, 1999; Hopkins, 1988);
- *checklists* (Dressel 1976; Hargreaves, 1989; Polland, 1989); and
- *guidelines* (Case, 1990; Health Communication Unit, 1998),

are to be found in both the evaluation and ELT literature. Those most directly applicable are, perhaps predictably, those in the area of language programme evaluation. The exception is Gardner & Miller's (1999) SAC evaluation framework.

In Figure 6 (presented in two sections), I summarise the steps proposed in eleven programme evaluation constructs that, in my view, have particular relevance to this study. As identified above, the constructs represented are of different types and not all were originally presented as formal evaluation models. They serve to present different conceptualisations of the process of programme evaluation. A very brief contextual note is provided for each.

A six-step guide to conducting an evaluation of self-access (Gardner & Miller, 1999)	**Context-Adaptive model (Lynch, 1988, 1996)**	**Outline of essential evaluation elements (Dressel, 1976)**
❑ specific focus on evaluation of SALL environments	❑ widely-recognised model for evaluation of language learning programmes	❑ summary of questions designed to be used as checklist for evaluation in academic environments
1. Establish the purpose [WHY] 2. Identify aspects of SAC to be evaluated [WHAT] 3. Select type of evaluation [HOW] 4. Select evaluation tools [HOW] 5. Conduct evaluation [HOW] 6. Report evaluation (includes data analysis stages) [HOW]	1. Audience & goals [WHY] 2. Context inventory [WHAT] 3. Preliminary thematic framework [WHAT] 4. Data collection design [HOW] 5. Data collection [HOW] 6. Data analysis [HOW] 7. Evaluation report [HOW]	1. What is the purpose & background of the evaluation? [WHY] 2. What information is to be collected? [WHAT] 3. What are the procedures for collecting & analysing data? [HOW] 4. Is the reporting process clear? [HOW] 5. How will the evaluation be evaluated?
Chapter overview (Worthen & Sanders, 1987)	**Forty-step approach to planning, designing & implementing an evaluation - a summary (Pollard, 1989)**	**Checklist for planning an evaluation (Hopkins, 1989 from Harlen & Elliott, 1982)**
❑ chapter headings from very influential book on educational evaluation	❑ from a "Workbook for service providers"	❑ presented in the context of evaluation for schools development in UK
1. Clarifying evaluation request & responsibilities [WHY] 2. Setting boundaries & analysing context 3. Identifying evaluation questions, criteria & issues [WHAT] 4. Planning data collection & analysis [HOW] 5. Developing evaluation management plan [HOW] 6. Collecting data [HOW] 7. Analysing data [HOW] 8. Reporting [HOW] 9. Evaluating the evaluation	1. Programme background 2. Purpose of evaluation [WHY] 3. Evaluation viability & cost-benefit analysis 4. Evaluation questions [WHAT] 5. Identification of evaluation process & impact [HOW] 6. Data sources & collection tools [HOW] 7. Piloting of #6 [HOW] 8. Evaluation plan [HOW] 9. Identification of data analysis strategies [HOW] 10. Methods of reporting [HOW]	1. Reasons, purposes & motivations for evaluation [WHY] 2. Worthwhileness 3. Interpretation of evaluation task [WHAT] 4. Subjects of evaluation 5. The evaluators [HOW] 6. Evaluation methods [HOW] 7. Time schedule [HOW] 8. Control of information [HOW] 9. Criteria for making decisions 10. Reporting [HOW]

Figure 6a: Eleven programme evaluation constructs (1-6)

Steps to participatory evaluation (Case, 1990)	**Questions to ask when constructing an evaluation framework (Ho, 1993)**	**Elements in the design of an evaluation study (Nunan, 1992)**
❑ conceived for use in forestry: from a practical guide to the development and use of participatory evaluation	❑ from a report on evaluation within the Hong Kong civil service	❑ conceived as a guide to language programme evaluation for language teachers
1. Review programme objectives & activities 2. Review reasons for evaluation [WHY] 3. Develop evaluation questions [WHAT] 4. Decide who will do the evaluation [HOW] 5. Identify direct & indirect indicators [WHAT] 6. Identify information sources for evaluation questions [WHAT] 7. Decide labour/skills needed for evaluation [HOW] 8. Decide timing [HOW] 9. Decide who collects data [HOW] 10. Analyse & present results [HOW]	1. Should an evaluation be conducted? 2. Why? [WHY] 3. What to measure & what criteria to use? [WHAT] 4. How comprehensive should evaluation be? [WHAT] 5. Who has authority for the evaluation? 6. What are the data sources? [WHAT] 7. How will the data be collected, compiled & analysed? [HOW] 8. How will the results be communicated? [HOW]	1. What is the purpose of the evaluation? [WHY] 2. Who is the audience for the evaluation? [WHY] 3. What principles of procedure should guide the evaluation? [HOW] 4. What tools etc. are appropriate? [HOW] 5. Who should carry out the evaluation? [HOW] 6. When should it be carried out? [HOW] 7. What is the time-frame & budget for the evaluation? 8. How should the evaluation be reported? [HOW]

Dimensions of an evaluation (Rea-Dickens, 1995)	**Ten-stage evaluation model (Jacobs, 2000)**
❑ from a review of evaluation and English language teaching	❑ presented as a model to be used as a framework for the evaluation of any type of educational innovation
1. What is to be evaluated? [WHAT] 2. Who evaluates and what are their roles? [WHO] 3. When to evaluate? [HOW] 4. Approaches [HOW] 5. Procedures [HOW] 6. Identifying data sources [HOW] 7. Reporting and utilisation [HOW]	1. Contextualise the innovation [WHAT] 2. Determine evaluation goals [WHY] 3. Identify principle stakeholders [WHY] 4. Identify aspects of innovation to be evaluated [WHAT] 5. Determine evaluation criteria [HOW] 6. Decide on best sources of information [HOW] 7. Decide on evaluation methods [HOW] 8. Collect data [HOW] 9. Analyse and interpret data [HOW] 10. Disseminate evaluation findings [HOW]

Figure 6b: Eleven programme evaluation constructs (7-11)

The constructs were developed for different purposes and thus the information is presented in different ways and in differing depths. In the table, I have identified three elements, expressed in different manners and differing in scope, that I would suggest are common to all evaluation constructs. These elements are the identification of:

- the purpose of the evaluation (WHY);
- the focus of the evaluation (WHAT); and
- the evaluation methodology in terms of both its conduct and reporting (HOW).

For the purposes of this study, I have interpreted each of the three elements broadly as discussed below.

2.7.1 The purpose of the evaluation (WHY)

Within this element I include not only an identification of the reasons for, or goals of, the evaluation but also who the audience will be. The evaluation goals and audience are closely related and the identification of one will affect, and be affected by, the other. Worthen & Sanders (1987: v) refer to this in terms of "clarifying the evaluation request and responsibilities" clearly relating the reasons for the evaluation to concerns such as personnel, cost and time. Hopkins includes the "motivations" for an evaluation suggesting that it is important to understand the reasons behind the evaluation request. Ho reminds the reader also to ask whether an evaluation should be conducted at all. Of all the constructs only Rea-Dickens does not refer explicitly to the reason for evaluation, and she addresses this issue at length previously in her article.

2.7.2 The focus of the evaluation (WHAT)

Within these constructs, we can identify a number of aspects relating to the question of what to evaluate expressed in different ways. Perhaps reflecting the nature of a SAC, Gardner & Miller see the need to identify "aspects" of the centre to be evaluated, while others refer to the need for "information", "criteria", "issues" and "indicators". Lynch collects critical "issues" and "themes" together into a "Preliminary thematic framework" although, in practice, this is basically a check list of evaluation foci. He and Jacobs explicitly make reference to contextualising the programme, which Jacobs suggests is necessary in order to understand "the complex variables impacting on innovative practices" (Jacobs, 2000: 263). Three constructs refer to "evaluation questions" which seems to emphasise the notion of

an evaluation as a search for the "answer" or perhaps even the "truth" of a programme: in other words, a search for what really happens in a programme rather than what is presented as happening. Interestingly, Nunan, in considering language programme evaluation, makes no explicit mention of the focus of the evaluation.

2.7.3 The evaluation methodology (HOW)

As noted above, in section 2.6, I interpret the question of "how" to include both the methodology of the evaluation process and the presentation of the evaluation results. The constructs identify methodological issues of varying types and scope, but most focus on the need for data collection and analysis design elements which will clearly reflect the types of data to be included. Another common element was that relating to personnel selection, both in terms of whom they might be and the skills/roles needed. While most referred to the post-data analysis stage as "reporting", Ho suggests a wider interpretation when he asks how the results will be "communicated". This is reflected in Gardner & Miller's suggestion that the evaluation data might be displayed on SAC notice-boards. Rea-Dickens was alone in referring explicitly to the *utilisation* of the evaluation results.

2.7.4 Additional elements

There were four elements that, while partly subsumed under the three groupings in 2.6.1 - 2.6.3 above, are worthy of further individual consideration and discussion.

i) *The evaluation context*

The second stage in Lynch's Context-Adaptive model is the "Context inventory" which he describes as a "checklist, or inventory, of potentially relevant dimensions of language learning programmes" (Lynch, 1996: 5). Lynch sees this inventory as being flexible in that an evaluator tailors it to a programme's particular context and setting. Similarly, other constructs highlight the need for an evaluation to be contextualised: Worthen & Sanders (1987: v), for example, refer to "Setting boundaries and analysing context". The use of the term "setting boundaries" has resonances of the notion of *mapping* as discussed in chapters five and eight. In chapter eight, I also outline my understanding of the importance of the context within which an individual SAC evaluation is conducted.

ii) *Evaluation viability, impact and cost-benefit*

Pollard, perhaps reflecting the more-commercial context of his approach, stresses the need for an examination of the evaluation's viability and costs in relation to its potential benefits or impacts, while Nunan also makes mention of the evaluation "budget". Hopkins reflects similar concerns indirectly in his focus on "Worthwhileness", which refers to potential outcomes and constraints. Elsewhere, Brown & Pennington (1991) isolate three evaluation criteria: academic, administrative and fiscal. Berk & Rossi (1990) consider a focus on fiscal accountability and the "Worthwhileness" of the programme as key evaluation criteria. These I perceive as also constituting an important aspect of the evaluative context presented in (i) above.

iii) *An evaluation plan*

An element that is often left unstated is that of the evaluation plan. In other words, a document that outlines the evaluation in terms of variables such as timing, details of data-related procedures and personnel. Of the constructs presented in Figure 6 above, only Worthen & Sanders and Pollard specify the development of an *evaluation management plan* as a discrete step in the evaluation process. Clearly, the others may well have intended it as a product of various other steps within the construct. As seen in chapter eight, I include it explicitly as an element within the evaluation framework.

iv) *Evaluating the evaluation* (meta-evaluation)

The notion of the final element in the evaluation process being an evaluation of the evaluation, or *meta-evaluation* (Straw & Cook, 1990; Stufflebeam, 1978), was identified in the constructs of Dressel and Worthen & Sanders. It clearly has application in terms of being a feedback-loop whereby the feedback from one evaluation can be used to inform the development of the next.

2.7.5 Conclusion

My conclusion relating to the extent to which we can utilise existing language programme evaluation models for the evaluation of SACs is at once predictable and perhaps surprising. It is predictable in that if we are to take the models together, we can see a high degree of commonality in the underlying process they propose. It is surprising in that the existing constructs seem to assume a two-

dimensional linearity that I will suggest in chapter eight might not be appropriate in the context of an educational entity which depends for its success on the flexibility and adaptability of its systems. In assuming such linearity, I suggest that the evaluation, as the sum of its parts, is in danger of not being brought into focus

2.8 Conclusion to chapter two

In this review, I have introduced themes and issues from literature primarily within the disciplines of Applied Linguistics, Education and Evaluation. In particular, I have focused upon areas related to:

- learner independence and self-access in English language learning and teaching;
- programme evaluation in the social sciences;
- language programme evaluation; and, specifically
- evaluation of SACs.

While it is not possible to review these disciplines comprehensively in such a brief chapter, there are a number of themes and issues that are pertinent to this PhD study. Many of those raised in this chapter will necessarily be re-visited and expanded upon in following chapters. In chapters four and five, this is done in relation to the study approach and methodology, and the use of a *mapping* metaphor; in chapters six and seven, with reference to the analysis of the data relating to the definition and evaluation of an SAC respectively; and finally, in chapter eight, with regard to the development of both the SAC mapping and the SAC evaluation framework.

It is clear that the field of programme evaluation is both complex and extensively researched, with much research emerging from the U.S.A.. There are clearly many competing, and at times conflicting, views of the field and the evaluation profession. While this has contributed to the richness of the literature, it also requires a clear focus on the issues that relate directly to the context of this study. The five issues identified at the end of section 2.4.5 are intended to provide a context within which the relevant evaluation literature should be considered.

By contrast, the relevant applied linguistic and educational evaluation literature is less expansive, less U.S.-centred and in some ways, because of its more direct relationship with the study topic, more accessible. The literature related to SAC

evaluation, in part due to the relative immaturity of the field, is again more limited in both quantity and scope.

It is, however, by bringing together the insights derived from both disciplines and using these to both inform the setting-up and procedure of the study, and to supplement the analysis and discussion of the data, that I intend the study to derive its theoretical strength.

Chapter 3

The study approach & underlying methodology

In the following chapters, four and five, I will describe in some detail the six stages of data collection, data analysis and conclusion drawing. In this chapter, I situate that research process in terms of the overall approach and methodology I have employed to collect and analyse relevant data. In doing so, I explain why I chose a naturalistic approach employing a Grounded Theory methodology. I also discuss the place of quantitative data as well as the role of the researcher within the research process. The chapter closes with a section relating to the ethical issues which, given the nature of the research techniques and my own role in the study, I have felt it necessary to address.

3.1 Introduction

As noted earlier in chapter 2, section 2.5.1, Riley (1996) refers to the self-access researcher as being like a blind man lacking the necessary tools to investigate a bubble. It is a central assumption of this study that, as a blind researcher, I must identify methods and procedures that are appropriate to researching a SAC. To do this, I recognise the essence of the concepts inherent in the terms *self*, *access* and *centre*. Thus, the centrality of the learner (the *self*) in the learning process suggests the inappropriacy of any interventionist research procedures that may impose a learning decision upon, or in some way limit, the learner participants' perception of the SAC's learning materials or facilities. The term *access* should lead the researcher to provide a focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of the processes available to the learner that provide the opportunity for, and right of, the learner to obtain easily and subsequently use information. The Oxford English Dictionary also refers to *access* as being the "power of getting near or into contact with" something or someone. Taking the terms *self* and *access* together suggests that the researcher should also be concerned with ways in which a learner might be empowered by using a SAC.

In this PhD study, the learner and the means of access are brought together in the notion of a *centre*. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a *centre* in many different ways. These include the notions of: a building dedicated to a particular activity; "the point round which things group themselves or revolve, or that forms a nucleus or point of concentration"; "a point from which things, influences

emanate"; and, in the context of architecture and construction, a supporting structure when building an arch or bridge. For the researcher, therefore, a SAC can be seen in terms of being both a physical place where a particular mode of learning is encouraged and supported, as well as being an axis or pivot around and from which it is intended that the influence of its philosophy should extend. Interestingly, with reference to the last dictionary definition, Cotterall & Reinders, in their (2001) investigation of SAC learners' perceptions use architectural metaphors when referring to the SAC as acting as either a "bridge" or a "fortress". A basic assumption of this study arising from consideration of these terms is that the investigation should focus on the physical centre as well as the values and philosophies it embodies.

My choice of methodological tools has been made on the basis of their applicability to this assumption and my knowledge of the self-access language learning context, rather than their fit with a particular, pre-determined approach. An attempt has been made to avoid "methodolatory", a term that Janesick (1994) uses to refer to a near-obsession in the 1980s and 1990s with the notion of choosing between positivistic and naturalistic paradigms, and between quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Despite this, however, the main emphasis of the study has been on the use of qualitative research methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Mason, 1996; Flick, 1998) based on naturalistic enquiry (Owens, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1986).

If qualitative research can be seen as reflecting aspects of the art of living (Guba, 1978), it can be said to be dealing with the unknown, the questions and uncertainties. It is therefore perhaps hardly surprising that the research process did not unfold as I had planned at all. Many of my initial conceptions, conceptual organisers and pre-conceptions have not made it through a research process which can best be described in terms of a series of repeating, inter-related and partially-formed loops. Within this process, the unknown became more known and the known became progressively less black and white until finally the loops started to more fully form, disentangle and finally re-combine to make sense of the process as a whole. As discussed in chapters four and five, a constant revisiting, re-examination and re-interpretation of the data, together with the resulting cross-checking of conclusions derived, has enabled me to state my final conclusions with a level of confidence that would not be possible without so many cycles of confirmatory analysis. As Silverman (2001: 169) points out in his discussion of the

interpretation of qualitative data, "its validity... [derives]...from the thoroughness of its analysis".

My overall approach to the PhD study can be described in terms of being, **naturalistic** (an attempt to understand real-life episodes), **qualitative** (a cyclical process characterised by common sense) and underpinned by the methodology of **Grounded Theory** (where the focus is on the emergence of theory from data). In the following three sections, I discuss the study approach, the Grounded Theory methodology and finally issues relating to research ethics.

3.2 The study approach

In this section, I present my overall approach to the study and explain some of the factors that led to its adoption. I first explain why the study was paradigmatically conceptualised in naturalistic and qualitative terms. I then examine the important notions of generalisability, validity and reliability not in quantitative terms but as concepts applicable to a qualitative research approach. I finally consider the place of theoretical and practical knowledge, and the implications of my role as practitioner-researcher and study participant.

3.2.1 A naturalistic approach

The naturalistic approach to this study is reflected in the fact that enquiry is focused upon understanding the real, everyday Hong Kong SALL environment within which the participants (with two exceptions) carry out their everyday workplace or study activities. Within this environment, I attempt to interpret and understand the "slices of life" (Guba, 1978:4) I encounter. In this context, "knowing is a process of interpretation...there is no objectivity in the sense of truths about a programme" (Lynch, 1996, 16).

Owens (1982) suggests a simple outline (as seen in Figure 7 overleaf) that characterises naturalistic study as being a process that narrows the study down from initial broad-scale questioning and data collection through checking and testing procedures to an eventual confirmation of data interpretation.

This PhD study's process reflects Owens's model in terms of a narrowing of focus from the use of the semi-structured interview as the research tool in the initial

data-gathering stage (as discussed in chapter four) through finally to the use of the highly-focused, confirmatory e-mail questionnaire. However, Owen's model also suggests that the process is linear in nature, which, as discussed in chapters four and five, was certainly not the case in this study.

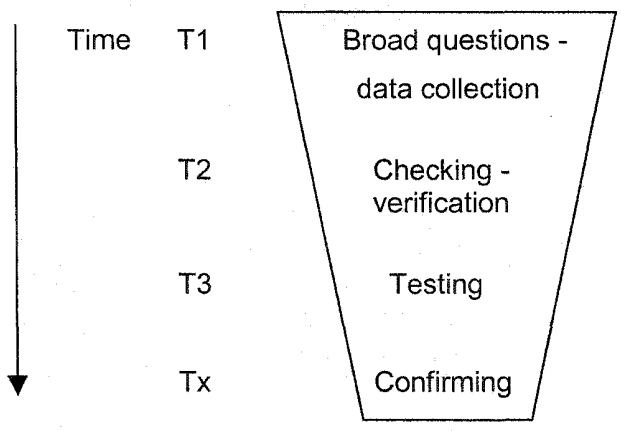


Figure 7: Naturalistic study (Owens, 1982)

3.2.2 Qualitative research

I had initially considered a quantitative approach to the study characterised by concepts such as hypothesis testing, statistical significance and replicability with a structured, pre-determined design (Worthen & Sanders, 1987; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:50). However, upon reflection, I felt it unlikely that such an approach would yield the data that I would require to make the types of judgement necessary to validate the construction of an evaluation framework for centres whose operation predicates on the people involved: primarily, the learners, the teachers and support staff.

I suggested in chapter one, that a pre-requisite for the development of a SAC evaluation framework is the existence of a theory that is able to explain a centre's operation and the ways in which it can help learners with different motivations and a variety of learning styles to achieve their learning goals. As also reflected in the first study objective, to "identify the defining pedagogical and systemic characteristics of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre", any research approach needs therefore to be theory-building in nature. There is a need for an inductive approach that will allow for an investigation of individual aspects of a SAC's operation that is:

> ...based on methods of analysis and explanation building which involve understandings of complexity, detail and context...to produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual, detailed data.
> (Mason, 1996:4)

I discuss the need for theory-building further in section 3.3.1 in relation to my use of a Grounded Theory research methodology.

Qualitative research cannot be characterised by the choice of particular methods, but rather by naturalistic concepts such as "closeness" (Patton, 1986:186), "common-sense understanding", "everyday life" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:50), and "a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3). It is an approach to research where Bruner (1993) sees meaning as "radically plural, always open..." (Bruner, 1993:1, quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 1049). Given that this study focuses on an educational entity that is little understood and, I would argue, *experimental* in nature, (see also chapter six, section 6.3.3, vii) the need for such a flexible, open, revelatory approach seems not just highly but uniquely appropriate.

Fretchling, reflecting a view of qualitative research as an iterative, cyclical process (Flick, 1998; Keeves & Sowden, 1997), suggests that a distinguishing feature of qualitative analysis is that it consists of:

> ...a loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as additional questions emerge, new connections are unearthed, and more complex formulations develop along with a deepening understanding of the material.
> (Fretchling & Sharp, 1997: 1)

As noted previously and as I explain in chapters four and five, it is primarily through such an iterative process with its cyclical revisiting of data and multiple checks that I feel confident in claiming credibility for the study's findings (as further discussed in section 3.2.2 below).

Qualitative analysis emphasises description and subsequent interpretation of mainly non-numerical data that may be less easy to reduce or distill than its quantitative counterpart (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process of data reduction is one of the three concurrently conducted activities that Miles & Huberman (1994) identify as typical of qualitative analysis: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. Having identified these central qualitative analytical activities, Miles & Huberman present a causal network that more closely

reflects the complex underlying processes at work in this PhD study (Figure 8 below) than the Owen's linear representation of naturalistic study seen in Figure 7 above.

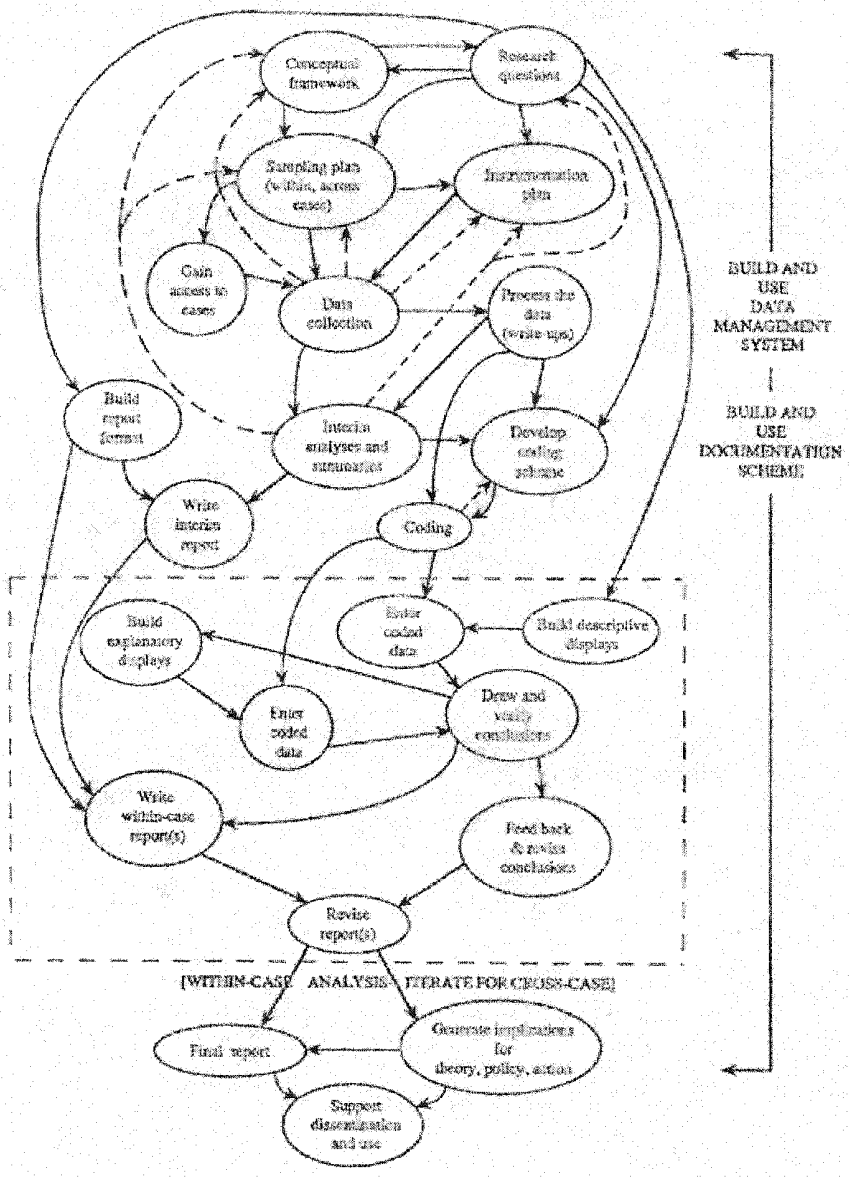


Figure 8: Qualitative data analysis processes (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Following Miles & Huberman, this PhD study also views data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification as being at the core of a complex process of investigation. However, while their causal network captures the complexity of the process, I do not feel such a representation clearly and unambiguously relates to the organisation of this study and this thesis. I feel that the simplified overview of the process of data collection and analysis presented in

chapter four, section 4.2, has sufficient descriptive and explanatory power in the context of this study.

3.2.3 Quantitative procedures within a qualitative approach

In employing a qualitative approach I did not rule out using quantitative analysis in combination with qualitative data (Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Sechrest & Sidani, 1995; Flick, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Wengraf (2001) argues that it is appropriate for researchers to use both approaches at different times in the research cycle. Thus, a study may be strategically inductive but with deductive working practices. In particular, quantitative analysis can be used as a triangulation tool (Denzin, 1970, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to identify "hard" data and quantifiable illustrative details to check assumptions and back up findings from more qualitatively focused investigation, as well as providing background data to help situate the qualitative data.

Therefore, despite this study's overall qualitative approach, as is discussed in chapter four, I have made limited use of quantitative data in the form of counts regarding participants' references to particular themes and in their Likert scale replies on the e-mail post-interview questionnaire. I have used these counts, where appropriate, to support my interpretation of a particular theme or viewpoint and in this way to provide a type of methodological triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Flick, 1998) since, from the constructivist viewpoint:

> ...no single research method will ever capture all of the changing features of the social world under study;
> (Denzin, 1997: 319)

and:

> ...We should combine theories and methods carefully and purposefully with the intention of adding breadth or depth to our analysis but not for the purpose of pursuing "objective" truth.
> (Fielding & Fielding 1986: 33, quoted in Denzin, 1997: 321)

3.2.4 Generalisability, validity and reliability: quantitative concepts re-defined

In order to situate this study ontologically, it is necessary to consider the concept of *generalisability*, and the supporting concepts of *reliability and validity.* These, used to justify the soundness and credibility of a study's findings, have been central to the quantitative paradigm. With a shift away from a central focus on the

"Paradigm Dialogue", the three concepts have not lost their relevance but have rather been re-theorised in light of the need for qualitative research to reflect the "human and passionate elements of research" (Janesick, 2000: 394). Clearly, since my fourth study objective is to "propose a framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre", any such construct will need to be generally applicable to all SACs in Hong Kong. Thus, it has been necessary for me to consider these concepts in relation to this study.

In qualitative research, in comparison to its quantitative counterpart, the concept of *generalisability* has been recast in more local, pragmatic, less authoritative terms as a function of human experience rather than of formal predictions. It is analytic rather than "sample-to-population" based (Miles & Huberman, 1994:28). Stake and Trumbull (1982) refer to *naturalistic generalisation* in terms of a study's findings being assimilated into the reader's experience and thus generalised as part of the social construction of knowledge. In this study, I follow Strauss & Corbin's view of generalisability:

> Insofar as a theory that is developed through this methodology is able to specify consequences and their related conditions, the theorist can claim predictability for it, in the limited sense that if elsewhere approximately similar conditions obtain, then approximately similar consequences should occur.
> (Strauss & Corbin, 1994: 278).

In positivistic terms, *validity* was seen as a measure of the degree to which a study correctly attributes effects to a particular programme (internal validity) and the degree to which a study of a similar programme would yield similar results (external validity). Guba & Lincoln (1989), reflecting a naturalistic interpretation of the concept, define validity in terms of "trustworthiness" and "authenticity", while Janesick (1994: 216) suggests it simply addresses the question: "Is the explanation credible?" In naturalistic terms, validity can be seen as referring to the "quality of craftsmanship" (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 241). It is dependent on constant checking and rechecking, on questioning and re-questioning, and on interpretation and re-interpretation at all stages of the research. The decreased centrality of the notion of objectivity in naturalistic research is seen in Smith & Heshusius's definition of validity as "a label applied to the interpretation or description with which one agrees" (Smith & Heshusius, 1986:9). In this study, I view research as valid if it can be regarded as credible, this credibility depending on the "quality of craftsmanship", and a research environment of checks and counter-checks.

Denzin & Lincoln define *reliability* in positivistic terms as being "the extent to which findings can be replicated, or reproduced by another enquirer" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 100). Redefined in more naturalistic terms, it can be seen in terms of the "fit" (Glaser, 1978: 4) between the object of the observation and the explanation put forward for it. Consistency of the research findings is of central importance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and can be addressed by the systematic keeping of a clear record (or "audit trail") of the investigation (Owens, 1982; Kvale, 1996). In this study, I have attempted to ensure reliability of the research through systematic record-keeping and on-going evaluation of how well these demonstrate the observation-explanation "fit".

Reflecting the interpretations of the three terms introduced above, Carson et al (2001: 67) refer to the "trustworthiness" of qualitative findings in terms of "conformability", "credibility" and "dependability". It is this criterion of trustworthiness that I have aimed for in the collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of my data. Referring to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), Lincoln & Guba (1985), and Patton (1990), amongst others, Carson et al (2001) present techniques to help ensure such trustworthiness. These techniques include a number used in this study and which are discussed in chapter four such as: the use of theoretical sampling; depth and intimacy of interviews; triangulation of data and/or methods; checking of comments made by participants and asking participants to comment on their own observations.

Crucial to the credibility of interpretations where "neither reliability nor validity is an inherent attribute of a measuring instrument" (Reichardt & Cook, 1979:14), is the recognition of the importance of identifying potential sources of bias within the research context. I previously introduced my role as practitioner-researcher in chapter one, section 1.2, and I further discuss this issue in section 3.2.6 below.

3.2.5 Theoretical & practitioner knowledge: the value placed on experience

In the course of developing a SAC evaluation framework, I needed to activate two types of knowledge that I shall refer to as *theoretical knowledge* and *practitioner knowledge*. While theoretical knowledge can clearly be seen as largely deriving from practitioner knowledge, it can also be viewed as distinct in that I accessed theoretical knowledge through a review of the relevant literature. Practitioner knowledge, on the other hand, in addition to that which I have gained as a result of six years' experience as a SAC co-ordinator, I accessed through personal

interaction with people who are or have been involved in SACs as learners, teachers, managers or in other stakeholder roles.

In a SAC, there is no formal teaching, no pre-determined syllabi and no prescribed, standardised measures by which improvement can be gauged. There is, therefore, a lack of observable behaviour that could yield useful, quantifiable data. With the exception of those derived from simple monitoring of SAC patterns of usage, SAC research data are not numerical in form. Instead, they consist in large part of insights from practitioner knowledge in the form of the perceptions of those involved in all aspects of the SAC learning process. While these perceptions cannot be argued to meet quantitative criteria of objectivity, reliability or validity, they can be shown (Ref. chapters four, five and six) to meet a qualitative interpretation of both reliability and validity, which I have referred to above as *trustworthiness*.

3.2.6 Researcher role and point of view

My role as qualitative researcher is recognised as a central feature of the study. Unlike his quantitative counterpart, the qualitative researcher does not attempt to be "an objective, authoritative, politically neutral observer" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:576). Within a qualitative framework, "all texts are personal statements" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 1051). It has been argued that, while meaningful attempts can be made to ensure certain types of data objectivity, the closest that can be achieved in terms of analysis is "inter-subjective agreement" (House, 1978) or "pooled inter-subjectivity" (Worthen & Saunders, 1987; 1993; Allison, 1993). In this study, therefore, no claim is made of objectivity in the quantitative sense. However, in addition to recognising potential advantages of researcher involvement, I have also paid attention to avoiding too narrow a focus, and biased or distorted conclusions, as discussed in section 3.4 below.

As the co-ordinator of one of the Hong Kong SACs, I have had to consider a number of issues with regard to my role as researcher. One was the danger of developing researcher "tunnel vision" whereby my close familiarity with a SAC might encourage me to develop preconceptions that would then have hindered the analysis truly emerging from the data. Another was the wider question of research ethics.

In terms of tunnel vision, I did not see my familiarity with the CILL as a problem but rather a strength and indeed a necessity. Given the approach, extended time-frame and wide-ranging nature of the PhD study, it seemed essential that the researcher have practitioner knowledge. I felt familiarity to be vital to the process of interpretation insofar as a degree of *pre-understanding* is necessary in order to provide the context within which the investigator can then go on to the *understanding* and *interpretation stages* (Ödman & Kerdeman, 1997) of the study. I needed a full understanding of the target centres, and continued, free and in-depth access in order to identify meaningful insights from the study data. In the role of researcher-as-study participant, I was able make more informed decisions based on my expertise and experience, and to distinguish between that which was, and was not, of value from the data. In others words, I recognise the value of my knowledge and experience, and have used this to ensure that my analysis of the data was informed, but not determined, by my understanding.

Using my knowledge and experience to do this, it has, however, also been important for me to stand back, suspend interest in any outcomes and interpret the data from as detached a perspective as possible. As the researcher, SAC co-ordinator and one of the subjects of any future evaluation, I began the study with both my own personal bias and an organisational bias in terms of a "vested interest" in the outcome. This raises questions relating to credibility and ethics. Thus, as outlined in section 3.4 below, I have taken care to avoid, and account for, bias at the various stages of the PhD study.

3.3 The study methodology

The aim of the process of data collection and analysis in this study is the development of two constructs. The first, which functions to address the first study objective relating to the definition of a SAC, is a SAC *mapping* (as introduced previously in chapter one, and discussed more fully in chapter four, section 4.8). The second is the framework for the evaluation of Hong Kong SACs that uses the SAC mapping as its primary focus. The methodology that I employ to yield the relevant data is one of Grounded Theory.

In this section, I examine the notion of the Grounded Theory research methodology, before going on to discuss the notion of *theory* as it relates to the first study objective (the development of the SAC mapping).

3.3.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is "...derived from data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 5). It has been defined as "...an initial, systematic discovery of the theory from the data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 3) which "emerges from the bottom up...from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are inter-connected" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:3). Charmaz (2000) explains Grounded Theory thus:

> Essentially, Grounded Theory methods consist of systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analysing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data.
> (Charmaz, 2000: 509)

When Glaser and Strauss introduced Grounded Theory methodology in 1967, it was to be of great importance in the emergence of qualitative research as a credible research approach. It not only challenged the existing separation of research and theory, but also the notion that qualitative research was simply impressionistic and only of use as a descriptive tool. They suggested that such research was also to be utilised for theory generation.

Individually Glaser and Strauss (and later Strauss and Corbin) went on to develop Grounded Theory in different ways. Glaser (1978, 1992) sets four criteria for Grounded Theory research: *fit, work, relevance* and *modifiability.* He stresses that the emergent theoretical categories (either existing or new) must *fit* the data; that the theory should *work* in terms of being able to both explain and predict; that the theory should be clearly relevant to the context; and that it should be flexible and open to *modification.* He also repeatedly emphasises the importance of the "emergence" of the data and theory seeing Grounded Theory as:

> ...a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area.
> (Glaser, 1994: 16).

As Strauss and Corbin (1994) attempted to more closely prescribe the theory and raised concerns with regard to reliability and validity, Glaser (1992) perceived their work as involving forcing the data and analysis rather than allowing them to emerge as part of the research process. Having identified this as an issue, Charmaz (2000) suggests that there is a need for pragmatism in the use of Grounded Theory as a methodology. She argues that "applicability and

usefulness are part of the criteria for evaluating Grounded Theory analysis" (Charmaz, 2000: 513). While confirming that categories must come from the data, she acknowledges a place for the researcher's intuition so long as any "existing concepts work their way into the analysis" (P. 511). Bringing a constructivist view to the methodology she sees Grounded Theory methods being used as "flexible, heuristic strategies rather than as formulaic procedures" (P. 510). Such a pragmatic recognition of the place for both notions of applicability and intuition reflects the constructivist context within which I perceive SACs in Hong Kong to operate. The SACs do not operate along rigid, unchanging lines and any attempt to utilise an inflexible research approach is, I feel, doomed to failure.

The relevance of Grounded Theory to this study derives primarily from the absence of a pre-existing SAC theory or model. The literature relating to SACs that I reviewed in chapter two, section 2.2.3 describes a number of existing SACs (cf. McCall, 1992; Esch, 1994; Gardner & Miller, 1997; Gardner & Miller, 1999; Reinders, 2000) and examines a number of important, relevant issues (cf. the relationship between self-access and independent learning - Sheerin, 1997; counselling in self-access - Riley, 1997; establishing a SAC - Gardner & Miller, 1999). There is, however, no coherent, defining theory of how a SAC operates and that, I argue, should be at the heart of a SAC evaluation framework. This absence led me to gather theory-building data from those whose experience and knowledge was likely to effectively inform the construction of a coherent and credible SAC theory.

As with other modes of qualitative research, in using a Grounded Theory methodology my role as researcher has been to interpret, not merely describe, data and to identify emerging organisational data categories. Grounded Theory emphasises the development of theory and, in particular, theories of "conceptual density" whereby the researcher strives to verify relationships between various concepts within the research environment (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). In this study, as evidenced by the two extensive chapters (six and seven) reporting upon the data analysis, I have paid great attention to identifying and interpreting the various, at times complex, relationships that exist within the collected data.

I have previously introduced the notion of the cyclical nature of qualitative research in section 3.2.2. Flick (1998) contrasts the cyclical, theory-focused Grounded Theory model with the linear quantitative model which pre-supposes a theory that informs hypotheses which are then operationalised and tested. The

Grounded Theory model does not break the research process down into discrete elements, but rather considers the process holistically with each extra stage of data collection and interpretation adding to the rich complexity of the research context. The theory is always adaptable to changing circumstances and traceable back to the data from which it was conceptualised. It is, by its nature, "not verificational" (Glaser, 1992:29); rather the researcher creates possibilities that are always auditable. It was partly this element of creativity that led me to consider the use of the *mapping* metaphor (Ref. Section 4.8) as an element in the SAC evaluation process.

3.3.3 Theory

The use of Grounded Theory as a methodology clearly presupposes the notion of the development of a *theory*. Chen (1990) identifies two types of theory: *normative* and *causative*. *Normative* theory "provides guidance on what goals and outcomes should be pursued or examined" within a programme (Chen, 1990:43). *Causative* theory, on the other hand, which Weiss (1997) refers to as *implementation* theory, is in essence "a set of assumptions about how a program works" (Chen, 1990:43). In this study, the term *theory* has been taken to refer to causative or implementation theory. It is assumed that the theory and its constituent assumptions should meet criteria for its assessment such as "logical consistency, clarity, parsimony, density, scope integration, as well as its fit and its ability to work" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:5). Reflecting the overall approach of the study and the Grounded Theory methodology, and referring to section 3.2.4 above, my emphasis in theory-building is upon the plausibility of the theory, rather than upon more positivistic interpretations of generalisability (Locke, 2001).

I see the term *theory* as partly synonymous and partly complementary to the notion of a *mapping* of a SAC (as discussed in chapter four). It is synonymous in terms of providing an underlying understanding of how a centre works. It is complementary in that such an understanding is only one (albeit perhaps the primary) constituent of the mapping process. A mapping can additionally be seen to include aspects that do not directly relate to the operation of a centre but, rather, which add, in a non-causal manner, to its descriptive power. An example of such an aspect is the possibility of the learner returning for further study in the SAC regardless of the effect of the previous SALL experience, as seen in the SAC mapping (chapter eight, section 8.2).

3.4 Research ethics

Any piece of research involving people carries moral responsibility. This is particularly true in contexts where there is a dependent relationship involved such as in an educational, a medical or counselling setting. While the personal interaction in an interview situation, in particular, is particularly vulnerable to research abuse, ethical issues arise at all stages of a research project. Flinders (1992) identifies four ethical frameworks relating to three aspects of research: recruitment, fieldwork and reporting as seen in Figure 9 below.

	Utilitarian	**Deontological**	**Relational**	**Ecological**
Recruitment	Informed consent	Reciprocity	Collaboration	Cultural sensitivity
Fieldwork	Avoidance of harm	Avoidance of wrong	Avoidance of imposition	Avoidance of detachment
Reporting	Confidentiality	Fairness	Confirmation	Responsive communication

Figure 9: Ethical frameworks & aspects of research (Flinders, 1992)

My overall ethical concern was that the study was worth doing, that it would benefit the Hong Kong SACs and that it added value to the relevant fields of study.

In terms of the four ethical frameworks identified by Flinders, I have worked primarily within a *relational framework* emphasising involvement, concern for the people involved and respect. This can be seen in how the issues identified below, that are of particular relevance at various stages of the study, have been addressed.

In the design of the study, I considered carefully the potential effects of the research. Care has been taken to consider any possible effects on learners in terms of interfering with their study; on staff in terms of interfering with their work or adding to their workload; and in separating my role as researcher and SAC co-ordinator as clearly as possible. Secondly, in the collection of data, informed consent (Appendix 2) has been obtained from all subjects; confidentiality assured where appropriate; and the possibility of the withholding of data that a subject may wish to be withheld. Thirdly, in the transcription and analysis of data, measures have been taken to ensure that the transcripts truly reflect a participant's oral statements. This has been achieved in three main ways: all transcriptions and recording media are available for examination and verification; assumptions made

have been based on knowledge that is as fully verified as practicable; and subsequent views that informants have expressed have been recorded and subsequently reported as appropriate. Fourthly, at the reporting stage, the consequences of publication for all involved in the research process have been carefully considered.

Apart from the researcher's best efforts to ensure the highest ethical standards of researching, the brief of the PhD study advisory group has included monitoring research ethics at relevant stages of the study. The study advisory group comprised two SAC "experts". One was not directly involved in the study, while the second was Lindsay Miller who, as a participant and experienced researcher was, I feel, well-placed to advise on any possible research ethic related problems. Locke (2001) identifies a tension in Grounded Theory research between immersion in the data and being able to maintain an analytical perspective or distance. One of the benefits of contact with the advisory group over the period of the study was to help relieve this tension. They acted as the outsiders with whom Glaser (1978) and Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998) suggest the researcher might discuss the data so as to avoid Glaser's "drugless trip" (1978:24) induced by extended periods of data analysis.

Finally, in terms of the development of the evaluation framework itself, every effort will need to be made to ensure that Utility Standard U2 of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994) is met with regard to all those involved in any subsequent evaluation. This standard states that:

> The persons conducting the evaluation should be trustworthy and competent to perform the evaluation, so that the evaluation findings achieve maximum credibility and acceptance.
> (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994: 31)

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained the rationale for my choice of a naturalistic approach to the study and of the Grounded Theory methodology employed to discover the "truths" embedded in the literature, and in participant and researcher experiential knowledge.

I have highlighted the fact that the research process was not a linear one, but one which can rather be characterised as an iterative process of repeatedly revisiting

data in order to examine emerging issues and confirm or deny initial interpretations. I have also stressed the importance of both theoretical and practitioner knowledge, as well as my role as both researcher and SAC co-ordinator in the research process.

In doing so, I have aimed to lay the foundations for the examination in the following chapters of the various six stages in the research process.

Chapter 4

The research process: from thematising to data recording

4.1 Introduction

In chapter three, I outlined the overall research approach and methodology employed in this study. I explained the rationale behind my choice of a naturalistic approach employing a Grounded Theory methodology to investigate the SAC and its evaluation. I also discussed a number of issues central to the investigation, including my role as researcher in the research process.

In this and the following chapter, I focus on the research process itself, my part within it and the outputs derived from it. I will present and discuss (in approximately chronological order) the data collection, analysis and reporting elements of the study process. In so doing, I will also present the notion of *mapping* a SAC as a way of representing the SAC definition (presented in chapter eight) as derived from the three data sources (the participants, myself-as-researcher and the literature review), and outline what is meant by the term *evaluation framework* in the context of this study process.

Reflecting Guba & Lincoln (1985), my aim in these two chapters is to persuade and convince the reader of the credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability of my findings. Unlike the positivistic researcher who can point to quantified, statistical evidence, I plan to achieve this through explaining the rationale and details of the research process: the detail being sufficient for the reader to build their own view of the process and thus judge its validity. I hope to approach Kvale's lofty ideal whereby:

> ...the quality of the craftsmanship results in products with knowledge claims that are so powerful and convincing in their own right that they, so to say, carry the validation with them, like a strong piece of art.
> (Kvale, 1996: 252)

In this chapter, I focus on the first four, of the seven, stages in the PhD data collection, analysis and reporting process as illustrated in Figure 10 in section 4.2 below. In chapter five, I discuss the last three stages in this process and include a worked example of the data coding process. The data themselves are examined and discussed in chapters six and seven.

4.2 Overview of the process of data collection and analysis

The purpose of collecting and analysing the study data was to identify concepts and perspectives in order to identify what constitutes a SAC in the Hong Kong context, and to inform the development of a framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC.

Data collection, as is explained in detail in sections 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 below, was primarily achieved through two means: interviews with follow-up, clarifactory data obtained through e-mails; and post-interview e-mail questionnaires. I investigated the views of participants in relation to both the nature of a SAC and how a SAC might be evaluated. From the data categories and relationships that emerged from the analysis, I developed two constructs or theories. The first was a *mapping* (this term is defined and the mapping process discussed in chapter five, section 5.3 and chapter eight, section 8.2) of how the participants perceive a Hong Kong SAC as operating. The second was a *framework* for the evaluation of a SAC which is discussed in chapter eight, section 8.3.

As detailed in Figure 10 below, the PhD data collection, analysis and reporting process developed through seven stages which largely parallel the stages of the qualitative research process as proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994) and Kvale (1996). Kvale identifies these stages as: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting.

As seen in the figure, the first four stages of this study clearly parallel those of Kvale, but with a change in terminology to reflect the fact that, in this study, interviews are not the only data collection method. It is in the next three stages that, despite an overall fit, a change in emphasis (as well as a change in terminology) can be seen. I have included the conceptually richer terms *interpretation* and *reduction* since I feel they are rather more appropriate to this study that Kvale's more simple *analyzing* and *verifying*. Kvale's terms seem to suggest a rather straight-forward process, something which, in reality, has not been the case. I have also included my *SAC mapping* and *evaluation framework* development stage within Kvale's *verifying* stage. This has been done, since the development of the mapping and the framework did not follow neatly and linearly on from stage five into the preparation of a report. It derived instead slowly and incrementally from insights gained throughout the stage five process of data analysis, interpretation and reduction.

The fact that the data-related process was a neat, linear one can be seen with reference to one example. Since I was following a Grounded Theory methodology and was guided by theoretical sampling (Glaser 1978; and as explained in section 4.4.1 (i) below), the second and third activities of the data collection stage were data-driven and not actually conducted chronologically during stage three. In fact, the follow-up e-mails (activity two) were carried out during the data analysis of stage five while the post-interview questionnaires (activity three) actually constituted activity two of the developmental stage six. The whole research process was iterative, characterised by a constant re-visiting, checking and re-interpreting of data previously considered.

Figure 10 overleaf does, however, serve as a frame and an overview of the discussion of the processes considered in each of the following sections of this chapter. The figure is complemented by Figure 15 in section 5.2, which provides a more-chronologically ordered representation of the elements that comprise the post-interview stages four to six. Reflecting the stages represented in these two figures, this and the following chapter discuss the stages of the data collection, analysis and reporting processes in some detail.

Kvale's (1996) stages	PhD study stages		Activity/focus
1. Thematising	**1. Thematising**	>	Addressing the "what", "why" and "how" of the data collection and analysis process
2. Designing	**2. Data collection design**	>	Selection of participants & design of research instruments
3. Interviewing	**3. Data collection**	>	1) semi-structured interviews 2) follow-up e-mails 3) post-interview analysis questionnaires
4. Transcribing	**4. Data recording**	>	Interviews: transcription
5. Analyzing 6. Verifying	**5. Data analysis, interpretation and reduction**	>	1) Impression memo 2) Transcript coding 3) Checking: follow-up e-mails 4) Mindmap entries 5) NVIVO entries 6) Re-examination and further categorisation of mindmap entries to develop a mindmap meta-framework 7) Re-examination, close annotation and further categorisation of NVIVO entries to develop a NVIVO meta-framework 8) Checking: comparison and synthesis of mindmap & NVIVO analyses, with reference to the transcripts
	6. Development of a SAC mapping and evaluation framework	>	1) Development of initial SAC mapping from stage 5 analysis 2) Checking: post-interview questionnaire and discussion of SAC mapping 3) Use of SAC mapping, with reference to existing pedagogical evaluation models, to suggest an evaluation framework
7. Reporting	**7. Reporting**	>	1) SAC mapping 2) SAC evaluation framework 3) PhD thesis

Figure 10: The PhD data collection, analysis and reporting process

4.3 Stage one: thematising

The term *thematising* refers to formulating:

> ...the purpose of an investigation and [describing] the concept of the topic to be investigated.
> (Kvale, 1996: 88)

In thematising the study, I considered three fundamental questions. Although previously considered in relation to the PhD study as a whole, it is also important to consider them in relation to the study's investigative structure in order to ensure that the investigative process is fully relevant to the study.

The three questions are:

- What will I be investigating? - the **content**
- Why is it of value to investigate this topic? - the **rationale**
- How will I investigate the topic? - the **methodology**

4.3.1 The content

Denzin & Lincoln (1994) and Kvale (1996) both emphasize the importance of "developing a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the phenomena to be investigated, to establish the base to which new knowledge will be added and integrated" (Kvale, 1996: 95-96).

I had been slowly developing this "conceptual and theoretical" base prior to my planning the PhD data collection process. Both by beginning the process of reviewing the literature, and (as a SAC co-ordinator) by the fact of "being there" and experiencing much of the phenomena first-hand, I had both consciously and sub-consciously developed my own notions that I later related to the emerging study. It was from these that the focus on evaluation emerged, initially for pragmatic reasons as pressures for accountability increased, and subsequently for more personal, philosophical reasons as my interest and involvement in the field of self-access language learning intensified.

4.3.2 The rationale

As I introduced in chapter one and discussed more fully in chapter three, the study was designed in order to generate a grounded SAC theory which was in turn intended to inform the development of a framework for the evaluation of a SAC.

This framework would then be available for use (after contextual adaptation to individual situations) by SACs, initially in Hong Kong and potentially elsewhere.

4.3.3 The methodology

The third question relates to the initial study approach and generated two further questions that in turn ended up guiding the entire investigative process.

i) *From the CILL to SAC to framework, or from SAC to framework?*
I identified two possible approaches to the development of an evaluation framework for SACs in Hong Kong. The first involved focusing on the underlying processes at work in the CILL (chapter one, section 1.2), then developing a framework for the evaluation of that centre and finally attempting to generalise that to the evaluation of other SACs in Hong Kong. The second approach involved identifying the underlying processes that the participants, using their diverse experience and knowledge, felt were at work in a non-specific SAC in Hong Kong to inform the development of an evaluation framework.

Despite the fact that many of the study participants had first-hand experience of the CILL, I chose the second approach, primarily for two reasons. First, my own experience and the initial interview data suggested that, despite their differences, there was considerable commonality in the processes underlying the operation of the five SACs in Hong Kong. By first trying to identify the common core and by basing the evaluation framework upon this, I felt that the evaluation framework would have greater potential generalisability. Secondly, I felt the process of identifying the commonality in itself had value in a number of ways. These first included the fact that a SAC theory would in itself be of value, particularly for those intending to set up such a centre, and secondly that the process might benefit the individual centres' development through a process of sharing experiences and ideas.

ii) *Why the need for a SAC "mapping"?*
The metaphor of a SAC *mapping* was incorporated into the study after the initial planning stages, as outlined in section 5.3.1 below. However, the notion that, in order to develop a SAC evaluation framework, I first needed to develop a theory of how a SAC operated emanated both from my intuition, experience and my review of the literature (cf. Chen & Rossi, 1983; Wholey, 1987; Lipsey

& Pollard, 1989; Smith, 1997). It was one of the very few preconceptions that I consciously allowed to enter the planning stage of the study. I perceived this as necessary primarily because, as pointed out in chapters one and three, there exists no theory-based description of what constitutes a SAC.

As discussed in chapter three, the study research philosophy generally reflects a constructivist understanding of the world where knowledge is developed through contextualised communication (Candy, 1989). In Kvale's words, it has been a *Bildungsreise* - "a scholarly, formative journey" (1996: 4). My aim has been to explore, and from such exploration build a theory relevant to my study.

4.4 Stage two: data collection design

In this section, I firstly focus on participant selection (or *sampling*) and then introduce the three data collection tools: interviews, follow-up e-mails and the post-interview e-mail questionnaire.

4.4.1 Participant selection

The selection of participants was determined by the choice I made regarding the sampling rationale appropriate to the study approach and methodology.

i) *Theoretical sampling*

My participant selection was driven by *theoretical sampling*. By this I mean that I selected the study participants on the basis of their relevance to my study objectives and the intended resulting theoretical framework. As Mason (1996) states:

> Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample...which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation. (Mason, 1996: 94)

In this regard, I also sampled "a specific locale according to a preconceived but reasonable initial set of dimensions" (Glaser, 1978: 37) for a large proportion of the study participants. I chose the CILL (chapter one, section 1.2) as the primary data source for two main reasons. It was the only centre in

Hong Kong with a dedicated, full-time academic and technical staff: this provided a valuable pool of expertise and in-depth knowledge to draw upon. Secondly, being the co-ordinator of the CILL has allowed me to observe and monitor a centre on a day-to-day basis and to adjust the research plan as appropriate in a way that would not have been feasible with less direct and unfettered access to a SAC.

Glaser (1978) contrasts *selective sampling* with *theoretical sampling* defining the second in terms of three data-driven stages:

> Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges.
> (Glaser, 1978: 36)

Charmaz (2000a) states that:

> As we grounded theorists refine our categories and develop them into theoretical constructs, we likely find gaps in our data and holes in our theories. Then we go back to the field and collect delimited data to fill those conceptual gaps and holes - we conduct theoretical sampling.
> (Charmaz, 2000a: 519).

Similarly in this study, as concepts and theory emerged so my sampling boundaries changed to include different people talking about different things, the same people talking about different things and different people talking about the same things. Decisions regarding the targets and content of the follow-up e-mails, and the content of the post-interview e-mail questionnaire were theoretically and data driven. These two data collection stages are discussed in chapter five, section 5.2.

ii) *Participants*

I initially chose two types of participants. Eleven were to represent a cross-section of stakeholders from one Hong Kong SAC (the CILL) with varying types and depths of experience in SALL. They were learners, teachers or other professionals whose work or study was in some way related to the operation of the CILL. The other five were chosen as being leading experts in the field of SALL and SACs both in Hong Kong and internationally.

Participants were assigned one of five *SAC expert* roles and three *Non-SAC expert* roles, as shown in Figure 11 below.

SAC expert roles	*Non-SAC expert* roles
SAC co-ordinators	Language centre manager
SAC consultants	Language teacher
SAC teachers	Funder
SAC learners	
SAC support staff member	

Figure 11: Interview participant roles

As can be seen in the participant profiles (Appendix 3), those assigned the sub-role *SAC consultant* have had considerable experience in the field of SALL, while not actually working in a SAC at the time of the study. This, in all but Barbara Sinclair's case, has included involvement in the setting up of SACs in Hong Kong. The sub-role *SAC co-ordinator* was applied to those who were involved in the running of a Hong Kong SAC or similar educational operation at the time of the study. The *learners* are students who have used the CILL extensively for study purposes. The *non-experts* have all been involved in some manner with a SAC, but have no specialist knowledge (pedagogical or administrative). This category includes a university English teacher, a head of a university language centre and a representative of the University Grants Committee that funds SACs in Hong Kong.

Fretchling & Sharp point out:

> The use of interview as a data collection method begins with the assumption that the participants' perspectives are meaningful and knowable, and able to be made explicit, and that their perspectives affect the success of the project.
> (Fretchling & Sharp, 1997: 1)

With the exception of the SAC learners (whose contribution is discussed below), the background and my own personal knowledge of the other participants allowed me confidence in making the assumption that their perspectives were both "meaningful", "knowable" and of value to the study.

SAC learners as participants

As described in the following paragraphs, I interviewed in total five (rather than just the initially selected two) Hong Kong SAC learners from a possible population of many thousands. I certainly feel that SAC learners should be consulted as part of the planning process for the evaluation of a particular SAC. They should be consulted in order to identify both foci and methods for

the evaluation of a SAC's operation. As Worthen & Sanders point out in relation to a school evaluation:

> An evaluation...that answers only the questions of the school staff and ignores the questions of parents, children and community groups is simply a bad evaluation.
> (Worthen & Sanders, 1987: 186)

There were four main reasons why I decided that, in the context of this PhD study, the aim of which is not to evaluate a specific SAC, I should not try to gather learner data in a quantity that could be referred to as "representative" relative to the quantity of data from the other interview participant roles.

Firstly, a number of the issues that emerged from the two fairly large-scale, learner-focused SAC studies noted in chapter two, Gardner & Miller (1997) and Reinders (2000a & b), have also arisen from, and been incorporated into, the data analysis and discussion sections of this study. Gardner & Miller's (1997) study surveyed 541 Hong Kong SAC learners, while Reindeer's (2000) study surveyed 149 SAC learners at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. The inclusion of findings from these related studies adds plausibility and credibility to this study in terms of providing additional sources of evidence.

A second reason is that my own six years' experience as a Hong Kong SAC co-ordinator and action researcher has led me to three main conclusions regarding the place of learner data in the context of SAC evaluation. Firstly, as suggested above, learners' views are crucial to the development of a particular SAC and their suggestions regarding particular aspects of a SAC's operation can be very useful in making operational decisions. Secondly, however, Hong Kong tertiary learners study under enormous pressure from a crowded and examination-oriented curriculum as well as (in many cases) financial hardships. Finally, most learners understandably have a limited understanding of, and interest in, many of the processes which are involved in the tertiary learning experience. The last two of these factors tend, in my experience, to make them very focused upon their extrinsic goals and generally uninterested in other aspects of the learning experience, and their contributions to research tend to reflect this.

My view seems to be supported by the experience in Hong Kong of Gardner & Miller (1997) and Kwan (2002), as well as overseas in that of Reinders (2000a

& b). Gardner & Miller attempted to interview SAC learners in focus groups in both English and Cantonese but found that the interviews:

> ...failed to achieve their aim which was to provide depth to the (previously administered) questionnaire responses.
> (Gardner & Miller, 1997: 91)

The responses elicited in Gardner & Miller's focus groups and subsequent one-to-one interviews, which were conducted in Cantonese (see below), tended to focus on very practical issues related to a specific SAC, such as the restriction on book borrowing, the availability of a SAC teacher and the opportunity to watch movies. Very little of their discussion and very few of Gardner & Miller's recommendations seem to derive from data elicited from SAC learners.

Kwan's (2002) summarising implications derived from extensive learner interview and questionnaire feedback are limited to identifying learners' preference for group learning, their tendency to depend heavily on learning material for support and their reluctance to exploit the presence of the SAC teacher. This would seem to suggest that the learner input was a limited source of relevant, innovative notions.

Reindeer's (2000) interview data from ESL students studying in New Zealand, which are used to support findings from a questionnaire (like those reported above in Hong Kong) seem to add little of depth. They focus primarily on areas of practical concern to a particular SAC such as which books learners use rather than on issues of wider relevance.

Thirdly, experience as a Hong Kong SAC co-ordinator interviewing students for annual evaluative purposes has led me to conclude that interviews conducted of Cantonese speakers in English would yield little of high research value for this study from the "average" SAC learner. The experience of researchers from the Hong Kong based studies introduced above would seem to support this. Gardner & Miller, based on their experience of previously conducting focus groups in English, conducted their SAC learner interviews in Cantonese (Gardner & Miller, 1997:91). As a non-Cantonese speaker, to have conducted my interviews in Cantonese would have required an interpreter or subsequent translation of a Cantonese interview transcription. I did not feel this was desirable for two main reasons. First, it would, at the very least, have

severely limited the flexibility of questioning during the interviews themselves. In addition, it would have distanced me from the data in that, subsequent to the interviews, I would have had to base my interpretation upon a third party's previous interpretation of the actual words of the participant.

Finally, although this study makes no claims to generalisability, due to the very limited number of educators involved in SAC operation in Hong Kong, non-SAC learner interview participants views could be claimed to be broadly representative, although not necessarily statistically generalisable of their particular role. Since between five and ten thousand students use the Hong Kong SACs in one year, it would have been impossible, in the context of this PhD study, to conduct interviews in sufficient depth and in sufficient numbers to make a similar claim for SAC learners.

To summarise, the issues on which I focused in the semi-structured interviews of this study are not, I feel, generally those about which most SAC learners could be expected to be able to express informed views in English. Thus, I did not feel able to make Fretchling & Sharp's assumption (quoted in this section above) regarding the value of their perspectives to the study.

For these four reasons, I felt rather that I should collect learners' views to confirm or deny, and build upon the conclusions derived from the interview data through the use of a focused, large-scale questionnaire which would be conducted subsequent to the development of the evaluation framework, as and when, appropriate and necessary.

Despite the reasons outlined above for restricting the collection of learner data in the collection stages of the study, I felt that I should at explore examples of the learners' voice. I therefore identified initially two, and later five, SAC learners whom I considered were more likely to contribute meaningfully. The first two were chosen on the basis not only of their thorough working knowledge of, and interest in, a SAC, but also because they were both post-graduate students professionally involved in evaluation in their work. The rationale for the inclusion of each of the five learners is included in Appendix 3. I felt that their views, as with those of the other interview participants, informed by experience relevant to this study, would generate data of greater value than those provided by most Hong Kong SAC learners. The data derived from their interviews has, I feel, confirmed this judgement.

4.4.2 Research instruments

Although I have not used interviews to the exclusion of all other research instruments, I judged that interviews were best suited since as Rubin & Rubin (1995) suggest:

> ...the purpose of qualitative interviewing...[is]...to obtain rich data to build theories that describe a setting or explain a phenomenon...step by step from the examples and experiences collected during the interviews. (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:56 - my parentheses)

and this reflects the research process employed for this study. This process is further reflected in Oppenheim's focus on the "essentially heuristic" purpose of the interview:

> ...to develop ideas and research hypotheses rather than to gather facts and statistics. It is concerned with trying to understand how ordinary people think and feel about the topics of concern to the research. (Oppenheim, 1992:67)

The iterative, hermeneutic process involving the interviews themselves, and my subsequent analysis and constant revisiting of them (as described in the following pages) underpinned the study methodology and reflected the overall study approach.

Interviews also gave me flexibility in a number of ways that questionnaires alone (for example), with their pre-conceived theoretical framework, would not have been able to. Interviews have allowed me to explore areas of interest and concern as they arose; to quickly clarify or verify participants' statements or views; and to reformulate questions the better to ensure participant comprehension within an unfolding discursive framework. As Patton (1990) notes, in-depth interviews are particularly useful when dealing with complex subject matter that needs careful introduction and monitoring, and with busy respondents when a face-to-face encounter is advantageous to ensure their focused, uninterrupted involvement.

In addition to interviews, I did, however, use two other methods to collect data in order to both clarify, and then follow up on, data the derived from the interviews. These were e-mail follow-up questions and a post-interview e-mail questionnaire. I discuss these in sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.3 below. The main reasons for using written rather than oral follow-up measures were two-fold. First, and particularly since two of the participants live in the U.K. and a third was then thought to be

living in Somalia, it would have been difficult to arrange a second round of face-to-face interviews. Additionally, the use of different data collection methods and the use of the Likert scale to derive a count provided an element of method triangulation (Sechrest & Sidani, 1995; Denzin, 1997; Keeves, 1997b;).

i) *Interview design*

The interviews were seen from a post-modernist perspective as exploratory conversations between "professionals": the professional teacher-as-interviewer, and professional teachers, learners, administrators and support personnel as interviewees. The interviews were guided by an interest in obtaining:

> ...a "good Gestalt", an inner unity of the text free of logical contradictions...[and] ...a possible consensus of understanding among actors within the frame of reference of self-understanding as mediated within the culture.
> (Kvale, 1996: 48, 51).

The interviews were *semi-structured* (Flick, 1998) and fairly *participatory* (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) in nature. In other words, although an interview framework was prepared that highlighted certain topics for discussion (Appendix 4), participants were generally encouraged to explore topics as they felt appropriate. As interviewer, I strove to be open to new ideas and interpretations, and to display a "deliberate naivete" (Kvale, 1996: 31) through the use of open-ended questions. These were followed by probing questions to clarify meaning as on-going interpretation necessitated. The implementation of the interview process and examples of the question types employed can be seen in section 4.5.1 below.

ii) *Follow-up e-mails*

The follow-up e-mails were theoretically sampled (section 4.4.1 (i) above) in that they were sent (post-interview) only to selected participants (see Appendix 5). The selection was made on the basis of my needing to achieve two goals. First, in some interviews, comments made by participants seemed unclear and so an e-mail was sent to clarify interview data that were in some way analytically problematic. An example can be seen in the following extract from one follow-up e-mail:

Andrew Morrall
...sometimes self-access is very free and sometimes it's more controlled. Self-access is where the student learner or the learner controls what they study, when they study and how they study.

Bruce
These seem to be contradictory views of self-access...any comment that could clarify your view?
(Extracted from Andrew Morrall: post-interview follow-up e-mail)

The other reason for sending an e-mail was to ask participants to elaborate upon a point made in the interview which, upon studying the data, I felt could usefully be further explored, for example:

Bruce
You mention the Learning Portfolios used at Temasek Poly. Can you see this type of approach having value for a centre where all the students are voluntary and "drop in"?
Barbara Sinclair
The thing about portfolios is they take time and effort to maintain - who's going to do that unless it's mandatory? I think you'd have to offer some kind of benefit to drop-in students, like some credits towards their degree (the approach they take at Temasek), so that keeping a portfolio becomes an alternative way of earning assessment points.
(Extracted from Barbara Sinclair: post-interview follow-up e-mail)

iii) *Post-interview e-mail questionnaire design*

Chronologically, the post-interview e-mail questionnaire (Appendix 6) was administered after the development of the initial version of the SAC mapping (section 5.3 in chapter five). This was in order to invite participants to comment on the mapping and suggest changes. The questionnaire content derived from the interview data and from the drafting of the first SAC mapping. The questionnaire is further discussed in section 4.5.3 below.

The questionnaire was not the primary data source for the study, but served to clarify, confirm and enrich data already collected from the interviews as detailed in section 4.5.1 above. Unlike the interviews, it gave participants an opportunity to consider the questions carefully before answering in their own time. The process of constructing the questionnaire basically followed four stages which included consideration of a number of relevant issues that have been raised by researchers concerning interview content, structure and conduct.

Stage one: determine information required and method of collection

The information that I wished to obtain was identified from the gaps in my understanding of the interview data. As I became immersed in the analysis of the interview data, questions began to emerge that related to themes and issues that participants had either identified (such as David Gardner's notion of *experimentation* for example) or had discussed. In considering these questions, I identified areas relating to both the definition and the evaluation of a SAC that, I felt, warranted further investigation. These areas are indicated in Figure 12 below.

Areas relating to the definition of the SAC	
❑ the level of formality of the learning environment ❑ the place of SALL and independent learning skills in SAC study	❑ the role of SAC staff ❑ the role of the SAC as a resource centre
Areas relating to the evaluation of the SAC	
❑ the role of an evaluation ❑ the nature of an evaluation ❑ who should evaluate	❑ *benchmarking* ❑ observation as an evaluation tool

Figure 12: Areas of focus for post-interview questionnaire

Before developing the questions, I had to determine how the questionnaire would be administered. A self-administered questionnaire had the advantage of being easy to administer, and also of being less susceptible to the influence of the researcher. Peterson (2000) reports that the results from self-administered questionnaires tend to show more variability but, given that one of my aims was that the questionnaire should act as a stimulus, I did not consider this to be a major constraint. Self-administration additionally means that the respondents can repeatedly review the questions, and determine their own pace in responding to the items. Given the fact that five of the eleven potential respondents are non-native speakers with no direct experience of pedagogical administration, there was, however, a potential problem in terms of item comprehension.

In the end, I sent the questionnaire by e-mail to all participants. However, at the same time, I telephoned the SAC learner participants to explain that, should they wish, I could go through the questionnaire with them. All four who responded to the questionnaire accepted this offer.

Stage two: develop the questions

The second stage involved developing the question items. There were three main issues I considered at this point: the question-types, the number of questions and their wording.

Question-types

Nunan (1992), discussing the two types of questionnaire item (*open-ended* or *closed*), argues that closed questions, while being easier to collate, tend to restrict the amount of meaningful data collected. Peterson (2000), however, reminds us that they are easier to answer. I chose to use closed question forms (using a four-point Likert scale) in order to collect a limited amount of quantifiable data to use for triangulation purposes, but then followed each with the option "Please comment". In my introduction to the questionnaire, I encouraged participants to make use of this option and, as will be seen in the data discussed in chapters six and seven, many did.

Number of questions

Keeping in mind the fact that the participants are mainly busy professionals, and also concerns regarding "respondent fatigue" (Wolf, 1990: 375), I limited the number of items, with the aim that they could be effectively answered within approximately twenty minutes.

Question wording

Recognising the potential comprehension problems that the non-native speaker respondents, in particular, might have (Nunan, 1992; Peterson, 2000; Reinders, 2000a), I constructed the questions with the following criteria (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Peterson, 2000) in mind. They should be:

- cognitively appropriate to all participants;
- experientially appropriate to all participants;
- transparently relevant to the research;
- as short as possible and as long as necessary; and
- as clear and unambiguous as possible.

Stage three: develop, and assess, the questionnaire structure

The questionnaire was divided into two sections which mirrored the manner in which I had introduced the research to the participants during the interview process i.e. relating to the *definition* and *evaluation* of a SAC. Within these sections, the questions were listed in what I considered to be a logical manner

in terms of an item relating to, and where possible leading on from, the previous item. I included an introductory, explanatory rubric, while at the same time using an informal closing to re-establish the rapport established earlier during the interview process.

Stage four: pilot and modify the questionnaire
The final stage of development involved an informal piloting of the questionnaire among colleagues in the English Language Centre which then led to a number of modifications being made prior to its formal use in this project.

4.5 Stage three: data collection

In this section, I describe the actual process of data collection that I followed for the three research instruments introduced in section 4.4.2 above.

4.5.1 Interviews

I contacted potential participants in person, by phone or by e-mail to ask if they would agree to be interviewed for the study. I explained to them the background and that the information was to be used in a PhD study concerning the evaluation of SACs. For each interview, I introduced the reason for the interview and its intended structure before posing questions in a manner that was designed to be clear and appropriate to the participant in terms of both professional knowledge and linguistic ability, reformulating where necessary. As previously noted in chapter three (section 3.4), all participants signed a consent form (Appendix 2).

Rubin & Rubin counsel that:

> In qualitative interviewing, blinkers are not allowed. You have to be free to follow your data where they lead
> (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 64).

With this in mind, I attempted during the interviews to act as an attentive, sensitive listener who was constantly interpreting the participants' statements in order to ask for elaboration or clarification as and when appropriate.

Spradley (1979) in his "taxonomy of ethnographic questions" identifies three types of interview questions: *descriptive, structural* and *contrast*. The primary aim of the study interviews was to identify concepts and themes to inform both the SAC mapping process and the subsequent development of an evaluation. Thus, as previously noted, the questions were generally open-ended and requested description, or the expression of perceptions, relating to the participants' experience of a SAC. I asked Barbara Sinclair, for example: "How would you define an effective self-access centre?" (Barbara Sinclair interview: 141).

There were additionally structural questions that aimed to verify comprehension of a particular term or reference (for example: "What do you mean by *student commitment*?" - Lindsay Miller interview: 303) and some contrast questions where I referred the participant back to previous statements or questions (for example: "..you said 'We evaluate ourselves constantly'...can you see that that could play any part in a more *formal* evaluation?" - Andrew Morrall interview: 421-4).

Other questioning techniques I employed included:

- probing questions with a clarifying function, for example following an open-ended question relating to the efficiency of a SAC:

  David Gardner: ...the purpose of any centre, any resource, is to be effective...
  Bruce: ...effective in doing what though?
  (David Gardner: 652-656)

- probing questions to confirm an interviewer intuition, for example:

  Mary Spratt: Well, I think that often SACs are just libraries or resource centres...
  Bruce: ...but the fact that you say "just" suggests that there's something missing if they are just that or not?..
  Mary Spratt: ...well, I suppose I'm saying "just" because I have read various...
  (Mary Spratt: 55-62).

- reformulation, for example:

  Bruce: And what would the learners be doing in this centre...what sort of activities?
  Sunny: Language learning.
  Bruce: In what form...if I went in there, what would I see them doing?
  (Sunny Chu: 50-55);

- request for reformulation, for example:

> **Wong Kwong Ming**: ...one month later you get together to review what is going on, what progress you got.
> **Bruce**: Sorry, "get together", what do you mean?
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 41-44);

- structuring questions, for example referring back to a previous utterance to introduce a change in topic, as seen in the interview with Wan Sau Yi:

> **Wan Sau Yi**: I would tell them there is a centre in this university we can learn English in there but it's not...there's no class or - how do you describe it - there's no class in there but you learn English by yourself...you can do the exercise, get the reference book to do in there and you can ask the tutor in the centre...
> **Bruce**: You mentioned just now classes and how there were no classes there - how would you say learning English in the centre differs from learning English in a class?
> (Wan Sau Yi: 13-23); and,

- silence, to allow time for participants to reflect and to take control by breaking the silence if they wish.

In summary, as an interviewer, I attempted to be sensitive and open to participants' ideas, while at the same time using my knowledge to ensure a clearly-structured encounter where listening critically and interpreting participants responses enabled me to follow up on potentially valuable data that emerged.

4.5.2 Follow-up e-mails

Follow-up e-mails of varying lengths were sent to six interview participants. As noted in section 4.4.2 (iii) above, most of the e-mails requested that participants elaborate upon a comment they had made in the interview. Elaboration was in terms of expanding the concept they had introduced or in some cases giving information or examples from their own particular experience. Other e-mails requested that the participant clarified conceptual or linguistic meaning.

4.5.3 Post-interview e-mail questionnaire

The questionnaire, together with the first version of the SAC mapping, was sent by e-mail to all sixteen interview participants. Additionally, as noted in section 4.4.2 (iii) above, I met the four SAC learner participants who responded, to explain and clarify issues relating to linguistic and conceptual comprehension. All participants, except SAC expert Richard Farmer, who is believed to now be living in Somalia, and SAC learner William Cheng, whose whereabouts are unknown, returned the

completed questionnaire. Comments relating to the mapping were received from nine participants. None of the SAC learner participants provided feedback on the mapping. In telephone communication with three of them, the reason given was that they found the mapping difficult to understand. After some explanation, they still felt unable to provide constructive criticism, but stated that in general they felt it seemed to represent their conceptualisation of a SAC.

The data resulting from the questionnaire have been incorporated into the data analysis and are thus included in the discussion of the data in chapters six and seven. The feedback relating to the SAC mapping is of two types. *Structure level feedback* is that related to the overall structure of the mapping and the extent to which it matches the participants' understanding of the main components of a SAC and the interaction between these components. *Component level feedback* focuses on the elements that comprise each individual SAC component. Both types of feedback have been included in the process of developing the SAC mapping as described in chapter eight, section 8.2.

4.6 Stage four: data recording

Data from both the interview and the e-mail follow-up questionnaire were recorded electronically as outlined in the following two sections. The process of data analysis is discussed in chapter five, and the analysis itself in chapters six and seven.

4.6.1 The interview data

All interviews were, with participant consent, audio-recorded on to digital mini-disk. The mini-disks constitute a permanent record of the events and have allowed for repeated playback and constant re-interpretation of analysis (Sacks, 1992 - quoted in Silverman, 2000).

The interviews were also transcribed. There are two main advantages of transcription, rather than note-taking. Transcription allows for a complete record of the event with less room for error due to selective memory. Additionally, at the time of interview, it allowed me to focus my full attention on the participant and the interview content, rather than the specific language forms being used. The difficulty of ensuring verbatim transcription (Poland, 2002) is, however, recognised

and where there was any subsequent indication of possible error, I re-transcribed the section. In order to further check for transcriber error, a section of one interview was transcribed by an English language teacher and there was over 90% agreement between the two transcripts at lexical level. The process of recording the interview data is represented in Figure 13 below.

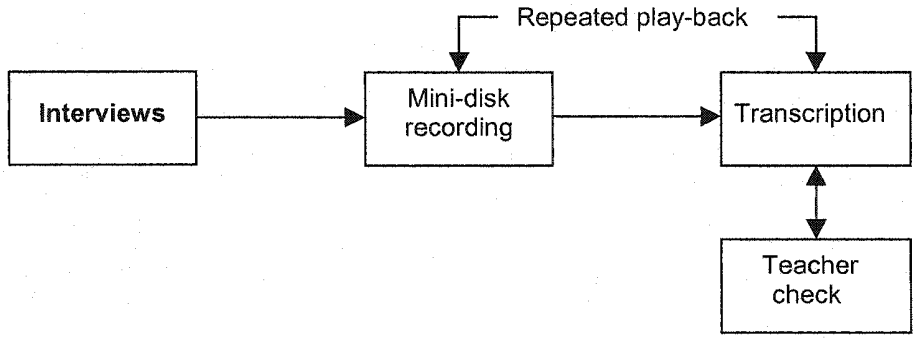


Figure 13: The interview data recording process

In deciding how to represent the spoken discourse both for my own later analysis and for the future reader, I considered the level of discourse analysis and the presentation format that would be necessary and appropriate (Mishler, 1991; Poland, 2002). Since I was primarily concerned with the ideas and opinions expressed by the participants, and generally not with non-linguistic meaning, a lexical level transcription of the interviews was undertaken. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, generally with no paralinguistic information recorded. Features such as pauses, facial expression, marked intonation patterns and gesture were only noted if they were critical to the understanding of points that the speaker was attempting to make.

4.6.2 The post-interview e-mail questionnaire data

Feedback from the questionnaire was received electronically. This allowed for it to be easily stored and coded using the same NVivo qualitative data analysis software package as for the interview data (chapter five, section 5.2.5). As represented below in Figure 14 and as discussed above in section 4.4.2 (iii), the data were of two types: Likert scale responses to statements in the form of counts and open-ended requests for comments that were exported directly to NVIVO for analysis. These are further discussed in chapter five, section 5.2.5.

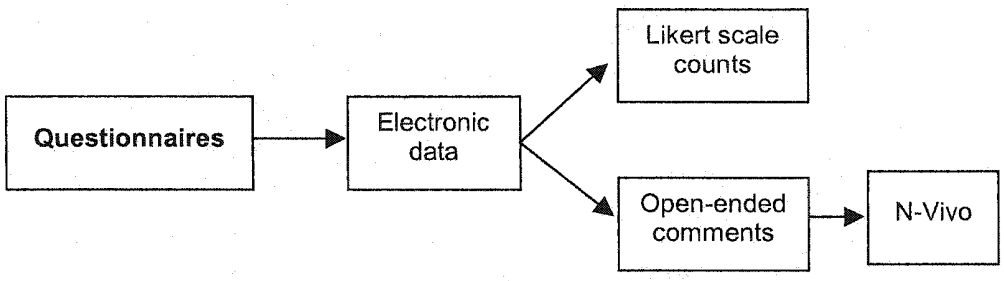


Figure 14: Post-interview e-mail questionnaire data recording process

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, and with particular reference to Figure 10 in section 4.2 above, I have described the initial four stages of the seven-stage study process: thematising, data collection design, data collection and data recording. In the following chapter, I discuss the remaining three stages that culminate in the presentation of the SAC evaluation framework.

Chapter 5

The research process: from data analysis to data reporting

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, having first outlined the seven-stage study process, I focused on the four stages that precede the data analysis stages of this study. These four stages were: thematising the study, designing the data collection procedures, and collecting and recording the data.

In this chapter, I outline the second part of the study research process, relating to the two data recording and analysis stages. These were presented as stages five and six in Figure 10 (chapter 4, section 4.2):

- the analysis, interpretation and reduction of data; and,
- the development of a SAC mapping and evaluation framework.

I first describe the initial data analysis and explain how the reductive process of *open coding* led to my presenting the data in the form of hierarchically linked *mindmap* categories and NVivo *nodes*. I continue by detailing how the data were revisited numerous times in order to check and re-check intuitive coding decisions, and to determine the ways in which the various coding categories and nodes were inter-related.

This process laid the foundations for the development, also described in this chapter, of the "Mindmap and NVivo meta-framework". This is the final data organiser from which I worked to produce the data analysis presented in the following two chapters relating to the development of a SAC mapping (chapter six) and a framework for SAC evaluation (chapter seven). In order to illustrate the data analysis and interpretation processes discussed in this chapter, I have included a worked example of the coding process performed upon one section of data from an individual interview participant. The actual "nitty-gritty" of the analysis is then presented in chapters six and seven.

5.2 Stage five: data analysis, interpretation and reduction

My overall approach to data analysis reflects elements from approaches described by Flick (1998), Glaser (1978, 1992), Glaser & Strauss (1967), Rubin & Rubin (1995), Seidman (1998), Spradley (1979) and Strauss (1987). With reference to their work, I developed a process of analysis consisting of increasingly-focused steps that has served to address the study objectives identified in chapter one and to develop theory from diverse perspectives of common themes. As previously noted in chapter four, the steps of analysis, although presented as linear, were often neither clearly distinct nor always conducted at different times.

The analysis and interpretation of the interview data involved a process of data reduction (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Flick, 1998; Seidman, 1998). This reduction was achieved through the iterative processes of annotation, coding and checking that are detailed in the following sections and exemplified in the worked example data extracts that are included. In addition to, but also resulting from, this reductive process, the data analysis and interpretation also involved a process of discovery, of revealing and making sense of concepts and perspectives within the contexts of the interview and the larger PhD study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978,1992; Flick, 1998; Seidman, 1998).

In addition to the formal stages in the post-interview data analysis process outlined in the following sections, data reduction actually took place prior to, and during, the interviews themselves. Prior to the interviews, (as discussed in chapter four, section 4.4) decisions were made concerning the choice of the initial conceptual framework for the study, the selection of informants and the drawing-up of interview protocols. I recognised from the outset that "no interviewer is a clean slate" (Seidman, 1998: 100). During the interviews, ad hoc decisions were made on the basis of my on-going interpretation of the comments and type of questioning to be pursued, and which points to target with follow-up questions.

Despite the various points noted above regarding the iterative and non-linear nature of the processes, I have attempted in Figure 15 below to represent an overview of stages three to six of the study: data collection, data recording, data analysis and theory development. Above the four stages in the figure, are

represented the various foci of activity for each stage. I have also indicated the section of this chapter in which each is discussed. The purpose of this figure is to help the reader, while reading the following sections, to visualise the way in which the various elements within these stages interact. To facilitate this visualisation, the data analysis steps are, as far as possible, presented chronologically in this chapter.

i) *A worked example of the coding process*

As a further illustrative aid, I have included in this chapter a data analysis *audit trail* in the form of a worked example of the coding process performed upon one section of data from the interview with SAC teacher Andrew Morrall. This worked example "follows" the data that emerges from one participant's interview from the annotated transcript, through the coding processes, the related mindmap and NVivo data groupings, and the interpretation of the final mindmap and NVivo meta-framework that informed the development of the SAC mapping and evaluation framework.

In this example, I have taken the first seventy-two lines of Andrew Morrall's interview transcript to use as an illustration of how I worked with the data (as outlined in chapters four and five, and reported in chapters six and seven). The lines have been chosen simply on the basis that they provide a sufficient number of clear examples that are both fairly easy to represent and to follow.

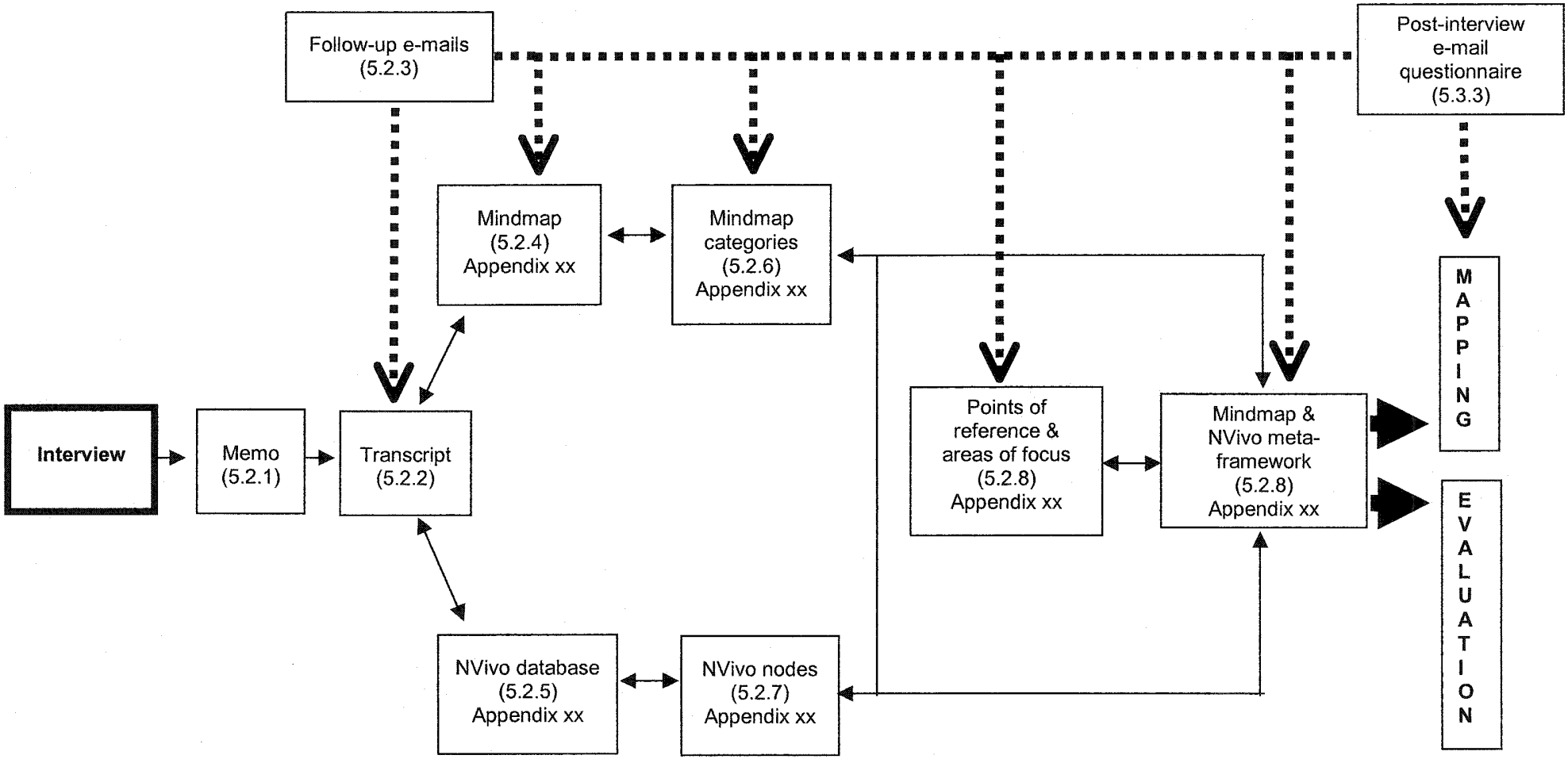


Figure 15: Overview of the collection, recording, analysis and theory development stages of the study

5.2.1 Recording first impressions: the impression memo

Immediately following an interview, as described in section 4.5.1 in the previous chapter, I undertook the first step in data analysis. This involved sitting back and thinking about the conversation I had just participated in and trying to get an overall "feel" for both the actual statements and the context within which they were made. In other words, I wanted to capture my initial perceptions of, and reactions to, the interview as a whole.

These thoughts were summarised in the form of an *impression memo* which then formed an instant debriefing document (Wengraf, 2001). The content of these short memos varied from interview to interview. They included any features of the interview that made a particular impression on me, such as whether the participant seemed supportive or dismissive of a particular notion. Generally, this process was done from memory but there were occasions when I made reference to the interview recording.

The rationale for this initial consideration of the data in a holistic and non-analytical manner was that the following analysis could then be conducted with an understanding of the wider textual and situational contexts. It was, in hermeneutic terms, to aid my *pre-understanding* for the *Bildungsreise* or "scholarly, formative journey" (Kvale, 1996: 4) that I was embarking upon. I also did this in order to identify issues and concepts that may not have been immediately apparent at text-unit level when reading the transcripts. In the interview with Sunny Chu, for example, a scepticism on his part could be seen to emerge gradually over the course of the interview and could not easily be identified in one particular statement or text-unit.

i) *Worked example (1)*

After Andrew Morrall's interview, which was one of the first I conducted, I was struck particularly by his self-assured responses which seemed to display a reasonably deep understanding of the various themes we had discussed. This was thus recorded in my impression memo of that interview, as can be seen in Figure 16 below.

DOCUMENT TEXT REPORT

Document: Memo for - Andy Morrall 1
Description: Interview memo for Andy Morrall 1

- quite dogmatic and confident in his views: probably due to his experience as SAC teacher and in setting up CILL

- quite learner-centred view of SAC

- SAC as a place for interaction (& fun)

- awareness of the wider context in which CILL operates in terms both of PolyU and wider HK context

- importance of CILL as integrated into ELC/PolyU

- sees academic staff a key SAC element

- evaluation for judgement & development

- aware of weaknesses of SALL & SACs

Figure 16: Worked example 1 - Impression memo for Andrew Morrall

5.2.2 Initial coding of interview transcripts

After writing the impression memo, I did not start to transcribe the interviews until all of the initially-planned thirteen were completed. My initial coding process reflects the data reduction, grouping and reformulating of Rubin & Rubin (1995) and Strauss & Corbin (1990), but importantly accepts Glaser's (1992) guidance regarding the value of simplicity and patience. Rubin & Rubin define *coding* as:

> ...the process of grouping interviewees' responses into categories that bring together similar ideas, concepts, or themes you have discovered, or steps or stages in a process.
> (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 238);

while Strauss & Corbin's understanding is of *coding* as:

> ...representing the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualised, and put back together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are built from data.
> Strauss & Corbin's (1990: 57)

Glaser, however, in his critique of Strauss & Corbin (1990), cautions against what he sees as their over-complex analytical process based on "derailing preconceived questions". He urges the researcher to:

> ...go directly for the categories, their properties and the theoretical codes that connect them...let it happen: impatience produces preconception. (Glaser, 1992: 45)

As visually presented in Figure 17 below, I conceived the coding procedure to consist of two overall processes, *open coding* and *axial coding* (as explained in the following sections 5.2.2 - 5.2.8), which were operationalised iteratively in a number of different, inter-related ways.

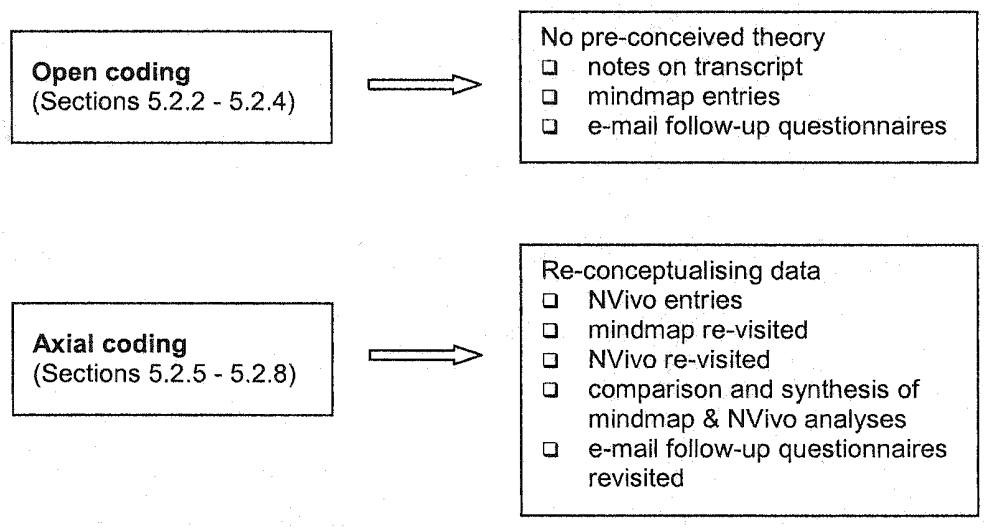


Figure 17: Overview of the study coding procedure

i) *Open coding*

This first step in the data analysis process involved an initial reading of the transcript and marking text that identified concepts that seemed potentially relevant to the study: thus, beginning a process of *open coding* (Flick, 1998; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This was the first stage in a process aimed at "expressing data and phenomena in the form of concepts" (Flick, 1998:180). I attempted to make it as instinctive a process as possible, reading through the transcript fairly quickly and highlighting concepts intuitively without great deliberation.

I then read the transcript again intensively line-by-line. It was here that I identified concepts, descriptions and views as potential coding units and marked them thus on the transcript (as seen in Figure 18 below). Identifying the coding units was not done through a process of definition (Strauss, 1987) but rather through an intuitive process of familiarisation with, and discovery from, both the interview texts and the research foci. This familiarisation and

discovery allowed for the development of a "feel" for what was would potentially be of relevance to the later steps of analysis. Seidman (1998) refers to this part of the analytical process as "a close reading plus judgement" and continues by quoting the instructions he gives to researchers:

> Mark what is of interest as you read. Do not ponder about the passage. If it catches your attention, mark it. Trust yourself as the reader.
> (Seidman, 1998: 101)

These coding units sometimes built upon the initial transcript coding noted above but sometimes emerged "ab initio" without reference to previously identified concepts. It was in this vein, reflecting an "intuitive notion of topic" (Brown, 1983: 69), that the initial stage of my analysis proceeded.

Worked example (2)

In Figure 18 below, I have represented the initial *open coding* process outlined above. The initial marking of text that, on first reading, seemed to be relevant to the study appears here as underlined text. Representing the second stage, the provisional coding units are indicated by the vertical bars and the accompanying explanatory text.

PhD study interview: lines 1- 63

Participant: Andrew Morrall

1.
2. **>Mark 2**

3. **Bruce**
4. Imagine you were defining the idea of self-access to a non-expert -
5. somebody who had some knowledge of education but no knowledge of
6. self-access - how would you define it and in particular in relation to what we
7. might define as "traditional" classroom learning?

8. **Andrew Morrall**
9. Well, in traditional classroom learning the teacher stands at the
10. front of the classroom and teaches the students and the teacher is in
11. control....but in SAL, the students decide what they want to study,
12. they decide when to study it, and most of the time they decide what to
13. study - although sometimes there can be self-access courses which they are
14. supposed to take...sometimes self-access is very free and sometimes it's more
15. controlled.

Definition of classroom teaching

Contrast to SALL Features of SALL

Possibility of more teacher control

16. **Bruce**
17. Have you ever had experience of self-access as a learner - working in a self-access
18. environment?

19. **Andrew Morrall:**
20. If you're talking about self-access as coming to SAC, then no I
21. haven't....but having done a MA and projects on other degree-level
22. courses, then a lot of the work you have to do is self-access.

SALL not only in SAC

23. **Bruce:**
24. Okay, so how would you define self-access?

25. **Andrew Morrall:**
26. Self-access is where the student or the learner controls what they study, | *Definition of* self-access
27. when they study it and how they study.

28. **> Mark 3**

29. **Bruce:**
30. Again to a non-expert, how would you describe a SAC - what are
31. its characteristics, what are the key features that distinguish it from
32. other places of learning?

33. **Andrew Morrall:**
34. It's a resource centre containing various resources students can | *Resource centre as neutral term*
35. use to help them study....the resources can be materials like books,
36. videos, computers - often they include some sort of tutor, teacher | *Definition of SAC*
37. facilitator to help the students if they have any questions...and that's
38. the main difference between a SAC and a library for example because | *SAC v library*
39. in a library you won't find English teachers for example to help you
40. learn English but you would in a SAC.

41. **Bruce:**
42. Are there any similarities with a library?

43. **Andrew Morrall:**
44. Yes there are - usually there's some kind of index system to help | *Similarity to library*
45. people with finding materials, usually it's stacked with various
46. different types of materials, usually but not always you have to be a
47. member.

48. **Bruce**
49. If you were painting a picture or taking a photograph of a SAC
50. what would it look like - your ideal centre.....how would it be divided
51. up...what would it have in it?

52. **Andrew Morrall**
53. I think it's important to have a pleasant environment - for | *Attributes of "ideal" SAC*
54. example plenty of natural daylight - and it shouldn't feel like a library
55. in that students should be allowed, in a language SAC, to come and
56. talk and make some noise and have fun whereas in a library having | *"Fun"*
57. fun is not their main purpose.

58. **Bruce**
59. Why do you think it is important for the learners to be able to
60. relax and have fun?

61. **Andrew Morrall**
62. Because language is all about communicating and communicating
63. should be pleasurable...

Figure 18: Worked example 2 - Open coding of part of interview transcript for Andrew Morrall

ii) *Data representation*

After this initial process of data reduction, I started to present the data in two forms that were intended to facilitate further analysis and subsequent interpretation. The first, which I refer to as a *mindmap*, was paper-based (Appendix 7 and section 5.2.4 below). The second was computer-based and utilised the qualitative analytical programs NUD*IST™ and its successor NVivo™ (section 5.2.5 below). There were two main reasons why I chose to

use both a paper-based and a computer-based method of data representation. Firstly, I believed that I would be affected by the media in terms of both perceptions of the content and the way in which it was subsequently interpreted; and secondly I felt that the two very different processes involved would affect what was coded and how. These beliefs were indeed borne out in differences in the resultant analyses carried out by these two means. These differences are highlighted and discussed in sections 5.2.7 (i) and 5.2.8 below. Reflecting Denzin's definition of triangulation as "the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenom" (1997: 318), the utilisation of these two different analytical approaches, together with constant reference back to the interview transcripts, can thus be seen as having provided a form of methodological triangulation.

5.2.3 Data checking: follow-up e-mails

A number of anomalies arose from the open coding of the transcripts. There were sections where the meaning was not clear, while in others there were some points that seemed of particular relevance and thus warranted further investigation. For each of these, as referred to in chapter four, sections 4.4.2 and 4.5.2, I contacted the participant by e-mail and then, where feasible, in person, and requested clarification and/or elaboration of points made in the interview. The information obtained was then used to re-examine my initial interpretation or grouping of the data as appropriate. *Worked example 3* below (Figure 19) shows the e-mail for Andrew Morrall relating back to comments he made in his interview (lines 11-13 and 26-27 in Figure 18).

i) *Worked example (3)*

Part of e-mail to Andrew Morrall

Dear Andy
Some time ago now, you kindly helped me by being interviewed about self-access, CILL and possible ways of evaluating the Centre. I have been working with the data from your interview and have a couple of points that I need to clarify.
If you had time, I would really appreciate it if you could respond a.s.a.p. so that I can get on to the next stage of the study.
Many thanks
Bruce

*Your comments:
1) *...sometimes self-access is very free and sometimes it's more controlled.*

2) *Self-access is where the student or the learner controls what they study, when they study it and how they study.*

- these seem to be contradictory views of self-access...any comment that could clarify your view?

Part of reply from Andrew Morrall

Well, it depends on the centre. In CILL all the students are volunteers and they are in charge of their learning so they decide what to study, when to study and how - with help from the teacher if they need it. But there are other SACs where the students have to go and sometimes they are even told exactly what they have to study etc.
Also, within CILL, students can decide to relinquish some of their control by asking the teacher for more guidance.

Figure 19: Worked example 3 - part of follow-up e-mail to Andrew Morrall and response

5.2.4 Mindmap entries

My initial concepts, derived from the process outlined in section 5.2.2 and a further re-reading of the interview transcript, were noted and grouped semantically on a large piece of card in the form of a *mind-map* or *concept map* (Novak, 1990; Lawson, 1997). Sectional copies of parts of the complete mindmap can be seen in Appendix 7. There was no attempt at hierarchical organisation since, at this stage, the aim was discovery rather than the representation of a system.

The mindmap was designed to help me "make sense of a large body of data generated through interviews" (Lawson, 1997:290). It allowed for an initial categorisation that was presented in an intuitive, very visual, non-linear fashion so as to avoid premature groupings that might then have biased further analysis. It served both to inform the next phase of electronic coding (outlined in section 5.2.5 below) as well as to provide an extremely valuable grounding and triangulation tool against which I could compare later steps in the process of analysis.

At this point in the coding process, I was referring solely to the textual data in the transcripts: both data which had been previously coded and those which had not. There was no reference to any pre-determined theory. In other words, I was simply coding:

> ...for categories and properties...[to allow] whatever theoretical codes [to] emerge where they may.
> (Glaser, 1992: 63)

Of the major groupings that developed from the data entered onto the mindmap, only the six indicated in Figure 20 below were, because of their intrinsic and recognised relevance to the research study, explicitly pre-conceived.

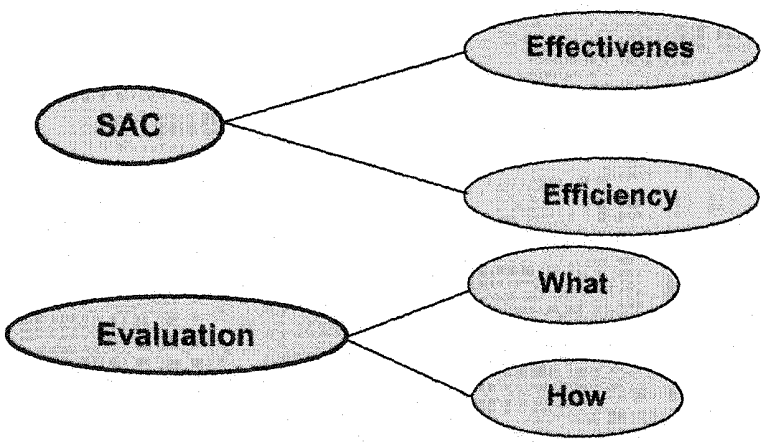


Figure 20: Pre-conceived mindmap categories

i) *Worked example (4)*

As an example of mindmap data, I have represented in Figure 20 below that small part of the entire mindmap showing relevant data derived from Andrew Morrall's interview relating back to the previous *worked examples* in figures 16 and 18. An enlarged version of this section can be found in 7.

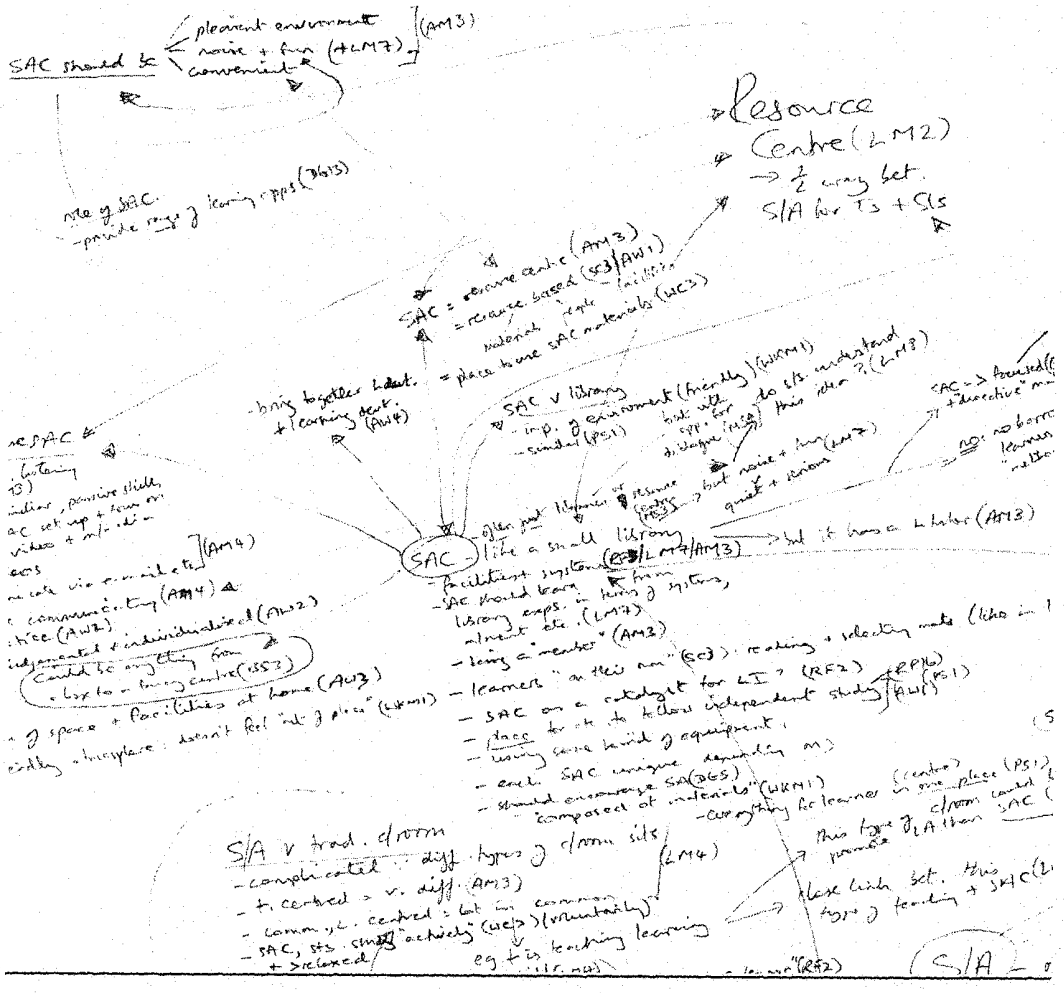


Figure 21: Part of mindmap section focusing on defining a SAC

The data relating to Andrew Morrall's interview are indicated by the highlighted code "AM" in brackets after the coding label and are summarised below with reference to the interview transcript line numbers.

- 9-13: SA v trad. classroom: teacher-centred - very different
- 34: SAC = resource centre
- 34-36: facilities and systems
- 44-47: being a member + like a small library
- 38-40: (ref. similarity to library) but it has a tutor
- 53: pleasant environment
- 56-63: noise + fun

5.2.5 NUD*IST/NVivo entries

After entering coding onto the mindmap, a further process of re-reading, and confirmation and adaptation of initial coding decisions took place before the data, and subsequently coding, were entered into the NUD*IST/NVivo software. This marked the beginning of the *axial coding* process, identified in Figure 17 in section 5.2.2, "whereby data are put back together in new ways after *open coding*" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 96). Informed by the mind-map and annotated transcripts, I grouped the codes (or categories) around concepts that I was in the process of identifying as being of central relevance to the PhD study's research objectives. The transcripts were then electronically coded accordingly using the NUD*IST/NVivo software (Ref. section 5.2.5 (i) and (ii) below).

I had decided early on that I would use both computer-based and non-computer based techniques in analysing the study data. Computers have been identified as being of value in qualitative research in terms of providing "short-cuts": increasing the efficiency of the data coding, storage and retrieval processes (Fielding & Lee, 1991; Richards & Richards, 1994; Richards, 1997; Gahan & Hannibal, 1998; Charmaz, 2000b; Weitzman, 2000; Seale, 2002). They have also be seen to be of potential value in supporting the creative process of theory building through the representation of relationships between data (Richards, 1997; Gahan & Hannibal, 1998; Charmaz, 2000b; Weitzman, 2000).

I used a *code-based theory builder* program (Weitzman, 2000), NUD*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching & Theorizing) and its successor

NVivo (see below) as an electronic research tool to assist in data analysis, pattern recognition, storage and retrieval.

However, while I recognise the value of a computer program such as NUD*IST as an efficient and reliable tool, I also believe that it is the human judgment that is critical to the coding. Indeed Weitzman (2000) reminds us that the program itself does not undertake the research process but only assists the researcher in this. Any non-human analysis is only as good as the investigative structure within which it works and the human input it receives. It is in the human judgmental processes that analytical decisions are made and not in the computerised part of the data analysis process. Charmaz (2000b) reports a concern that the use of such software can lead to uncritical adoption by the researcher. Thus, in this study, I have placed the greatest emphasis on the human processes involved in the analysis as can be seen in my use of the mindmap and constant revisiting of the original interview transcripts.

i) *NUD*IST*

The NUD*IST program (Version 3) was used to support the emergence of insights from the data, and in particular to perform the following tasks:

- ❑ data storage;
- ❑ attaching codes to text segments;
- ❑ sorting of codes to facilitate searching and retrieval of text;
- ❑ providing a variety of documentary perspectives from which the data could be examined;
- ❑ data linking to form categories and identify patterns; and,
- ❑ text searches.

It was in the coding of text-units for the generation of categories that the software proved to be of most value in the process of theory development. While the coding decisions were obviously creative researcher decisions, the ability of the program to present the developing hierarchy of codes from different perspectives enabled me to make connections and comparisons with greater ease. I provisionally entered coding units as *nodes* either within the initial developing hierarchy of *Index tree nodes* or labelled them as *Free nodes* if they fell outside the emerging hierarchy but were felt to be potentially of interest as the process of analysis proceeded. For example, from the outset it seemed clear that a node *self-access centre* would exist with the sub-node *definition* which would later break down into further sub-nodes. The node relating to *teacher scepticism* concerning a SAC, on the other hand, did not

initially fit into any of the emerging nodes. However, since I felt that it might be of relevance later, it was labelled as a *Free node.* Examples of both types of node can be seen in Figure 22 below. The coding system is discussed in greater detail in sections 5.2.6 to 5.2.8 below.

Example Tree nodes

Level 1		Level 2		Level 3
Self Access Centre	⇨	Definition	⇨	SAC objectives
				SAC v classroom
				SAC v library

Example Free nodes

Teacher scepticism to SAC

SAC as a service

Figure 22: Example NU*DIST/NVivo nodes

These initial nodes were provisional in nature. As will be seen in the following sections, they were revisited and others were added, while some were expanded to include sub-nodes. Some nodes, such as *How to increase the efficiency of the learner*, were eventually not used while others were renamed or re-positioned within the tree structure.

ii) *NUD*IST VIVO (NVivo)*

About half way through the data analysis process, I upgraded from NUD*IST to NVivo (NUD*IST VIVO™). Developed by the same company as NUD*IST, NVivo was conceptually based on the NUD*IST software but brought a number of new features that convinced me to transfer the data and data analysis I had already completed in NUD*IST to the new software (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). As well as being easier to use, it combined editable text and full-colour multimedia capabilities that helped present data in a visually more meaningful way. It also combined new integrated search tools that allowed for easier search and retrieval of relevant data.

iii) *Worked example (5)*

Andrew Morrall's interview transcript was coded into an NVivo document as represented in Figure 23 below. It can be seen that the coding units are adapted from those seen in the initially-coded transcript presented in Figure 18

in section 5.2.2 (i) above. The labels for some, such as *Definition of self-access*, remained unchanged. Some, however, were re-interpreted in the light of data from other interviews and their inclusion into the mindmap. For example, *Possibility of teacher control* has been re-labelled *Directed self-access* in order to facilitate its identification with a wider notion that had arisen from subsequent interviews relating to control of the SALL process not necessarily, or not entirely, lying with learner or teacher. A few other labels, such as *Definition of classroom teaching*, have not been included since, even at this relatively early stage of the analysis, the category seemed not to be of relevance.

PhD study interview: lines 1- 63

Participant: Andrew Morrall

1.
2. **>Mark 2**

4. **Bruce**
4. Imagine you were defining the idea of self-access to a non-expert -
5. somebody who had some knowledge of education but no knowledge of
6. self-access - how would you define it and in particular in relation to what we
7. might define as "traditional" classroom learning?

8. **Andrew Morrall**
9. Well, in traditional classroom learning the teacher stands at the
10. front of the classroom and teaches the students and the teacher is in
11. control....but in SAL, the students decide what they want to study,
12. they decide when to study it, and most of the time they decide what to
13. study - although sometimes there can be self-access courses which they are
14. supposed to take...sometimes self-access is very free and sometimes it's more
15. controlled.

Teacher-student control
SAC v classroom
Definition of SAC

Directed self-access
Flexibility of learning in SAC

16. **Bruce**
17. Have you ever had experience of self-access as a learner - working in a self-access
18. environment?

19. **Andrew Morrall:**
20. If you're talking about self-access as coming to SAC, then no I
21. haven't....but having done a MA and projects on other degree-level
22. courses, then a lot of the work you have to do is self-access.

23. **Bruce:**
24. Okay, so how would you define self-access?

25. **Andrew Morrall:**
26. Self-access is where the student or the learner controls what they study,
27. when they study it and how they study.

Flexibility of learning in SAC
Learner choice
Teacher-student control
Definition of self-access

28. **> Mark 3**

29. **Bruce:**
30. Again to a non-expert, how would you describe a SAC - what are
31. its characteristics, what are the key features that distinguish it from
32. other places of learning?

33. **Andrew Morrall:**
34. It's a resource centre containing various resources students can
35. use to help them study....the resources can be materials like books,
36. videos, computers - often they include some sort of tutor, teacher
37. facilitator to help the students if they have any questions...and that's
38. the main difference between a SAC and a library for example because
39. in a library you won't find English teachers for example to help you
40. learn English but you would in a SAC.

SAC v library
SAC as resource centre
Self-access resources
Definition of SAC

41. **Bruce:**
42. Are there any similarities with a library?

43. **Andrew Morrall:**
44. Yes there are - usually there's some kind of index system to help
45. people with finding materials, usually it's stacked with various
46. different types of materials, usually but not always you have to be a
47. member.

SAC v library
Learner support - non human

48. **Bruce**
49. If you were painting a picture or taking a photograph of a SAC
50. what would it look like - your ideal centre.....how would it be divided
51. up...what would it have in it?

52. **Andrew Morrall**
53. I think it's important to have a pleasant environment - for
54. example plenty of natural daylight - and it shouldn't feel like a library
55. in that students should be allowed, in a language SAC, to come and
56. talk and make some noise and have fun whereas in a library having
57. fun is not their main purpose.

Ideal SAC
SAC v library

58. **Bruce**
59. Why do you think it is important for the learners to be able to
60. relax and have fun?

Fun

61. **Andrew Morrall**
62. Because language is all about communicating and communicating
63. should be pleasurable...

Figure 23: Worked example 5 - Part of NVivo-coded interview transcript for Andrew Morrall

5.2.6 The mindmap re-visited

The presentation of data in the mindmap was intuitively powerful. It seemed to give a much truer sense of the immense complexities present in the bringing together of the various strands that constituted the whole of the data collected in the interviews than the neat and tidy presentation of data in NVivo. Indeed, despite the advantages of using computers in the research process noted above, I felt the mindmap helped me to avoid being constrained within a conceptual straitjacket. It was therefore crucial that I should return to the mindmap to examine the data afresh to confirm and/or refute the analytical categories I felt I had identified in the NVivo-based data reduction process.

Working from the two major, and three subordinate, preconceived nodes that I identified in Figure 20 in section 5.2.4 above, I returned to the transcripts and

examined each individual data entry for further new categories and further exemplification of previously-identified categories. I then identified a full set of twenty primary mindmap categories and their related subcategories, together with identification of the participant source. These twenty primary mindmap categories are presented in Figures 23 and 24 below.

Of the twenty categories, eleven relate to defining a SAC (Figure 24) with each subsuming a number of sub-categories. For example, the major category MM3: *SAC v library* subsumes seven sub-categories including MM3.2: *library + teacher*, MM3.3 *need for library-like systems* and MM3.7: *membership* (a complete listing of categories and sub-categories can be found in Appendix 8). The eleven primary mindmap categories relating to the definition of a SAC are (in no order of priority):

MM1: *Overall*
MM2: *SAC as a resource centre*
MM3: *SAC v library*
MM4: *SAC v "traditional teacher-centred classroom"*
MM5: *SAC is not = SALL*
MM6: *Role of SAC*
MM7: *Essential elements of SAC*
MM8: *SAC should be…*
MM9: *Reasons learners use SAC*
MM10: *Role of SAC teacher*
MM11: *Role of SAC learner.*

Figure 24: Primary mindmap categories relating to defining a SAC

I also identified nine primary mindmap categories (Figure 25) relating more directly to SAC evaluation with each subsuming a number of sub-categories (a complete listing of categories and sub-categories can be found in Appendix 9). The nine main categories relating to SAC evaluation are (in no order of priority):

MM12: *Tension*
MM13: *Why evaluate a SAC?*
MM14: *What to evaluate*
MM15: *Who is a SAC evaluation for?*
MM16: *How to evaluate a SAC*
MM17: *Who evaluates*
MM18: *Evaluating learners' progress*

MM19: *What is an effective SAC?*

MM20: *What is an efficient SAC?*

Figure 25: Primary mindmap categories relating to evaluating a SAC

i) *Worked example (6)*

The mindmap concepts relating to Andrew Morrall's interview data (illustrated in section 5.2.4 above) were integrated into new categories. For example, as seen in the extract from the mindmap coding framework in Figure 26 below, his original mindmap concept of *SAC v library* plus "*but it has a teacher*" is now classified with three other references as *library + teacher*, while *becoming a member* has been re-categorised as *membership*. In the table, the first column presents the category and sub-category, while the second and third columns indicate the number, and identity, of participants who made comments related to these.

Category	Count	Refs.
MM3 SAC v library	**9**	**AM/BS/LM/MS/PS/RF/RP SC/WC**
MM3.1: SAC as library	2	PS1/WC5
MM3.2: library + teacher	4	AM3/LM8/MS4/WC3
MM3.3: need for library-like systems	1	LM7
MM3.4: learners selecting and reading materials on their own	1	SC3
MM3.5: no borrowing	1	WC3
MM3.6: SAC language-focused	3	BS3/RF5/ RP5&9
MM3.7: membership	1	AM3

Figure 26: Worked example 6 - Mindmap coding framework (Definition of SAC) *SAC v library*

5.2.7 The NVivo coding re-visited

Having completed the process of refining the coding for the mindmap data, I then re-examined the coding and the hierarchy of nodes and sub-nodes within the NVivo data for emerging patterns. Anomalies within the structure were removed, some of those units that had been categorised as *free nodes* were re-assigned to the index tree hierarchy, deletions were made and restructuring took place to reflect emerging theory development. The re-structuring provided another layer of coding whereby the coding hierarchy was divided into six *areas of focus* reflecting participants' conceptions of a SAC: three areas relating the definition of a SAC and three relating to the evaluation of a SAC.

The data relevant to the definition of a SAC emerged in the form of forty tree nodes and twenty-six free nodes. These nodes were then categorised into the three areas of focus:

NVEEF: *Existing educational facilities*
NVPC: *Physical centre*
NVLP: *Learning process.*
Figure 27: NVivo areas of focus relating to the definition of a SAC

Thus, within each of these areas of focus are nodes, some of which subsume further sub-nodes. For example, the node NVEEF3: *SAC compared to library* subsumes eight sub-nodes including *SAC as library*, *learners on their own* and *collection of resources* (a complete listing of the nodes and sub-nodes can be found in Appendix 10).

The data relating more directly to SAC evaluation emerged in the form of twenty-nine tree nodes and thirty free nodes. These categories were then categorised into the three areas of focus:

NVWHY: *Why evaluate a SAC*
NVWHAT: *What to evaluate in a SAC*
NVHOW: *How to evaluate a SAC.*
Figure 28: NVivo areas of focus relating to evaluating a SAC

As with the NVivo nodes relating to SAC definition, within each of these areas are nodes, some of which subsume further sub-nodes (a full listing of nodes and sub-nodes can be found in Appendix 11).

A number of nodes that had previously been labelled as *free nodes* and had not been a part of the coding hierarchy were now brought into one of these areas of focus. For example, the area of focus *Existing educational facilities* included three nodes previously grouped under the node *Self-Access Centre/Definition*, but also two (*Language lab as SA* and *SAL & CLT*) which had previously been designated *free nodes.*

i) *Worked example (7)*
The influence resulting from employing the two methods of data representation (the mindmap categories and the NVivo nodes) on the same data from

Andrew Morrall's interview can be seen in the extract below from the resulting NVivo coding-framework. For example, the initial coding for lines 36 to 40 included the following categories: *SAC v library*, *SAC as resource centre*, *Self-access resources* and *Definition of SAC.* Extracted in Table 1 below, the categories identified are: *SAC compared to library*, *Library + "advisor"/"teacher" etc.* and *Collection of resources*. This does not, however, mean that aspects of the original coding that seem not to be represented here have been "lost". The category *Definition of SAC*, for example, although not appearing in this area of focus, is represented in both the other two areas of focus relating to the definition of a SAC.

In Table 1, the first column lists the nodes and sub-nodes categorised within the area of focus *Existing educational facilities*. The second column presents the number of references to a node or sub-node, while highlighted in the third column are the line references to Andrew Morrall's interview transcript.

Area of focus & nodes	**Count**	**Refs. (person + line reference)**
Area of focus: Existing educational facilities (NVEEF)		
NVEEF1: language lab as SA resource	1	LM99-104
NVEEF2: SALL & Communicative Language Teaching	1	LM46-80
NVEEF3: SAC compared to library	10	**AM34-48/55-57/124-128**; BS21-29/37-42; DG686-696; LM124-132/137-147; 56-57/81-86; PS38-39; RP102-110/154-157/177-183; SC16-23/57-58/485-486; WC42-46/51-55/124-131; WKM271-285; YT32-38
- SAC as library	6	LM124-132; MS56-57; PS38-39; RP102-111; SC57-58; WC123-131
- fun & noise	3	**AM55-57**; LM142-147; WKM271-285
- "learners on their own"	1	SC21-23
- library + "advisor"/"teacher" etc.	5	**AM36-40**; BS26-28/37-42; MS81-85; RP6-2; RP154-157
- library + pedagogical role	3	DG693-696; RP177-183; WC42-46 (+ all above refs.)
- ref. classification system	2	**AM44-45**; WC51-54
- collection of resources	2	**AM34-46**; RP102-110
- SAC has focused (ELT) collection of materials	4	**AM124-128**; BS21-25; LM128-132; RP107-110
- SAC more technologically advanced	1	LM129-132
- application of library systems to SAC	2	LM137-147; WC51-54

Table 1: Worked example 7 - NVivo coding framework relating to area of focus *Existing educational facilities*

5.2.8 Comparison and synthesis of the NVivo and mindmap analyses

This stage of the analysis was particularly critical to the whole process. Although the mindmap and NVivo analyses were derived from the same data, the process of coding was both different and conducted at different times. This inevitably (and valuably) led to different data patterns emerging. It was therefore necessary to bring these two analyses together and re-examine them to identify gaps, cross-check intuitions, re-conceptualise linkages and develop an overall coding meta-framework. They were brought together in order to construct the final analysis from which the SAC mapping and ultimately the evaluation framework would derive.

For both the data relating to the definition of a SAC and those relating more directly to SAC evaluation, generated by the mindmap and NVivo analyses, I identified common *points of reference* within the existing NVivo *areas of focus* that I presented above in Figures 26 and 27 in section 5.2.7. This reductive process provided a new framework into which I could then add the *relevant categories* derived from both the mindmap and NVivo coding. These *relevant categories* (as outlined in sections 5.2.6 and 5.2.7 above) had been previously entered onto separate summary data sheets as mindmap *categories* and NVivo *nodes*. The result was their synthesis into single data sheets (the meta-frameworks). The process and resulting meta-frameworks are explained in sections (i) and (ii) following. Finally, using these meta-frameworks, the previously separate mindmap and NVivo data analyses were brought together as a single consolidated analysis of the interview data. This is explained below in section (iii) and a worked example is presented in section (iv).

The process is summarised in Figure 29 below.

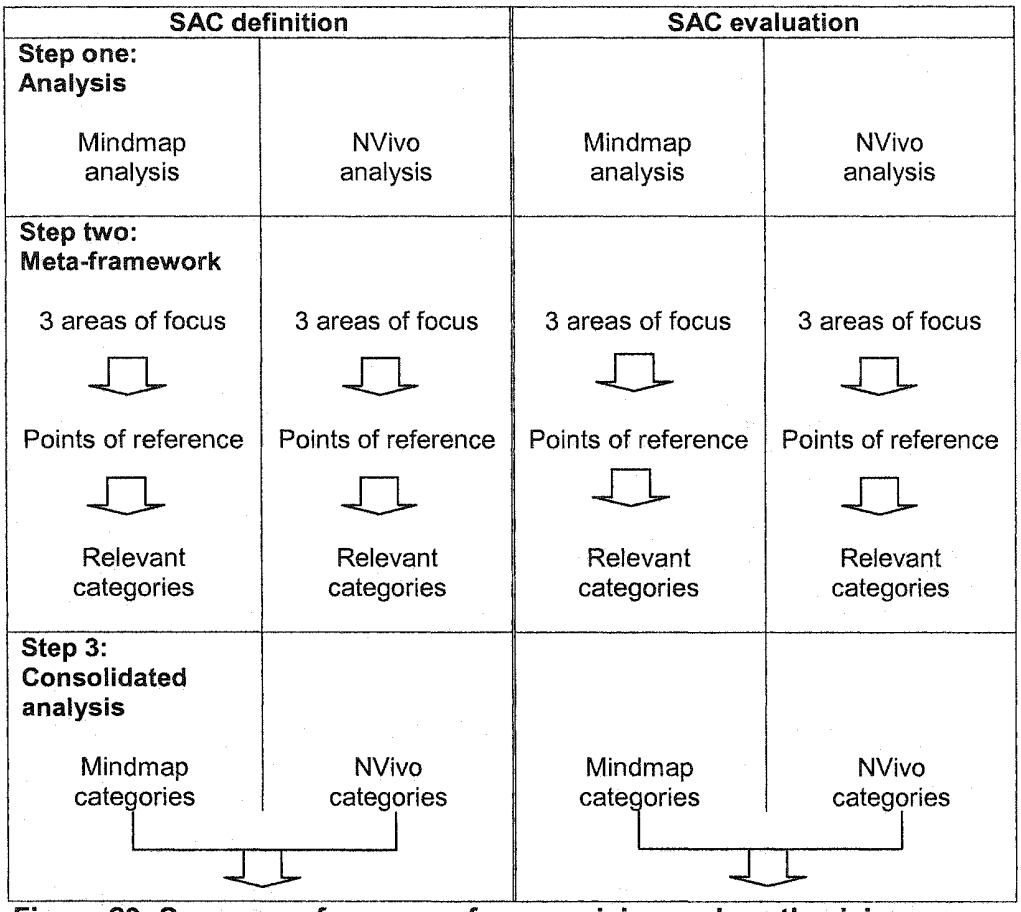


Figure 29: Summary of process of summarising and synthesising interview data

i) *Developing a SAC definition data analysis meta-framework*

When asked to define what they mean by the notion of a SAC, responses from the participants are varied. The responses include references from a SAC teacher to a SAC as a resource centre:

> It's a resource centre containing various resources students can use to help them study...
> (Andrew Morrall: 34-35);

from a non-SAC expert to it as a place where learners are able to study English on an independent learning basis outside the formal classroom:

> ..many people have to travel home...may not have a good deal of facility in their own home base if they're living with the family...having something which is, allows them to learn independently of the formal classroom situation would be very useful for them just in the practical sense.
> (Aster Warner: 31-34);

from the viewpoint of a SAC consultant as a service:

> ...it's a service, you have to think of it as a service industry, you offer a service to these people
> (Barbara Sinclair: 300-302);

and from a SAC learner in terms of the materials and teaching expertise available:

> ... composed of so many materials like CD-ROM material and book, video and some pronunciation tape - I can make use of this materials for self-learning...and also one important - centre have the tutor supporting the student or the learner who has problem and they will tackle it.
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 13-18).

Despite these various perceptions of how a SAC might be defined, *nine points of reference* emerge from the mindmap and NVivo analyses. These points of reference sometimes overlap (for example, "SAC v library" and "The SAC as resource centre") and are often inter-dependent (for example, the roles of the SAC, learner and teacher). They are, however, sufficiently discrete to act as the data organisers within the framework of the three areas of focus previously introduced in section 5.2.7 that relate to the definition of a SAC: existing educational facilities, the physical centre and the learning process. The relationship between the *Areas of focus* and *Points of reference* is illustrated in Figure 30 below.

Area of focus	Points of reference
Existing educational facilities (EEF)	❑ SAC v the library ❑ SAC v the "traditional" classroom
The physical centre (PC)	❑ The SAC as a facility for SALL ❑ The SAC as a resource centre ❑ SAC elements ❑ Reasons learners use a SAC
The learning process (LP)	❑ Role of the SAC ❑ Role of the SAC learner ❑ Role of the SAC teacher

Figure 30: Mindmap & NVivo SAC definition data - Areas of focus & points of reference

Using these areas of focus and points of reference as meta-organisers, I then brought together the NVivo and mindmap data categories and constructed a meta-framework. It was within this meta-framework that the data relating to the definition of a SAC was then analysed. The meta-framework can be seen below in Figure 31. In this, the areas of focus act as the highest-level organisers and are thus in the first column. The second column includes the

points of reference that relate to these areas of focus, while the third column presents the relevant categories that describe or elucidate the points of reference. An example relating to the point of reference *The SAC v library* can be seen below in (iii).

Areas of focus ⇨	Points of reference ⇨	Relevant categories
EEF: Existing educational facilities	EEF1: The SAC v the library	A. The SAC as a library
		B. The SAC as a library with a teacher/ pedagogical role
		C. Differences between the SAC and a library
	EEF2: The SAC v the "traditional" teacher-centred classroom	A. Difficulty in comparison
		B. The SAC as individualised and learner focused
		C. Flexibility and lack of teacher control in the SAC
PC: Physical centre	PC1: The SAC as a facility for SALL	A. The SAC is not SALL
		B. Need for a centre for SALL
		C. Uniqueness of each SAC
	PC2: The SAC as a resource centre	SAC as a resource centre + teacher/ pedagogical role
	PC3: SAC elements	A. Environment
		B. A "one-stop-shop"
		C. Human learner support
		D. Non-human learner support
		E. Resources
		F. Efficiency
		G. Experimentation
	PC4: Reasons learners use a SAC	A. Reference to a place or a space
		B. Use of resources
		C. Language improvement
		D. Mode of learning
LP: The learning process	LP1: Role of the SAC	A. Dual focus – bringing together language learning and independent learning
		B. An enabling role
		C. Resource centre role
		D. Learner support role
		E. Constraints
	LP2: Role of the SAC learner	A. Independent learning
		B. Learner activities
		C. Constraints

(Figure continued overleaf)

LP3: Role of the SAC teacher	A. Terminology used: the SAC teacher as expert, consultant or guide
	B. Teacher to talk about learning
	C. Teacher to give feedback and review learner progress
	D. Constraints

Figure 31: Mindmap & NVivo SAC definition meta-framework

The same process was followed for the data relating to SAC evaluation.

ii) *Developing a SAC evaluation data analysis meta-framework*

As with the coding related to the definition of a SAC identified in (i) above, participants have varied opinions on topics relating to the evaluation of a SAC. Likewise, however, points of reference emerge from both the mindmap and NVivo analyses. However, unlike the process described above, the points of reference like the areas of focus previously presented in Figure 27 in section 5.2.7 are, I feel, more easily predicted and indeed derive to a greater extent from the nature of some of the interview questions. For example, I consider it highly likely that any researcher investigating the evaluation of an educational programme would ask questions relating to **what** the focus of an evaluation should be or **how** an evaluation might be conducted. This is due in large part to the nature of the theme of educational evaluation which, unlike that of defining a SAC, has been extremely widely investigated, is extremely well-documented and has accepted tenets that are widely known and accepted.

As presented in Figure 32 below, eleven points of reference were identified from the data and consequently subsumed below the three areas of focus: **why** evaluate a SAC; **what** to evaluate in a SAC; and **how** to evaluate a SAC.

Area of focus	Points of reference
Why evaluate a SAC (WHY) ⇨	❑ Evaluation as an administrative requirement ❑ Possible evaluation audiences ❑ Possible functions of an evaluation
What to evaluate in a SAC (WHAT) ⇨	❑ The scope of an evaluation ❑ The focus of an evaluation ❑ Efficiency ❑ Effectiveness ❑ Learning gain
How to evaluate a SAC (HOW) ⇨	❑ Approach ❑ Data collection and analysis ❑ Who evaluates

Figure 32: Mindmap & NVivo SAC evaluation data - areas of focus & points of reference

As with the SAC-related coding described above in section 5.3.1, the three areas of focus are super-ordinates for the points of reference which then act as organizers for the NVivo and mindmap data categories. Together these form the meta-framework for data analysis. This can be seen in Figure 33 below.

Areas of focus ⇨	Points of reference ⇨	Relevant categories
WHY: Why evaluate a SAC	WHY1: Evaluation as an administrative requirement	
	WHY2: Possible evaluation audiences	A. Direct stakeholders
		B. Indirect stakeholders
	WHY3: Possible functions of an evaluation	A. Developmental functions
		B. Judgmental functions
WHAT: What to evaluate in a SAC	WHAT1: The scope of an evaluation	A. The need for focus
		B. Constraints
	WHAT2: The focus of an evaluation	A. Focus on stakeholders
		B. Focus on learning
		C. Focus on facilities, systems and resources
		D. Focus on efficiency and effectiveness
	WHAT3: Efficiency	A. Why focus on efficiency?
		B. Usage
		C. Systems and procedures
		D. Staff
	WHAT4: Effectiveness	A. Why focus on effectiveness?
		B. The SAC as a physical centre
		C. The learner
		D. SAC objectives
	WHAT5: Learning gain	A. Should an evaluation attempt to evaluate learning gain?
		B. Possible ways of evaluating learning gain
HOW: How to evaluate a SAC	HOW1: Approach	A. Paradigm
		B. Formal v informal evaluation
	HOW2: Data collection and analysis	A. Data collection methods
		B. Data analysis and data reporting methods
		C. Constraints
	HOW3: Who evaluates	A. Insider evaluation
		B. Outsider evaluation

Figure 33: Mindmap & NVivo SAC evaluation meta-framework

iii) *Consolidation of the mindmap and the NVivo analyses*

Finally, using these two meta-frameworks as organisers, the mindmap and the NVivo analyses were then brought together to form one single analysis of the

interview data relating to the SAC definition, and one relating to the SAC evaluation.

As seen in the worked examples (6) and (7) (sections 5.2.6 (i) and 5.2.7, i), the separate NVivo and mindmap summary data sheets indicated for each category and sub-category a count of occurrences in the transcripts, identification of the source participants, and the line or section references.

In this final stage of analysis, these separate NVivo and mindmap summary data sheets were synthesised into single data sheets that related the mindmap categories to corresponding NVivo categories, and provided a combined count of occurrences. This can be seen in the worked example in section (iv) below and in Appendices 13 and 14. This process was carried out with constant reference back to the interview transcripts in order to double-check initial codings, clarify confusions and confirm intuitions. Predictably, inconsistencies were found in terms of the categorisation resulting from the two methods of displaying the data. It was necessary, therefore, for me to make judgements regarding the confirmation or rejection of categories. Three major techniques were used to confirm categories that had emerged from the data analysis process. These techniques or "tactics for deriving meaning" (Keeves & Sowden, 1997: 302) were the following.

Counting

Although there may be a tendency for qualitative researchers to reject any type of quantification, "to ignore a count is to overlook the most obvious data" (Keeves & Sowden, 1997: 302) and, thus, to ignore an opportunity for data triangulation. Attention was, therefore, paid to multiple expressions of a similar view or perception. The count for the two analytical methods was compared and when there was a discrepancy, reference was made to the interview transcript.

With reference back to the transcripts, this information was, however, considered in the light of the role of the speakers who had (or had not) expressed that particular view. For example, the fact that all five learners identify the importance of the presence of a teacher in a SAC is given greater weight than if five participants who are not directly involved in the learning process of a SAC had done so.

Noting patterns, clustering and relations

The patterns, clusters and relations that emerged from the mindmap data representation were compared to those coded using NVivo. As with counts, discrepancies led me to re-visit and re-consider the interview transcripts for clarification.

Splitting and combining categories

Some new categories emerged in isolation from one, or both, of the data analysis processes. However, many emerged as a result of either a splitting of existing NIVO or mindmap categories into two or more, or a combining of two or more categories that had developed independently but which I later judged to actually constitute part of a larger whole. For example, the mindmap category *Guidance for learners* was combined with two NVivo nodes *Using the centre/accessing materials* and *Environment and physical layout of centre.*

iv) *Worked example (8)*

In relation to the selected data from Andrew Morrall's interview that I have presented in the previous worked examples, the following table represents the relevant section of the final mindmap and NVivo consolidated analysis, discussed in section (ii) above, and relates to the category *SAC v library.*

EEF: Existing educational facilities **EEF1. SAC v library**	
Mindmap categories	**NVivo nodes**
A. *SAC as library*	
MM3.1: SAC as library	NVEEF3: SAC as library
MM3.3: need for library-like systems	NVEEF3: ref. classification system NVEEF3: application of library systems to SAC
MM3.4: learners selecting and reading materials on their own	NVEEF3: "learners on their own"
MM3.7: membership	NVEEF3: collection of resources
B. *SAC as library + teacher/pedagogical role*	
MM3.2: library + teacher	NVEEF3: library + advisor/teacher NVEEF3: library + pedagogical role NVLP30: teacher compared to librarian
C. *Differences between SAC and library*	
MM3.5: no borrowing	
MM3.6: SAC language-focused	NVEEF3: SAC has focused (ELT) collection of materials
MM2.2: noise & fun/friendly	NVEEF3: fun and noise NVEEF3: SAC more technologically advanced NVEEF3: ref. classification system

Figure 34: Worked example 8 - Consolidated Mindmap and NVivo analysis for category *SAC v library*

With reference back to Figures 26 and Table 1 (in sections 5.2.6 and 5.2.7 respectively), it can be seen that not only have the data categories been re-organised, but that the process of referring back to the interview transcripts has resulted in revised categorisations. For example, the broad NVivo category *SAC compared to library*, in Table 1, has disappeared to be replaced by the three more focused categories: *SAC as library*, *SAC as library + teacher/pedagogical role* and *Differences between SAC and library*.

5.3 Stage six: the development of the SAC mapping and evaluation framework

In this section, I firstly outline the reasons for my use of the metaphor of *mapping*. I go on to introduce the development of the SAC mapping. Finally, and very briefly, I introduce the evaluation framework. Both of these constructs, the mapping and the framework, I discuss in detail in chapter eight.

With reference to Figure 10 in chapter four (section 4.2), I perceive stage six of the study, which focuses on the process of developing the SAC mapping and the evaluation framework, as being one where the notion of verifying my interpretations is central. As such, and with reference to the same figure, I see it as subsumed under Kvale's penultimate "Verifying" stage of the data collection, analysis and reporting process.

The verification process took the form of two main steps. First, I confirmed the fit of the data to my initial SAC mapping through re-examining the data, conducting the post-interview e-mail questionnaire and checking participants' perceptions of the validity of the SAC mapping. I then adapted the mapping in the light of the feedback from the study participants.

5.3.1 Mapping

With reference to the first study objective (chapter one, section 1.4), I had initially articulated the intended intermediate product of the research in terms of developing a *model* of a Hong Kong SAC. However, it became clear that the overall qualitative, naturalistic approach and resulting written tone of this thesis was not compatible with references to *models*. The term suggested a much more positivistic research framework (c.f. House, 1978) than that which I envisaged constructing, and which might be expected to lead to the development of an

empirical theory (Alkin & Ellett, 1990) of great complexity and completeness (House, 1986; Nevo, 1986:15).

The use of *mapping* as an alternative metaphor to describe the product that developed from the research process arose from two main sources. Discussion on the American Evaluation Association e-mail list (EVAL-TALK) had first led me to consider the use of *results mapping* (Kibel, 1999) as a possible evaluation approach. Reports had suggested the relevance of results mapping as an evaluative tool for programmes which did not follow a standard curriculum with all students. They discussed the way it would "reveal how the student uses new learning to help both self and others" (EVAL-TALK, 14th March 1999). Kibel (1999) describes its use in health-care contexts where the process focused on the evaluator analysing and scoring stories in order to measure the value-added programme outcomes in clearly identifiable, if not explicitly quantifiable, terms. After further research, however, the concept did not seem to be of immediate value in the context of this study where, as discussed in chapters three and four, outcomes are considered to be neither normally measurable nor generalisable.

While the method Kibel described seemed unlikely to be of value in the context of this study, *mapping* as a concept seemed intuitively to be worth pursuing as a research metaphor that might help to conceptualise more clearly what I was aiming to do. I was reminded of Talmadge's (1997) autobiographical account of how he learnt the "craft" of teaching and of the effects of his time spent in "some of America's most remote and beautiful places" (Talmadge, 1997: x). He refers to a living, growing *map* of memories and stories that grounds the teller as he reflects upon his experiences. This humanistic and naturalistic view of a map of an exploratory journey struck a chord. Subsequent literature searches led to me undertaking some background reading in the area of *mapping*. Two papers in particular (Cosgrove, 1999a; Corner, 1999) in the book "Mappings" (Cosgrove, 1999b) that examined the concept of, and processes involved in, *mapping* convinced me of its relevance as a metaphor for the processes involved in this study in particular, as well as for modern, post-structuralist culture in general.

The modern conceptualisation of mapping has been valuable in helping me to perceive the research process as revealing, formative, creative and even exciting rather than simply descriptive, interpretative and dryly academic. My use of the metaphor has even, at times, reflected Corner's conceptualisation of mapping as:

> ...a means of emancipation and enablement, liberating phenomena and potential from the encasements of convention and habit.
> (Corner, 1999: 252)

i) *The nature of mapping*

Corner (1999) & Cosgrove (1999a) discuss maps in terms of both their revelatory powers, as well as the illusionary but liberating nature of their appearance of stability and finality of definition:

> ...mapping as a collective, enabling enterprise, a project that both reveals and realizes hidden potential ...uncovering realities previously unseen or unimagined, even across seemingly exhausted ground...Thus, mapping unfolds potential; it remakes territory over and over again, each time with new and diverse consequences"
> (Corner, 1999: 213);

> They [maps] are troubling. Their apparent stability and their aesthetics of closure and finality dissolve with but a little reflection into recognition of their partiality and provisionality...their ability to record...and their powers of deception. At the same time their spaces of representation can appear liberating, their dimensionality freeing the reader from both the controlling linearity of narrative description and the confusing perspective of photographic or painted images.
> (Cosgrove, 1999a: 2)

The qualitative, Grounded Theory-based research processes of this PhD study can be seen to reflect some of the features encapsulated within Cosgrove's and Corner's notions of mapping:

- The mapping process is one of a gathering of data which the cartographer then works on; the results are then assembled, related to each other and used to reveal new perspectives; these perspectives are then examined, re-examined and speculated upon again and again.
- Amounts of data are collected by searching in a real-life context.
- Mapping is a creative process where the cartographer is far from a neutral, objective observer. He is rather an intrinsic part of a process that entails interpretation and selection, omission and addition, as well as incorporating both certainties and uncertainties into a "complex architecture" that is "theoretically disconnected from its geographical reference". (Cosgrove, 1999a: 3)
- Mapping is a way of embedding a subjective and interpretative act within a framework of analytical research.

In addition to reflecting these features of the mapping process, the stages of this research process roughly correspond to the three stages Cosgrove identifies as essential in the mapping process. These are:

- the creation of a field and the establishment of a system;
- the gathering and subsequent reduction of data; and,

- the interpretative drawing out of relationships between the various parts of the larger whole that then enables the cartographer to bring the elements together to provide "the spatial embodiment of knowledge and a stimulus to further cognitive engagement" (Cosgrove, 1999a: 2).

5.3.2 Development of the initial SAC mapping

From the data categories and relationships that emerged from the process of data analysis described in sections 5.1 and 5.2 above, I developed an initial mapping of how a Hong Kong SAC is perceived to operate (Appendix 14). The initial mapping process (which is presented in detail in chapter eight) while informed by the data, is also supplemented by my own knowledge and experience as a SAC co-ordinator of how Hong Kong SACs operate. It is, in Glaser & Strauss's (1967) terms, "grounded" and not based on a priori categories and hypotheses, but supported and strengthened by my own reflections. As a topographical map defines the relationships between various geographical features from the point of view of the user, so the mapping process in this PhD study attempts to define:

> ...the assumed relationships among program resources, program activities, and expected outcomes from the points of view of key policy-makers, managers and interest groups.
> (Wholey, 1987:80).

5.3.3 Checking the initial SAC mapping

As outlined in sections 4.4 to 4.7, I employed two techniques to check the assumptions and conclusions upon which the initial SAC mapping had been based. These were: the post-interview e-mail questionnaire (Appendix 6), which was also used to inform the development of the evaluation framework; and a request for feedback on the initial SAC mapping (Appendix 14). Both of these were sent to all the interview participants.

The purpose of the questionnaire was, with reference to both SAC mapping and evaluation issues, to clarify points that arose from the data, to check the degree of consensus among participants on views expressed, and to obtain feedback on issues raised. The request for feedback on the initial SAC mapping was intended to elicit feedback to inform revisions to the mapping. These changes would in turn inform the development of a mapping that, despite the inherent uniqueness of each SAC in Hong Kong, could be said to broadly represent the operation of Hong Kong SACs from the viewpoint of their stakeholders.

i) *Participant response to the post-interview e-mail questionnaire*

All participants answered all the Likert scale choice questions with the exception of David Gardner who provided no response for questions three and fourteen (a to d), and Pamela Smith who, likewise, provided no response for question eleven. The data is incorporated into the data analysis discussed in chapters six and seven while the responses are summarised in Table 2 below. The responses have been categorised according to whether the participant fulfills the role of: expert - learner (L); expert - non-learner (E); or non-expert (NE). This is in order to aid interpretation in the light of the role of the speaker.

Agree	Disagree		Strongly agree			Agree			Disagree			Strongly disagree		
			L	E	NE	L	E	NE	L	E	NE	L	E	NE
14	8	Q1	1	4	2	3	3	1						
6	5	Q2				1	3	2	2	4	1	1		
8	2	Q3		2		3	1	2	1	3	1			
12	2	Q4		3	1	3	3	2	1	1				
12		Q5	3	3	1	1	2	2		2				
	5	Q6	Comment only											
9	0	Q7		3	1	2	2	1	2	1	1		1	
14		Q8	3	3	2	1	4	1						
		Q9	Comment only											
	2	Q10	Comment only											
11	8	Q11	1	1		3	5	1		1	1			
6	0	Q12	2		1	2	1			2	2		4	
14	3	Q13	1	5	1	3	2	2						
10	0	Q14A	2	4		1	1	2	1	1	1			
14	4	Q14B	2			2	6	3						
9	2	Q14C	2	1		1	3	2		2	1	1		
11	0	Q14D	2	4		1	1	3		1		1		
14	0	Q14E	3	4	2	1	3	1						

Table 2: Post-interview e-mail questionnaire - summary of responses

The data resulting from the open-ended items requiring participant comment were coded utilising NVivo in a process that reflects that described above in sections 5.2.1 - 5.2.8 above. The data was kept separate from the interview data and coded under a separate node into twelve categories with four sub-categories (Appendix 16). These data are discussed in chapters six and seven.

ii) *Participant response to the SAC mapping*

Following the development of the first version of the SAC mapping (Appendix 14), as noted above, study participants were asked how representative they perceived it to be of a Hong Kong SAC. They were asked to do this, not in

terms of the details relating to any particular SAC, but rather regarding the components and processes as representing what they conceived a SAC to be.

The feedback, collected via e-mail, is in two ways incomplete. First, despite repeated attempts, I was unable to regain contact with SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer and SAC learner William Cheng. Of the remaining study participants, the four SAC learners and SAC support staff member Wilkin Cheung, having had the mapping explained to them, felt unable to make specific comments, but agreed it generally represented the workings of the SAC they were familiar with. It is perhaps to be expected that those participants who have provided feedback are those with experience in teaching and pedagogical administration, and therefore better able to understand the rather complex nature of the construct.

The feedback, which is generally extremely positive, tends to be micro-focused on specific elements within the SAC components. Three participants, however, make suggestions relating to the overall structure of the mapping. Thus, I discuss the feedback below in terms of *structure-level feedback* which focuses on the construct as a whole, and *component-level feedback* which relates to issues within specific components of the mapping.

Structure-level feedback

SAC expert David Gardner comments on the construct as a whole:

> ...whatever route the learner takes the outcome seems to be the same. Either they recycle (with or without having learned something) or they exit (again, with or without). On top of that wonder how can you tell the difference between those who do and those who don't learn?
> David Gardner: Initial SAC mapping feedback

It needs to be emphasised that the mapping does not aim to evaluate learning gain, but rather to represent the facilities available and processes at work within a SAC that are designed to enable the learner to benefit from the potential effects outlined. Lindsay Miller seems to acknowledge this but then adds:

> But the arrows also point back to the enter (sic) the system which to me looks like no improvement for anyone. This is probably what happens for learners who did not gain anything, but for those who have gained something then surely it is more of a spiral - they go back into the system but at a 'higher' level.
> Lindsay Miller: Initial SAC mapping feedback

However, it is not intended that the mapping should have any evaluative power. It is a descriptive reference tool to be used in the planning and contextualisation of an evaluation. Each individual learner will construct her own individual SAC learning experience that will largely determine the degree of learning gain: I do not see that it would be possible or indeed desirable to attempt a collective representation of such an individualised construct.

While generally acknowledging the validity of the construct, SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton argues that what is missing is the myriad of horizontal linkages that exist: for example, the *Teacher* providing guidance in the use of *Materials*. This is acknowledged and such links are referred to in the discussion of the mapping below. However, in order to ensure that the mapping does not become over-complex, I have decided that these should remain implicit. I feel that such linkages are both so numerous and at such a level of particularity that their value to an evaluation would probably be of limited value and would be out-weighed by the potential for confusion in the interpretation of the mapping. Thus, at the overall structure level, no changes have been made as the result of the feedback.

Component-level feedback

In contrast to the structure level, at the component level a number of revisions have been made to the mapping as a result of the e-mail feedback. These can be seen in the revised mapping that is discussed in chapter eight, section 8.2.

The feedback comprises mainly (fourteen out of twenty-one suggestions) elements that should be added to the mapping. Of these suggestions, I have incorporated seven directly into the mapping. These are the addition of:

- *peer support* to the Learner elements;
- *guidance* to the Materials elements;
- *personalisability* (re-labelled *individualisability*) and *interactivity* to the Materials qualities;
- *noise level* and *opening hours* to the Environment elements; and,
- *motivation* as a potential learner lack.

The component *Diary/log* has been replaced by, and incorporated into, a wider, sub-ordinating component labelled *IL support*. This change was implemented in order to include other elements that, like a learning diary or log, aim to

support the development of effective learning strategies. This new component subsumes five elements: *feedback, guidance* (including the notion of *orientation* as suggested by Barbara Sinclair); *planning* (including the notion of the *study plan* as suggested by both Mary Spratt and Aster Warner); and *study record* (which incorporates the *Diary/log*). Aster Warner suggests that the study plan should also act as a "deliverable". Like the learning diary, it is a potential deliverable, but I do not feel it should be included as an element in a construct that aims to broadly describe SACs in Hong Kong, not to propose a SAC ideal. The new component is also the super-ordinate for five qualities: *efficiency* (which replaces and expands upon the notion of *organisation*), *focus*, *individualisation*, as suggested by Mary Spratt, and *interactivity*.

Three suggested additions are not included. I have not included Aster Warner's suggestion that an *exit interview and follow-up procedure* be added on the grounds both that it does not describe current (but rather potential) Hong Kong SAC practice and also due to the impracticality of implementation. The other two suggestions are made by Andrew Morrall. He suggests the inclusion of *self-knowledge* as a learner element but this is not included on the grounds (given the necessity to balance comprehensiveness and practicality) that the *Learner* element *knowledge* would include a degree of *self-knowledge*. His suggestion to include the *internet* as a component was not incorporated, but this does not negate the importance of a SAC's website, and this would be evaluated as part of either the SAC's *non-human learner support*, *materials* components, or both.

The other seven items of feedback relate to changes of labelling except for Sunny Chu's observation that the component *Diary/log* is also an element of material support. This is an example of Richard Pemberton's point highlighted above regarding the lack of horizontal linkages between components. Additionally, however, a *Diary/log* is a materials support component of a different order to the others (for example, *guidance*, *information* and *organisation*). The latter are notions rather than concrete examples of tools that are used to effect a notion.

The labelling feedback has been accepted in all cases and acted upon where necessary. In one case, however, David Gardner questions the use of the term *reliability* for support staff and *commitment* for SAC teachers. The term *commitment* emerged from the data and I have retained its use since it seems

that while the support staff can be reliable in their SAC role without necessarily being committed to SALL as a concept, the same cannot be said for the SAC teachers. In order for the teachers to act as effective SAC teachers, they need to have a commitment to the context within they operate (Kelly, 1996), "making significant shifts in their attitudes and perceptions of the student-teacher relationship..." Gardner & Miller, 1999: 182).

5.3.4 Development of the evaluation framework

As with the development of the SAC mapping detailed above, the evaluation framework was developed from the process of data collection and analysis described earlier in this chapter. Additionally, however, it draws upon the literature relating to evaluation and in particular the evaluation of language programmes and SACs.

This development is detailed in chapter eight.

5.4 Conclusion

In this and in the preceding chapter, I have described the processes of thematising, data collection design, data collection, data recording, data analysis, and the development of the SAC mapping and evaluation framework as if they had proceeded in an orderly linear manner. The actual progress was, as noted previously, far from being linear in fashion, being rather the "iterative, hermeneutic process" alluded to in chapter four, section 4.3.

Each part of the process, while in itself incomplete and sometimes of limited descriptive or interpretative value, contributed to allowing the ideas that informed both the SAC mapping and evaluation framework to emerge, be analysed and be interpreted. The patterns relating these ideas to each other and to the study objectives then had to be identified until finally I felt confident about the construction of the SAC mapping and subsequently the evaluation framework.

Overall, the data analysis stages of the study can perhaps be simply represented, as in Figure 35 overleaf, as one where the data "rises" from the "ground" providing for the emergence of the theory through an iterative series of steps of data analysis and representation (as described in this chapter).

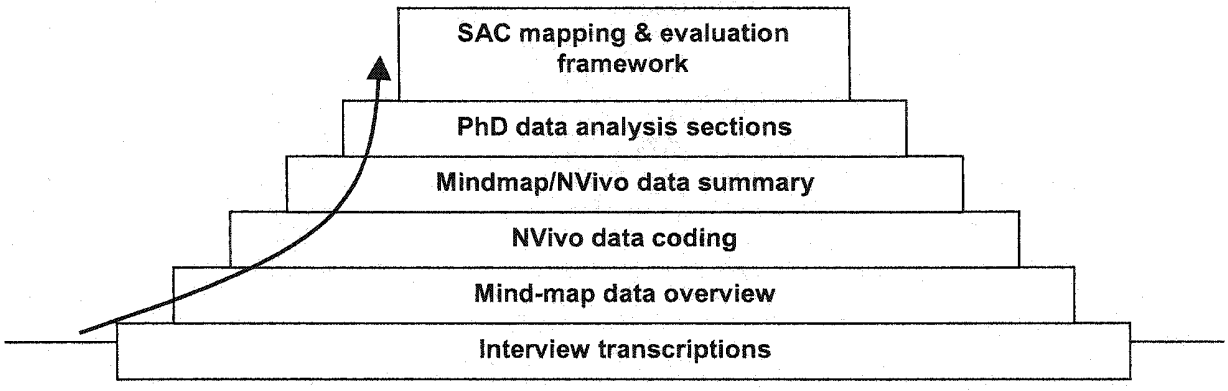


Figure 35: Data analysis stages of the study

In the following two chapters, I present and discuss in detail the analysis of the data that resulted from the processes described in this and the preceding chapter.

Chapter 6

Developing a mapping for a self-access centre: an analysis of the data relating to the definition of a SAC

6.1 Introduction

In chapters four and five, I introduced the process of data collection and analysis that was designed to lead to the development first of the SAC mapping and subsequently to the SAC evaluation framework.

In this chapter, I address the first study objective as stated in chapter one, namely to:

- identify the defining pedagogical and systemic characteristics of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre.

I aim to achieve this through presenting an analysis of the views expressed by participants in interviews and subsequent e-mail questionnaires that are relevant to the development of a SAC mapping. The aim of this analysis is then to inform the development of the SAC mapping which is presented in chapter eight.

In chapter two (section 2.2.3). the diversity and uniqueness of individual SACs was emphasised. However, in order to develop an effective SAC evaluation framework, the need for a definition (or *mapping* as introduced in chapter five, section 5.3 above) of a Hong Kong SAC has been highlighted previously in chapter one (section 1.3). My initial, working definition in chapter one, section 1.3, refers to the SAC as a centre with a set of language learning facilities and resources (both human and non-human) which provide opportunities for the development and exercise of independent learning skills. I stated that a SAC could range in type from a high-technology, purpose-built centre to a corner of a school classroom with a box of learning materials.

This definition, however, is clearly inadequate to describe the multitude of layers and facets of what actually constitutes a Hong Kong SAC. It is, therefore, also inadequate in terms of providing the basis for the development of a SAC evaluation framework. To provide such a basis, as discussed previously in chapters three, four and five, I sought the views of the SAC experts and non-experts, teachers and learners who participated in the interview and subsequent e-mail questionnaire processes. From their views, which I examine in this chapter, and with reference to the literature and my own experience, I have been able to develop the SAC mapping presented in chapter eight.

As previously discussed in chapter five, section 5.2, participant views can be interpreted as having clustered around three main defining concepts. These form the focus for the following three sections. In section 6.2, I firstly examine participant comments which bear upon the relationship between the SAC and existing educational facilities. This is followed, in section 6.3, by consideration of the SAC as a physical centre focusing upon both its physical attributes and the rationale for its use. Finally, in section 6.4, I discuss the learning processes identified by participants as taking place within the SAC. Implications, deriving from the data analysis, for the development of the SAC mapping are highlighted at the end of each sub-section.

6.2 The SAC defined in terms of existing educational facilities

Participants discuss defining a SAC mainly with reference to two existing educational facilities: the library and the classroom.

6.2.1 The SAC in relation to the library

Participants clearly identify the SAC as having certain library-like elements. However, the SAC is also seen as being a more clearly focused facility in terms both of its materials and its explicit pedagogical role. The comments made by participants referring to the SAC in terms of similarity to, or difference from, a library fall into three main sub-categories. These are: the ways in which the SAC is like a library, how it is similar to a library but also fulfilling a pedagogical role, and the ways in which it differs from a library.

i) *The SAC as a library*

When asked to describe a SAC to a non-specialist or to describe their first impression of a SAC, six out of the sixteen participants identify the SAC with a library. However, it is noticeable that none of the SAC learners or SAC co-ordinators (i.e. those participants with the most actual SAC experience) did so. This may reflect the fact that the SAC is similar in outward appearance to a library but different in its operation.

The general identification of SACs with libraries is, I would argue, not surprising for a number of reasons. Participants note the fact that a SAC

constitutes a collection of resources, membership is often required, materials are catalogued and learners are "on their own" (Andrew Morrall: 33-46; Richard Pemberton: 102-110; Sunny Chu: 23). As Gardner and Miller (1999) point out, an institution's self-access facility can sometimes be accommodated within a library or a SAC itself can sometimes itself accommodates a library (also, Bootle & Benson, 1996; Sheerin, 1989; Silver, 1994). Furthermore, given the layout and materials-focused nature of the centres, SACs do tend to look like libraries. Finally, the perception is reinforced by references in the SAC literature to the need for "cataloguing", "indexing", "lending systems" and even "library suppliers" (Bootle & Benson, 1996; Gardner & Miller, 1999; McCall 1992; Sheerin, 1989; Silver,1994).

One SAC consultant and a SAC teacher recognise that there is a need for library-like systems such as those for materials classification and retrieval (Andrew Morrall: 44-46; Lindsay Miller: 138-142). However, two non-SAC experts imply that the identification of a SAC with a library is not necessarily a completely positive attribute. Non-SAC expert Pamela Smith suggests that:

> The trouble is it can seem a bit like a library and they can be daunting as well...
> (Pamela Smith: 38-39);

while another non-SAC expert seems to suggest it is necessary for the SAC to have a wider role than a library:

> Well, I think that often SACs are **just** libraries or resource centres...
> (Mary Spratt: 56-57 - bold typeface indicates emphatic voicing).

ii) *The SAC as a library with a pedagogical role*

Despite its library-like features, study in the SAC is seen as different from that pursued in a library. This is perhaps most bluntly summed up by SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair:

> I don't think it's just a case of sitting there on your own with your head in a book...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 135-136).

Eight of the participants, representing all the interview participant roles, clearly identify the need for the SAC to fulfill an explicit pedagogical role with most suggesting the need for the physical presence of a teacher. The role of this teacher, which is further discussed in section 6.4.3, is seen to be wider than that of a librarian with the teacher being able to give expert advice about

language and language learning, as well as recommending materials suitable for the individual learner's needs. This is in addition to the teacher performing more librarian-like duties such as directing learners to where materials can be found on the shelves or computers:

> ...I think having a librarian who can direct them to different materials has its limits...students are often not used to working on their own and to have an expert or someone who can give them advice, tell them about materials, talk about learning with them is a good idea
> (Barbara Sinclair: 37-42);

> ...unlike a library, I think, we have a pedagogical role, we are not just a provider of resources, we have to take it upon ourselves, we have the responsibility to help students learn.
> (David Gardner: 693-696)

iii) *The differences between the SAC and a library*

As seen above, a major difference between a SAC and a library is perceived as being the SAC's pedagogical role, which is normally operationalised by the presence of a teacher or advisor.

However, participants identify a number of other distinguishing features. Five express the opinion that a SAC is likely to have a much more focused collection of (ELT) materials than most libraries. One SAC teacher feels that, because the SAC caters for a smaller, more targeted audience (English language learners), it is able to provide "a wider and possibly higher quality range of materials" than a library (Andrew Morrall: 127- 128). SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair likewise feels that the target user group affects the nature of a SAC but also feels that this tends to lead SAC materials to be more specifically "directive" and focused on the teaching/learning process:

> I think a SAC is probably more focused... libraries would have what I call mostly non-directive materials - published books, magazines and goodness knows what....whereas a SAC is specifically designed to help people learn and may have directive materials on specific linguistic points.
> (Barbara Sinclair: 21-25)

This, together with their sometimes being better equipped, may lead some users to view the SAC as "more professional than a library" (Yen Tung Yuk: PI 59 - the abbreviation "PI", henceforth, indicates that the quote is sourced from the post-interview e-mail questionnaire data).

Among other ideas for how the two types of facility differ, one is identified by four of the participants and reinforced by the observation of two more. The four

participants, perhaps themselves identifying the need for the language learning process to be motivating, opine that a SAC should be a friendly place where learners are allowed to "come and talk and make some noise and have fun whereas in a library having fun is not their main purpose" (Andrew Morrall: 55-57).

Taking the term *individualised* to refer to there being a focus on individual learners' needs, the fifth participant suggests that a SAC is unlike a library in that the learning need not be individualised in terms of being undertaken solitarily. Her feeling is that "it can support group learning and conversation" and, as previously quoted, that it is not "...just a case of sitting there on your own with your head in a book" (Barbara Sinclair: 133-136). In a similar vein, the sixth participant, Aster Warner sees the need for "lively, interactive learning" which may be "less easy to offer in a library". (Aster Warner: PI 39) This seems to support Andrew Morrall's notion of a SAC as a busy, friendly, noisy place where learner interaction is a component that is often crucial if language learning is to take place.

However, when the participants were asked in the post-interview questionnaire if a SAC should have "a fun, noisy, interactive environment" just over half disagreed. Perhaps most significantly, three out of the four SAC learners disagreed. In further comments, however, half of the participants (including most of those who had disagreed) suggested the desirability of separate "quiet" and "noisy" areas. Data from surveys conducted in the CILL at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Centre for Independent Language Learning, 1998) would suggest that learners do indeed like the opportunity of interaction but that it should not be at the expense of creating excessive noise that interrupts the study of others.

It seems clear that, unlike a library where silence is the default condition, a SAC should, if possible, cater for both learners who wish to work individually in silence and those who either wish to work collaboratively or wish to, for example, practise their pronunciation aloud. In other words, it "needs to cater for a variety of learning styles, including quiet independent study." (Aster Warner: PI 30)

iv) *Implications*

Data from this section explicitly inform four of the SAC mapping components:

- **human learner support** in terms of the need for a teacher with expert knowledge who can provide learner guidance;
- **non-human learner support** with reference to the organisation of materials;
- **resources** in terms of the materials themselves and in particular the need for them to be clearly and directly relevant to the learner; and finally,
- the **environment** with regard to the need for a balance between the desire for an interactive space and the need for an environment conducive to individual study.

6.2.2 The SAC v the "traditional" teacher-centred classroom

If the SAC is accepted as a valid language learning and/or teaching facility, it is inevitable and desirable that it should be discussed in relation to, and compared with, the classroom in which the majority of learners experience formal language education.

Three main themes emerge from the data. Firstly, participants identify difficulties in making a simple comparison between the SAC and the "traditional" classroom, in terms both of definitions and whether it is possible that self-access learning opportunities might exist even within the traditional classroom. Despite these reservations, participants do compare the SAC to the classroom in terms of it being more focused on the individual learner, as well as being a place where the learner (rather than the teacher) exercises control over, and has responsibility for, the learning process.

i) *Difficulty in comparison*

Three of the participants, all teachers, identify a difficulty to be discussed before any comparison can be attempted. The essence of this difficulty is the fact that each language classroom is as unique as its teacher's way of teaching and the dynamics brought to it by its learners. Andrew Morrall identifies the "traditional classroom" as one where "the teacher stands at the front of the classroom and teaches the students and the teacher is in control" (Andrew Morrall: 9-11). Two other participants, however, point out that the situation is rather more complex since classroom teaching "falls into all sorts of

categories" (Lindsay Miller: 42) and "teachers teach in very different ways" (Mary Spratt: 26).

Lindsay Miller goes on to suggest that the learning that occurs in a "modern-day class" may not differ so much from that which is encouraged in the SAC (Lindsay Miller: 48). Such a view is perhaps unsurprising given that much modern EFL pedagogy still reflects many elements of a *Communicative Approach* to English language teaching (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Breen & Candlin, 1980; Littlewood, 1981) which stresses the need for a clear focus on the learning rather than the teaching of the language. Another teacher, and SAC consultant, David Gardner takes a more extreme line and suggests that:

> ...even if they go back into a traditional class there are still lots of self-access opportunities there which the student might not actually see as self-access and it doesn't really matter if they know this is self-access but it is helping them to become more independent in their learning.
> (David Gardner: 146-150)

Despite the two potential obstacles to comparison highlighted above, Aster Warner's non-SAC expert definition of a SAC strongly suggests that the SAC and the classroom are usefully placed in contrast since the SAC "allows them to learn **independently** of the formal classroom situation" (Aster Warner: 32-33 - my emphasis). Likewise, SAC researcher, Barbara Sinclair refers to a self-access approach to learning as probably being "a non-traditional mode of learning" (Barbara Sinclair: 8). Gardner and Miller in their (1997) study found that 83% of students and 81% of the teachers they surveyed disagreed with the statement that: "The work done in the SAC is the same as the work done in the classroom". Although they did note that approximately 50% of both groups perceived a connection between the work done in the SAC and that done in the classroom, there was clear identification of a distinction between the SAC and the classroom.

It is this identification, by both SAC experts and non-SAC experts, of the SAC as being somehow outside the traditional, formal language teaching/learning context that allows us to usefully compare the two learning contexts in terms of firstly their focus and secondly the degree of flexibility they afford the learner.

ii) *The SAC as individualised and learner-focused*

Reflected in the mission statements of nearly all the Hong Kong SACs is the recognition that one of the roles of the SAC is to encourage or foster the

development of independent learning skills in its users (Appendix 17). As well as also being generally assumed in the SAC literature, it is implied by all participants and explicitly identified by five out of the sixteen. Since such skills development is necessarily individualised, the SAC focus is then clearly on the individual learner. This identification of an individualised focus is reinforced by references by both SAC learners and SAC teachers to individualised study and to the value of individualised (and instant) feedback (Sunny Chu: 132, 160; Wong Kwong Ming: 74-79).

A notion of the learner-focused nature of the SAC is presented by the participants in a number of different ways. Six out the sixteen express it in terms of learner choice or learner control, for example:

> ...where students have the opportunity to do what they like, when they like, how they like, for as long as they like, with whatever they wish
> (Barbara Sinclair: 9-11);
>
> ...where the student or the learner controls what they study, when they study it and how they study
> (Andrew Morrall: 26-27);

or as David Gardner expresses it:

> ...it's a learner thing, not a teacher thing.
> (David Gardner: 29-30)

This notion of learner choice or control is widely echoed in the literature (e.g. Benson, 1994; Cotterall & Reinders, 2001; Dickinson, 1987; and Gardner & Miller, 1999), in particular in the title of Pemberton's (1996) book, "Taking Control".

Like Kohonen (1992), Richard Farmer sees learner choice also in terms of learner responsibility with the learner in the SAC taking responsibility for the whole learning process (Richard Farmer: 33-34). Learners who take responsibility for their own learning are also seen by a SAC support staff member as "studying actively" as a result of their own motivation, rather than because of direct pressure from teachers or parents. This would make the learning experience very different from that of the typical Hong Kong school classroom.

> **Bruce:**
> In what way do you think learning in a SAC is different, or the same, as learning in a classroom at school?

Wilkin Cheung:
It's not the same as in the SAC...student do the study actively..
Bruce:
What do you mean by "actively"?
Wilkin Cheung:
If the student want to study they will go to here and in the classroom is something like the government and their parents push them to the class.
(Wilkin Cheung: 81-91)

The essence of Wilkin Cheung's comment contrasting the voluntary nature of the SAC with the compulsory nature of the formal classroom is also present in the comments of SAC learners. Yen Tung Yuk talks of being "self -motivated" (Yen Tung Yuk: 50), Wan Sau Yi of "self-motivation" (Wan Sau Yi: 16, while Lawrie Yeung suggests it is the "initiativeness" of a learner (Lawrie Yeung: 20), that leads him to choose to study in the SAC.

Despite wide agreement about the learner-centred nature of the SAC, four teacher participants and one SAC learner point out that this does not equate to individual study. This view is reflected in the fact that two SACs in Hong Kong have dedicated facilities for groups of students to work together (Morrison, 1995) and is supported in two research studies. Richard Farmer, in his interview, refers to two surveys conducted in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 1994 and 1995 which indicate Hong Kong SAC learners' preference for studying in peer-groups to studying individually. Likewise, Kwan's (2002) study found that 65% of SAC learners interviewed preferred learning in a group to studying alone. SAC learner Lawrie Yeung simply states that: "...the most effective way is that the way that two or three people...can self-organise a group..." (Lawrie Yeung: 24). Thus, while there seems to be a consensus regarding the individualised, learner-centred nature of SALL, it would seem that at least some learners do not equate this with learning individually.

iii) *Flexibility and lack of teacher control in the SAC*

Implicit in the references to the importance of learner control is the identification of a lack of teacher control. Lindsay Miller explicitly makes this point when he states:

> I like to distinguish the controlled environment, which I call the classroom, to the uncontrolled environment which is anything outside the classroom - the SAC can come into that uncontrolled environment.
> (Lindsay Miller: 109-112)

Three SAC learners also explicitly refer to this lack of pedagogical control as an important element of the SAC. One, reflecting Wilkin Cheung's comment in (ii) above about learners studying "actively", talks of not being "forced by the others" (Wan Sau Yi: 16), another states that he does not "like people force me to do something" (Yen Tung Yuk: 49-50) while the third refers to learners going to the SAC "on their own wishes" (Lawrie Yeung: 20).

In the eyes of one of the SAC learners, it is this lack of teacher control in a SAC that permits flexibility for the learner.

> ...you can preserve your time upon your demands to come to here and the programme you can manage faster or slower, and you can diversify your studying - I mean one day you can study listening, another day you got a problem you want to find out you can find out what you want - but the classroom is different, it has some fixed programmes...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 52-57).

This reference by Wong Kwong Ming to the learner managing his programme of study and diversifying the study focus, together with other SAC experts' references to flexibility (Barbara Sinclair: 128-131; Richard Farmer: 105-107; Richard Pemberton: 410-411), seems to gel with the notion of the importance of learner experimentation that arises in the interview with SAC consultant David Gardner:

> ...understanding all the options available and really the way to achieve that understanding is through experimentation - so, yes, experimentation is very important...
> (David Gardner: 109-112).

It also seems to me that the participants' views concerning flexibility and the notion of learner experimentation are indicative of the sense of being part of what Heuring (1997) refers to as a *post-industrial educational structure*, where it is the learner focus that motivates both teachers and students. The importance of experimental innovation in SALL is clearly also reflected in the SAC literature (cf. Esch, 1994b; Pemberton, 1996; Benson & Voller, 1997; Morrison, 1998). The notion of experimentation being an element of the SAC experience is discussed at length below in section 6.3.3.

When participants are asked in the post-interview questionnaire about the importance of learner control in successful SALL, the majority agree, unsurprisingly perhaps, that it is important. However, when asked to comment further, six suggest the desirability of varying degrees of control, but with

"guidance and support" (Aster Warner: PI 57). Some seem to feel that learners need to "build up to taking complete control" (David Gardner: PI 58) and perhaps need "nurturing" (Mary Spratt: PI 65) in the developmental process. These views correlate with the results of the Gardner & Miller (1997) study where SAC managers felt that users were generally very teacher-dependent, while SAC teachers were of the view that the level of teacher support that learners needed was dependent on whether they were new or experienced SAC learners. The role of the teacher and the learner in the SALL process is further discussed in sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.3 below.

Finally, a note of caution is introduced by SAC teacher Andrew Morrall who reminds us that the SAC features referred to above tend in some cases to be somewhat idealised. Thus, while "in SALL the students decide what they want to study, they decide when to study it...sometimes there can be self-access courses which they are supposed to take - sometimes self-access is very free and sometimes it's more controlled" (Andrew Morrall: 11-15). Indeed, reflecting this reality, two of the English Language Centres in Hong Kong offer an assessed self-access component as an integral part of a credit-bearing course.

iv) *Implications*

Some of the data from this section, such as the fact that the SAC is generally seen to be in contrast to the classroom and allows for flexibility of learning, inform the overall concept of the SAC mapping. There is an assumption in the data that the learner comes to the SAC potentially lacking effective learning strategies and feedback opportunities. Other data explicitly inform four of the SAC mapping components:

- the **learner** component clearly needs to include the notion of the importance of individual learning styles and qualities such as control, experimentation, motivation and responsibility;
- the **environment** needs to be able to accommodate group-learning as well as individual study; and,
- the **teacher** should be there to provide guidance and support for learners.

6.2.3 Conclusion

While participants identify differences between a SAC and a library or "traditional" classroom, they also note areas of similarity. These include the "library-like" elements of a SAC and the fact that even a "traditional" teacher-centred classroom might provide opportunities for self-access learning. The differences centre on the SAC being more clearly focused in terms of its materials and pedagogical role. However, the differences between the SAC and the library are generally seen in terms of this role being provided by the presence of a teacher; while between the SAC and the classroom the differences were seen in terms of greater learner centredness, less teacher control and a greater flexibility for the learner in determining the learning process.

6.3 The SAC defined in terms of being a physical centre

In Section 6.2 above, the analysis focused on participants' references that compare a SAC to two existing educational facilities: a library and a classroom. While some similarities have been identified, with the library in particular, the differences clearly suggest that a SAC cannot be simply defined in terms of functioning as either a library or a classroom.

In chapter three (section 3.1), I discussed the notion of a "centre" in relation to the term SAC. In this section, the focus is on defining the SAC as being a physical centre, thus distinguishing it from, for example, a language learning website or "Virtual Language Centre" (Greaves & Teng, 1998). Participants' references to the notion of the SAC as a physical centre can be seen to fall into three categories: the SAC as a facility where learning in a self-access mode takes place; the SAC as a resource centre; and the elements that the participants identify as being integral to the notion of the SAC as a physical entity.

6.3.1 The SAC as a facility for self-access language learning

SAC consultant Lindsay Miller suggests:

> ...there is a major area of confusion with the use of terminology in self-access, and there are terms like "self-access", "independent learning", "learner autonomy", "self-directed learning" - all this kind of stuff - and to begin with they look as if they're all different things but I think they have more in common than they do in difference...and it's very confusing, even

> for the experts who say they know what they're talking about here to define what all these separate terms are and I think people don't define them clearly because they're not clearly identifiable.
> (Lindsay Miller: 86-93).

Keeping this caution in mind, I use the term *self-access language learning* (SALL) to clearly identify it with the learning taking place in a SAC, while at the same time to contrast the **learning process** itself with the **physical centre** within which the learning takes place.

i) *Need for a centre for SALL*

None of the participants identify a SAC as necessary to the operation of SALL, and Barbara Sinclair explicitly de-links them.

> **Barbara Sinclair:**
> Yes, I don't think you have to do self-access in a centre...
> **Bruce:**
> So SALL doesn't necessarily take place in a SAC?
> **Barbara Sinclair:**
> I don't think so, no....I've heard of experiments in say Vietnam where there were so few facilities that no such thing existed and the teachers just brought in selections of materials and students made their choice and did what they wanted with them...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 90-111).

However, eight participants, SAC experts (including learners) and non-experts, affirm a role for the SAC in providing opportunities for SALL. The opportunities they identify have three foci: the learning process, learning materials and the SAC as a physical space. In terms of **the learning process**, as discussed in section 6.2.2 above and in further detail in section 6.4 below, the SAC is seen as allowing for greater learner control of the learning process, providing opportunities for learner experimentation, and providing guidance for learners in terms of both language learning and the development of effective independent learning strategies. As regards **learning materials**, participants feel that the SAC provides a wide range of material-types that cater for a wide range of approaches to learning in one place. It is also perceived as enabling easier and more open access to those materials than is available in formal learning environments. Finally, particularly with reference to the often rather cramped living conditions in Hong Kong students' homes, it is felt that the SAC provides a learning **space** conducive to, and encouraging of, language study.

Overall, David Gardner and Lindsay Miller perhaps summarise the general view best when they conclude:

> I suppose the SAC is just a resource which facilitates and hopefully encourages SALL
> (David Gardner: 91-92);
>
> SALL is a stage towards becoming autonomous and a SA facility...a centre...is a facility which helps you
> (Lindsay Miller: 32-33).

In its role as a resource, a facility or a venue, it is clear that a SAC has need of an actual **physical space:** i.e. that it be a physical centre.

ii) *Uniqueness of each SAC*

When considering and interpreting the views presented above, we need to keep in mind that each SAC is unique in a fundamental way that, for example, every Hong Kong secondary school, which follows a common curriculum and has to conform to certain recognised and agreed standards, could not be said to be. As SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair states, the term *self-access centre* could refer to a facility that ranges "from a cardboard box in the corner of a classroom...to a really big, hi-tech set of rooms...and everything in between" (Barbara Sinclair: 12-16). As highlighted in the following section, SAC consultant David Gardner identifies this uniqueness in terms of the various, elements (including those brought to the SAC by the learner) that together constitute the SAC entity:

> ...self-access is not a discrete item, it's a collection of all these elements and I think that the way you collect the elements together and the way you tweak the elements is unique to every situation - it is certainly unique for a SAC, the way you put those things together.
> (David Gardner: 63-67)

iii) *Implications*

The focus on the SAC as a unique collection of elements for SALL is reflected in the overall structure of the SAC mapping. Other data contribute in more specific ways. Specifically references to:

- materials are reflected in the **non-human learner support** and **resources** components in terms particularly of materials provision and access, and provision of an appropriate study environment;
- the learning processes are reflected in the **learner** and **human learner support** components; while,
- the notion of a physical space are seen in the **environment** component.

6.3.2 The SAC as a resource centre

I introduced the term *resource centre* in chapter two (sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2) in relation to resource-based learning and its role as a pre-cursor to the modern-day SAC. In this section, I discuss the participant data relating to discussion of the degree to which the SAC can be considered to be a resource centre.

Many of the points made reflect those reported in section 6.2.1 relating to the differences between the SAC and a library. The suggestion from the comments noted in that section, that the SAC is more than just a physical location for the storage and access of learning resources, is supported throughout all the interviews in this study by references to numerous other roles played by the SAC. Clearly the SAC mapping needs to reflect this multiplicity of roles.

However, eight participants refer to a SAC in terms of being either similar in nature to a resource centre, or in terms of its resources. While these resources are seen by SAC teacher Andrew Morrall and the SAC learners as including both human and non-human resources, most of the other participants focus on the non-human resources and in particular learning materials. Pamela Smith defines a SAC as being "a facility for people...to have available to them in one place everything they might need to work on their own" (Pamela Smith: 15-17). This characterises the central importance many of the participants place on the convenient storage of, and ease of access to, learning resources which is, of course, reflected in the term, ***self-access*** *language learning centre*, itself. The characterisation of a SAC as a "one-stop-shop" is further examined in section 6.3.3 below.

However, as with comparisons with the library, and despite Richard Pemberton's view that "many people take the definition of (a) SA(C) as purely a resource centre" (Richard Pemberton: 18-19), participants feel that, although resources are an essential element of a SAC, a SAC differs from a resource centre in its role.

The main way it is seen to differ is in the need for the SAC to have a pedagogical role to support learners in their use of the centre's resources. As mentioned above, Andrew Morrall (SAC teacher) includes the SAC teacher as a "resource". Richard Pemberton (SAC co-ordinator) identifies the role of the SAC in developing learners' learning strategies (Richard Pemberton: 20-22). All the SAC learners tend to see the centre's role **primarily** in terms of providing teachers whose role is to assist learners who have problems. SAC learner Wan Sau Ki adds the

statement that "also the facilities is quite useful" almost as an after-thought after explaining his view of the role of the SAC teacher at length (Wan Sau Ki: 32). A discussion of the roles of the SAC teacher is found in section 6.4.3 below.

This distinction between the SAC and resource centre is in some ways similar to the distinction made by Esch (1994a). She contrasted self-service and self-access by comparing the impersonal, isolating experience of shopping in a Tesco supermarket (self-service) with that of shopping in the local village shop with its personalised, supportive environment (self-access). Indeed, in my experience, the need to balance the impersonal non-human support systems characterised by electronic databases for example with the expensive but psychologically supportive human presence is a central issue for SAC co-ordinators.

The implications of these data for the SAC mapping can be seen primarily in the central emphasis on materials as **resources** and the need for easy access to them, and the importance of **human learner support** (of various kinds) with its characteristic qualities of empathy and interaction.

6.3.3 SAC elements

In the course of the interviews, in addition to considering a SAC as a physical venue with a specific pedagogical role, participants both explicitly and implicitly identify a number of elements that they see as integral to the notion of a SAC. Two elements that are not included in this section are the *learner* and *effectiveness*. The role of learner is discussed at length separately in section 6.4. Effectiveness is not discussed here since, due to its centrality to the notion of evaluation, it is addressed in detail in chapter seven, which focuses on the data relating to SAC evaluation. I have grouped the elements to be discussed in this section into seven categories:

- the environment;
- the SAC as a "one-stop-shop";
- human learner support;
- non-human learner support;
- resources; and
- efficiency.

i) *Environment*

Four participants refer to the SAC's role in providing a "space" or "place" where learners might pursue their independent learning activities. In doing so, Andrew Morrall, Aster Warner and Richard Pemberton contrast it to the cramped learning space many Hong Kong students experience in their homes. Andrew Morrall reflects the view of these three participants when he suggests that learners' homes "tend to be small, they tend to have other people in them doing other things that are noisy, there are interruptions, it's hard to study" (Andrew Morrall: 80-81). Barbara Sinclair reflects a number of participants views when she states that a SAC needs to be " pleasant, comfortable, airy - not some dungeon at the bottom of a building" (Barbara Sinclair: 210-211). Thus, it can be seen that although some participants stress that SALL can be undertaken anywhere, there are advantages for Hong Kong learners in using a SAC in terms of its role as a "centre" that provides sufficient dedicated learning space.

Gardner & Miller express the view that:

> The physical setting, equipment and furniture used with self-access language learning have an important role in instilling and maintaining learner motivation."
> (Gardner & Miller: 1999, 139)

Two criteria emerge from the interview data that focus on the SAC environment: firstly, that the environment of a SAC should be agreeable; and secondly, that it should not be silent and serious.

The adjectives participants use to describe an **agreeable environment** are "pleasant" (Andrew Morrall: 53; Barbara Sinclair: 210), "comfortable" (Barbara Sinclair: 210; Wilkin Cheung: 307), "airy" (Barbara Sinclair: 210) and "friendly" (Wong Kwong Ming: 271-276). The first three can be seen to refer to the physical environment as experienced in terms of features such as the seating and lighting. The last, however, (from a SAC learner) would seem also to include non-physical elements such as the attitude of SAC staff and the assistance they provide to the learner.

The second criterion, regarding the degree of **formality of atmosphere**, relates back the discussion in section 6.2.1 in which the SAC was compared to a library and some differences highlighted. Two participants (the first a SAC

teacher and the second a SAC consultant) explicitly refer to the desirability of the SAC being a place where:

> ...students should be allowed...to come and talk and make some noise and have fun...
> (Andrew Morrall: 55-56);
>
> ...your aim might be to create a fun, noisy, interactive environment...
> (Lindsay Miller: 145-146).

As previously noted, however, this is not suggested by the SAC learners and, while perhaps being pedagogically desirable in some ways, the notion does conflict with feedback from users in the CILL that noise from other users disturbs their concentration. It would seem optimal, as suggested previously and as reflected in some of the post-interview questionnaire comments, that a SAC has both "quiet" and "noisy" areas.

ii) The SAC as a *"one-stop-shop"*

I have used the marketing term "one-stop-shop" to encapsulate the participants' views that focus on the need for a sufficiency of resources in one convenient place that has a "service" ethos.

All participants mention the fact that a SAC has a collection of learning materials. The need for quantity is explicitly expressed by three in terms ranging from "sufficient" (Barbara Sinclair: 201) to "stacked" (Andrew Morrall: 45). There is also reference to the need for a wide variety of types and levels so as to cater for learners' differing learning backgrounds, styles and needs (Barbara Sinclair: 201-204; David Gardner: 361-363). A seemingly important point given the word "access" in the term "self-access centre", although only explicitly made by one non-SAC expert participant, is that there should be:

> Easier access of (all) materials on a hands-on basis - you can take things down and touch them and look at them - you don't have to ask for them...
> (Pamela Smith: 88-89 - my parentheses).

Participants were asked in the post-interview questionnaire whether they agreed with the statement that: "It is important for a SAC to be a "one-stop shop" in terms of providing learners with easy and efficient access to a wide range of materials and appropriate equipment **in one location**" (emphasis provided in the questionnaire). All fourteen agreed and eight agreed strongly.

The other aspects of the *shop* metaphor are those of convenience and service. It is felt that, a SAC should be bringing together materials, facilities and learning support in one place. Unlike a library where a learner can generally only access information or the classroom where the learner can get guidance from the teacher, in the ideal SAC the learner can get "all the resources (she needs) in one small area so that you don't have to go here and there to find things" (Andrew Morrall: 90-91). Central to this is the notion of the SAC providing a "service" with its concomitant need for efficiency:

> ...you offer a service to these people and its got to appear efficient from their point of view otherwise they won't go...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 301-303).

With reference to this notion of service, it is interesting to note that one SAC teacher, while seeming to suggest the service nature of the SAC, is clearly not entirely happy with regarding the learners as "customers":

> ...I think we would have to meet the learners' needs but it doesn't mean that all the learners' needs...it doesn't mean that the learners are customers and that they are always correct...
> (Sunny Chu: 225-227).

This may well be explained in terms of his training and experience as a classroom teacher not allowing him to easily accept the notion of learner-driven learner support and a feeling that perhaps the teacher might be better able to effectively identify learner needs. There is a certain validity to his point in that it indicates a potential tension between the need for a focus on the learner (the customer) and the notion that the teacher (as guide or expert) should be allowed, and indeed is perhaps expected, to exercise judgment.

In conclusion, while accepting the value of the notion of a "one-stop shop", we should perhaps again turn to Esch's (1994a) metaphorical contrast between the supermarket and the village shop. While a SAC could learn from certain of the supermarket's organisational strategies relating to access, sufficiency and scope, we should not forget the lessons that can be learnt from the village shop with its quality of service and customer-as-person oriented outlook.

iii) *Human learner support*

Reflecting Esch's "village shop" metaphor, Kelly (1996), Riley (1997) Gardner & Miller (1999), amongst others, have stressed the need for human learner support in the SAC: in other words, the provision of a *teacher*, or *counselor*, or

facilitator, or *tutor.* This view is supported by the fact that all participants state that a SAC should provide human support (or, in the words of Mary Spratt (96), "bods in various guises") for learners. This support is seen as potentially coming from one or more of three sources: a teacher, administrative and/or technical staff, and other learners. The first two are seen primarily in terms of providing guidance for learners in using the centre effectively, and accessing useful and relevant materials. The teacher is also seen as being able to help with language learning problems. The learners are identified as providing support in terms of facilitating a "group access" approach to learning.

Thirteen participants explicitly identify the need for a teacher within a SAC. This corresponds with the findings of Reinders' (2000b) research project that attempted to identify factors that enhanced or hindered successful SALL. The roles that the teacher might play, which include that of a facilitator, information source, guide and feedback provider, are discussed at length in Section 6.4.2 below. Three participants with different roles (Andrew Morrall, Richard Farmer, Wilkin Cheung), referring to the need for experience or training in a self-access language learning environment, and thereby suggesting the specialist nature of the SAC teacher's role, contrast that role to that of a classroom teacher. Their comments can be seen to support Kelly's (1996) perceptions of the macro-skills employed by the SAC counsellor that, he suggests, differ in significant respects from those of the classroom teacher.

Three participants (Andrew Morrall, Barbara Sinclair, Richard Pemberton) identify the need for non-academic support staff, in the roles of technician, and librarian or "resources person" (Barbara Sinclair: 213).

Interestingly, data from five participants (including one SAC learner) suggest that other learners provide learner support. This support is implied in statements that are made to clarify or emphasise that SALL, with its focus on individualisation of the learning process, does not have to be undertaken alone. SAC consultant David Gardner contrasts individualisation with the learner studying alone:

> ...the key to it is the individualisation - by which I don't mean people working alone in segregation, I just mean that things are tailored to the individual's needs and that doesn't mean they can't work in groups (David Gardner: 69-72).

As referred to previously in section 6.2.2, SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer, referring to research carried out in 1994 (Farmer, 1994), suggests that learning in groups means that learning becomes more of a social activity and the group members are then able to provide peer support. This support he identifies as being of two main types: firstly, group interaction facilitating effective needs analysis; and secondly, a group approach to language activities and assessment, again involving interaction, leading to better use being made of the materials and learning opportunities. This view is reflected in comments from SAC learner Lawrie Yeung who sees a group-access approach as being "very interactive and it provide opportunity for student to practise..." (Lawrie Yeung: 24). Morrison (1995) and Dickinson & Carver (1980) support the notion of benefits being gained from such an approach in a SALL environment.

iv) *Non-human learner support*

In addition to the need for human support for the learner, participants recognise the need for non-human, systemic support. Generally, comments on non-human learner support tend to focus on accessibility of materials and the need for a systematic infrastructure. For example, Barbara Sinclair suggests that:

> ...it (the SAC) must be organised in such a way that it is obvious to students where things are and how they can be accessed.
> (Barbara Sinclair: 205-206)

Barbara Sinclair goes on to suggest explicitly (as others, when pointing out a similarity with a library or resource centre, do implicitly) that a SAC should be perceived as a service provider and as such should pay attention to the efficiency of the service it offers. In a similar vein, Lindsay Miller suggests that "if you were establishing a SAC it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a good look at a library" in order to set up "the system from the learner's point of view" (Lindsay Miller: 137-142).

The discussion of a SAC's infrastructural support for learners primarily focuses upon two areas: the accessing, classification and indexing of learning materials; and the provision of a supportive structure to help learners develop effective learning strategies.

Classification and indexing of learning materials

Six of the participants, though not the SAC learners (who tend to emphasise the importance of the presence of a SAC teacher), refer to the need to support learners in accessing materials. This support is seen in terms of the classification and indexing of materials, and the development of learning pathways which identify topic-specific materials that could be useful to the learner in addition to a suggested order in which to use them. This perceived need is supported by Reinders' (2000b) finding that 60% of SAC learners had problems locating appropriate materials, and the fact Gardner & Miller (1997) reported that Hong Kong SAC teachers felt there was a lack of easy, transparent learner access to materials.

There are, however, two notes of caution with regard to the provision of materials access support. SAC teacher Andrew Morrall feels that, while the index and pathways are useful in suggesting potentially relevant and useful materials for learners, they do not help the learner in knowing what to do with the material. In other words, they do not help with learning strategy development (Andrew Morrall: 142-147). SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer takes this point further. While seeing the index as a useful "stepping stone" (Richard Farmer: 52) in the development of a successful independent learner, he sees a danger of the SAC actually substituting dependence on the teacher with a new dependence on the learner's use of indexes, pathways and other infra-structural features of the centre (Richard Farmer: 100-102).

Development of effective learning strategies

Morrall's and Farmer's are the only notes of caution among the participants who otherwise speak of the need for the SAC to provide structural support for the development of effective learning strategies in the SAC learner. Among the examples of such support are: help for students to identify "'what is the best way to get at my goal?" (David Gardner: 682); the use of "learning logs" to allow for progress measurement (Aster Warner: 108-111), and review and feedback (Wong Kwong Ming: 115-124); a self-access "programme" of study with opportunities for progress review and feedback (Wong Kwong Ming: 102-109); and "some systematic direction to go through" (William Cheng: 56-57).

It is interesting to note that the learner quoted above uses the term *programme* to in his description of a learning strategy: a term which many

might see as inimical the whole ethos of SALL. This is discussed in section 6.4.1.

v) *Resources*

In answer to the question "What does a typical SAC look like?", SAC teacher Sunny Chu replies simply: "There are resources". (Sunny Chu: 29) In addition to the need for human resources, which is discussed in sections 6.3.3 (iii) above and 6.4.3 below, twelve participants identify the importance of learning materials and ten identify equipment as a reason why learners would use a SAC.

Reflecting this perception of the central importance of resources to a SAC, the British Council, in its series of five booklets which aimed at assisting in the setting-up of SACs (McCall, 1992; Moore, 1992; Sturtridge, 1992; Carvahlo, 1993; Booton & Benson, 1996), dedicated two complete booklets and a large proportion of a third to the issue of SAC resources. Participants in this PhD study, also acknowledge resourcing either explicitly:

> ...without the resources the students wouldn't come in and it wouldn't be effective
> (Aster Warner);

or implicitly, as being of central importance to a SAC. In particular, they recognise that there should be a wide range of learning materials catering for different learners' learning styles and abilities, as well as appropriate technology to assist learning.

Range of materials

As Barbara Sinclair points out:

> ...there is no point in having a SAC with no materials so there must be materials there for the students to use at different levels, of different types, with different focuses...it must have learning support....it must be organised in such a way that it is obvious to students where things are and how they can be accessed...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 201-206);

and the key issue participants identify in relation to learning materials is the range of materials available. While participants express a need for the collection to be focused on language learning, there is also a perceived need for:

> a sufficient amount at different levels...of different types, with different focuses
> (Barbara Sinclair: 201-204);
>
> ...as wide a range as possible - different kinds of language, different kinds of material, different approaches to learning
> (David Gardner: 361-363);

and a collection that:

> ...caters for a wide range of learning styles, a wide range learning approaches...
> (Richard Farmer: 194-195).

The primary focus on the range of materials needed in the SAC reflects the findings of Gardner & Miller (1997) where 97% of SAC teachers and 89% of SAC learners felt that having a variety of learning materials was important. The need for materials to be "kept up-to-date and in good nick" (Barbara Sinclair: 298-299) is also pointed out.

Appropriate technology

As is perhaps to be expected, participants tend to focus comments regarding equipment on the need for videos, computers and "specially-designed equipment for language learning" (Richard Pemberton: 106-107). Reinders (2000b) concluded that the use of computer programs and listening materials ranked very positively as factors enhancing the effectiveness of users' SALL. Aster Warner and Barbara Sinclair, however, make the point that resources can assist in the self-access language learning process "whether they are fairly low technology or higher technology" (Aster Warner: 21-22). This point is also made by Moore (1992) and reinforced by the title of her booklet - "**Appropriate** Technology" (my emphasis).

In addition to the foci on materials and technology, Richard Farmer (18-29), as a SAC co-ordinator, focuses on the financial resources and the effect these had on the setting-up of a SAC, referring specifically to "refurbishment" and space planning. These references, which imply that the physical space and environment should be regarded as a resource, are reflected in comments by another SAC co-ordinator who, when asked what he would expect to see in a SAC, suggests they "would be pretty similar to what you would get in a library I guess...areas, spaces for language learning." (Richard Pemberton: 103-104).

vi) *Efficiency*

Support systems and resources of any kind are only of value if they help to ensure the efficient operation of a centre. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines *efficiency* as being the production "of the desired result with the minimum of wasted effort". When discussing the efficiency of a SAC, Mary Spratt stresses the need for "look(ing) at efficiency against the background of effectiveness" (Mary Spratt; 275-276). With reference to this dictionary definition and Mary Spratt's observation, it is clear that efficiency to a degree presupposes effectiveness which I discuss in relation to evaluation in chapter seven.

SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair presents the notion of the SAC as a "service" and since "you offer a service to these people...it's got to appear efficient from their point of view otherwise they won't go...it's absolutely vital" (Barbara Sinclair: 300-308). Either explicitly or implicitly, and from the viewpoint of the learner, management or funder, most participants recognise the importance of efficiency in the operation of a SAC. Participants feel that a SAC should be efficient with regard to the learners: in terms of the systems that the learners interact with (for example, the registration process or access to a teacher), the condition and accessibility of the materials, and the opening hours and any other factors which directly impact on the learners' use of the centre. Participants of all roles also see efficiency as being important from a management or funder's point of view but tend to discuss it primarily in terms of "cost effectiveness" and in terms of "bums on seats" (Barbara Sinclair: 167).

As previously mentioned, both the notion of effectiveness and efficiency will be considered in greater depth in chapter seven.

viii) *Implications*

As suggested in the section title, *SAC Elements*, the data analysed in this section provides substantial input into the SAC mapping. There is input from this section into all five SAC components identified in the mapping:

- the **learner** in terms of interaction with other learners in group learning contexts to provide both practice opportunities and peer support, and the variety of individual learning styles that need to be catered for;
- with regard to **human learner support**, a particular emphasis on the notion of service and efficiency, the roles of the teacher in providing expert

knowledge, guidance and feedback and the expert knowledge of support staff;

- with reference to **non-human learner support**, systematic, informative and well-organised materials support as well as learning diaries as an aid to the development of effective learning strategies;
- **resources** in terms of the need for a variety of materials and technology appropriate to the context; and finally,
- the **environment** with reference to the décor, provision for learners to study in groups, accommodation for noisy and quiet areas, and the importance of space itself.

6.4 The SAC defined in terms of the learning process it supports

In sections 6.2 and 6.3, I have focused on the data from the angle of the SAC and how it operates in order to facilitate learners in the SALL process. In this section, I focus on the learning process itself. I examine this by considering the various roles that are played in the process by the SAC itself, the SAC learner and the SAC teacher, and the constraints within which they operate.

As previously suggested in chapters one and three, and as reflected in my perceived need to develop a SAC mapping, there seems to be a lack of clear understanding of the actual nature of a SAC. In the context of this PhD study, this is both true amongst those involved in education in general (although without experience of the operation of a SAC) and those involved in the running of a SAC in a non-academic capacity. Aster Warner, an educator with considerable experience, prefaces her answer to the question "What's your understanding of the term 'SAC'?" with the words "I imagine..." (Aster Warner: 6-8). Wilkin Cheung, an audio-visual assistant with five years' experience of working in a SAC, answers the same question in these words:

> It's the centre that you use the material provided by the centre to help you to something like to upgrade your language...**something like that**. (Wilking Cheung: 7-9 - my emphasis)

In both cases the tentative quality of the terms "I imagine" and "something like that" suggests that the participant is not sure they were supplying an answer that matched an accepted understanding of the term *SAC*. Thus, since discussion of

the learning processes at work within a SAC would pre-suppose such a clear understanding, in this section, I have relied primarily on data from those familiar with the workings of a SAC either as SAC learner, SAC teacher, SAC consultant or SAC researcher.

Since consideration of the learning process will inevitably involve revisiting some issues I have previously discussed, I will focus on some specific data for a second time. However, such seeming repetition is necessary in that the data is examined with reference to a different purpose.

6.4.1 The role of the SAC in the learning process

In this section focusing on the role of the SAC, there are five areas of discussion. The first considers how the SAC can provide a dual focus on language learning and the development of independent learning. The next three suggest roles that the SAC can fulfill with reference to the individual learner's learning process as: a facility that enables effective, independent language learning; a resource centre; and a provider of learner support. The fifth area of discussion focuses on some of the constraints faced in the fulfillment of the three individual learner-focused roles previously outlined.

i) *A dual focus: bringing together language learning and independent learning*
When asked why they use the SAC, interview participants in both Gardner & Miller's (1997) study and this current PhD study tend to focus on the attributes of a centre such as those identified in section 6.3.3 above relating to resources. Only one SAC learner in this study actually states: "I go there to improve my English" (Yen Tung Yuk: 27), and language improvement is explicitly mentioned by only six other participants including, however, all five SAC learners. On the other hand, it would seem fair to assume that the one main reason learners visit a language-learning focused self-access facility is language improvement. Despite the development of IL skills being a declared aim of some SACs, there are no participant comments to suggest that learners primarily use the SAC with this objective in mind. In support of this assumption, two SAC learners speak at length about their work-related language problems and challenges, citing these as the reason why they study in a SAC.

> In the day-to-day work I'm need to talk to native-speakers and my immediate supervisor is also come from British so I listening her voice...so

> often and I also dialogue with her regularly...and also because I need to produce the audit report, I am also feeling the writing report is more faster than before - this I think is the progress that I got from the Centre.
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 199-207)

Certainly, SAC consultant David Gardner seems in no doubt:

> ...the language gain thing is really, in my view, the main reason students go to self-access - they don't go there thinking "I want to become an autonomous learner", they go there thinking "my English isn't very good, I need to do something about it".
> (David Gardner: 558-562)

Furthermore, this is reflected in the fact that, in the mission statements of all but one of the SACs in Hong Kong, a primary aim of a SAC is to enable learners to enhance their abilities in their target language (Appendix 17).

There is also, however, considerable attention paid to the development of IL skills. This is reflected in the names of some of the Hong Kong SACs: the Centre for Independent Language Learning, the Independent Language Learning Centre and the Independent Learning Centre. Andrew Morrall actually refers to a SAC as an "*Independent Learning* centre" (Andrew Morrall: 390). Richard Farmer, reflecting what Sheerin (1997) refers to as an "ideological goal" of SALL, suggests that the development of IL skills should be an aim of any learning programme and the key aim of a SAC. Like Lindsay Miller, he sees the effective use of a SAC by a learner as a stepping-stone on the way to the development of complete learner autonomy. SAC learner Lawrie Yeung supports Richard Farmer's view when he states:

> I think the aim of the centre is to help students to pick up self-learning and to encourage students to self-learn.
> (Lawrie Yeung: 32)

All five SAC learners refer to a particular mode of learning that they feel is appropriate to working in a SAC but, compared to the other participants, they tend to stress more the need for learner support. This suggests that such support may be at least one reason why they use the SAC. For example, William Cheng, while referring to "self-study", when asked what changes he would like made to the SAC stresses the need for support and refers to **imposing** a "self-study **programme**" (William Cheng: 100 - my emphasis):

> The main change is that I want to impose some, design some study...for example, when new student come here...student to take a test first to test

> their standard and then focus on the standard they have...and then provide some different programme...
> (William Cheng: 98-103).

Wong Kwong Ming, while also referring to the value of teacher support also, however, clearly displays an understanding of the concepts upon which the SAC is based. Early in the interview, he refers to "self-learning" (a term also used by Lawrie Yeung: 32) to describe his mode of learning which he explains as follows.

> I think self-learning - is my understanding or my expectation is - your learning path is not mainly guided by the tutor, the learning path is customised by yourself and if you have any problem arise during your learning path you can make use of the tutor to help you overcome the problem.
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 28-32)

In all, though, only five interview participants explicitly mention the notion of IL. However, when asked in the post-interview question if they agreed that "A SAC should explicitly help learners to develop their independent learning skills", only two participants disagreed and four strongly agreed with comments like it being "essential to aid progression" (Aster Warner: PI 48) and the SAC having:

> ...a duty to provide some learning opportunities which provide explicit development of the metacognitive knowledge and language learning skills that can help a language learner become more effective and independent in their learning.
> (Barbara Sinclair: PI 50)

Interestingly, none of the SAC learners strongly agreed and one disagreed showing, I would suggest, that they perceive the SAC's role in aiding the development of IL skills as being of lesser importance.

Reflecting Sheerin's (1997) "pragmatic goal" of SALL, Richard Pemberton suggests that learners develop **certain** IL skills as **part of their use** of the SAC for language study. Other participants also support the aim of developing learners' IL skills but warn against prescription (David Gardner), ignoring the desires of the learners (Lindsay Miller) and introducing compulsory learner training programmes (Andrew Morrall). Comments from one SAC learner suggest that learners are also aware of the need to develop such skills. SAC learner William Cheng, however, expresses this in terms of improving his English, and sees the need for the teacher to guide him:

> I don't know **how to improve** my English so I come to the centre and ask the tutor if he can **give me some direction.**
> (William Cheng: 16-17 - my emphasis).

Andrew Morrall, as a SAC teacher, expresses the belief that learners need such skills if SALL is to be efficient:

> ...it (SALL) only becomes more efficient than, for example, classroom teaching when the student is familiar with analysing their own needs, is familiar with planning what they want to do, is familiar with studying something using study strategies that they prefer using, and is familiar with self-assessment...
> (Andrew Morrall: 383-387).

The role specific centres play in the individual learner's learning process would, however, be expected to differ particularly since the centres differ in the emphasis they place on the development of IL skills. This difference can be seen when comparing the CILL mission statement with its primary emphasis on language learning with that of the SAC at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology where none of the SAC objectives primarily and explicitly refer to the promotion of language learning. Rather they refer to the provision of "a supportive environment for autonomous language learning" and helping "learners develop the ability to control their own learning" (Appendix 17).

From a macro point of view, however, the SACs in Hong Kong can all be seen to fulfill a dual role in that they all aim to both help learners improve their language skills and to develop (or encourage the development of) appropriate independent learning skills. It is also clear that a duality of role was in mind when the SACs in Hong Kong were established. Aster Warner states that, in her opinion, the funding committee she served upon:

> ...specifically targeted both language development and also learning development projects and those two priorities would seem to come together in something like a self-access language centre so it's something which, although of course it is the business of the institution, is very much in accord with (its) priorities.
> (Aster Warner: 52-56)

ii) *An enabling role*

With reference to the discussion above, the SAC can be seen as having a role in enabling learners to both improve their language proficiency and to develop

their IL skills in three ways. It can enable the learner to improve her language proficiency through the language learning opportunities it offers. It can help learners develop their IL skills by acting as a catalyst for independent learning. Finally, by encouraging experimentation, it can aid in the development of both IL and language learning skills.

Language learning opportunities

The provision of language learning opportunities in terms of learning materials such as books, CD-ROMs and audio cassettes, and the provision of various learner support mechanisms has been discussed previously in section 6.3.3. The SAC's role as provider of materials and facilities should not be underestimated. It enables learners who have very limited access to both learning resources and learning space (Aster Warner, Richard Pemberton) to make use of a wide range of materials. As one SAC learner phrases it:

> ...the centre provides every material that a language learner requires and wants to have.
> (William Cheng: 14-15)

Catalyst for IL

In terms of enabling the development of IL skills, as previously noted, SAC experts Richard Farmer and Lindsay Miller see the SAC as a stepping-stone for the learner on the road to the ideal of full learner autonomy. In addition to the SAC having a medium-term goal in enabling the learner to take responsibility for her own learning, Richard Farmer sees a longer-term aim as being to enable the learner to "do all those things without a SAC" (Richard Farmer: 50-51). The SACs act as a catalyst to enable their learners to develop their IL skills in different ways but seven of the participants explicitly point to learner choice as an important element in any SAC. This choice, or learner control (as previously introduced in sections 6.2.2 and 6.3.1), is in terms of:

> ...it (being) the learners that make the decisions...they decide what to learn and when to learn and how to learn...
> (Sunny Chu: 9-11);

and can be contrasted to the "controlled environment" (Lindsay Miller: 110) of the traditional classroom where teacher control is the norm. However, the person of the SAC teacher, who was identified by fourteen participants as being important to the success of a SAC, would also seem to have an important role to play in enabling learners to develop their IL skills. This is discussed in section 6.4.3.

Experimentation

While discussing learner choice, SAC consultant David Gardner uses the term *experiment* in relation to learner's activities:

> ...it (a SAC) provides many opportunities all in one place and also it gives learners a chance to experiment much more than they could do if they didn't have the SAC...
> (David Gardner: 84-87).

The term "experiment" is only used by two participants (SAC consultant David Gardner and SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer). However, the notion of experimentation, as well as being encapsulated in the notion of the SAC as a non-traditional educational entity, seems to be of direct relevance to the educational philosophy upon which SALL and, by extension, the SACs are based. Richard Farmer identifies experimentation as one of the responsibilities of the SAC learner (Richard Farmer: 37). Rather less prescriptively perhaps, David Gardner expresses the view that it is the chance for both learners and teachers to experiment that is one of the things that makes a SAC "the most important resource for SALL" (84). He also points towards experimentation being a powerful aid in the development of effective learning strategies:

> ...I think the more that students experiment with things, the more they learn about themselves, strategies that are suitable for themselves, the ways they like to learn, that kind of thing...
> (David Gardner: 113-116).

Although not synonymous, the term can be seen as a loose super-ordinate for notions expressed by other participants such as learners having "the freedom to do as they want" (Barbara Sinclair: 126-127), "flexibility" (Barbara Sinclair, Richard Farmer), the learners taking "responsibility" for their own learning (Richard Farmer), and the learners as decision-makers:

> ...it is the learners that make the decisions...they decide what to learn and when to learn and how to learn...
> (Sunny Chu: 9-11).

When participants are asked subsequently in the post-interview e-mail questionnaire if they feel that experimentation could play an important role in the learning process in the SAC, all respond positively with 50% strongly agreeing. In their comments, participants focus primarily on the importance of experimentation to the individual learner as a part of the learning process:

> ...They need to experiment because they need to find a suitable way for them to study
> (Wilkin Cheung: PI 23);
>
> ...experimentation is essential to active self-study
> (Aster Warner: PI 23).

My own experience as a SAC co-ordinator likewise leads me to feel that experimentation, in the wide sense of the word, has been, and should continue to be, a key element both at the institutional level in the successful development of the Hong Kong SACs. Additionally, as a SAC co-ordinator, I feel it is extremely important at the level of the individual learner in terms of an individual's pedagogical development.

This notion arises again when considering the role of the learner in a SAC in section 6.4.2 below. However, both as a facet of learner choice and a recognised strategy for language learning (ref. Stern's (1975) *experimental* learning strategy), the encouragement of experimentation can be seen as another way in which the SAC can play an enabling role in the learning process.

iii) Resource centre role

Although in section 6.3.2 the point was made that the SAC does not only serve as a resource centre (in terms of being a *centre* for *resources*), this role in the learning process should not be underestimated. Support for this is provided by the fact that seven participants identified such a role for the SAC and the fact that it is reflected in the name of one of the University of Hong Kong's SACs: *The Languages Resource Centre*. SAC learner Lawrie Yeung highlights the resource centre role when he explains that his reason for visiting the SAC is:

> ...when I find there is something I need to use in English and then I will go to the centre to **find things out**.
> (Lawrie Yeung: 11 - my emphasis).

A well-organised and well-managed SAC should be particularly well-suited to meet the needs of a resource-based approach to learning (Beswick, 1977; Noble, 1980; Clarke, 1982; Breivik,1998).

Participants identify four factors relating to how the resource centre role can be effectively fulfilled. Firstly, reflecting William Cheng's comment in (ii) above that a centre provides "every material that a language learner requires"

(William Cheng: 14), a SAC should have a "sufficient amount of materials" (Barbara Sinclair: 201).

Secondly, that such materials should be focused and appropriate is identified as a defining SAC feature by three SAC experts (Richard Farmer, Richard Pemberton, Barbara Sinclair). Regarding the appropriacy of materials, however, SAC teacher Andrew Morrall's words of caution concerning learners' use of materials (quoted two paragraphs below) should be borne in mind.

Thirdly, as previously discussed in section 6.3.2, the materials must be "organised in such a way that it is obvious to students where things are and how they can be accessed" (Barbara Sinclair: 205-206). There should be:

> ...easier accessibility of materials on a hands-on basis - you can take things down and touch them and look at them - you don't have to ask for them or go through catalogues...
> (Pamela Smith: 88-90).

As a SAC teacher with five years' experience of working in a SAC, Andrew Morrall suggests three tools to enable easier learner access to materials but adds a note of caution relating to the suitability of some of the learning materials to a SALL environment:

> ...the **indexing system** is in a way selective in that it points students to stuff that is useful so are the **materials lists** and **pathways**...but I still worry that students are left to pick up a book and the teacher's book that goes with it and they come across things that they can't do or that they can't find the answers for...
> (Andrew Morrall: 142-147 - my emphasis).

Finally, perhaps the notion also discussed previously in section 6.3.2 of the *one-stop-shop* encapsulates how the SAC can best fulfill its role as a resource centre: by combining a sufficient number of appropriate resources in one convenient place with a "service" ethos.

iv) *Learner support role*

Fourteen participants focus on the role that the SAC plays in supporting the individual's learning process, as discussed previously in section 6.3.3.

However, as also noted previously, one additional way in which some SACs play a role in the learning process is by providing structured SALL programmes that might be part of a non-SALL focused (possibly credit-

bearing) language improvement programme. This notion is supported by a number of SAC experts such as Lindsay Miller and Richard Pemberton. It is also reflected in the comments of two SAC learners in this study concerning the need for greater structure in their learning (William Cheng and Wong Kwong Ming).

v) *Constraints on the role of the SAC in the learning process*

In this and following sections, the term "constraint" is used not so much in the sense of coercion or forceful restraint, but rather to identify those areas that might hinder in some way the fully effective and efficient use of a SAC.

During the course of the interviews for this study, participants identify a number of constraints that act upon the SAC in its role in the learning process. Some of these constraints directly affect the role of the SAC, while others affect its operation indirectly through their effect upon either the role of the SAC learner or teacher. These indirect constraints are highlighted but then discussed in more detail in sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.3 respectively.

Participants identify constraints acting on the SAC in the following areas: the profile of the SAC's learners, SAC materials, and the learning environment of the institution within which it operates.

Learner profiles

Two factors are highlighted regarding the learner profile. The first concerns learner needs. The mission statement of the SAC of the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology reflects an accepted tenet of independent learning when it states that the centre's mission includes helping learners to identify their learning needs:

> To help learners develop the ability to control their own learning by raising their awareness of the possibilities for language learning both inside and beyond the SAC; **by helping them to identify their specific needs,** set goals, choose appropriate learning materials and strategies, and evaluate their progress.
> (Extracted from the mission statement of the SAC of the Language Centre of the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology - my emphasis).

However, SAC consultant David Gardner suggests that SAC co-ordinators and teachers do not know what individual SAC learner needs are:

> ...if you don't have a lot of contact with your students, how do you know what their needs are - well, I think that is a major problem at the moment that we experience with SACs, that we don't know really why the students are there and I think as teachers we can make educated guesses, we have a kind of teacher intuition about what sorts of things the students need but sometimes we're wrong...
> (David Gardner: 317-323).

Two other SAC experts have similar worries. Richard Farmer reports on the ineffectiveness of successive needs analyses developed for another Hong Kong SAC. Barbara Sinclair, who has conducted research in this area, feels that the learners themselves often have no "specific aim in mind, they poke about, they look at what there is, they try one activity, they pick up a magazine, think 'oh no I'll look at a video'..." (Barbara Sinclair: 58-61). This learning behaviour is identified and labelled a "flip-flop learning pattern" by Kwan (2002). Sinclair believes it is only the experienced SAC learner who is able to identify achievable aims for each SAC study session and even then "they probably get waylaid by a nice-looking magazine or video they think would be fun to use" (Barbara Sinclair: 69-70).

Later in the interview, however, Barbara Sinclair refers to the need to meet learners' needs and so presumably feels their identification to be important. Likewise David Gardner, (if one assumes that his reference to "stakeholders" is to be taken to include the SAC learners) when he states that "an effective SAC is one that meets the needs of its stakeholders" (David Gardner: 647-648), presumably sees a necessity for SACs to address learner needs. He points out that "the needs range right across things to do with language learning" (David Gardner: 273-274). Although learners tend to identify their needs in terms of language to be learnt, they also have needs (that they are perhaps unaware of) in terms of becoming a more effective and efficient learner.

All of the participants, when discussing learning needs, do so almost entirely in the context of the individual learner. This individualisation can be seen as a constraint upon the SAC particularly in terms of how to identify individual learners' needs and with regard to the resulting budgetary implications. It can also be a constraint in terms of identifying appropriate materials for the centre. However, the process of the individual learner identifying her needs (albeit with guidance from the SAC teacher) is also a central and powerful feature of SALL. This could be particularly true if used by the learner as part of a wider

process of compiling a learner profile which she then uses as a tool for focusing her learning (Gardner & Miller, 1999: 84-93).

The second constraining factor, regarding the learner profile, is that of the learners' lack of appropriate learning strategies and skills to enable them to make effective use of the SAC. An example of this is suggested by one SAC learner:

> ...for example for the listening, what kind of the book should I start from so I maybe waste some time to know, to go around and to search them, the material and for beginner maybe lose direction...
> (William Cheng: 57-59).

Identifying with this frustration, Andrew Morrall, as a SAC teacher, sees the problem as being one of the learner being expected to develop strategies and skills that are usually expected of a teacher:

> ...you're asking non-expert students to partially take over the teacher's role of materials selection, marking, assessment in general - in fact the whole creation of a study programme, needs analysis - which they're not expert in and they don't have as much experience as a normal teacher...
> (Andrew Morrall: 377-381).

While some learners' lack of learning strategies and skills can undoubtedly be an impediment in the learning process, comments by three participants (a SAC teacher, a SAC co-ordinator and a SAC consultant) suggest they should not be over-stated. Both SAC teacher, Andrew Morrall and SAC consultant, Lindsay Miller refer to learners transferring learning strategies developed in school to then the SALL context. In this respect, Lindsay Miller suggests that:

> ...nowadays, in class, if the teacher is au fait with the latest methods and techniques, they will not only be teaching language but they will be teaching learning skills to the students as well...such things as reading strategies - for not just reading a text and matching questions to answers but they will be showing them how to read any text for global understanding, or how to work out vocabulary and these are learning strategies and they're learning skills as opposed to language skills and these skills are what the students need to use by themselves a lot more in a SAC...
> (Lindsay Miller: 54-62).

Finally, Richard Pemberton does not see a lack of learner IL skills as a constraint since, as noted earlier, he identifies part of the role of the SAC as being a place where users learn some of the skills they need for effective IL:

> ...it's somewhere where you can not only access materials when you want and choose what you want but you can also learn to plan, carry out and evaluate your own learning...
> (Richard Pemberton: 20-22).

SAC materials

The second potential constraining factor that participants identify with regard to the role of the SAC in the learning process is a centre's learning materials. Materials can constrain the learning process in two ways: firstly, by the nature of the materials themselves; and secondly, by the way learners access them.

SACs have a choice as to whether to purchase published **learning materials**, to develop their own, or (as most SACs do) to do both. Both types of materials can impose their own constraints.

When purchasing published materials, SACs have to consider quality and, as Andrew Morrall points out and quoted earlier, their suitability for SALL. The question of the suitability of published materials for SALL was raised as an issue by the SAC managers in Gardner & Miller's (1997) survey of Hong Kong SACs. The criteria for suitability includes two factors: their content suitability in that, as opposed to custom-produced materials, they are not "tailored to the individual's needs" (David Gardner: 71-72); and their usage suitability which would include factors such as that identified by Andrew Morrall of whether there is a teacher's book or comprehensive answer key for learner reference.

In terms of SAC self-developed materials, the first and major constraint is "the amount of time we have put into producing these materials" (Richard Pemberton: 302). Another possible constraint is identified by Mary Spratt who, as an experienced and published materials writer, worries that in trying to improve the suitability of the materials in terms of usage:

> ...you need to have a lot of materials possibly which provide that guidance but the materials may themselves become a kind of added obstacle to get over before sort of working on the text...
> (Mary Spratt: 120-123).

The way that the SAC attempts to enable **learners to access the centre's materials**, and the subsequent way in which the learners might use such materials, are also identified by most participants as issues to be considered. SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair suggests that, when it comes to selecting learning materials, learners spend a lot of time "faffing about" (54). SAC

learner William Cheng expresses his frustration with regard to selecting appropriate materials when saying that he "cannot spend many time to go through each kind of book" (William Cheng: 56-57). This point of view is backed up by comments from SAC experts who suggest that a part of the SAC teacher's role is to:

> provide the kind of expert help that students need...(and to)...tell them about materials..."
> (Barbara Sinclair: 37-41);

and to answer questions such as: "Where can I find listening materials?" (Barbara Sinclair: 33-34).

This perceived need for SAC teacher guidance in the use of learning materials is a constraint in terms of SACs not always being able to provide such support. In Hong Kong, only one SAC is able to provide anything like full-time teacher cover. If learners are not able to self-access material in a SAC, this represents a considerable constraint upon the centre in terms of the learning process. It is also a potential constraint over the longer-term on the learner developing her IL skills.

Learning environment

The third and final constraining factor identified is the learning environment of the institution within which a SAC operates. Participants mainly identify the institution as a constraining factor in terms of the degree of control imposed over the learners and the learning process. This issue of control is commented upon by four participants. SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair refers to a "political view of self-access":

> **Barbara Sinclair:**
> I've been in places where students have no freedom to do that and they're given specific projects to do and specific lots of materials to get through...
> **Bruce**:
> Is that "self-access" then?
> **Barbara Sinclair**:
> That's what it's called in those places, the only freedom they have is when they do it and how long they take.
> **Bruce**:
> Would you refer to that as "self-access"?
> **Barbara Sinclair**:
> I think it's an interpretation of self-access, it's a specific political view of self-access.
> (Barbara Sinclair: 73-85).

This reflects Andrew Morrall's earlier quoted comment that "sometimes self-access is very free and sometimes it's more controlled" (Andrew Morrall: 14-15).

In contrast, while some of the participants might view such control negatively, neither Lindsay Miller (SAC consultant) nor Richard Pemberton (SAC co-ordinator) see this as a constraint upon the SAC. Lindsay Miller, for example, in the context of discussing the voluntary and non-voluntary use of the SAC, states:

> ...I'm quite in favour of timetabled SA so students are taken there and told to do things.
> (Lindsay Miller: 304-305).

A different type of constraint, which can emerge from the learning environment of the host institution (and which is discussed in the following section 6.4.2), is that SAC learners sometimes have different views from SAC teachers and other experts of what SALL is, and what and how a learner can effectively use a SAC. This mismatch is seen by SAC teacher Sunny Chu as one of the reasons why "the learner doesn't value this (SALL) experience" (395). He gives as an example the following:

> ...they are just interested in the product...they are just interested in....the tutor marking their work and then they produce an error-free piece of writing - this is what they are interested in.....they can't see the value of the learning process
> (Sunny Chu: 204-208).

vi) *Implications*

A number of implications for the SAC mapping emerge from these data:

- in terms of starting **assumptions**, a need for learners to improve their linguistic knowledge and proficiency is perceived as the main reason for learners to attend a SAC. Additionally, however, many learners clearly lack effective learning strategies and in particular the ability to identify clear aims;
- as elements and qualities of the **learner** component, both previous learning experience and related level of learner confidence, learner needs, learner experimentation and the issue of learner control;
- as in previous sections, the importance of the SAC teacher in relation to **human learner support**, particularly with regard to expert

knowledge (both generally and specifically in terms of identifying learner needs) and guidance;

- the need for clear and efficient organization of, and ease of access to materials which impacts on the **non-human learner support** component;
- **resources** both in terms of the centrality of the notion of resources to the SAC, and with reference to materials providing information and needing to be varied, relevant and structured;
- with regard to the **environment** component, again the notion of the SAC providing a learning space; and finally,
- in terms of **potential effects**, the notion of a SAC's dual focus on both increasing linguistic knowledge and proficiency, and developing effective learning strategies.

6.4.2 The role of the SAC learner in the learning process

Having examined participant data relating to the role of the SAC in the learning process, I now focus on the role of the learner herself. When considering the role of the learner in a SAC, we should keep in mind two points. Firstly, as previously discussed in chapter two, section 2.2.3, although generally assumed, there is no necessary link between a learner using a SAC and the same learner developing strategies to enable greater learner independence: as Sheerin points out, "Self-access is not the same as self-direction" (Sheerin, 1991: 144). Secondly, unlike that for a class of learners studying on the same course where to a considerable degree the learning experience is fairly homogeneous, the learning experience in the SAC is unique and individualised for each learner. As quoted previously, in section 6.3.1 (iii), SAC consultant David Gardner suggests that a SAC is:

> ...a collection of all these elements and I think the way that you collect the elements together and the way you tweak the elements is unique to every situation - it's definitely unique for a SAC, the way you put those things together, but I have a feeling it's probably unique or close to unique for each individual learner as well...so I suppose in a way the key to it is the individualisation...
> (David Gardner: 63-69).

This experiential uniqueness should be kept in mind when we talk about a generalised perception of the role of the learner in the SAC learning process.

In this section, I shall examine two main foci that emerge from the participants' discussion relating to the role of the learner: independent learning, a degree of which is generally assumed of an effective and efficient SAC learner; and the type of activities that learners undertake in a SAC.

i) *Independent learning*

SAC teacher Andrew Morrall suggests that if learners are "more serious about their learning they tend to use (effective learning) strategies" (70-71). Reinders' (2000b) claim, that the greater the number of attributes of an independent learner a SAC learner is judged to display, the higher her usage of the SAC, would seem to lend some support to his assertion. However, Gardner & Miller (1997) report that SAC managers SAC learners to be generally very teacher-dependent. It can certainly be argued that many SAC learners do not always display autonomous or independent learning skills or strategies, even though it is clear that SAC educators see the development of such skills as important (Sturtridge, 1992; Esch, 1997; Gardner & Miller, 1999; Pemberton, 1999; and the mission statements of the Hong Kong SACs', in Appendix 17).

Only two participants, SAC teacher Andrew Morrall and SAC Co-ordinator Richard Farmer, explicitly identify a **series** of actions that they perceive as reflecting the learning process of an independent learner and the importance of learners employing independent learning strategies. Other participants identify a number of individual actions as examples of the operation of individual learners' IL skills. The relevant data have been summarised in Table 3 below and are presented according to whether participants are SAC learners or fulfill another study role.

Learner actions	SAC learners (by initial)	Others (by initial)
Identification/analysis of needs		AM, DG, MS, RF
*Developing a study plan	WC, WKM, WSY	AM, RF, RP
*Setting study goals	LY, WC, WKM, WSY, YTY	DG, MS
Selecting materials	YTY	AM, RF, SC
Using resources	WSY, YTY	DG, RP
Monitoring progress/self assessment	LY,WSY, YTY	AM, RF, RP
Repeating the above cycle		AM, RF

* These two actions may be seen as partially synonymous, or at least overlapping in scope

Table 3: Examples of the operation of individual learners' IL skills

It is also noteworthy that while only three SAC learners talk of the need for a study plan, all five identify the need for setting learning goals or objectives. This possibly suggests that, although learners may not display evidence of employing explicit independent learning strategies, they are aware of the importance at least of some of them. Wan Sau Yi (WSY) and William Cheng (WC), however, talk about the importance of both developing a study plan and setting goals. It may be that, while learners accept the desirability of a study plan, they either feel unable, or are unwilling, to spend the time to develop one. Gardner & Miller's (1997) report supports this interpretation with learners giving reasons that included laziness, lack of time and a lack of knowledge of how to develop a plan. In their study, they found that SAC teachers, while also perceiving the value of a study plan, recognised the learners' reasons for not producing one. Additionally, one teacher viewed the type of help learners needed to produce a study plan as very time-consuming for both learner and teacher.

Reflecting a fairly teacher-dependent attitude, SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming, (WKM) although talking of how "the learning path is customised by yourself" (Wong Kwong Ming: 30) and identifying the need for a study plan, emphasises the need for a teacher to perform (or help the learner to perform) these activities.

In the light of a seeming reluctance to employ certain IL strategies, one (perhaps surprising) finding is that three of the SAC learners identify ways of monitoring their learning progress. While Yen Tung Yuk (YTY) performs this in an informal way so that he "can feel...my vocabulary library is becoming larger ...and also my grammatical errors become lesser and lesser" (Yen Tung Yuk: 136-140), the other two suggest somewhat more "objective" monitoring processes. Wan Sau Yi claims that "after I go through around five or six chapters then I do some revision exercises or like test to clarify the improvement on my English" (Wan Sau Yi: PI 52).

Other comments made by participants relating to independent learning can be seen to fall into two categories: those relating the notion of learner control and its attendant responsibilities; and the notion of there being a particular learning "method" that SAC learners should follow in order to be effective SAC learners.

Learner control

Both SAC teacher Andrew Morrall and the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology (HKUST) SAC mission statement use the word "control" to describe the relationship between the learner and the learning process:

> Self-access is where the student or the learner **controls** what they study, when they study it and how they study.
> (Andrew Morrall: 26-27 - my emphasis);

> Our purpose is to provide resources, opportunities and support to help learners take **control** of their own learning.
> (Extracted from: HKUST SAC mission statement - my emphasis)

The perception of the importance of learner control of the learning process is reinforced by comments from SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair and non-SAC expert teacher Mary Spratt who both talk about learners in a SAC doing what they "like" or "want". Similarly, SAC teacher Sunny Chu states that:

> ...it is the learners that make the decisions...they decide what to learn and when to learn and how to learn...
> (Sunny Chu: 9-11),

while SAC consultant David Gardner expresses the same notion in terms of learner "choice" (David Gardner: 105-106).

There are other rather less explicit references to learner control. Barbara Sinclair and Sunny Chu both refer to the notion of "freedom" although Barbara Sinclair, in the context of discussing the possibility of greater guidance in the SALL process, qualifies it with reference to the use of "directed materials":

> ...I think the important thing is that the SAC allows students to have the freedom to do what they want **at some point** - that doesn't preclude having directed materials to practise certain skills or practise certain strategies or practise certain linguistic points but there must also be the flexibility for students to go to some bank of materials and say "no I don't want to do a grammar exercise, I want to read an article"....
> (Barbara Sinclair: 125-132 - my emphasis).

The possibility suggested by Barbara Sinclair (and others) of a degree of direction in SALL will be discussed in section 6.4.3. It leads also to discussion concerning the voluntary (or non-voluntary) nature of SAC attendance. It is in this light that we should keep in mind the comment by SAC support staff member Wilkin Cheung, quoted earlier in section 6.2.2 (ii), who refers to learners in a SAC as studying "actively", by which he means the students attending voluntarily.

Finally, as noted previously in this section, SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer emphasises the SAC learners' role as an independent learner and particularly in terms of the learning process becoming "the responsibility" of the learner (Richard Farmer: 41). This notion of responsibility is reflected in comments by SAC consultant Lindsay Miller who suggests:

> ...the concept of learning is that we should become autonomous in our own learning whatever you're learning so that you can gain information from experts or teachers at certain stages **but inevitably you've got to learn for yourself and find out things for yourself.**
> (Lindsay Miller: 26-30 - my emphasis)

Perhaps most succinctly, however, a vital point, and one which is discussed in terms of being a constraint on the role of the teacher in section 6.4.3, is that made by SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming:

> ...the initiation depend on the student so that the centre can do nothing (if the student does not initiate).
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 234 - my addition in parentheses)

A SALL method

The penultimate comment I consider relating to the role of independent learning in the learning process is made by SAC learner William Cheng and concerns the idea of there being a particular SALL "method":

> ...the study method is quite important, I cannot get a progress because I didn't know them - the method...
> (William Cheng: 153-154).

Interestingly, while I would imagine most SAC experts would question the existence of an overall SALL method, SAC consultant David Gardner, contrasting *learning* to *teaching,* suggests that SALL is, in itself, an "approach" to learning:

> ...unlike some authors, I want to emphasise that I see self-access as **an approach** to learning...
> (David Gardner: 26-27 - my emphasis)

Later, however, he stresses the importance of a SAC providing "as wide a range of opportunities as possible" in terms of "...different approaches to learning" (361-363). This seeming contradiction might be a question of terminology. As seen previously in this section, there is general agreement on the desirability of learners employing appropriate independent learning strategies in order to make most efficient and effective use of the SAC. It is perhaps a systematic utilisation of such strategies to which both William Cheng and David Gardner are alluding.

ii) *Learner activities*

The second theme to emerge relating to the learner's role in the SAC is the activities that learners pursue, or potentially pursue, in the SAC.

Although SAC consultant David Gardner has a valid point when he suggests the need for research into what SAC learners actually do in a SAC (David Gardner: 369-371), the participants put forward many ideas as to what they feel constitute the range of actual or potential learner activities in a SAC. These include activities related to the practice of the various language skills and include watching videos, reading texts, practising pronunciation exercises and using the computers. Other activities relate to the learning process itself such as selecting materials, conducting self-assessment, obtaining feedback and asking a SAC teacher for help.

As an example, SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming reports a number of different activities he undertakes including downloading listening texts from the internet:

> The one facility I quite favour is about the radio news...I can retrieval the last night's radio news...from the internet...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 162-164)

and using a multimedia dictionary to improve his pronunciation:

> ...one of those I mostly use is the Longman dictionary - CD-ROM - the pronunciation, sometimes I know the word, what is the function of the word, and how to use the word but sometimes in the past I pronounce wrongly and I didn't aware until one day I talk to some people "what?" - the people didn't know it...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 174-179).

In overall terms, Aster Warner (non-expert SAC funder) suggests that learners in a SAC:

> ...are able to follow independent study probably on a resource-based basis using equipment of some kind or another.
> (Aster Warner: 6-8)

SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming also identifies resources as a focus for his learning activities. He then continues by suggesting that they are used for *self-learning* (Wong Kwong Ming: 13-16), while Lawrie Yeung (as quoted in 6.4.1 (iii) above) goes to the SAC to use the resources to "find things out" (Lawrie Yeung: 11).

This viewing of the activities learners pursue as being at least partly prompted by the resources can be seen in nearly all the comments made by participants in reference to learner activities. I shall report on their comments by dividing them into three groups: those that consider the focus of the activity; those that consider the type of activity; and those which highlight activities that could be said to be, in some way, "alternative" with reference to activities undertaken by learners in other educational entities.

Focus of learner activities

In terms of the focus of learner activities, participants mainly emphasise those aimed at development or practice of the four language skills. I asked participants which language skills they felt a SAC was best equipped to support effectively. The responses address the question both in terms of actual and potential learning activities. SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming feels

that a value of a SAC is that improvement in all the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing can be achieved (Wong Kwong Ming: 300-303). All the other participants who discuss the issue, however, express the opinion that learners benefit more from a focus on a particular skills or skills.

David Gardner, reflecting the views of two other SAC experts, suggests the following:

> SACs find it difficult to help with speaking and find it very easy to help with things like reading, and then somewhere in the middle between those two...there would be writing I suppose, and an easy one also of course is listening, yeah I suppose reading and listening, oh yeah reception easy, production difficult..
> (David Gardner: 179-187).

Lindsay Miller supports this scenario with statistics from Gardner & Miller's (1997) research into SALL activities: stating for example that 80% of SAC learners report practising their listening skills (Lindsay Miller: 164-166). SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton, speaking with a particular reference to computer-assisted SALL, supports their view that it is with improving the receptive skills that the SAC can best help learners. SAC support staff member Wilkin Cheung also reports observing learners undertaking activities that seem to suggest practice of the receptive skills:

> ...watching videos, using the computer and doing self-study.
> **Bruce**:
> What do you mean by self-study?
> **Wilkin Cheung**:
> I saw them watching the books...reading the books...
> (Wilkin Cheung: 141-145).

Interestingly, SAC teacher Sunny Chu, when asked what a visitor to a SAC might see the learners doing, immediately responds in terms of their being involved in speaking and writing activities. When asked to confirm this, however, he seems less clear, talks of learners **reading** and writing, and refers to the central position of the listening facilities, seeming to suggest that this encourages learners to practise their **listening** skills:

> Most of them (learners) are working at the desk and writing and reading...even though in our centre, at the entrance the most prominent thing that we can see is the computer area - we can see students putting the headphones on working at the computer or watching a video...
> (Sunny Chu: 73-77 - my addition in parentheses).

Non-SAC expert teacher Mary Spratt agrees that she feels learners could usefully practise their listening skills, but her view differs from that of David Gardner in that she feels that reading skills cannot be effectively addressed and on the other hand that certain sub-skills of speaking and writing can be.

> ...I suppose various **sub-skills within speaking** for example could well be addressed within a SAC...I think **listening** could be very well developed within a SAC, **reading** I'm not so sure because I think it needs to be very guided and I think you need to have a lot of materials possibly which provide that guidance but the materials may themselves become a kind of added obstacle to get over before sort of working on the text...
> (Mary Spratt: 116-123 - my emphasis).

Types of activity

While there are numerous participant references to the type of activity undertaken by learners, SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair expresses a view which is indirectly supported by comments from other participants and by comments in the following section 6.4.3 which focuses on the learner support role of the teacher. It is perhaps also at the heart of what (as previously referred to in section 6.4.1) Kwan (2002) refers to as a "flip-flop" learning pattern. In response to the question: "What, in your experience, would be the type of activity that learners commonly engage in in a SAC?", as quoted previously, Barbara Sinclair identifies the most common activity as "faffing about!" (Barbara Sinclair: 54).

While she explains this in terms of the learners not having "any specific aim in mind" (Barbara Sinclair: 58), SAC learner William Cheng, as quoted above, suggests the same lack of focus in terms of there being a need for a SALL programme of study (William Cheng: 99-110). David Gardner seems to be attempting to address this problem when he suggests the need for SACs "to provide doable things so that the students can do something and see that they've achieved something" (David Gardner: 399-400).

"Alternative" approaches

Finally, I consider three aspects of what learners do in a SAC (all three of which have been previously introduced) in terms of their being in some way alternative, non-traditional or in some way not generally the norm in most other educational environments. The three aspects are: group-access learning, experimentation and the notion of fun being important to the learning process.

Dickinson & Carver (1980) pointed out that various aspects of independent language learning (such as organising learning, developing confidence and decisions about how to use learning materials) can be carried out in **groups** and, thus, independent learning does not need to be practised in isolation. Five participants (four SAC experts - including one SAC learner - and a non-SAC expert teacher) likewise explicitly express the view that SALL, while based on the notion of individualisation, should not be equated with learners learning on their own and that a SAC can support learners working together in groups. As previously noted, in 6.2.2 (ii), Richard Farmer makes reference to surveys carried out in Hong Kong which indicate that Hong Kong learners prefer working in peer groups to working individually. These surveys identified two aspects of group-focused learning as being particularly appreciated by learners. These were: the fact that studying with friends made learning a social activity; and the fact that they felt the group provided learners with peer support.

The notion of **experimentation** has previously been referred to in sections 6.2.2 and 6.4.1. Instances of learners experimenting can be clearly recognised in the SAC where we see learners involved in activities that we would not commonly expect them to initialise in other educational environments. These include activities such as self-assessment, working in self-initiated groups and selecting texts from a variety of media to practise language skills and sub-skills that they have identified as in need of improvement.

Finally, we have, in previous sections 6.2.1 and 6.3.3, considered the place of **fun** in the SAC and the importance of learners enjoying the learning experience as aspects of SALL. Three participants, all with considerable experience of SACs, explicitly put forward this as an aspect of learner activity within a centre, either actual or preferred. They used terms to describe the preferred learning atmosphere such as: "pleasurable", "fun" and with "noise" (Andrew Morrall: 55-63); "enjoyable" (Barbara Sinclair: 72); "fun, noisy interactive" (Lindsay Miller: 146).

iii) *Constraints on the role of the learner in the learning process*

In this section, I discuss the constraints identified by the participants as acting upon the role of the SAC learner which can be viewed as falling into three categories. Firstly, there are those that are generally beyond the control of either the SAC or the learner, and emanate from an external source. Then

there are those that are centred upon the learners themselves. Identifying constraints as "learner-centred" does not, however, imply that the constraints originate from the learner. Instead, it classifies them as having their origin outside the SAC, and does not suggest that the SAC is powerless to help learners ease such constraints. Finally, those that are in some way imposed by the philosophy and/or systems of the SAC.

Constraints beyond SAC or learner control

Some constraints are generally beyond the control of the SAC or the learner. Participants identify three such constraining factors: SALL as an element of a taught programme, previous learning experience and lack of time.

A potential language learning programme model recognised by SAC experts David Gardner, Barbara Sinclair and Lindsay Miller involves the inclusion of a SALL element in an otherwise teacher-delivered programme. Whether this programme were to include timetabled SAC-based study sessions or not, the lack of learner control over various aspects of the learning process would inevitably constrain the learner in one way or another. Barbara Sinclair, as previously quoted, expresses such a constraint as a lack of "freedom":

> I've been in places (SACs) where students have no freedom...and they're given specific projects to do and specific lots of materials to get through... (Barbara Sinclair: 73-75 - my parentheses).

Another constraint, beyond the direct control of the learner or the SAC, is the learners' previous educational experience and the expectations that this can raise. An example of this is put forward by SAC consultant Lindsay Miller who suggests that learners tend to focus on developing their listening skills in the SAC because:

> ...receptive skills are developed much more in Hong Kong in secondary schools - teachers concentrate on listening and reading, to the expense of speaking and writing - not so writing but speaking is hardly touched on at all so listening is a skill which they're familiar with...
> (Lindsay Miller: 173-176).

I will return to some of the specific expectations and attitudes this experience may raise, and the effects on the learner's SALL experience, in the following section focusing on learner-centred constraints.

Finally, a SAC learner, SAC co-ordinator and SAC teacher suggest that a lack of time is a factor that impedes the development of the effective SAC learner. This is a factor also identified by Gardner & Miller (1997) as affecting learners' use of the SAC.

Learner-centred constraints

The last two constraints outlined above could be said to act upon other educational environments and not be specifically related to a SALL environment. The learner-centred constraints below, however, impact more directly and specifically on the SAC learner. Interestingly, most of these can perhaps be seen to emanate from those "external" constraints identified above. Two constraints are more frequently referred to than others. These are: a lack of motivation and a lack of awareness of the concept of IL.

SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton and SAC teacher Sunny Chu both identify a **lack of motivation** as well as a lack of time as a constraint on learners:

> ...people who have **more time**, more inclination, **more motivation**...we see very few of those students...
> (Richard Pemberton: 266-267 - my emphasis);

> ...they may see the value of the learning process but they haven't got the **time**, or they **haven't got the motivation**...or they have **some other commitments**...
> (Sunny Chu: 208-211 - my emphasis).

Richard Pemberton jokingly tells of being "sort of stunned" (Richard Pemberton: 268-269) to encounter a highly motivated learner in the SAC. This perceived lack of motivation may be due to in part to the fact that:

> ...probably to some extent, in SACs, (learners) don't really understand the concept that they can make a noise and do things in it so they think just sitting quietly and watching a video is the best thing to do.
> (Lindsay Miller: 185-187 - my addition in parentheses)

Perhaps supporting this view, SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming (who in my experience would qualify as a highly motivated learner) seems to accept the idea that a SAC, unlike a library, should be a place where a degree of noise is seen as part of the learning process and not simply as a distraction:

> ...when I pronounce loud in the library some people stare to you he thinks "what you doing?" - but in there you can really understood what you are speaking so loudly or what you are wearing headphone or something - people in the outside maybe think you're mad (laughs)...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 281-285).

SAC learner William Cheng suggests that it is the language learning process in general that is "boring". He proposes that, since "the language learning process is quite long and also very boring" (William Cheng: 250-251), what is needed is a structured programme of self-access study with clearly identified targets and achievement tests.

Another major learner-centred constraint that can be seen to have its roots in previous educational experience is learners' lack of an **awareness of IL** as a concept and specifically of learning strategies they might usefully employ in a SALL environment. SAC teacher Andrew Morrall feels that we cannot expect learners to easily employ independent learning strategies since many of the related activities (such as goal-setting, for example) were previously, in their experience, performed by the teacher (Andrew Morrall: 377-382). On the other hand, as quoted earlier in section 6.4.1 focusing upon constraints on the role of the SAC, Lindsay Miller suggests that learners have been exposed to some degree of explicit learning skills development at school. This view, however, assumes a level of awareness of the concept of IL among teachers, and time allocated to its dissemination to learners, that it would seem unrealistic to expect in many Hong Kong secondary learning contexts. Even if learners have been exposed to such strategies, it would seem very unlikely that the majority of learners would have effectively assimilated many appropriate strategies. Even if they have been assimilated, SAC consultant David Gardner suggests that many learners do not realise the role that such learning strategies play within the SAC context (David Gardner: 285-288). Indeed, perhaps acknowledging the optimistic nature of his earlier-quoted comment regarding learners having been previously introduced to IL skills, Lindsay Miller goes on to add:

> ...but also when you're talking about learning strategies, there are so many different learning strategies that students are not aware of...
> (Lindsay Miller: 73-75).

Learners' lack of appropriate learning strategies is identified indirectly in comments from other participants who comment on the result of this lack in a variety of ways; for example:

> ...people are at a loss - they don't know quite what to do - there is all this stuff and they don't know quite what to do...
> (Pamela Smith, non-SAC expert language centre manager: 25-26);

> ...I cannot get a progress because I didn't know them - the method - I don't know the method...
> (William Cheng, SAC learner: 154-155).

Finally, I would like to note four further learner-centred constraints identified by participants. Firstly, David Gardner identifies a two-part constraint related to the practice of speaking skills in a SAC:

> ...we do have problems with speaking - certainly in our SAC, **students do not like talking to other students**, well they have this thing in their mind that **they want a native speaker**...and they find it very difficult to talk to each other in a foreign language but I don't believe that's true in every culture so I think that's more of a sort of cultural thing...
> (David Gardner: 197-203 - my emphasis).

Possibly connected to this is a second constraint which is suggested by Lindsay Miller's comments concerning how learners:

> ...in the classroom environment just by talking and working with each other they get exposed to a lot of new strategies which they might then go away and try themselves...
> (Lindsay Miller: 75-77);

whereas if they work on their own (and not in a group) in a SAC "all they've got is their own limited strategies which they're trying to work with" (Lindsay Miller: 78-79). In other words, without the socialising aspect of the learning experience, he feels that their learning strategy development will fossilise. It should be noted, however, that in the CILL (for example) the provision of a structured system for groups of learners to meet with a teacher seems to avoid the potential problem identified by David Gardner and provide the type of "socialising" that Lindsay Miller values.

A third, possibly related, constraint is noted by non-SAC teacher Mary Spratt, SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton and SAC learner Yen Tung Yuk, namely the reluctance of learners to approach a SAC teacher or member of the support staff:

> I would suspect that in many contexts that bod won't be tapped because students are reticent, shy for one reason or another...
> (Mary Spratt: 98-99);

> ... they (SAC learners) don't tend to come forward but you sometimes you do get feedback from them but you have to ask them "I see you hanging around here, what's actually the problem?" - "Well, I've been using this tape for but actually it doesn't work" and they've never told anybody about it...
> (Richard Pemberton: 594-598 - my parentheses).

There is, it seems, a tension between the constraint identified earlier by David Gardner that learners "have this thing in their mind that **they want a native speaker**" (David Gardner: 198-199 - my emphasis) and this reluctance to approach a SAC teacher who is normally a native-speaker. This tension was identified in Gardner & Miller (1997) where 62% of learners indicated in the questionnaire that they needed teacher help but, the majority, when interviewed stated that they did not approach the teacher for such help. Similar findings have resulted from monitoring in the CILL, and Kwan's (2002) study where she observed no individual students approaching the SAC teacher and reported 75% of SAC learners stating they never or seldom utilised teacher support. Reasons that tend to reflect a general misconception on the part of the learner of the SAC teacher's role were given in all three cases. These included the perception that the teacher was "busy" or would be unhelpful, not knowing "how to ask", feeling "odd" or "uncomfortable", and having the notion that the learner should solve her own problems. Ironically, it may be that the SAC learners' (correct) conception of SALL as involving their taking responsibility for their own learning is discouraging them from making use of the teacher as a learning resource.

A final learner-centred constraint is one that may also be influenced by previous educational experience or may partly be a result of the faster pace of everyday life in modern Hong Kong. SAC teacher Sunny Chu feels that learners are looking for a teacher to provide a "fast fix" and are not prepared to subscribe a pattern of study that focuses on the process of learning rather than the product:

> ...they (the learners) are just interested in the product...they are just interested in...the tutor marking their work and then they produce an error-free piece of writing - this is what they are interested in...they can't see the value of the learning process...
> (Sunny Chu: 204-208 - my parentheses).

SAC-imposed constraints

The third category of constraint includes those that are in some way imposed by, or can be seen as being the responsibility of, the SAC. Three such constraints can be identified from participants' comments. These were: the learning materials in the SAC; the lack of provision for writing practice; and the lack of consistent, traceable feedback for learners.

SAC teacher Andrew Morrall sees the SAC materials as possibly imposing constraints upon the learning process in terms of their contextual suitability:

> ...a lot of our materials are not suitable for self-access...
> **Bruce**:
> You see this as a major weakness?
> **Andrew Morrall**:
> I'm not saying it's a major weakness because the indexing system is in a way selective in that it points students to stuff that is useful and so are the materials lists and pathways...but I still worry that students are left to pick up a book and the teacher's book that goes with it and **they come across things that they can't do or that they can't find the answers for**, for example - and I think that's a weakness
> (Andrew Morrall: 138-147 - my emphasis).

He makes the point that, given a decision made by many SACs, extensive in-house materials production is not feasible. Therefore, centres must generally rely on published learning and teaching materials, the learners are often attempting to use materials for SALL that were originally produced for classroom use with a teacher. His worry seems to be substantiated by a comment, previously quoted in 6.4.1 (v), from SAC learner William Cheng:

> I cannot spend many time to go through each kind of book - for example for the listening, what kind of the book should I start from so I maybe waste some time to know, to go around and to search them...
> (William Cheng: 56-59).

There is, however, a need, I feel, to distinguish between, on the one hand, the general suitability of particular material for use in a SALL context, and, on the other, both their usefulness for particular types of learner and the ability of learners to make optimal use of the material.

A second constraint concerns writing. This has been recognised by co-ordinators of the Hong Kong SACs as evidenced by the setting up of writing-focused initiatives at three centres, to one of which Lindsay Miller refers when commenting on the lack of provision for the improvement of learners' writing skills:

> I like the idea at Chinese U where they had a writing centre attached to a SAC...I don't think writing is catered for very well in SACs but obviously that's because **students need a lot more individual attention on their writing skills - feedback & things like that**, time consuming so probably the centres themselves can't do a whole lot about writing unless there's a writing centre attached to it...
> (Lindsay Miller: 195-201 - my emphasis).

This identification by Lindsay Miller of the need for feedback on the writing process is an example of the final constraint, identified by SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming. He feels that what students need in order for them to operate as more effective independent learners is "something like feedback or traceable record - I mean is traceable record..." (Wong Kwong Ming: 115-116). When asked to clarify what he means, refers to the setting-up of a more systematic system of teacher-learner interaction to ensure a more structured cycle of review:

> Yes, say for example in the diary book we writing some of the working, draft, maybe the exercise answers or something like that, and the comment - sometimes we got some comment here - but sometimes it's different tutor to respond to the comment and if it is possible to assign some of the tutor to have a group of the students to take care them what progress they got but what I would like is if there has a mechanism to catch up some progress review for that learner - I think it will effective for the learning.
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 122-129)

iv) *Implications*

Given that this section focused on the role of the learner in the SAC, it is perhaps unsurprising that most of the implications from the data analysed are for the **learner** component of the SAC mapping:

- **learner** elements that have emerged include the influence of motivation and the learner's previous learning experiences, the need for the learner to take initiative, control and correspondingly responsibility for the learning process, and the potential of learner interaction in group-focused activities.
- there are also, however, numerous references to the need for **human learner support** and in particular to the need for the teacher to provide guidance and feedback which, in order for learners to overcome their reticence and approach the teacher, needs to be delivered in a friendly, interactive and empathetic manner;

- with reference to **resources**, the range of activities in which learners are perceived as engaging suggests again a need for a corresponding range of materials and equipment;
- references to the **environment** again suggest the need for a less serious atmosphere and the provision for group-work; and finally,
- in terms of both **assumptions** and **potential effects,** repeated reference is made to the lack of, and need for, learners to be able to activate appropriate and effective learning strategies.

6.4.3 The role of the SAC teacher in the learning process

Ten out of the sixteen participants (including all the SAC co-ordinators, teachers and learners), when discussing the elements necessary for a SAC to be effective, stress the importance of some type of human, pedagogical support for learners. This is usually expressed in terms of a "teacher", "tutor", or "learning expert". This view is supported in the literature, where many references are made to the fact that SALL should not equate with students learning on their own with no help or guidance (for example: Holec, 1985b; Piper, 1994; Sturtridge, 1997; Voller, 1997).

In previous sections, the role of the SAC teacher has been introduced in the context of both the resources provided by a centre for the learner as well as in terms of the constraints on the role of the learner, the effects of some of which the presence of a SAC teacher would aim to mitigate. In this section, I identify the various roles that the participants suggest the SAC teacher might perform, and discuss some aspects of this role in relation to the learning process. I examine the role of teacher from four angles: the terminology used by participants to describe the SAC teacher; the teacher's role in talking with the learner about the learning process; the teacher as a giver of feedback and reviewer of learner progress; and finally some of the constraints imposed upon the role of the SAC teacher.

i) *Terminology used: the SAC teacher as an expert, consultant or guide*
Thirteen of the sixteen participants, including all the SAC learners and SAC teachers, talk about the SAC teacher and their role, using a variety of terms. The other participants, with the exception of non-expert SAC funder Aster Warner who has virtually no direct experience of SAC operation, all mention the presence of a teacher-like figure but do not attempt to specify her role.

SAC support staff member Wilkin Cheung, for example, acknowledges the teacher's presence but in rather general terms that make it difficult to classify:

> ...they (the teachers) just provide their opinion and help them (the learners) to study...
> (Wilkin Cheung: 33 - my parentheses).

This may indicate that he is unsure of the exact nature of the teacher's role in the SAC.

The terms used by participants to describe the SAC teacher and her role, are summarised in Table 4 below.

Term used	Participant reference
Consultant	Wong Kwong Ming: 79
Consultation	Andrew Morrall: 112 Barbara Sinclair: 28, 35
Counsellor	Richard Farmer: 72
Friend	Aster Warner: PI 72 Sunny Chu: PI 69
Guide	Andrew Morrall: 114 Lawrie Yeung: 114 Lindsay Miller: 126 William Cheng: 16 Yen Tung Yuk: PI 85
Language expert	Andrew Morrall: 112 Barbara Sinclair: 28, 37, 40
Mentor	Aster Warner: PI 72 Barbara Sinclair: PI 75
Motivator	Richard Pemberton: PI 66
One-to-one...	Sunny Chu: 132, 143-147
Professional	Andrew Morrall: 112 Wong Kwong Ming: 149
Tutor	Barbara Sinclair: 27 Lawrie Yeung: 114 Wan Sau Yi: 17 William Cheng: 17, 26 Wong Kwong Ming: 32, 78-79
Trained	Richard Farmer: 72 Richard Pemberton: 171

Table 4: Terms used to describe the SAC teacher and her role

Although participants sometimes use the term *teacher* as a descriptor for the SAC teacher, less directive terms somehow more akin to psychology or social work such as *consultant*, *counsellor*, *guide* and *mentor*, tend to be used when the participants are focusing on the role that this person plays in the SAC.

Additionally, terms which suggest expertise and training such as *expert*, *professional* and *trained* are also used. Four SAC learners and SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair use the term *tutor*, while SAC teacher Sunny Chu talks of "one-to-one tutorials" (Sunny Chu: 132). Most of the terms seem to reflect a view of the SAC providing an individualised service to learners and the teachers playing roles that contrast with the perceived "traditional", rather more judgmental roles of the classroom teacher such as corrector and activity-controller. The actual roles that the SAC teacher are perceived to play are discussed in the following two sections.

ii) *Teacher to talk about learning*

A number of the terms presented in Table 4 above, that participants use to describe the work of the SAC teacher, generally refer to a person for whom talking with their *client* or *customer* is central to their work. Study participants certainly perceive this as true of the SAC teachers who tend to talk about their role in terms of oral interaction with the learner.

To use a previously-quoted comment, the overall purpose of much of such talk between SAC learner and teacher is perceived as being to "help them (the learners) to study" (Wilkin Cheung: 33 - my parentheses) and to support their learning (Barbara Sinclair: 27). In terms of how the SAC teacher might achieve this, six participants (four SAC learners, the SAC researcher and a non-SAC expert teacher) express the view that there is a need to talk about the learning process itself and explicitly comment on this need. SAC consultant Barbara Sinclair uses Harri-Augstein and Thomas's (1991) term "learning conversations" to describe an interaction:

> ...where students are able to speak one-to-one with a tutor and the tutor might prompt, elicit, get the students to articulate their feelings, their experiences, their insights, their worries, their anxieties about learning in a very personal kind of way.
> (Barbara Sinclair: 44-48)

Non-SAC expert teacher Mary Spratt talks about learners needing to be able to "**dialogue** about what they're doing, why they're doing it, whether they're achieving something or not achieving something..." (Mary Spratt: 100-102 - my emphasis). SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming uses the informal word “talk” to describe interaction he has had with the SAC teacher when they discussed possible reading strategies:

> ...sometimes I **talk** to you like last week I talked to you about when I studying newspaper...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 138-139 - my emphasis).

SAC learner, William Cheng, reports "discussing" with the SAC teacher a way of improving his listening strategies:

> ...before I come here I didn't know how to improve my listening but I have discussed with tutor and I find some videos have sub-titles that can help me to improve my extensive listening...
> (William Cheng: 133-135);

while a third SAC learner gives the example of the teacher helping the learner "make a plan" (Wan Sau Yi: PI 12) as an example of a "learning conversation".

Two other participants, SAC consultant David Gardner and SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton, when discussing the role of the SAC teacher, both express (in their own terms) a similar perception of the learners' underlying need i.e. knowing how best to approach the learning task. To address this need, learner and teacher become involved in talking about the learning process:

> ...really what students need to know is "what is the best way to get to my goal?" and if "my goal" is "learn English" or "get better at speaking English" or "write a business letter", that's their need and we need to make sure that we are helping them to achieve that need...
> (David Gardner: 681-685);

> ...(a learner's question to the SAC teacher is)...likely to be "I want to learn Japanese, where the hell do I start?"
> (Richard Pemberton: 169-170 - my parentheses).

Another aspect of talking about learning, recognised by SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer as well as by all five SAC learners, relates to the learner utilising the teacher when necessary, in response to a particular problem encountered in the learning process. This is expressed by SAC learners Wong Kwong Ming and William Cheng in the following ways:

> ...if you have you problem arise during your learning path you can make use of the tutor to help you overcome the problem...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 30-32);

> ...when I find the problem I can discuss with the tutor and get some idea from the tutor...
> (William Cheng: 52-53).

iii) *Teacher to answer questions, give feedback and review learner progress*

Eight participants refer to the activity of answering specific learner questions as being part of the role of the teacher. Example questions quoted range in scale from specific, practical questions such as " 'Where can I find listening materials?' " (Barbara Sinclair: 33-34) to questions such as those quoted by David Gardner and Richard Pemberton on the previous page concerning larger pedagogical issues.

Five participants discuss the teacher's role in terms of discussing learner progress and giving feedback. It is the SAC learners who identify the motivational benefits of some type of review whereby the learner can assess if they are making progress. Wong Kwong Ming explicitly suggests that such review should be in the form of face-to face interaction:

> I really appreciate with there have some progress review - review some of the past study, for example doing some pronunciation work in the past and maybe two month or one month later you get together to review what going on, what progress you got..
> **Bruce**:
> ...sorry, "get together" what do you mean?
> **Wong Kwong Ming**:
> "Get together" I mean talk with the tutor to review the progress, not just myself...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 88-97);

In terms of feedback, Wong Kwong Ming seems to use the term synonymously with *review* when he says "I want feedback where we are..." (Wong Kwong Ming: 143). Meanwhile, SAC teacher Sunny Chu discusses the benefit he feels SAC learners derive from "instant feedback":

> We (SAC teachers) are providing encouragement, helping them (SAC learners) to solve the problem, motivating them, giving them instant feedback...you see sometimes just like in the classroom I think, if we are trying to help the students, we mark the scripts & then in the next week we give them back...people simply forget...but if we are giving them instant feedback, I think that would make a lot of difference...I would be very happy if somebody gives me instant feedback.
> (Sunny Chu: 159-165 - my addition in parenthesis)

One issue that emerges in this context from the interviews with SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer and SAC learner Yen Tung Yuk is the extent to which SAC teachers should be pro-active or re-active in their approach to learners. Yen Tung Yuk suggests that, since learners are reticent to approach the SAC teacher, the teacher should be "more active towards the students." (Yen Tung Yuk: 77-78) However, feedback from learners interviewed in the

CILL, suggests many prefer to work uninterrupted. Richard Farmer in his interview discusses the example of a learner who methodically worked his way through a grammar book chapter by chapter and then proceeded to repeat the process. While Richard Farmer feels that a "laissez-faire approach" would be "unfair" and that the SAC teacher should "have some pity on the poor guy", a question that then arises is what the teacher should do if the learner feels that his learning approach is enabling him to learn effectively (Richard Farmer: 178-180).

iv) Constraints on the role of the SAC teacher in the learning process

Many of the constraints identified in section 6.4.2 (iii) above as acting upon the SAC learner clearly also apply to the SAC teacher. The imposition of directed SALL; a learner's lack of time, motivation and awareness of independent learning strategies and skills; a learner's reticence to talk in English to either the SAC teacher or another learner; and a desire to find a "quick fix" for language problems: all these impact upon the SAC teacher through their impact on the learner. The interviews yield two other constraints that we can identify as potentially acting upon or concerning the SAC teacher. These are the individual SAC teacher's personality and the teacher's attitude to the concept of SALL.

I have already discussed SAC learners' reluctance to talk to the SAC teacher and SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton suggests that it is the teacher who must often make the first move and be, in Richard Farmer's words, "pro-active". This connects with a point made by non-SAC expert Pamela Smith, who stresses the quality of the face-to-face interaction between SAC learner and teacher that she feels is necessary in order for SALL to be effective:

> I do think you need the personal contact - it's absolutely vital that you have personal contact (between learner and teacher) and that it (the teacher) should be an approachable person
> (Pamela Smith: 39-40 - my additional information in parentheses);
>
> ...it's got to be available, approachable but not intrusive and that's very difficult...
> (Pamela Smith: 92-93).

The personality of the teacher can also be identified as a constraint upon the SAC's management in terms of needing to identify which teachers will make effective SAC teachers.

While SAC teachers can be very supportive of the place of SACs in the wider learning process, there can also be a degree of scepticism, both of SALL and of the learners' abilities to benefit from it, and this could affect the SAC teacher's effectiveness. While there were no examples of a clearly negative attitude, I have previously quoted an example from both of the two SAC teachers interviewed that shows at least a degree of concern concerning SALL. Andrew Morrall expresses his scepticism in terms of what he perceives as the inability of learners to take over part of the role traditionally played by the teacher:

> ...in a way, IL is not efficient because you're asking non-expert students to partially take over the teacher's role of materials selection, marking, assessment in general - in fact the whole creation of a study programme, needs analysis - which they're not expert in...
> (Andrew Morrall: 377-380).

Sunny Chu shows greater unease concerning the possibility of success for learners:

> I feel...I would think that they're motivated to improve their English but whether their objective is achieved or not is another matter...
> (Sunny Chu: 87-89);

and the value learners place on the role of the SAC teacher and the SALL experience in general:

> ...sometimes maybe the learner doesn't value this experience unfortunately - they will think that they are wasting their time - you are just leading them around the garden...
> (Sunny Chu: 394-397).

The effect of the SAC teachers' attitude towards the SAC, SALL and the SAC learners undoubtedly has the potential to impact upon the success of both the learners' and teachers' roles in the SAC. Clemente (2001: 56), for example, describes a number of negative teacher attitudes in her survey of Mexican SAC teachers using terms such as "unbelief in principles" and distrust of students". While it is beyond the scope of this study to pursue this, it is clearly an area of relevance and importance, and the implications of such findings should be borne in mind.

iv) *Implications*

In general, the data from this section served to reinforce insights that have emerged from previous analysis:

- in terms of the **teacher**, her role in providing guidance, feedback and knowledge are emphasised, as is the need for interaction with the learner, empathy and commitment in terms of being "professional" and "trained";
- with regard to the **learner**, the focus is on her needs and thus the data has reinforced the **assumption** of a lack of effective learning strategies and feedback opportunities and the corresponding **potential effects** of utilizing the SAC.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, with reference to the first study objective stated in chapter one, namely to:

- identify the defining pedagogical and systemic characteristics of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre,

I have presented and discussed the data deriving from both the initial interviews and the follow-up e-mail questionnaires that relate to the definition of a Hong Kong SAC. In doing so, I have considered participant views in relation to defining a SAC with reference to existing educational facilities, to the SAC as a physical centre and the learning processes that operate within such a centre - focusing on the roles of the SAC, the learner and the teacher respectively. The findings discussed in this chapter, and the implications drawn from them, will be brought together in chapter nine to in the context of presenting the development of the SAC *mapping*.

Chapter 7

Developing a framework for evaluation: an analysis of the data relating to the evaluation of a SAC

7.1 Introduction

As I reported in chapter two, while the importance of evaluating a SAC has been recognised (Gardner & Miller, 1997; Sturtridge, 1997; Gardner 1999; Morrison, 1999), so too have the difficulties that this involves (Riley, 1996; Sturtridge, 1997; Gardner 1999; Morrison, 1999). Gardner & Miller (1997) suggest that what is needed is the identification of an innovative approach and this is my intention.

In chapter six, I examined the views of the study participants, as expressed in the interviews and follow-up e-mail questionnaires, with a view to the development of a SAC mapping. In chapter five, I explained that the SAC mapping is a construct that aims to define a SAC in order to provide the basis upon which the SAC evaluation can be focused. In this chapter, I examine the same data but with the intention of identifying issues directly relating to the evaluation of a SAC.

All sixteen participants discuss the topic of SAC evaluation in generally positive terms but differ in what they see as the function of such evaluation. Some identify an evaluation's developmental potential, while others regard it simply as an administrative exercise. SAC experts Barbara Sinclair and David Gardner, for example, both discuss the issue at great length and give numerous arguments supporting the need for evaluation from the points of view of many of the SAC's stakeholders. On the other hand, SAC support staff member Wilkin Cheung, when asked about the value of the type of statistics necessary for a centre evaluation, replies only that "it must be useful to get the budget..." (Wilkin Cheung: 299).

In chapter two, I identified three questions derived from existing programme evaluation constructs with which to ground this part of my study. They were: "why evaluate?", "what to evaluate?" and "how to evaluate it?". In this chapter, I discuss the data relating to the development of an evaluation framework in relation to these three questions. The first section of this chapter examines the question "Why evaluate a SAC?". In the second section, I discuss perhaps the most problematic issue: that of the focus of an evaluation. This section raises the thorny question of the possible place in an evaluation of an element focusing upon the progress learners make as a result of studying in a SAC. Finally, in the third

section, I focus upon possible evaluation methods. My conclusions are then brought together in chapter eight where I discuss the development of the SAC evaluation framework.

At the end of each sub-section, I outline the major implications of the data discussed on the development of the evaluation framework which is then discussed in chapter eight.

7.2 Why evaluate a SAC

In this section, I focus on the reasons the participants identify for evaluating a SAC. The reasons are examined within three groupings. Firstly, potential evaluation audiences are considered in terms of comprising both direct and indirect SAC stakeholders. Secondly, evaluation is presented as an administrative requirement to justify a centre's existence and further funding. Within the third grouping, while recognising that the audience profile will affect such functions, I discuss participant comments relating to the functions that an evaluation might perform, both developmental and judgmental.

7.2.1 Possible evaluation audiences

The question of whom the evaluation is aimed at (the audience) will necessarily affect decisions concerning factors such as the evaluation method, focus and reporting strategies (Lynch, 1987, 1996; Nunan, 1992; Patton, 2002).

Eight of the participants refer to possible audiences for whom an evaluation may be conducted. Six participants define the audience in terms of comprising of SAC *stakeholders*. The importance of the *stakeholder* in evaluation is widely recognised, either explicitly using the term itself (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Alderson, 1992, 1994; Robson, 2000), or by emphasising the need to involve the *consumer* (Scriven 1967, 1991), the *client* (Stake, 1975), or the *teacher* and *learner* (Alderson & Scott, 1992; Cousins & Earl, 1995c; Charities Evaluation Services, 1998; Robson, 2000).

I shall define a *stakeholder* simply as being "a person who has an interest or concern in something" (The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary, 1993: 3022), or "all those concerned" (Weir & Roberts, 1993: 19). Within the context of this study, I

identify two distinct groups of SAC stakeholders that I shall refer to as *direct stakeholders* and *indirect stakeholders.*

i) *Direct stakeholders*

A direct SAC stakeholder is defined as a person who either learns or works in a SAC. This would therefore include SAC learners, SAC teachers, SAC co-ordinators and SAC support staff.

Eight participants, all of whom are SAC experts and all of whom (with the exception of SAC learner William Cheng) have direct or indirect experience of SAC management, identify direct stakeholders as a potential audience. Six of the eight state that the SAC teacher and, perhaps rather more surprisingly, the SAC learners are potential audiences, while five identify the SAC co-ordinator. This would seem to suggest that those with input into the pedagogical management of a SAC see an evaluation as having a formative, developmental function since the teacher and co-ordinator would presumably be one of the agents, and the learners the targets, of any change that is suggested.

ii) *Indirect stakeholders*

Participants identify indirect SAC stakeholders (i.e. those SAC stakeholders not identified above as *direct* stakeholders) as potential audiences, as indicated in Table 5 below.

Indirect stakeholders	**Participants by initial**
Institution management	AM, BS, DG, LM, MS, RF, RP, SC, WC
Funders	AW, DG, RF, RP, WC, WCG
Other teachers in the institution	BS, DG, RF, RP
Other departments in the institution	AM
ELT professionals	BS
Parents	DG
Hong Kong government	AM, WC
Hong Kong tax-payers	AM

Table 5: Indirect stakeholders identified as potential evaluation audiences

Reflecting the view introduced in section 7.2.1 above regarding evaluation as an administrative exercise, the host institution's management or administration is perceived as an evaluation audience by more of the participants (nine) than any other. These nine participants include those who might be felt to be directly affected by decisions made by the management as a result of an evaluation i.e. both the SAC co-ordinators, both SAC teachers and one of the

SAC learners. Similarly, six participants identify the SAC funders as an evaluation audience.

It can be seen that, while the participants generally identify all the direct stakeholders (except SAC support staff) as evaluation audiences, they also recognise the importance of those indirect stakeholders who have the power to impact on the operation of the SAC: the funders and the institutional management.

7.2.2 Evaluation as an administrative requirement

Eight participants express the view that evaluation is a necessity in terms of it being an expectation of indirect SAC stakeholders. Andrew Morrall summarises this view:

> ...because we are required to - stakeholders like the government, the Education Department, the University etc. expect us to evaluate ourselves...
> (Andrew Morrall: 234-236).

He continues by identifying a need for the SAC to show evidence of its achievements so that the funders can decide "how much it is worth spending money on" (Andrew Morrall: 252-253). SAC learner William Cheng points out that an evaluation of a SAC can also be used to judge whether its continued existence can be justified (William Cheng: 288). The importance of funders' expectations is endorsed by the strong support for evaluation expressed by Aster Warner (non-expert SAC funder) and SAC consultant David Gardner's statement that "institutional and funding kind of justifications are important" (David Gardner: 421-422).

That the importance of an evaluation hides an element of compulsion to evaluate is reflected in comments by SAC consultant Lindsay Miller's and two SAC learners. Lindsay Miller is of the opinion that "we would lose the facilities if we didn't produce some kind of statistics for them (the funders)" (Lindsay Miller: 245-246 - my parentheses); while SAC learners William Cheng and Wong Kwong Ming refer to conducting an "audit", a term which seems to suggest an element of bureaucratic, institutional compulsion. Thus, while the participants' views generally reflect Gardner & Miller's observation that an evaluation "can be used as evidence for deciding whether self-access is a successful use of the institution's resources..." (Gardner & Miller, 1997:226), they also reflect a bureaucratic reality.

Some type of evaluative review is indeed an administrative requirement for many SACs with each Hong Kong SAC being required to submit an annual evaluative report to its funders, the Hong Kong University Grants Commission. This is not, however, to suggest that such a summative, judgmental view of evaluation is seen as necessarily either the most important or the most useful, as will be seen in section 7.2.3 below.

7.2.3 Possible functions of an evaluation

In this section, I investigate the possible functions identified by participants that an evaluation can perform in relation to the various possible audiences identified in section 7.2.2 above. As Mary Spratt points out, the evaluation audience will affect the evaluation function:

> ...if you write things for the managers of the university, you're going to see things in a different way, not see things in a different way, well, yeah you'll probably going to investigate certain things in a different way and certainly report things in a different way...
> (Mary Spratt: 284-288).

In proposing his (1996) *Context-adaptive* evaluation model, Lynch expresses a similar point:

> Identification of the evaluation audience **leads** to determining the evaluation goals, or purpose.
> (Lynch, 1996: 3 - my emphasis)

Barbara Sinclair states that "you do it (the evaluation) for different reasons for different people" (Barbara Sinclair: 321-322 - my parentheses). It is also true that the functions desired by different audiences may conflict. For example, while an administrator may want to focus on efficiency criteria such as levels of usage, a SAC teacher may place higher priority on investigating learners' language proficiency gain.

The participants' interview comments have been categorised as reflecting upon either developmental or judgmental functions of an evaluation. This reflects Sunny Chu's use of the term *developmental* in contrast to *judgmental* (Sunny Chu: 493-494). This in turn reflects the identification of these key notions, also referred to as "*formative*" and "*summative*", in the evaluation literature (chapter two, section 2.4.4, i). Again reflecting the evaluation literature (e.g. Cronbach, 1980; Chambers, 1994; Rea-Dickens, 1994) it will be seen, however, that participants do

not perceive this as a black-and-white distinction, with some evaluations performing both functions. In the follow-up e-mail questionnaire, when participants are asked whether they thought a SAC evaluation should be primarily developmental or judgmental, only one (SAC teacher Sunny Chu) chooses one or the other. While Sunny Chu (PI 108-111) expresses a preference for a developmental approach, because of worries about the appropriacy of adopting "performance standards" in a SAC environment, the other participants suggest that there could be a role for either or both. As Andrew Morrall points out:

> There is a lot of overlap, in that if a development is suggested, it implies a judgment that something is lacking.
> (Andrew Morrall: PI 125)

i) *Developmental functions*

The use of the term *developmental* in this study refers to a function that aims to aid in the development and improvement of a SAC's operation. Many evaluators have identified the importance of an evaluation including a developmental function (e.g. Suchman, 1972; Dressel, 1976; Worthen & White, 1986). Some have specifically made this a primary focus, for example Patton's (1997) "Utilization-Focused", Parlett & Hamilton's (1977) "Illuminative" and Stake's (1967, 1975, 1999) "Responsive" approaches to evaluation.

In this study, one participant, SAC consultant David Gardner, in clearly identifying the developmental function of the process, describes an evaluation as:

> ...a learning process so as you go through the steps of it people are developing so that's okay in that sense, it's just a process that encourages sort of reflection and development...
> (David Gardner: 810-813).

Richard Farmer, a SAC co-ordinator, explicitly refers to the place of evaluation in the cycle of a centre's development. This function, although generally implicitly stated, is present in the comments of all the participants, with the exception of two of the SAC learners (William Cheng and Wong Kwong Ming) who, perhaps because of their jobs as auditors, focus almost entirely on more judgmental aspects.

Comments from participants relating to the developmental functions of an evaluation include those focusing on:

- the identification of aspects of a SAC's operation that would benefit from changes or improvement;
- the provision for learners of evidence relating to how the SAC has helped them in the learning process;
- the promotion of job satisfaction; and
- the sharing of good practice.

The value of an evaluation in **identifying aspects of a centre's operation that need further improvement or development,** or as Barbara Sinclair expresses it "...making suggestions...isolating problems" (Barbara Sinclair 338-339), is identified by six participants. They express this in terms of the evaluation being valuable in this regard to the SAC teachers (Sunny Chu: 487-489), to the SAC manager or co-ordinator (Barbara Sinclair: 147-150; Richard Farmer: 231-235), and more generally to SAC stakeholders (Andrew Morrall: 305-306).

SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer and non-expert SAC funder Aster Warner use the term *feedback loop* to express this notion of an evaluation identifying operational aspects which "can be refined", "need further development" or need "ditching" (Richard Farmer: 232-233), and which then feed into an on-going developmental cycle.

Three SAC expert participants highlight the desirability **of providing learners with evidence that the SAC is helping their learning**. Barbara Sinclair suggests that learners:

> ...will want to see concrete evidence that it's helping them, they will want to see that they are making progress, they will want to feel that it is worth it, they will want to see that the materials work for them and that they come out knowing more than when they went in...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 152-157).

This would seem to be very important in a SAC where learners, unlike in other educational contexts, do not receive indications of progress, such as examination results or certificates. This is also supported by SAC learner Wan Sau Yi's description of how she sets up revision exercises or tests to "recognise for myself that it's more simple than previous, than before" (Wan Sau Yi: 52).

Five participants make reference to an evaluation helping to **increase aspects of job satisfaction**. Non-SAC expert language centre manager Pamela Smith expresses it in terms of it being "part and parcel of pride in your own job" (Pamela Smith: 100-101). A SAC teacher sees it in terms of a teacher being "happiest in a place which you think is effective" (Andrew Morrall: 239-240). SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair feels it gives a "sense of satisfaction" (Barbara Sinclair: 183), while, SAC consultant David Gardner perceives it to be important because:

> ...they (the SAC teachers) need some kind of like a kind of reward to say "look you've worked on this and look it's working"...
> (David Gardner: 430-431).

Barbara Sinclair, however, recognises the fact that the evaluation might also reflect negatively on the performance of the SAC staff:

> ...it's got to be for the staff as well because they need to know they're doing a good job, they need to know if they're not doing a good job....
> (Barbara Sinclair: 341-344).

The extent to which an approach that provides such re-assurance or warning is pedagogically developmental rather than judgmental, is clearly dependent on the way in which the evaluation recommendations are used.

Finally, in terms of an evaluation having a developmental function, Aster Warner (non-expert SAC funder) suggests that the main function of an evaluation would be:

> ...**to see good practice shared** and disseminated among the institutions, and it is important to evaluate the exercise and experiments the institutions are undertaking to ensure that those can be evaluated in the first sense and then disseminated so that other institutions can gain.
> (Aster Warner: 61-65 - my emphasis)

She is notably the only participant in any of the interviews to see the evaluation as having a pedagogical macro-function that reaches beyond the centre being evaluated.

ii) *Judgmental functions*

The term *Judgmental functions* refers to those functions identified by participants as being primarily aimed at influencing decisions affecting factors such as the SAC's future funding and development plans. Participants identify the functions, which often overlap, as including:

- satisfying stakeholder expectations;
- acting in a public relations capacity; and
- providing accountability.

Satisfying stakeholder expectations

As highlighted earlier in this section, participants recognise that the structure of the evaluation is affected by the necessity to satisfy the expectations and requirements of the particular stakeholders that constitute the evaluation audience. Andrew Morrall refers to the SAC being "**required to**" conduct an evaluation by "stakeholders like the government, the Education Department, the University etc." who "**expect** us to evaluate ourselves" (Andrew Morrall: 234-236 - my emphases). His choice of words can be seen perhaps to reflect his role as a teacher in an institution where appraisal and standardised student assessment are fundamental aspects of many programmes. As previously quoted, he later refers to the administrator stakeholders' judgmental role, in terms of making future spending decisions:

> ...it's the administrator's job at whatever level to judge how much it is worth spending money on....
> (Andrew Morrall: 251-253).

Clearly, with so much potentially at stake, an evaluation needs to ensure that these stakeholders obtain the information they need in order to make the appropriate and correct decisions. Additionally, it is conceivable that an evaluation might also have a public relations (PR) element, whereby certain information is included (or excluded) in order to satisfy the perceived expectations and wants of a particular audience. This is discussed further below.

Acting in a PR capacity

An evaluation's function in terms of satisfying the expectations of stakeholders clearly overlaps with that of providing PR opportunities since there is a need to inform those stakeholders not so closely involved with the day-to-day running of a SAC. The three participants who discuss the issue of an evaluation as a PR tool, focus on three issues.

The first is the perceived need to provide the information necessary for the SAC "to justify its existence and its continuing expense and investment" to the funders and institutional management (Barbara Sinclair: 181-182). Secondly,

they see the need for the SAC to both demonstrate what it is that the centre does, as well as to provide evidence of its success. With reference to his earlier identification of experimentation as a key SAC element (chapter seven, section 6.3.3), David Gardner discusses the need for such a demonstration for non-SAC teachers and SAC learners, to understand how a SAC is helping the learners.

> (Non-SAC) Teachers should be shown that this is doing something important and where possible we should actually try and show those teachers that it's helping them because if we can get students to do SALL what you do in the classroom will be more effective as well...that's important but I think really important is the students need some kind of evidence, I mean this is incredible this is actually - by using self-access as part of their learning agenda - we are in a way taking risks with their future (David Gardner: 444-451 - my parentheses).

The notion that learners should be convinced of the efficacy of a centre is supported by five other participants. They include SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming who feels the need for a tool that is at once judgmental in enabling him to judge his progress and developmental in terms of it helping him to decide his next pedagogical goal. He expresses his desire for a "traceable record" to demonstrate that his SALL activities are enabling learning progress (Wong Kwong Ming: 116). Such a need is, in my opinion, reinforced when a SAC co-ordinator in New Zealand writes that in their SAC:

> We experiment with our poor students, try out any possible or impossible teaching techniques, come up with insane language learning activities and enjoy it all very much. All in the name of science of course!
> (Reinders, 2002)

Thirdly, Barbara Sinclair suggests a wider PR role with the audience for the evaluation report expanding to other non-ELT academic staff:

> ...and it needs to be for non-ELT professionals - other lecturers, other staff in the university who need to be made aware of the opportunities for support their students can have....you have to be shown to be an important part of the university.
> (Barbara Sinclair: 345-349)

A word of caution concerning the difference between trying to *inform* and trying to *impress* stakeholders, is introduced by SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer. He is concerned that a SAC co-ordinator "should not I believe be window-dressing...setting up evaluation systems simply to please people outside" which he identifies as wasting opportunities for further centre development and improvement (Richard Farmer: 245-246).

Providing accountability

The final judgmental function of an evaluation discussed is that of providing accountability. SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair, non-SAC expert language centre manager Pamela Smith and SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer all identify accountability as a function of a SAC evaluation. While Barbara Sinclair and Pamela Smith discuss this in terms of accountability to the university authorities or a funding agency, Richard Farmer talks of "personal accountability" and accountability to other university staff (Richard Farmer: 250): thus, using it in a rather less financially-focused, more humanistic way.

Four participants make other references to accountability when discussing the need to demonstrate cost-effectiveness. As Mary Spratt points out:

> ...these are centres which almost by their nature gobble up money and they do tend to have a lot of expensive resources in them and therefore I think that they very often find themselves in the situation of needing to be justified at a budgetary, and through that, at a political level...
> (Mary Spratt: 147-152).

In summary, regarding the functions a SAC evaluation can perform, Barbara Sinclair suggests that a SAC needs to "ensure we are doing the best we can for our students..." (Barbara Sinclair: 182-183). With this comment, we return to the notion suggested in the introduction to this section that an evaluation's judgmental functions are difficult to separate from an evaluation's developmental functions. From the interview comments and data from the post-interview e-mail questionnaire we can see that participants perceive value in the inclusion of both developmental and judgmental elements in an evaluation of a SAC so long as they are of relevance to the intended audience. SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming seems to sum up the general view effectively when he states:

> I think it should be both. As the world changes rapidly, the existence of SAC will be mainly based on the judgmental, whilst the re-form or re-organised will be highly depended on the developmental to copy (cope) with the changes, especially end-users' need
> (Wong Kwong Ming: PI 120).

7.2.4 Implications

With regard to the purpose of an evaluation, there were two major areas of focus:

- in terms of **audience**, I made a distinction between the indirect stakeholders who include those who are empowered to make decisions in

the light of an evaluation and direct stakeholders who would be the agents and targets of any suggested changes; and,

- I discussed both developmental and judgmental evaluation **functions**, as well as in regard to the notion of evaluation as an administrative requirement.

7.3 What to evaluate in a SAC

Addressing the question "**why** evaluate a SAC" in the previous section, I suggested that, apart from being recognised as an administrative requirement, an evaluation is also seen as potentially fulfilling a range of possible developmental and judgmental functions for a range of possible audiences. While this might seem fairly convincing, the notion of **what** it is that we should be evaluating is perhaps less clear. On an English language course that prepares learners for taking a language proficiency examination such as the TOEFL examination, for example, it would seem logical to focus an evaluation on learners' success rate and possibly learners' perceptions of the value of the course in helping them to pass the examination with a sufficiently high grade. However, when considering the evaluation of a SAC, it is less easy to identify a clear focus. As noted in chapter one, SAC learners tend to be extremely heterogeneous in aspects such as aims, linguistic level, study timetables and learning styles. Thus, in order to identify evaluation foci, it is necessary to examine factors other than simply the achievement of the learners' collective aim. This is my intention in this section.

I present the analysis of participant data relating to what should be evaluated in seven sections. The notions of *effectiveness* and *efficiency*, as previously noted in chapter three, are very widely accepted as basic evaluation categories. With the exception of these, as with all the analysis, the data categories introduced in this section have *emerged* from the participant data and subsequently "new incidences (have) fit existing categories" (Glaser, 1978: 56).

Firstly, and briefly, some participant comments relating to the possible **scope of an evaluation** are considered. This parallels the first step taken by many evaluators in the evaluation process, for example: "setting boundaries" (Worthen & Sanders, 1987: 186) or "defining the evaluation problem" (The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994:viii). This brief introductory discussion leads into the second and third sections which examine data relating to

an evaluation focus upon **SAC stakeholders** (people) and **SAC systems, facilities and resources** (infrastructure) respectively. The fourth section serves to revisit the concepts of **efficiency and effectiveness** in relation to this study, as introduced previously in chapter two (section 2.6.4). The rationale for highlighting these two particular foci is that they are widely acknowledged to be extremely important aspects of a programme's claim to optimum operation, not only in regard to the evaluation of SACs (Star, 1994; Gardner & Miller, 1997; Klassen, 1998) but also in programme evaluation more broadly (Pollard, 1989; Berk & Rossi, 1990; Rossi & Freeman, 1993; Ho, 1993; Patton, 2002). In the following sections (7.3.5 and 7.3.6), I then examine separately data relating to the concepts of **efficiency** and **effectiveness** respectively. In section 7.3.7, I finally focus on the critical issue of actual or perceived **learning gain** or progress. The question of learning gain is identified by the study participants, as well as by SAC theorists and practitioners, as one that is central to the issue of SAC evaluation (Miller & Gardner, 1994a; Piper, 1994; Gardner & Miller, 1997: 240; Klassen, 1998).

7.3.1 The scope of an evaluation

I use the term *scope* to refer collectively to the foci, activities and people that an evaluation might include.

SAC consultant Lindsay Miller identifies an obvious consideration when he states that you "can't evaluate everything" (Lindsay Miller: 393). Another SAC consultant David Gardner concurs and argues for a focused evaluation:

> I'm leaning these days much more towards not trying to do anything comprehensive because it's impossible even with research funding it's just not possible so what you to do is say "right, well what we're really concerned about at the moment is 'x' & that could be for all sorts of reasons...so fine okay concentrate on that"...
> (David Gardner: 764-771).

Indeed in the study interviews, none of the participants suggests evaluating a very wide range of SAC elements, tending instead to focus on certain aspects of a centre's pedagogical and administrative operation such as usage, the facilities or the SALL process. As will be seen in the following section (7.3.2) below, there are a number of potential such **foci** for a SAC evaluation. Participants discuss the possibility of focusing an evaluation on areas such as learning gain, learning

materials, centre procedures, cost effectiveness, the learning environment and learner support provision.

Evaluation **activities** might include widely applied techniques including examination of a SAC's administrative documentation, the conducting of interviews, observations and questionnaires, as well as other activities such as examination of learning diaries (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Rea-Dickens, 1994; McDonough & McDonough, 1997), introspection and participant self-evaluation (Holt, 1981; Rea-Dickens, 1994; Gardner & Miller, 1999). Participants discuss the use of a range of these and discussion of this data is presented in section 7.4.2.

The question of **whom** might be involved in an evaluation will be examined in detail in section 7.4.3, below with particular reference to the inclusion of "insiders" and/or "outsiders" (Alderson & Scott, 1992; Davies, 1992; Rea-Dickens, 1994) and the degree of participation by learners and teachers (Alderson & Scott, 1992; Cousins & Earl, 1995c; Charities Evaluation Services, 1998; Robson, 2000).

The range of options in terms of determining an evaluation's scope reflects both the relative maturity and sophistication of the field of programme evaluation and, to an extent, the range and complexity of perceptions regarding the nature of a SAC, as previously outlined in chapter six.

Participants identify two possible constraints relating to the scope of an evaluation that need to be taken into account in the evaluation design process.

Relating to an issue identified by Alderson & Beretta (1992: 278) and SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair, of different stakeholders having different expectations, there is then the possibility that there might be a conflict of criteria among the various different stakeholders. For example, "management stakes like how many bums on seats are there" might conflict with teachers' wanting to focus on "what's best and how to make the best use of facilities" (Barbara Sinclair: 166-170). SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton, while doubting that views would be "totally polarised" (reflecting other participants' opinions), feels that there would be "different focuses" (Richard Pemberton: 520-522). This leads to questions arising from a comment made by SAC consultant Lindsay Miller, where he suggests it would be for a group of stakeholders to decide the focus of the evaluation: who would constitute this group, and how would this group then decide?

Relating to this constraint is SAC consultant David Gardner's observation (previously noted in section 6.3.1) concerning the individualised nature of a SAC and the identification of a SAC as a collection of elements that combine to create the learner's perception of her learning environment. His suggestion is that SALL and any individual SAC, because of their emphasis on individualisation, tend to be unique in a way that makes it difficult to pin down common elements that can form the focus for an evaluation. Due to the fact that the evaluation focus necessarily partly determines the evaluation activities and personnel, the identification of the focus then constrains these other decisions relating to the evaluation scope. His observation, apart from being reflected in the literature (Esch, 1994; Gardner & Miller, 1999; Morrison, 1999), is reflected in the many aspects of a centre's operation that participants identify as potential evaluation foci which are introduced in the following sections.

7.3.2 SAC stakeholders

The discussion of the data relating to SAC stakeholders focuses on the **perceptions** of various stakeholder groups of the operation of the SAC, as well as, to a lesser extent, on the **activities** of two groups of direct stakeholders (the learners and the SAC staff).

Perceptions of stakeholders

The centrality of stakeholder perceptions in an evaluation will be discussed in section 7.4 where I examine issues relating to possible evaluation methodologies. However, in terms of deciding what to evaluate, participants repeatedly make reference, either explicitly or implicitly, to the need to consider the perceptions of those involved in the operation and use of a SAC (the direct stakeholders). For example, SAC teacher Andrew Morrall feels:

> ...there's two ways to look at this (evaluation)...one is to see **how happy the stakeholders are with what we do**...the other way is for us to look at our procedures etc., ourselves and figure out - because we are supposed to be the experts here - **how we** (as stakeholders) **feel** we could do things better.
> (Andrew Morrall: 263-267 – my emphasis and parentheses);

while SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair emphasises the need to be clear and focused in the investigation of such perceptions:

> Yes, well, you'd have to pinpoint specific areas for each of those stakeholders to consider and often they would be the same things but not always...suppose you went to your boss and you said "How much money do we spend on the SAC in a year...is it worth it...**from your point of view, is it worth it**?"...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 371-375 – my emphasis).

Participants discuss stakeholder perceptions in relation to a variety of stakeholder groups including SAC learners, SAC staff, non-SAC teachers, the parent institution and SAC co-ordinators. Predictably perhaps, much discussion focuses on the perceptions of SAC learners as end-users. SAC teacher Andrew Morrall expresses the view, echoed by many participants, that the only way to find out about a SAC and its effectiveness is "to ask the users" (Andrew Morrall: 155). Participants suggest examining SAC learners' perceptions of various aspects of a SAC's operation. Some of these aspects are summarised in Table 6 below.

Aspect of SAC	**Participant reference(s)**
The learning environment	BS157-159; WCG307
Learner motivation & confidence	DG557; MS228-230
Usefulness of the SAC	RF322-323; YTY 128-131
Usefulness of learning materials	BS155; WCG263-264; WSY: 159-161
Efficiency	See Section 7.3.3
Effectiveness	See Section 7.3.4
Learning gain	See Section 7.3.5

Table 6: Perceptions of aspects of a SAC from the learners' perspectives

Participants also suggest examining the perceptions of SAC stakeholders (Andrew Morrall: 264-266), SAC co-ordinators (Mary Spratt: 163-165), ex-SAC learners (Richard Farmer: 332-333), and non-SAC teachers (Barbara Sinclair: 277-280; Mary Spratt: 330-332).

However, a note of caution is also introduced with regard to how much credence the evaluator can place upon the perceptions of informants. Andrew Morrall recounts learners being given a class project that involved them "evaluating" a SAC:

> ...in the past, Service English teachers have their students do an assignment to come down to CILL (the SAC), have a look at the materials, comment on CILL in general (including on its effectiveness) and there were certain problems - for example, those students might not have been members of CILL or have joined CILL specifically to do that exercise and not had a lot of experience with CILL & not realise a lot of the things that were available for them because they hadn't had so much exposure to the centre...
> (Andrew Morrall: 328-336 – my parentheses).

This issue of the extent and depth of knowledge that it is desirable that an evaluator should possess also emerges from other participants' comments. One SAC learner, for example suggests focusing on "certain students - like me" (Lawrie Yeung: 100), seemingly implying that other learners would not be able to provide relevant and useful data. This comment is discussed again in section 7.4.2 (1).

Likewise, one might consider carefully (including taking into account local cultural factors) before including the following perception as a criterion for judging student learning:

> **Bruce**: Honestly, do you think CILL helps the students learn English?
> **Wilkin**: Er, yes.
> **Bruce**: How do you "know" that?
> **Wilkin**: Sometimes I saw that the student quite hardest study in the centre.
> **Bruce**: So you judge that he's learning by how hard he's studying?
> **Wilkin**: Yes.
> (Wilkin Cheung: 195-205).

Despite such cautions, what emerges from the study data, the literature and my own experience is the fact that a SAC evaluation will necessarily depend to an extent upon the perceptions of the centre's direct stakeholders. This will be further discussed in section 7.4 when examining the data relating to possible evaluation approaches.

Activities of stakeholders

Apart from commenting on the value of stakeholder perceptions, participants also suggested ways in which direct stakeholder activities could be an evaluation focus. The activities of SAC learners and SAC staff as an evaluation focus are mainly considered within the context of learning gain which is discussed in Section 7.3.7 below. There are, however, two other relevant references.

SAC teacher Andrew Morrall, while discussing possible evaluation methodology, suggests that one way of evaluating the operation of a SAC would be to observe the learners using it.

> There'd be two ways I guess...one would be to watch the students and see what they do and see if the things that are designed to attract students do attract them - see if students using the indexing system are successfully finding things...
> (Andrew Morrall: 285-288).

In relation to this, SAC consultant Lindsay Miller suggests that even informal observation can give an indication of a centre's effectiveness. He continues, however, by making the suggestion that observation of the **ex**-SAC learners' language use would be a better measure of the centre's effectiveness:

> ...if students are actively involved in using some of the facilities, just by casually glancing in and you see that they're there, they're doing things, then that's effective - it's not a scientific measure but that's effective...the main measure of effectiveness does not come from the immediate observation of SALL though, it must come five, six years later when students have left the institutes where they were introduced to this and they know how to read a newspaper or how to go about speaking to a foreigner or something...
> (Lindsay Miller: 260-267).

Weir & Roberts, in their review of evaluation in English language teaching, likewise see value in what they refer to "tracer studies" (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 91). However, given both the problems of evaluating ex-students' capabilities (in terms of factors such as intervening, extraneous variables and the type of assessment conducted) and the high-mobility of Hong Kong residents (both within Hong Kong and in terms of emigration), we need to consider the practicalities involved in such studies.

Observation as an evaluation tool is further discussed below in section 7.4.2 (ii) which focuses on possible data collection methods in an evaluation.

7.3.3 SAC facilities, systems and resources

As reflected in section 6.2.1 (where I examined the definition of a SAC in relation to its similarity in role to that of a library) the SAC's facilities, systems and resources are perceived by participants as being central to its operation. Five participants explicitly refer to a SAC being a type of "resource centre" or comprising various "resources". All participants refer to a SAC in terms of

"facilities", while nine refer to a SAC as having "systems". SAC facilities, systems and resources may be at differing levels of technology and sophistication (Sheerin, 1989; McCall, 1992), but their contribution is clearly crucial.

Participants' comments relating to this topic fall into three areas of concern:

- a centre's various systems and procedures;
- its learning materials; and
- equipment available.

In this section, these are discussed both in terms of their availability as well as (to some extent previewing sections 7.3.5 and 7.3.6) in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency.

SAC systems and procedures

It was perhaps predictable that the importance of a centre's systems and procedures is emphasised primarily by those who have experience of how an SAC operates from an administrator's point of view: Andrew Morrall (a SAC teacher with responsibility for SAC computer systems), and SAC experts Barbara Sinclair, Lindsay Miller and Richard Pemberton. It is interesting to note that three out of the four discuss the issue from a learner's viewpoint. Barbara Sinclair, while focusing on the issue of efficiency, makes a similar point to Richard Pemberton (304-307) and talks about systems in terms of:

> ...getting students logged on, and in quickly, easily without too much fuss... having the documents they need to work with...having a system which is not too time-consuming, doesn't involve too many people, doesn't put the students off...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 293-297).

Lindsay Miller, discussing the systems to be set up when establishing a SAC, suggests the use of library-like systems. However, he stresses that the systems should be set up with the learners' point of view in mind (Lindsay Miller: 142). This view is implicitly supported in Andrew Morrall's point concerning a need to evaluate a SAC's organisation and presentation of learning materials, particularly in terms of learner access (Andrew Morrall: 272). This concern has been reflected in the literature (for example, Carvahlo, 1993 and Sheerin, 1997). Interestingly, Reinders (2000b) reports that 60% of SAC learners in his study found it difficult to find appropriate materials, perhaps confirming that this is an operational aspect upon which SACs could usefully focus in an evaluation.

Other aspects of SAC systems that are not explicitly and individually highlighted by participants but which have been identified in the literature include learner preparation (Sturtridge, 1992; Sheerin, 1997), registration (Fitzgerald, 1996) and learner help (Sturtridge, 1992; Riley, 1997; Clemente, 2001). SAC learner, Wong Kwong Ming does, however, as introduced briefly in section 7.2.3, suggest the need for a system of formalised feedback for learners to better enable them to structure their learning.

The fact that these systems focus on the learner-as-SAC user emphasises the centrality of the learner in the SAC, and this centrality needs to be recognised in any suggested approach to SAC evaluation. As discussed more fully in chapter eight, I propose that this be achieved by making the SAC mapping, that focuses on a learner's progress through a SAC, a central element within the evaluation framework.

SAC learning materials

With reference to a SAC's learning materials being a possible focus for evaluation, nine of the participants explicitly mention materials as being essential SAC elements. It is Barbara Sinclair (perhaps influenced by her background as a language learning materials writer) who contributes at greatest length suggesting four possible materials-related evaluation criteria.

Her first point, that there needs to be "a sufficient amount of materials" (Barbara Sinclair: 201), is explicitly echoed by SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming who describes a SAC as being "composed of so many materials like CD-ROM material and book, video and some pronunciation tape..." (Wong Kwong Ming: 13-15). It is further paralleled in Gardner & Miller's (1997) findings that 89% of SAC learners and 97% of SAC teachers stressed the need for a variety of materials in a SAC. Barbara Sinclair's first point is reflected in her second: that materials need to be available to cater for various levels of learner with various learning styles (Barbara Sinclair: 203-204). This is second point is supported by comments from three other participants. These include SAC learner William Cheng who feels that a SAC should provide the learner with "every the study material that can enable you to improve the language" (William Cheng: 178-180). Barbara Sinclair's third point concerns the "right sort of material" (Barbara Sinclair: 149), particularly from the learners' viewpoint:

> They (the learners) will want to see that the materials work for them and that they come out knowing more than when they went in...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 155-157 - my parentheses).

In this focus on the appropriacy and efficacy of materials for the individual learner, she can be seen to be echoing a concern about the quality of both published and in-house produced materials expressed by both SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton and Dorothea Carvalho in her (1992) booklet "Self-Access: Appropriate Material". Fourthly, and leading on from Carvalho's and Pemberton's observations, Barbara Sinclair stresses the need for:

> ...making sure all your materials are kept up-to-date and in good nick, having them tested so that you don't find broken videos and crumpled tapes, torn books...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 298-300).

When evaluating a centre's learning materials it would, therefore, be useful to have two foci. The first would be on ensuring a variety of materials in terms of both material-type and content, and linguistic level. The second focus would be on the quality of materials with regard to both content and actual physical condition.

SAC equipment

With regard to equipment, apart from noting its presence, participants make only three comments that directly focus upon the role of equipment in a SAC. Richard Pemberton talks of equipment being of two types: "either general equipment or specially-designed equipment for language learning..." (Richard Pemberton: 105-107). Barbara Sinclair meanwhile refers to the need for "enough computers to use," and "a technician on hand in case anything breaks down" (Barbara Sinclair: 159-160). Gardner & Miller, in their 1999 book, however, stress the need to evaluate the equipment in efficiency terms such as in relation to cost-effectiveness and usage. This aspect is examined in section 7.3.5 below. These points suggest that an evaluation might focus on whether a centre's equipment is efficient in terms of being appropriate, well-maintained and cost-effective.

What emerges clearly from the data is the need for an evaluation focus on facilities, systems and resources, not only from the SAC co-ordinator's point of view, but also from that of the SAC learner.

7.3.4 Efficiency and effectiveness

The importance of the concepts of *efficiency* and *effectiveness* to the evaluation process has been recognised and introduced above in section 7.3.3, and previously in chapters two and five. Gardner (1999) and Gardner & Miller (1999: 228) highlight efficiency and effectiveness as the two "key elements in measuring the success of self-access facilities" which subsume the other evaluation foci. While Mary Spratt suggests that *efficiency* is not to be directly equated with *effectiveness* (Mary Spratt: 271-276), Gardner (1999) and Gardner & Miller (1999) point out that the two terms are at least inter-linked. Gardner (1999: 116), reflecting Mary Spratt's view, believes that efficiency measured independently of effectiveness provides information of little pedagogical value. Likewise, he feels that measures of effectiveness do not provide any indication of the costs of achieving such effectiveness (a measure of efficiency). While this is true, and while it may not be always easy to define effectiveness and efficiency in educational contexts (Sizer, 1982), I have chosen to categorise the data thus since it seems to provide a useful juxtaposition within which to present the data. Despite their above-quoted views, this is a view shared by Gardner & Miller (1999).

I introduced both notions into the study interviews as noted in chapter five (section 5.2.4). The resulting data and those from the post-interview e-mail questionnaire are discussed below in the following sections 7.3.5 and 7.3.6.

7.3.5 Efficiency

Previously, in section 6.3.3 (vi), efficiency was defined in terms of achieving a goal or result with minimum effort wasted and within the context of a SAC being a *service*.

In this section, I discuss the data that I have categorised as relating to the efficiency of a SAC from four viewpoints:

- the rationale for efficiency as an evaluation focus;
- usage as an efficiency measure;
- a focus on the efficiency of SAC systems and procedures; and
- efficiency of SAC staffing.

It is interesting to note that there were no data relating to the efficiency of SALL except for Andrew Morrall's critique (as noted in (i) below) and SAC learner Yen Tung Yuk's comment that "a SAC should guide learners on how to learn efficiently" (Yen Tung Yuk: PI 84).

i) *Why focus on efficiency?*

Nine participants indicate that they feel measures of efficiency should be included in any SAC evaluation process. It is interesting to note, however, the contributions of the two SAC teachers. Sunny Chu, who seems reluctant to view the SAC learner as a "customer" (i.e. seemingly not wanting himself to be placed in a *service* role - Sunny Chu: 226-227), makes no comments directly relating to efficiency. Andrew Morrall, focusing on the learning process, expresses the opinion that not only is it very difficult to measure levels of efficiency, but also that the IL process itself is inherently pedagogically inefficient:

> ...now, in a way, IL is not efficient because you're asking non-expert students to partially take over the teacher's role of materials selection, marking, assessment in general - in fact the whole creation of a study programme, needs analysis - which they're not expert in and they don't have as much experience as a normal teacher so especially at the start of learning how to be an independent learner, it is not efficient...
> (Andrew Morrall: 377-383).

It is possible that such positions foretell resistance amongst SAC teachers to certain perceptions of how the notion of efficiency (and perhaps other notions that could be seen as threatening, to either the staff, the centre, or both) might be viewed. In the light of Clemente's (2001) findings relating to the presence of a degree of negativity among Mexican SAC teachers, such a possibility should not be ignored when a methodology for the evaluation of SACs is considered.

The reasons given for an efficiency focus centre primarily on pragmatic considerations of the perceived expectations of funders and university administrators as identified by four participants including SAC consultants David Gardner and Lindsay Miller:

> ...we're kind of guessing what administrators like but it seems the kind of things they like - they like to know that the money is well-spent and in terms of well-spent they're not thinking in pedagogical terms, they're thinking about usage...
> (David Gardner: 624-628);

> ...continue number crunching unfortunately to keep these people happy otherwise, as you know, we would lose the facilities if we didn't produce some kind of statistics for them.
> (Lindsay Miller: 244-246)

SAC funder Aster Warner concurs suggesting *cost-effectiveness* as one of three major evaluation foci (Aster Warner: 122-124). There has been some confusion in the use of the term *cost-effectiveness*. Aster Warner states, that as well as implying "levels of usage", it also implies "**efficient** and **effective** use of resources" (Aster Warner: 123-124 - my emphasis). Certainly, *cost-effectiveness*, misleadingly perhaps due to its etymology, is a measure of efficiency and it is in this sense, of equating to *value for money*, that I use the term in this study. Non-SAC expert teacher Mary Spratt, reflecting this notion of value for money, sees the resource-hungry nature of the HK tertiary level SACs as a reason for their existence needing to be justified in terms of cost-effectiveness "at a budgetary, and through that, at a political level..." (Mary Spratt: 151-152).

The participants who directly refer to the desirability of including measures of efficiency in an evaluation focus on financially pragmatic reasons for doing so. Gardner & Miller in their (1999) book point out a number of more developmentally-focused reasons that are both administratively-focused, such as staffing patterns and resource deployment (as discussed in (iv) below), and pedagogically-focused, such as the responsiveness of the SAC to student needs.

ii) *Usage as an efficiency measure*

Ten participants identify levels of usage as a primary measure of efficiency, while non-SAC experts Pamela Smith and Aster Warner additionally point out the importance of measuring the levels of sustained usage. Even SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton, who initially seems to suggest that usage figures are unimportant, concludes by agreeing their value:

> ...it (level of usage) doesn't bother us at all - we're not into that thing - we were at first - of that very expensive resource and we need "bums on seats". Now to be honest I would be fairly happy if that place - well, I wouldn't be happy but...if it were empty it would be kind of bad news because it would mean what we've got there is of no use or interest to students...
> (Richard Pemberton: 37-42 - my parentheses).

Using a basketball analogy, Lindsay Miller goes a step further. Contrary to Mary Spratt's belief (noted in section 7.3.4 above) that efficiency does not equate to effectiveness and that "hard data like use figures, tell you not very much in terms of how effective the learning is that goes on in the centre" (Mary Spratt: 195-197), he suggests that:

> ...the way the students demonstrate the effectiveness is by turning up & taking part in it so if they'd had a rotten coach for basketball, nobody would go and take part in the team - if they didn't like the SAC or the people there they wouldn't come to it...
> (Lindsay Miller: 351-355).

Likewise, SAC user Lawrie Yeung (76-86) expresses the view that the level of SAC usage, while seemingly a measure of efficiency, is actually one of effectiveness, since learners would not attend a centre that they felt was ineffective. A question that might be raised, however, is in regard to what behaviour or outcome is being evaluated in terms of effectiveness: it may be, for example, that the coach tells good jokes and keeps the team entertained.

In other words, in their views, not only is usage a measure of efficiency, it also reflects learner perceptions of effectiveness. Despite the question I raised in the preceding paragraph, this is an important point since effectiveness itself, as recognised by Gardner & Miller (1999) and Gardner (1999), is difficult to pin down let alone quantify. There is then the possibility of arguing that levels of usage, in some way, correlate to levels of effectiveness.

iii) *A focus on the efficiency of SAC systems and procedures*

Reflecting in part SAC teacher Andrew Morrall's earlier-quoted concern regarding what he sees as the inherent inefficiency of SALL, two participants focus on the efficiency of the various systems and procedures used by learners in the SALL process. SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair focuses on computer systems and documents, while SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton focuses on finding materials, the presence or lack of queues, and opening hours:

> In terms of efficiency...it would be getting students logged on, and in quickly, easily without too much fuss...having the documents they need to work with... having a system which is not too time consuming, doesn't involve too many people, doesn't put the students off...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 293-297);

> I suppose efficiency is, well, can you find the material, can you get in easily enough, do you have to queue up for ten minutes before you check in with the person at the counter - is there a huge queue there, I guess is it open when you want it to be open - maybe that would be that kind of issue, some things like that...
> (Richard Pemberton: 578-582).

These criteria are mirrored in the literature by McCall (1992) and Gardner & Miller (1999), and might suggest the desirability of elements of a *Systems* approach to evaluation (Rossi et al, 1979; Scriven, 1991) or a simplified *Management Information System* approach (quoted in Stufflebeam, 2001). The reason is that, in these approaches, an emphasis is placed on the monitoring and subsequent improvement of a programme's systems.

iv) *A focus on the efficiency of SAC staffing*

Two participants consider the issue of efficiency in relation to the staffing of a SAC. The first relates to the previously introduced notion of a SAC providing a *service* to learners. Barbara Sinclair discusses this, with reference to staffing, in terms of the need to ensure learners can use a centre effectively:

> ...having somebody always there on duty to deal with problems...making sure all your materials are kept up-to-date and in good nick, having them tested so that you don't find broken videos and crumpled tapes, torn books....it's a service, you have to think of it as a service industry, you offer a service to these people and its got to appear efficient from their point of view otherwise they won't go.
> (Barbara Sinclair: 297-303)

The second emphasis is on the efficiency of the staffing in more general managerial terms. In proposing it, non-SAC expert Mary Spratt reflects one efficiency-related evaluation focus suggested by Gardner & Miller (1999), that of the deployment of human (and non-human) resources:

> Well, I suppose there are things that are independent of wherever the workplace is so "do the number of staff match the number of tasks that need to be done?", "do the staff and the conditions in which the staff operate allow them to carry out these tasks in an effective way?"
> (Mary Spratt: 271-275)

In a centre which by its nature (and implicitly suggested in its name) predicates on ease and efficiency of access to the tools of learning, it seems clear that the level of efficiency at which a SAC operates is a key determinant of its well-being. That an evaluation should address this issue, therefore, seems incontestable. The issues remaining relate to questions of how this might be accomplished and the

inter-relationship (already introduced) between the notions of efficiency and effectiveness.

7.3.6 Effectiveness

Having discussed data relating to participants' perceptions of efficiency-related evaluation foci in the previous section, and having suggested an inter-relationship between the notions of efficiency and effectiveness, I now focus on various elements of effectiveness as evaluation criteria. In using the term *effectiveness*, I refer to the notion of describing something functioning in such a way as to cause or produce a certain result or effect.

Whereas Gardner & Miller (1999) focus on evaluation measures of effectiveness aimed at judging learners' development of IL-related skills, such as their learning strategies and changes in attitude towards SALL, the data from this study and my own subsequent direction is towards identifying more tangible areas of focus. Participants in this study and SAC theorists more widely (Gardner, 1999; Morrison, 1999; Sinclair, 1999; Kwan, 2002) have questioned attempts to measure criteria such as those suggested by Gardner & Miller. For example, while agreeing their validity as research topics, I would question the practicality, in the context of most SAC evaluations, of criteria such as "whether appropriate learning practices occur" or "whether self-access encourages learners and teachers to change their approaches to learning/teaching" (Gardner & Miller, 1999: 230).

In this section, I discuss participant data relating to:

- the rationale for effectiveness as an evaluation focus;
- a focus on effectiveness in the context of the SAC as a physical centre,
- a focus on effectiveness in the context of the learner; and,
- a focus on effectiveness in the context of a SAC's objectives.

i) *Why focus on effectiveness?*

Four participants implicitly or explicitly refer to *effectiveness* prior to my introducing the notion in the study interviews. Aster Warner's view, as a non-expert SAC funder that both efficiency and effectiveness should be included as evaluation criteria, has been introduced in section 7.3.5 above. A SAC teacher referring to possible evaluation foci, suggests that one focus of an evaluation should be "how we feel we could do things better" (Andrew Morrall: 266-267). In a similar vein, a SAC support staff member suggests that the

evaluation team should examine the SAC's learning materials and "see if it's really useful" (Wilkin Cheung: 286). SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair, commenting on potentially differing perspectives among SAC teachers, juxtaposes the term *effectiveness* with the word *great* suggesting, it seems, that an *effective* SAC is a *great* SAC:

> ...teachers might have a different view of what makes **an effective SAC** - some teachers might feel **everything is great** if the whole place is absolutely quiet and students are getting quietly on with their own thing... (Barbara Sinclair: 160-164 - my emphasis).

That effectiveness should be a criteria within the evaluation process has been previously introduced above in section 7.3.4, although comments made by three participants should be borne in mind when considering implementation of the evaluation. Andrew Morrall and Barbara Sinclair warn of possible difficulties in clearly identifying effectiveness criteria:

> It's very hard to say or to come up with criteria to be able to say this SAC is effective and this one isn't...
> (Andrew Morrall: 153-154);
>
> ...different stakeholders will have different criteria...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 143).

Lindsay Miller, using the basket/volley ball analogy previously quoted, focuses on the question of what the evaluation tools actually evaluate in terms of effectiveness:

> ...to evaluate, I mean if you sat the basket ball team down and gave them a test, a written test, would that mean they could still go and play a fantastic game of basketball - no it wouldn't - it just means they know the rules of basketball...so if you sat the students down and said okay perform on a test & they all scored great scores, does that mean the SAC had been effective - not really.
> (Lindsay Miller: 337-342)

However, despite these words of caution, the inclusion of effectiveness as an evaluation focus seems sensible and is supported by its inclusion as a major (if often implicit) focus of many if not most evaluations. Indeed, to exclude it would mean excluding a focus that usefully subsumes and consolidates a number of other foci that might otherwise remain unconnected. For example, it can serve to act as a meta-organiser for such seemingly diverse aspects of a SAC as its registration system, usage and the organisation of learning materials within the centre. The analysis in (ii), (iii) and (iv) below relates to

some of the potential elements of such a consolidating focus upon effectiveness.

ii) *Effectiveness in the context of the SAC as a physical centre*

Apart from the comments analysed below, which are made by participants discussing various foci of effectiveness in an evaluation, reference should also be made to section 6.3 which examined participants' definitions of a SAC in terms of the physical centre. It seems fair to assume that, since they are included in the definition of a SAC, the elements introduced in that section are perceived as necessary (or at least desirable) for a SAC to function effectively. In this section, however, I examine views expressed by participants in response to questions in the interview and the follow-up e-mail questionnaire which focus on effectiveness as an evaluation criteria.

SAC teacher Andrew Morrall, stating that "...without the resources the students wouldn't come in and it (the SAC) wouldn't be effective" (Andrew Morrall: 223-224 - my parentheses), is the only participant to explicitly identify the presence of resources in general as a criteria for a centre's effectiveness. Supporting this view, SAC learner William Cheng expresses his view of the two elements that are necessary for the effectiveness of a SAC:

> **Bruce** (summing up William's previous comment):
> ...so it's the facilities..
> **William Cheng**:
> ...and the tutor..
> **Bruce**:
> ...anything else that would make it effective?
> **William Cheng**:
> I think that is the two key effective areas.
> (William Cheng: 184-191)

Five other participants refer to specific aspects of resourcing that can affect effectiveness, in particular the:

- quantity and quality of learning materials;
- quality of the SAC's systems; and,
- central importance of the SAC staff.

Learning materials

In terms of learning materials, SAC learner William Cheng explains that in his opinion a particular SAC is "excellent" because it "provides every material that

a language learner requires and wants to have" (William Cheng: 14-15).

Barbara Sinclair also suggests that a range of materials is an important factor:

> ...sufficient amount of materials at different levels - there is no point in having a SAC with no materials so there must be materials there for the students to use at different levels, of different types, with different focuses...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 201-204).

This point is reinforced by SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer's view of an effective SAC as being:

> ...one that provides a wide range of activities, covering a wide range of skills & sub-skills necessary for a wide range of wants, needs and preferences...one that caters for a wide range of learning styles, a wide range of learning approaches.
> (Richard Farmer: 191-195)

In addition to a focus on the quantity of available materials, as noted in section 7.3.3, SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair and SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton consider that the quality or "right sort" (Barbara Sinclair: 149) of materials influences SAC users' perceptions of a centre's effectiveness.

SAC systems

Having introduced the notion of the quality of materials, Richard Pemberton then refers to "the way we've arranged them". He continues by identifying both the environment and the SAC's systems as being factors that may affect perceptions of a centre's effectiveness:

> ...the way that we've arranged them, how easy or difficult we've made it for learners to find their way around the centre, the layout of the place - how comfortable or user-friendly it is...
> (Richard Pemberton: 304-307).

The importance of a centre's systems in its effective operation is also identified by SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair:

> ...and that the layout is clear and that it is easy to use, and there is no confusion, it's not too crowded, facilities are nice an attractive, enough computers to use...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 157-159);

and Lindsay Miller who comments on the need for an "organised facility" (Lindsay Miller: 295).

In Reinders's (2000b) study, the difficulty, noted earlier in section 7.3.3, that learners experienced in finding materials inversely correlated with their perception of the usefulness of the SAC for their learning of English. In other words, a learner's experience of the efficiency of a SAC's systems impacts on the learner's perception of the effectiveness of the SAC in catering for learner needs.

SAC staff

Finally, as introduced in chapter six (section 6.4.3), the role of the SAC staff in determining the effectiveness of a centre is highlighted by ten participants, including all the SAC teachers and learners. Andrew Morrall feels that the staff is the most important SAC element in terms of ensuring effectiveness and indeed that it is "the staff's job to make sure that what they do and the place they work is effective" (Andrew Morrall: 208-209). Barbara Sinclair likewise highlights "how well the staff manage it" (Barbara Sinclair: 149-150) as a measure of a SAC's effectiveness. The theme is taken further by SAC consultant Lindsay Miller who identifies staff commitment as one way in which a centre can be seen to be effective:

> A centre is effective in different ways...it's effective in terms of staff commitment to it...if staff are happily involved in working in the centre, if they're giving up some of their own personal time to do things for the centre I think it's being effective, it shows a high degree of professional development - that must show some kind of effectiveness...
> (Lindsay Miller: 255-260).

This notion is supported in the literature: Reinders (2000b) suggests a positive correlation between learners' perceptions of the usefulness of the SAC teacher and their perceptions of the usefulness of the SAC for their learning of English.

The effectiveness foci identified in this section have been on areas of the SAC (i.e. the materials, the systems and the staff) that have also been previously identified in chapter six as key, defining elements of a SAC. This serves to suggest confirmation of their centrality to a SAC evaluation.

iii) *Effectiveness in the context of the SAC learner*

I shall now examine participants' views of how a centre can demonstrate effectiveness with reference to its learners. Apart from the direct relevance of this data to the development of an evaluation framework, the discussion also

serves to preface the final part of the data analysis in section 7.3.7. In that section, I consider the place that perceptions of learning gain can play in a SAC's evaluation.

The data discussed in this section mainly refer to learner usage of the SAC, with two participants additionally focusing on the SAC's ability to ensure user satisfaction and its ability to meet the needs of its users. There is finally a reference to post-graduate performance and to learning gain.

All participants, with the exception of SAC teacher Sunny Chu, who focuses entirely on the importance of meeting learners' needs, consider **learner usage** to be a factor for inclusion in an evaluation. I have previously discussed usage in terms of providing an indication of efficiency in section 7.3.5. However, nine participants, representing all SAC roles, consider that "how many students use the centre" (William Cheng: 200) or "how many bums on seats are there" (Barbara Sinclair: 167), and "the number of hours studying there" (Wan Sau Yi: 99) are also indications of the effectiveness of a SAC. As SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton points out, "(if) they then stop coming...then it's ineffective..." (Richard Pemberton: 298-299 - my parentheses). As previously recognised in section 7.3.5 (ii) in relation to efficiency, however, "simply levels of usage" (Aster Warner: 74) are not enough, and "repeat usage, sustained usage by individual students" (Aster Warner: 74-75) is a better indicator of a centre's effectiveness. As David Gardner rather sardonically notes: "any SAC which turns students off after one visit cannot possibly be described as effective, unless your purpose is to close down the SAC" (David Gardner: 402-404).

Although the notion that usage figures are a valid indicator of a SAC's effectiveness is generally accepted, two participants sound notes of caution. SAC consultant Lindsay Miller, discussing the notion of *student commitment,* points out that it is only if learners use a centre voluntarily that such commitment can be assumed. SAC usage figures can only be considered valid indicators of effectiveness if such usage is on a voluntary basis. This is an important consideration when placed in the light of the fact that some learners use the SAC on a non-voluntary basis (Pemberton et al, 1999; Tsang, 1999; Reinders, 2000a & b). Non-SAC expert teacher Mary Spratt also cautions that usage figures alone are not sufficient to judge the effectiveness of a centre:

> ...if you were to just look at use figures then you may just be tapping that sort of scraping of the surface of what the facility has to offer so I think you've got to be looking at much more measures...
> (Mary Spratt: 203-206).

This point is taken up by both David Gardner and Aster Warner who feel that there is additionally a need to discover the extent to which users are satisfied with the SAC. Aster Warner points out that this would provide an "immediate feedback loop" (Aster Warner: 79). In other words, the level of **satisfaction** would provide corroboration that levels of usage indicate effectiveness (and vice versa). The perceived need for such corroboration is indicated by Mary's Spratt's suspicion that usage figures "tell you not very much in terms of how effective the learning is that goes on in the centre" (Mary Spratt: 195-197). It is further supported by the fact that five participants explicitly express the opinion that an effective centre should be seen to be addressing the **needs** of its learners (David Gardner: 262-263; Mary Spratt: 240; Richard Farmer: 192; Richard Pemberton: 255-256; Sunny Chu: 225-226). As discussed in section 7.3.7 following, this is of course also implicit in the focus of nearly all participants on learning gain as a criterion for judging a centre's effectiveness. SAC teacher Andrew Morrall expresses this focus on learner needs in different terms. He refers to the need for an effective SAC to "back up students who want to improve their English skills" (Andrew Morrall: 250).

Finally, two participants, SAC consultant Lindsay Miller and non-expert SAC funder Aster Warner, focus upon the **post-graduation performance** of learners as a criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of a SAC:

> ...the main measure of effectiveness does not come from the immediate observation of SALL though, it must come five, six years later when students have left the institutes where they were introduced to this and they know how to read a newspaper or how to go about speaking to a foreigner or something, and that's the only measure which unfortunately at stage we have no control over.
> (Lindsay Miller: 263-269)

> ...the third thing (effectiveness criteria) would be to see, to evaluate, to see if institutions are able to evaluate outcomes in terms of performance of graduates.
> (Aster Warner: 80-82 - my parentheses)

In the evaluation of a learner-centred entity such as the SAC, it seems entirely appropriate that a focus on effectiveness in relation to the learner is of importance. Potential difficulties arise, however, when considering the

practicalities of measuring in any way the last two criteria: meeting learners' needs and their post-graduation performance. Since one feature of the SAC is its focus on individualisation of the learning process, there is clearly a consequent lack of identifiable common needs. The closest an evaluation could come to this is an evaluative focus on perceptions of the effectiveness of a SAC in meeting such needs. In terms of addressing Lindsay Miller's and Aster Warner's valid point concerning the long-term nature of learner's performance gain, there are two problems (as previously identified in section 7.3.2). The first is both purely practical in terms of being able to contact learners after they leave the institution, while the second relates to the impossibility of attributing any type of gain directly and exclusively to the learner's use of a centre some years previously.

iv) *Effectiveness in the context of a SAC's objectives*

The final data I shall consider with reference to evaluating a SAC's effectiveness relate to its degree of success in meeting its stated objectives. This data is discussed, despite the fact that it was referred to by only four participants, due to the central role that has historically been given to the achievement of stated objectives in the field of evaluation (e.g. Tyler, 1949; Bloom et al, 1964; Provus, 1971; Parlett & Hamilton, 1977; Stufflebeam, 2001). Four of the SACs in Hong Kong have clearly stated and publicly available objectives and/or mission statements (Appendix 17).

In response to being asked how he would define an effective SAC, SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton expresses his belief that the stated objectives of a SAC would constitute the evaluation yardstick against which a SAC's performance should be measured:

> Okay, I mean I suppose in terms of our stated aims, our mission statement type thing which is, and which is pretty standard I think - so one is to help people develop their language skills and one is to help them develop their independent learning, or learning-to-learn skills - so that's how I would see it I suppose, how I would judge it - are we being effective in meeting those aims?
> (Richard Pemberton: 250-256)

SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming, likewise, clearly expresses his opinion that what is needed is to "demonstrate how the centre can facilitate or some to implement your objective - the CILL objective" (Wong Kwong Ming: 397-399).

Another participant, while supporting the notion of the importance of a SAC fulfilling its purpose, views the matter from a somewhat different perspective. SAC consultant David Gardner bases his view that an "effective one (SAC) is one that meets its purpose" not based upon its stated aims, but rather upon the fact that "it's very clear in my mind what the purpose of a SAC is...and its purpose is to give the students learning opportunities..." (David Gardner: 357-360).

Finally, SAC teacher Sunny Chu perceives the development of learners' independent learning skills as a key objective of a SAC (Sunny Chu: 232-241). He then expresses the need to evaluate the extent to which a SAC meets "the educational ideals...(for the learner) to become an independent learner" (Sunny Chu: 246-250).

I have included these four views since they reflect a commonly-held conception of upon what an evaluation *should* focus. With further examination of the data, however, two factors do become clear that suggest a primary focus on the SAC's objectives might be naive. Firstly, the stated objectives of the Hong Kong SACs' are both necessarily broad in their scope and capable of varied interpretations. The heterogeneity of the SAC learners ensures that each learner brings her own learning objectives to the centre. Examples of the possible variation in interpretation can be seen in David Gardner's readiness to impose his view of a SAC's purpose, and in the fact that SAC teacher Sunny Chu's interpretation of the "key" CILL objective and my own (as the CILL co-ordinator) differ greatly since I see the key objective as being assisting learners in language improvement. Secondly, and emerging from the first, is the difficulty of identifying SAC learners' objectives and how, once identified, they might then relate to the stated objectives of the SAC.

In this section, I have identified a number of potential evaluation foci relating to the notion of effectiveness. The third part, bringing together effectiveness and the learner, has, I hope, served to provide an introductory context for the following and concluding part of this section which deals with the notion of learning gain as a potential evaluation focus. This clearly also relates back to the issue of the effectiveness of a SAC, thus highlighting its importance as a focus in any evaluation.

7.3.7 Learning gain

It is not only in my role as a SAC co-ordinator that it seems clear to me that the issue of the progress learners make in their language learning in the SAC (referred to here and previously as "learning gain") is key to any discussion of SAC evaluation. It is reflected in the emphasis that is placed on the learning process contained in the data from participants representing all participant roles that were previously presented in chapter six. It is also seen in the SAC literature (e.g. Henner-Stachina & Holec, 1985; Lister, 1994; Klassen, 1998; Gardner & Miller, 1999; Reinders, 2000a & b).

It is also explicitly recognised in participants' discussion of the possible foci of an evaluation as seen in, for example, David Gardner's comment that a centre should show stakeholders that "everybody's really happy with this, they feel they're learning" (David Gardner: 420-421). It is further implicit in suggestions such as that of Wilkin Cheung who, when discussing evaluating a SAC's learning materials, suggests the evaluator "try to using them and see if it's really useful " (Wilkin Cheung: 286).

There is, however, also recognition of the practical problems that such a focus involves. Such scepticism is perhaps most clearly expressed by non-SAC expert language centre manager Pamela Smith who, in response to a question concerning evaluating learning gain, replies:

> I honestly don't know how you do this...I don't know how you do it, I really don't...
> (Pamela Smith: 126/130).

Other participants recognise problems such as varied duration and intensity of study, the difficulty of isolating independent variables and the ethical issues relating to the possible imposition of assessment procedures within the context of a centre dedicated to independent learning.

In short, there is, it seems clear, a very real (and crucial) tension between the perceived need to include learning gain as an evaluation focus, while there is, at the same time, a recognition of the practical problems in doing so.

In this section, I first examine arguments for and against using the evaluation of learning gain as a criterion for evaluating a SAC, and then briefly introduce some

ways in which participants suggest this might be done. The suggestions presented in the second part of this section will then be examined more fully in the context of the discussion of data relating to evaluation methodology in section 7.4 below.

i) *Should an evaluation attempt to evaluate learning gain?*
Gardner & Miller (1999: 230) include learning gain as a "measure of effectiveness" but do not detail how such a measure might be produced. In the study interviews, ten participants highlight the importance of evaluating learning gain, both at the level of the individual learner and the SAC overall. SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair argues in terms of the beneficial effect such resultant data would have, not only for the learners and the SAC, but also for the "field" of independent learning (Barbara Sinclair: 260-264).

SAC teacher Sunny Chu expresses the view that not only should learning gain be evaluated but that it is necessary to bring it to the attention of individual learners. His view is reflected in comments by non-expert SAC funder Aster Warner who argues for the evaluation of learning gain of individual learners as well as some kind of aggregate learning gain of the "programme" (or SAC):

> ...I think that (a test) would be beneficial for the particular students...I suppose the distinction is to be made between the actual proficiency level in absolute terms and the learning gain of the programme and I suppose ideally you should try to be able to assess both of those...
> (Aster Warner: 101-105 - my parentheses).

However, of the eight participants who stress its importance, six observe that any evaluation of learning gain is a difficult task. David Gardner expresses the difficulty thus:

> I think it's probably very important to look at language gain but I also think it's very difficult to do...
> (David Gardner: 563-564);

Amongst the difficulties highlighted are the:

- problem of regular and non-regular SAC users (William Cheng, 245-249; David Gardner, 576-599; Richard Pemberton, 269-272; Barbara Sinclair, 258-259);
- the control of variables extraneous to the SAC Andrew Morrall, 355-365; Barbara Sinclair, 269-272; Pamela Smith, 130); and,
- the effect such evaluation might have on individual learners' independent learning process (Richard Farmer: 209-210).

SAC experts Barbara Sinclair and David Gardner agree that evaluating learning gain is "going to be very difficult if they're not **regular attenders**..." (Barbara Sinclair: 258-259), and that one "would have to have people who use it on a fairly regular basis so that you could at least make a claim that you can attribute some of the learning to that..." (David Gardner: 578-581). One group of learners whom it might, in this sense, be easier to evaluate effectively is that group of non-voluntary learners identified above in section 7.3.6 (iii) who attend the SAC regularly as part of a course. However, to base a centre's evaluation on only one group of learners whose motivation would most probably be affected by the compulsory nature of their SALL would seem questionable. Indeed, it should be noted that a large proportion, if not the majority of SAC learners do not attend on a regular basis (Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2000, 2001, 2002).

Even with regular attenders, there are difficulties as identified by four participants and perhaps best illustrated by comments from non-SAC expert language centre manager Pamela Smith:

> ...you'd have to have a pilot group, people who were kept in a box and only allowed out to go to CILL and no other exposure, and people who had classes plus CILL, people who had classes no CILL...I don't know how you can do that...
> (Pamela Smith: 130-134).

This difficulty of **extraneous variables** has also been identified in the SAC literature (Gardner, 1999; Morrison, 1999), and is summed up by Sturtridge who states that:

> It is not easy to evaluate the success of a centre in terms of whether the work done there has contributed more to the learners' proficiency than work they did in class (or elsewhere).
> (Sturtridge, 1997: 69 - my parentheses)

A third difficulty is identified by SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer who warns that any attempt to measure progress has the **potential to "impose" on the learner** (Farmer: 209). Gardner & Miller (1997: 232) make a similar point when talking about learners potentially "suffering at the hands of evaluators". In other words, the evaluation process itself may have negative effects (or "negative washback" (Davies et al, 1999: 225)) on the SAC learners.

Finally in our discussion of whether an evaluation should include the attempted measurement of learning gain, we should perhaps keep in mind a

comment made by SAC teacher Andrew Morrall. It summarises some of the points raised and reminds us that an individual student's lack of progress does not equate necessarily to an ineffective SAC:

> ...if the assessment was that their English hadn't really improved, would it be fair to put that down to a failure on the part of CILL or could it be partly a failure on the part of the student who, for example, had been here for 10 hours but whose English hadn't improved because for 10 hours they'd been e-mailing or watching a video and not getting much out of it - they'd been using the Centre ineffectively...
> (Andrew Morrall: 355-361).

Leaving aside the question as to the degree to which a SAC could be said to work effectively if its learners were using it ineffectively, the clear support amongst participants for the notion of including language gain as an element in a SAC evaluation leads me to the conclusion that it must be seriously considered in the development of a SAC evaluation framework.

ii) *Possible ways of evaluating learning gain*

Participants suggest a number of ways in which one might attempt to evaluate learning gain. However, as discussed in (i) above, judging the progress that learners have made in (and as a result of using) a SAC is problematic. Perhaps the best that can be hoped for is an analysis of learners' perceptions of gain.

Despite, or perhaps as a result of, their rather uncertain attitudes to the possibility of identifying quantifiable learning gain, twelve participants see the identification of learners' **perceptions** of gain as a meaningful alternative to more easily quantifiable criteria such as test scores. These twelve participants represent all SAC roles. The following are two examples:

> It's very hard to say or to come up with criteria to be able to say this SAC is effective & this one isn't...the only way you can really find out is to ask the users how effective they think the Centre is.
> (Andrew Morrall: 153-155);

> ...the learners' perceptions of the usefulness of the facility which will be partly progress - it depends what you mean by "progress", progress could be a feeling of making headway in your proficiency, it might also be a feeling of greater involvement and motivation...
> (Mary Spratt: 172-176).

Seven possible ways of evaluating learning gain are suggested: learning diaries or "logs", tests, learner portfolios, learner focus groups, learner self-

recording, learner introspection, and regular SAC learner-teacher review meetings. These are discussed below. A number of the suggestions put forward are done so in the context of enabling the provision of "feedback or traceable record" (Wong Kwong Ming: 115) for learners rather than specifically for the purposes of SAC evaluation. However, as Wong Kwong Ming points out, this "kind of raw material can (then) feedback into the evaluation" (Wong Kwong Ming: 348-349 - my parentheses). The use of tests and learner focus groups is revisited in section 7.4.2 (i) below in the context of participant comments relating to data collection methods.

Learning diaries

Three participants suggest the use of learning diaries or "logs" for evaluation purposes. Hopkins (1993) distinguishes between the subjective writing of a *diary* and the recording of factual information in a *log*. In this study, I am assuming that a *learning diary*, in the context of a SAC, may contain elements of both. SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming and non-expert SAC funder Aster Warner suggest the use of the learning diary in conjunction with the setting of learning goals or objectives, and some kind of review of learning (Wong Kwong Ming: 122-126; Aster Warner: 108-111). Similarly, SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton sees value in the use of diaries, but only in conjunction with learner focus-group discussions and/or interviews with learners (Richard Pemberton: 495-497). Wong Kwong Ming suggests that a review of learning might be undertaken in the form of groups of learners having regular face-to-face sessions with a SAC teacher (Wong Kwong Ming: 122-130).

A number of self-access researchers have discussed the use of learning *diaries* or *logs* in a SAC (e.g. Gardner & Miller, 1999, Martyn, 1994; Pemberton et al, 2001). However, most studies that focus upon the diary as a data collection tool have tended to apply the results of research to classroom-based language learning (e.g. Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Bailey, 1990; McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Nunan, 1992). The richness of the data that can be obtained is undeniable: an example can be seen in Wilga River's diary account of learning Spanish, whose reflections provide insightful and fascinating data for research into language acquisition, language learning and language teaching (Rivers, 1983). While the potential value of diary data is undeniable, within the context of the SAC, practical issues such as the sheer volume of data and data analysis methodology would, however, need to be carefully considered.

Tests

Four participants discuss the notion of using a diagnostic test to set learning goals which then form part of a learning programme that is reviewed periodically for progress. SAC learner William Cheng sees the need for new learners to take a diagnostic test in order to clearly define their "self-study programme". His ten-stage programme is characterised by clear, timed stages with an achievement test at each stage to be successfully completed before continuing to the next section (William Cheng: 28-30; 99-106; 223-227; 251-254). Non-SAC expert funder Aster Warner and two SAC learners perceive tests as part of a system of learner self-assessment. The use of a diagnostic entry test and progress tests for learners is also supported by SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair but she acknowledges the previously-identified problem of isolating variables when using the test results as SAC evaluation data (Barbara Sinclair: 270-273). In the testing literature, Davies et al (1999: 43) identify a further potential drawback in that diagnostic tests which are able to provide a detailed analysis of learner problems, are at best problematic and time-consuming. They are also generally used for student placement and selection rather than progress review.

Mary Spratt expresses the view that progress is only measurable in terms of the learning of specified content within particular learning material or of "discrete language items" since:

> ...often I don't think they're going to put in a lot of hours necessarily and a lot of the standard tests are only going to mark changes in proficiency after a significant number of hours...
> (Mary Spratt: 218-221).

This view seems supported in the testing literature by Bachman who, in calling for the introduction of criterion-referenced tests in language programme evaluation, states that:

> ...the development of such tests requires a well-specified domain of language proficiency...
> (Bachman, 1989: 257).

Mary Spratt suggests, alternatively, that we should perhaps be looking for "different kinds of progress" and not just language gain (Mary Spratt: 207). Lindsay Miller reports that three studies (Lam, 1996; Ruechakul, 1996; Yeung, 2002) have purported to show learning gain using "certain tests", and others have been noted in Figure 5 (section 2.5.2). However, as quoted previously,

he then continues, using his basket/volley ball analogy, to question the validity of using a test as an evaluation tool (Lindsay Miller: 330-342). Such concerns are reflected more generally in the language testing literature (Bachman, 1990; Davies et al, 1999; Hughes, 1996).

The issue of a test as a data collection tool is further considered in section 7.4.2 (ii).

Learner portfolios

SAC experts Barbara Sinclair and Lindsay Miller put forward the use of learner portfolios as a way of learners self-evaluating their progress. A *portfolio* is defined by Genesee & Upshur (1996) as:

> "...a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress and achievements in given areas" (Genesee & Upshur, 1996: 99)

They suggest that, together with learner self-reflection and "conferences" with a teacher and other students, portfolios help students take responsibility for their own learning. Hamp-Lyons & Condon (2000), tracing the development of the notion from that of the *writing folder* that they report has been widely used in British education since the 1950s, focus more on the use of the portfolio in more formalised assessment-focused contexts. Despite this, in their description of a " living system" (168) and a "context-rich kind of evaluation" (166) where a learner is encouraged to have "ownership" (162) of this reflective and self-assessed evaluation tool, there would seem to be a resonance with many of the features of the SAC that I have been discussing.

If practicable, the portfolio would seem to have potential in a SALL environment, in particular as an evaluation tool with a developmental function. In this vein, Lindsay Miller describes the process being piloted in one Hong Kong SAC where the emphasis is less on assessment of learner output and more on the use of the portfolio as a reflective tool:

> When the students start using the SAC, they are introduced to the concept that they won't be evaluated, assessed...but they have to build up a package, a profile of their own learning and they have to be able at the end of a certain period to demonstrate what they've done in the SAC & how they feel it has helped them...
> (Lindsay Miller: 436-441).

He continues by proposing the use of portfolio data in a SAC evaluation:

> ...there's no reason why it (the use of portfolios) shouldn't be presented as a way of evaluating the success of the centre to the administrators as well - obviously you're not going to look at thousands of learner profiles but you can easily take random samples to show what students actually think. (Lindsay Miller: 467-471 - my parentheses).

It should be noted, however, that both the Hong Kong SACs which have introduced portfolios have groups of non-voluntary learners and, as previously noted by Barbara Sinclair, regarding SAC evaluation in general, "it's going to be very difficult if they're not regular attenders" (Barbara Sinclair: 258-259). The difficulty would seem to be two-fold in this regard. Firstly, non-regular users are unlikely to be sufficiently motivated to maintain an effective portfolio. Barbara Sinclair, in e-mail follow-up to the interview, suggests that such motivation might be provided by the recognition of SALL in terms of it being credit-bearing. Hamp-Lyons & Condon (1999), however, point to the possibility of the processes involved in the compiling of the portfolio being motivational in themselves. Secondly, if SAC learners are not fairly regular attenders, the portfolios are unlikely to include data of a sufficiently high quality to enable their use as an evaluation tool.

The potential benefits of the rich, qualitative data that might be derived from learner portfolios together, however, with the potential problems in implementation point to their possible value as an additional, rather than core, tool for evaluating learner gain. It may be that they can perhaps be used more with an eye to developmental, rather than judgmental, evaluative functions.

Learner focus groups

Richard Pemberton suggests the possibility of setting up learner focus groups to evaluate learner progress:

> ...you could have some sort of group, you know, a self-directed learning group and they might discuss - I've tried to run a couple of those - you could have them discuss their progress but either the advisor would need to be present or they would need to get a copy of the tape or something... (Richard Pemberton: 381-385).

Although he later explicitly suggests that such focus group data might be used for SAC evaluation purposes (Richard Pemberton: 495), it seems unlikely that the data derived from such meetings, while potentially of value to individual learners, would easily feed into a formal evaluation process.

The following three suggestions, it should be noted, are made by participants with no direct reference to their use in a SAC evaluation, but rather as possible learning tools for SAC learners.

Two SAC co-ordinators, Richard Farmer and Richard Pemberton, make reference to **learners self-recording** (either aurally or on video) their oral production. Richard Farmer suggests that the learner can use such recordings for comparative purposes to evaluate progress (Richard Farmer: 163-164), while Richard Pemberton suggests that learners could be "passing tapes or videos occasionally to an advisor to check or comment on" (Richard Pemberton: 237-238). Such a procedure would seem, however, to be difficult for the individual learner to undertake effectively and, even then, would only be of value as an evaluation tool for an individual learner, rather than for the SAC.

One SAC learner reports the result of using an informal type of **learner introspection** as a way of evaluating his progress:

> I cannot count the level of my English but I can feel for example my vocabulary...my vocabulary library is become larger and larger...
> (Yen Tung Yuk: 136-138).

While this type of self-evaluation is to be undertaken on an individual basis, it may be feasible for such perceptions to be collected to form a data-set of perceptions indicative of learning gain.

Finally, SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming stresses the value for a learner of having a **face-to-face progress review** with the SAC teacher as part of his learning programme:

> ...I really appreciate with there have some progress review - review some of the past study, for example doing some pronunciation work in the past and maybe two month or one month later you get together to review what going on, what progress you got...
> **Bruce:**
> ...sorry, "get together" what do you mean?
> **Wong Kwong Ming:**
> ..."get together" I mean talk with the tutor to review the progress, not just myself...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 88-97).

As with learner introspection, it may be possible to collect data from such individualised reviews to use as indications of perceived learning gain on a collective SAC-focused basis.

In this section I have introduced the possibility of using learner progress as an evaluation criterion. While the desirability of such a focus seems to me to be beyond doubt, there are clearly issues to be addressed regarding the nature of the resulting data. The topic will be examined further in section 7.4.2 below in relation to **how** we might approach evaluating a SAC.

7.3.8 Implications

It has, I feel, become clear that as the elements that constitute a SAC are numerous and complex in their inter-relationships, it must be recognised that it is not possible (or necessarily desirable) to evaluate all aspects of a SAC's operation. Therefore, a focused evaluation is called for.

Five main potential evaluation foci have been identified in this section:

- stakeholders' perceptions of the operation of the SAC and the activities of learners and SAC staff;
- language learning and IL skills, both in terms of perceptions of learning gain as well as the actual activities carried out;
- the SAC's facilities, systems and resources;
- efficiency in terms of measures such as levels of a SAC's usage, systems and procedures, service provision, and staffing;
- effectiveness in terms of
    1. the physical centre as manifested in its learning materials, facilities and range of possible activities
    2. the learner in terms of usage, meeting learner needs and progress made as measured post-graduation
    3. the degree to which the SAC meets its stated objectives.

With regard to the development of the evaluation framework, the need for certain decisions to be made regarding the **what** of a SAC evaluation have begun to emerge. These decisions include the need to decide:

- the **foci** of the evaluation;
- the **questions** that need to be asked in order to determine those foci;

- the **boundaries** in terms of what is to be understood by certain key terms and concepts (such as, for example, what constitutes *effectiveness* in terms of the operation of the SAC); and,
- what "**truth**" will the evaluation be searching for - will it, for example, be looking for quantifiable data in order to state objective "truths" regarding the SAC or will it seek perceptions with their rich but unquantifiable data?

It is with these in mind that I move on to the final section of the data analysis and interpretation that focuses on the question of **how** to evaluate a SAC.

7.4 How to evaluate a SAC

In the previous two sections (7.2 and 7.3), I have discussed participant data relating to possible reasons for undertaking a SAC evaluation and possible foci for such an evaluation. The data in this section relate to the question of how a SAC might be evaluated and I examine this in three parts. In the first (section 7.4.1) I consider aspects relating to possible overall approaches to an evaluation. The second (section 7.4.2) deals with the methodology that might be employed within an approach for the collection and analysis of data. The last part (section 7.4.3) examines the participants' views concerning the question of who might conduct such an evaluation. In this discussion, I use the term *methodology* as referring to:

> ...a set of procedures and tools to generate enlightening or useful results. (Scriven, 1991: 25)

It is, thus, more focused and practical in meaning than the term *approach*, which might rather be seen as describing the evaluation context within a particular method is employed.

7.4.1 Approach

In this section, I examine the data relating to possible approaches to SAC evaluation in terms of two issues: the paradigm within which the evaluation is to operate and the degree of formality. There are two other pertinent issues. The first is whether the overall evaluation focus should be developmental or judgmental. As discussed in chapter 2, it is the purpose of the evaluation that determines its point on the formative-summative cline. Decisions regarding the possible developmental and judgmental functions that a SAC evaluation might perform (as discussed in

section 7.2.3 (i) and (ii)) will both impact upon the choice of paradigm and the degree of formality, and indeed largely determine the overall evaluation approach. The second issue, whether the evaluation should be conducted internally or by external consultants, is discussed below in section 7.4.3 which focuses on: "Who evaluates?".

i) The evaluation *paradigm*

As stated in chapter two, I use the term *paradigm* to refer to a basic, but loose, set of shared beliefs and concepts that inform a set of methodological principles. Since the chosen paradigm underpins the evaluation methodology, it is clearly desirable that the paradigmatic principles be identified, even if the relationship between such principles and the attendant methodology is not always clear-cut (Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Worthen & Sanders, 1987; Candy, 1989; Janesick, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a).

Four SAC expert participants put forward the view that any evaluation of a SAC should be naturalistic and qualitative in approach. Two of them, Barbara Sinclair and Richard Farmer emphatically point to any attempt to implement a positivistic and quantitative approach as being unrealistic:

> ...if you're looking for empirical, positivistic type evidence, I don't think you'll get it...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 280-281);

> I don't see how you can measure quantitatively...well, you can suggest that as a very short-term strategy, except in the individual short term...
> (Richard Farmer: 213-214);

SAC teacher Sunny Chu and SAC consultant Lindsay Miller also talk of the need for a naturalistic and qualitative approach. Sunny Chu does not explicitly rule out the use of a quantitative element but seems to suggest that his preference is otherwise:

> ...if the society uses the figures as the criteria for evaluating a centre, I can't say it's wrong and there's no evidence to prove this is invalid to use the figures as a criteria in the evaluation process...but how do we...we can use a more qualitative approach in evaluation...
> (Sunny Chu: 324-328).

Lindsay Miller, on the other hand, is clear in his view when he states that "effectiveness can only be measured in terms of more naturalistic approaches to measurement". He then adds that "...these are more **personal** approaches"

(Lindsay Miller: 235-237 - my emphasis). This notion of a more "personal" evaluative approach is reflected generally in other participants' comments concerning the evaluation process which tend to relate to individual learners and teachers rather than to centres or institutions. Barbara Sinclair (184-185) explicitly refers to "very private and personal reasons why we need to evaluate what we are doing". Such comments suggest a humanistic approach and can be seen to preface section 7.4.1 (ii) below where I focus on the degree of evaluation formality.

My perception of participants' views supporting a naturalistic approach is echoed in very many of the participants' comments, not only in this section, but also in the rest of this chapter. It is also explicitly supported by their responses to the post-interview e-mail questionnaire question that asked if a SAC evaluation should be primarily qualitative or quantitative. Ten out of thirteen agreed, six strongly that an evaluation should be primarily qualitative. However, as will be seen below, although a naturalistic paradigm would seem to be the most suitable, there is implied support, both in the interviews and in the post-interview questionnaire, for Flick's (1998: 230) view that "qualitative research is inherently multi-method in focus": in other words, a qualitative approach does not rule out the collection of quantitative data.

A number of participant suggestions clearly seem to accept that there is a place for quantitative as well as qualitative data. This viewpoint is explicitly stated by SAC experts Andrew Morrall (PI 162), Barbara Sinclair (PI 175), David Gardner (PI 160), Lindsay Miller (PI 162), Richard Pemberton (PI 144), Wong Kwong Ming (PI 155; 168), and characterized by William Cheng who suggests the SAC:

> ...set up some of this financial or non-financial in university...some non-financial measure... and each year to evaluate this kind of the indicator and then to measure pros and cons...maybe more quantitative in commercial point of view but maybe you'll be having some qualitative - you combine the two things...I think that is and also - from the centre's angle - justify the value of the centre, the existence of the centre and that too - two kind of the position conduct the evaluation.
> (William Cheng: 303-309)

The inclusion of quantitative data is further supported by references by participants to the notions (often conceived of as operating within a quantitative approach) of *audit* and *benchmarking* as possible elements of a SAC evaluation. These are discussed below in section 7.4.2 (iii). Their

inclusion does not rule out a naturalistic and qualitative approach, but at very least it argues for a mixed evaluation design with a quantitative element.

Thus, although participants can be seen to generally favour a naturalistic and qualitative approach, there is certainly a perception that there might also be a place for a more quantitative element in a SAC evaluation. As this section unfolds, it is perhaps the evaluator as "bricoleur" or "quilt-maker" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a: 4-6) that is seen to best reflect the necessary multi-dimensionality of approach and methodology of the SAC evaluation process. In this multi-dimensional role, the evaluator is working within an interpretivist, constructivist framework where she brings her own experience and understanding to bear upon the context in an attempt to "understand contextualised meaning" (Greene, 2000). SAC learner Wan Sau Yi seems to recognise this in her response to the question "who evaluates?" when she insists it should be the SAC co-ordinator because "you know much" and others "may mislead your question" or "not ask the question accurately" (Wan Sau Yi: 158-163).

ii) *Formal v informal evaluation*

Six participants discuss elements of an evaluation that might be characterised overall by informality as opposed to formality. This reflects evaluator Robert Stake's (1976) view that:

> ...informal, personal evaluation should be no less important at a time when formal evaluative research is becoming more important.
> (Stake, 1976: 8)

Such informality is discussed in this section within the context of the possibility of inclusion of an 'ad hoc' evaluation and/or the inclusion of on-going elements, but qualified by the participants' perceptions of the need also for a degree of formality.

Ad hoc evaluation

'Ad hoc' evaluation is clearly indicated, both explicitly in terms of evaluation techniques suggested and in the choice of language used, by three SAC expert participants. SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair suggests teachers "randomly" asking learners about their experience of the SAC. She uses a very informal register to do this and in doing so seems to highlight the informality of the evaluation process she is suggesting:

> ...randomly with tutors stopping people as they go out and asking them..."**Oi, you, what do you think of that then**?" - that would be a kind of informal gathering of views...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 230-235 - my emphasis).

SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton, referring to aspects relating to the efficiency of a SAC, emphasises a short, subjective process, the informality of which is, as with Barbara Sinclair above, characterised by his choice of register (as indicated by my emphasis in the following quote):

> I don't think I'm going to spend long trying to evaluate those, I think the evaluation of that is going to be **impressionistic** evaluation of when you walk in kind of what does it look like and **the odd bits of feedback you get from various people** - you realise that this sign isn't very clear and needs to be replaced...
> (Richard Pemberton: 583-588 - my emphasis).

Finally, SAC consultant Lindsay Miller expressly emphasises an informal approach:

> ...if students are actively involved in using some of the facilities, **just by casually glancing in and** you see that they're there, they're doing things, then that's effective - it's not a scientific measure but that's effective...
> (Lindsay Miller: 260-263 - my emphasis).

This informality of approach is supported by SAC learner Wan Sau Yi (115) who suggests "you (the evaluator) just walk in and ask them...the first person you see" (my parentheses).

However, despite such views and the fact that nine of the participants agree to the suggestion in the post-interview e-mail questionnaire that an evaluation should be "fairly informal", an examination of comments from the same questionnaires suggests any informality should not be all-pervasive. They suggest there is a need for at least "face" formality. In other words, even though the data collection process may be conducted fairly informally, as Lindsay Miller points out:

> ...evaluation needs to be taken seriously and be seen to be a main part of the SACs development.
> (Lindsay Miller: PI 172).

Particularly with reference to the evaluation end-product (i.e. the report), SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair doubts:

> ...that an informal report to an external or managerial body would go down too well and would perpetuate the image of 'language workers', especially English teachers/tutors, as academically less worthy than other subject areas.

and worries that:

> I do think we have an image problem to battle.
> (Barbara Sinclair: PI 195).

In e-mail follow-up to the interview, I asked Barbara Sinclair how such informally collected data as she was suggesting might be included could be incorporated into a more formal evaluation report. She responded that, although she felt it was valuable in that it showed that the SAC is "interested in the individual":

> Perhaps, on deeper reflection, it's a function more related to counselling than evaluation.
> (Barbara Sinclair: e-mail interview follow-up)

Her reconsideration of the place of such informal data in a SAC evaluation, together with the other participants' concerns identified above, would lead me to treat with caution extensive use of such data.

On-going evaluation

Reflecting Stake's (1976) recommendation that on-going evaluation should be built into an educational programme, SAC teacher Andrew Morrall introduces the possibility of an evaluation being a constant or on-going process. He suggests that a centre:

> ...can be evaluated by whether or not it constantly evaluates itself...or whether it sees evaluation as a 'once a year, do it for a couple of weeks and then forget it' thing (Andrew Morrall: 422-425).

However, once again, when I examined participants' comments regarding this issue in the post-interview questionnaire, despite eleven out of thirteen agreeing that on-going evaluation was desirable, a somewhat different picture emerges from their follow-up comments. Participants agree with the notion of on-going evaluation but with significant provisos and clarifications, for example:

> (Evaluation should be on-going) but should have summative events...
> (Aster Warner: PI 186 - my parentheses);

> Evaluation is time consuming and tiring. Over evaluating has an impact on learners and staff. To make all evaluation on-going would be a waste of resources and may have a negative effect.
> (David Gardner: PI 187);

while Richard Pemberton seems to define the notion of on-going evaluation very broadly, equating it with an evaluation with a developmental function:

> I'm taking 'ongoing' to refer to the developmental nature of the evaluation. (Richard Pemberton: PI 157).

Finally, regarding the formality of an evaluation, Andrew Morrall (430-434) identifies the need for documentary evidence to support, and to some degree formalise, an informal approach to evaluation. This seems to reflect the view of SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer (262-264). Experience as a SAC co-ordinator has led Richard Farmer to believe firmly in the need for the evaluation processes to be formalised in terms of providing clearly identifiable feedback that can be used to identify action to be taken with regard to future centre development. The need for this type of formalisation is reflected in two ways. Firstly, in the reality of the fact that Hong Kong SACs are required to report annually to their funders. Secondly, it can be seen in participant comments such as those referring to showing "evidence" (Andrew Morrall: 430), or setting up "measures" and evaluating "indicators" (William Cheng: 304-305).

I feel that non-SAC expert Mary Spratt perhaps best summarises most participants' views regarding the informality/formality issue when she states:

> An evaluation would probably need to be quite rigorous in its design and information collection so this is not informal. But any contact with staff and users would probably be more fruitful if carried out in an informal style. (Mary Spratt: PI 184).

Overall, participants suggest a naturalistic, qualitative paradigm while accepting the need for incorporation of a quantitative element, particularly for purposes of accountability. A "personal" and fairly informal approach is then generally suggested but one which should, however, be formalised in terms of the need for it to provide clear, useful feedback to the audience.

7.4.2 Data collection and analysis

In this section, in which I examine participants' comments relating to evaluation data collection and analysis, I focus on:

- from whom to collect data;
- eight potential data collection methods and their applicability to the SAC evaluation context;

- issues identified by participants relating to the analysis and reporting of the collected data; and finally,
- three main potential constraints: irregular patterns of learner usage
  the perceived reticence of learners
  the perceived weaknesses of existing SALL evaluation instruments (a summary).

i) *Whom to survey*

Perhaps reflecting their general preference for a qualitative approach to SAC evaluation, those participants who discussed the question of whom to survey (or *sample*) express views that seem to support the notion of *theoretical* (Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 2000b), or *purposeful/purposive* (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Patton, 1990, 2002) sampling (chapter 4, section 4.4.1). None of them make reference to any kind of *probability sampling* (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 87-88).

Seven participants explicitly identify the SAC learner as a key informant while all participants seem to imply in their references the need to ask for learners' views in various contexts. As SAC support staff member Wilkin Cheung points out:

> ...sometimes the students know the most, they know all about it. (Wilkin Cheung: 257-258)

As also discussed in different contexts in sections 7.3.2 above, and 7.4.2 (iv) and 7.4.3 (i) below, there are also concerns expressed concerning the learner's status as a user of the SAC. Reference is made to: regular users (Yen Tung Yuk: 151-152), non-regular users (Andrew Morrall: 343-345), ex-users (Richard Farmer: 333) and (presumably referring to regular, motivated SAC users) "certain students - like me for example" (SAC learner, Lawrie Yeung: 100).

Otherwise, participant comments reflect David Gardner, Andrew Morrall and Barbara Sinclair's view that a wide range of informants should be utilised. Participants refer both to other direct stakeholders such as the SAC teachers and learners (Wan Sau Yi: 87; Yen Tung Yuk: 165), and indirect stakeholders such as teachers in other departments (Andrew Morrall: 410-415; Mary Spratt: 330-336; Yen Tung Yuk: 171-172).

Overall, the data, with reference also to the evaluation literature and personal experience, suggest that the purpose and functions of an evaluation should largely determine the sampling. Thus, for example, an evaluation focusing on the SAC's administrative systems would probably usefully include technical staff in the survey, one focusing on learning gain would probably not.

ii) *Data collection methods*

Most participants focus upon one or two ways of collecting evaluation data but a number, in putting forward various possibilities, seem to reflect Richard Farmer's view that a "cluster of evaluation procedures and mechanisms" is desirable (Richard Farmer: 249). Similarly, but with regard to the data itself, David Gardner favours the collection of a "wide-ranging set of data" (David Gardner: 835). A number of evaluation researchers, referring to the issue of *triangulation*, i.e. applying and combining a variety of methodologies while examining the same phenomenon, have suggested the advantages provided by a multi-focused approach at many levels (Denzin, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a; Keeves, 1997b; Sechrest & Sidani, 1995). Denzin, for example, sees an advantage to this, particularly in terms of overcoming the bias inherent in the researcher, theories, method and data:

> By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources, (researchers) can hope to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single-methods, single-observer, and single-theory studies.
> (Denzin, 1989: 307)

In an e-mail follow-up to the interview, Barbara Sinclair suggests that asking SAC learners' host department teachers about their perceptions of language improvement in the learner, while not reliable in itself, would be useful for triangulation purposes.

Gardner & Miller (1999: 236) suggest seven ways of collecting SAC evaluation data: tests, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, observation, documentation and participation. The participants in this study, who all contribute suggestions, put forward eight different data collection methods including all those suggested by Gardner & Miller with the exception of *participation*, and with the inclusion of two others: case studies and "activity-focused mini-questionnaires".

Tests

The desirability and feasibility of using tests as a way of evaluating learning gain (as introduced previously above in section 7.3.7 (ii), is discussed by eight of the participants. SAC consultant Lindsay Miller, referring to Lamb (1996) and Reuchakul (1996), reports that tests have been used in research studies to demonstrate the potential benefits learners might derive from a self-access approach to learning:

> ...there are a couple of studies which have measured students' language benefit after having used self-access and each of the studies has demonstrated students have got higher scores on certain tests. (Lindsay Miller: 311-314)

Yeung (2002), in her comparison of the vocabulary correction strategies of two groups of Hong Kong secondary school students, found that the group with SALL experience scored higher in word memory tests.

Non-expert SAC funder Aster Warner, and SAC learners Wong Kwong Ming and Lawrie Yeung express the view that tests would be valuable as part of the evaluative process to demonstrate learning gain. In addition, Aster Warner also perceives a benefit for the individual SAC learner:

> ...if a good, robust outcome test could be developed, that would be a big gain as far as the system is concerned and if it could be a self-assessed test - by self-assessment - I think that would be beneficial for the particular students...I suppose the distinction is to be made between the actual proficiency level in absolute terms and the learning gain of the programme and I suppose ideally you should try to be able to assess both of those... (Aster Warner: 98-105).

SAC learners William Cheng (99-110; 223-227), Lawrie Yeung (80-88) and Wan Sau Yi (52) suggest integrating tests into a fairly structured programme of SALL.

Four participants, however, express doubt as to the effectiveness, in a SALL context, of the use of tests to demonstrate learning gain. SAC teacher Sunny Chu, when asked about possible measures of a SAC's effectiveness, is quite is his assertion that such measurement is should not be made "through a test" (Sunny Chu: 372-373).

The doubts expressed focus on two main issues: what the test actually assesses and the effects of uncontrolled variables. SAC consultant Lindsay Miller and SAC teacher Sunny Chu question the ability of a test to reflect

learners' effective use of the SAC. Sunny Chu focuses his criticism on the fact that a test would not reflect what the learners had been doing in the SAC.

> Before they come to the Centre they've got a score like this and after they've come to the Centre they've got another score...what about using the score...but does it reflect the process of learning?...it doesn't reflect the process of learning...it doesn't...
> (Sunny Chu: 378-381).

Lindsay Miller suggests that, while for some learners a writing portfolio that demonstrates a learner's progress during their time spent in the SAC may be of value, a SAC test score is of very limited use to the individual learner (Lindsay Miller: 436-449). With reference to a test as a tool for evaluating a centre's effectiveness, when relating his volley-ball/basket-ball team analogy (previously referred to in sections 7.3.5 (ii) and 7.3.6 (i)) to the evaluation of a SAC, he comments:

> ...if you sat the students down and said okay perform on a test & they all scored great scores, does that mean the SAC had been effective - not really
> (Lindsay Miller: 340-342).

The limitations that Sunny Chu and Lindsay Miller note above are reflected the testing literature. Genesee & Upshur's (1996) judgment regarding standardised tests would seem to be of direct relevance when considering the individualised nature of study in the SAC. They state that:

> The chief shortcoming of standardised tests...is their failure to mesh with instructional objectives, plans and practices. If tests and other methods of assessment are to be instrumental in improving second language teaching and learning, they must reflect important aspects of teaching and learning in your classroom.
> (Genesee & Upshur, 1996: 257)

Such reservations concerning the use of tests also relate to those expressed by SAC consultant David Gardner (and referred to earlier in section 7.3.7, i) concerning extraneous variables. He identifies variables extraneous to the SAC that might affect affecting learners' linguistic performance and therefore test scores as presenting a fundamental problem:

> ...wouldn't it be nice to say "we studied 500 students and they went through a one-term self-access programme and when they came out at the end of it they were all 100% better at English", if we could do that it would be great you can't even do that for classroom teaching (not honestly), you can do it a little more effectively but not really honestly because there are other variables...for self-access I think it is particularly difficult, particularly

> in the way that most of the self-access in Hong Kong is conducted I think and that is that it is running alongside other kinds of language input... (David Gardner: 495-504).

Non-SAC expert Mary Spratt identifies duration of study as one such variable. She feels that, for learners who have not studied in the SAC for sufficiently long, test scores are unlikely to reflect any, necessarily small, changes in proficiency (Mary Spratt: 219-221).

In summary, despite the attraction of the derived quantitative data, unless part of a structured self-study programme within the SAC that required a fixed number of hours of study, the value of using a test as a SAC evaluation tool seems limited.

Interviews & focus-group discussions

Seven participants identify interviews as a potential evaluation tool. They identify a number of possible interviewees: SAC learners (Andrew Morrall: 288-289; Richard Farmer: 333-336; Wong Kwong Ming: 346-349; Lawrie Yeung: PI 100; Yen Tung Yuk: 151-152), SAC staff (Richard Pemberton: 627-628; Yen Tung Yuk: 165-166), and non-SAC teachers (Andrew Morrall: 410-415; Barbara Sinclair: 237-238; Yen Tung Yuk: 165-188). As noted previously with reference to measuring learning gain (section 7.3.7, ii), Richard Pemberton suggests a variation on interviews as a means of providing "open-ended data" in the use of "focus group discussions" (Richard Pemberton: 495).

Interviews are widely used as a data collection tool in evaluation. This is true in evaluation generally as pointed out by Fretchling & Sharp (1997), Pollitt & Summa (1997) and Patton (2002) to name a few; in ELT evaluation (e.g. Weir & Roberts, 1994 and Lynch, 1996), and in the evaluation of SACs as seen in Gardner & Miller (1999) and Reinders (2000a & b). The use of interviews in the context of this PhD study is discussed in some detail in chapter four and much of this discussion is relevant to the issue of using interviews in an evaluation context. Issues that need to be considered in the use of interviews include protocol design in relation to question topics and question types, sampling, and practical concerns such as when and where to interview participants and in what language.

The use of the *focus group* as a tool for both qualitative and quantitative research is widely accepted within many disciplines (Vaughn et al, 1996). A *focus group* has been defined as:

> ...a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive and non-threatening environment. (Krueger: 1994: 6)

Both strengths and possible weaknesses of a focus group approach can be seen in the reliance upon the role of the moderator and the nature of the group itself (Morgan, 1997). A focus group session can be less time-consuming than individual interviews and there is the possibility of it having a loosening effect (Vaughn, 1996) resulting in richer data emerging from interaction which might include participants relating and comparing experiences. However, the moderator and the need for purposeful sampling are sources of potential bias (Vaughn, 1996) that need to be recognised. Additionally, Morgan (1997) points out that the group interaction itself can affect the data in terms of, for example, a polarisation of participants' views. There is, therefore, a need for very careful planning and moderator training if focus group discussion is to be included in a SAC evaluation.

Questionnaires

Four participants discuss the use of questionnaires as an evaluation tool. SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton (485-491) and SAC learner Yen Tung Yuk (153-156) identify a need for them. As Richard Pemberton points out, they are "a way of getting a lot of numbers in quickly" which is necessary since "there's always going to be the administrators who want to look at those kinds of numbers" (Richard Pemberton: 485-488). In a similar vein, Barbara Sinclair declares that "to make it more formal for research purposes you would need to have questionnaires" (Barbara Sinclair: 235-236). SAC learner Yen Tung Yuk (153-156) supports the use of questionnaires in order to obtain learners' views quickly and also sees further value to be gained from e-mailing them to learners. Weir & Roberts, in their (1994) review of evaluation in ELT, identify a number of factors supporting their use. These include the fact that they are: time and cost efficient, anonymous, allow for wider sampling than would be feasible with interviews and the fact that the data collected is potentially easier to analyse.

Their use as a SAC evaluation tool is, however, questioned by SAC co-ordinators Richard Farmer and Richard Pemberton, and non-SAC expert language centre manager Pamela Smith. They comment on problems of learner questionnaire strategies in relation to questionnaire design and "questionnaire fatigue".

The two SAC co-ordinators comment on problems of questionnaire design with particular reference to the "Hawthorne Effect" (Davies et al, 1999; Mayo, 1933) and the Likert scale. Richard Farmer explicitly identifies the "Hawthorne Effect" whereby learners are potentially affected by the intrusive nature of the evaluation which then affects their behaviour (Richard Farmer: 342). Richard Pemberton identifies a related problem in the SAC learners' possible desire to please:

> ...you get your motivated learners like our PG self-access learners, we get this questionnaire which says we're all wonderful...
> (Richard Pemberton: 446-448).

Richard Farmer and Richard Pemberton both question the use of the Likert scale, in particular due to a perceived tendency for learners to gravitate towards the middle choice. In the testing literature, Davies et al (1999) also refer to the possibility of this "halo effect" and the need to counter it with variation in the questionnaire format and rating scale. Richard Pemberton suggests that use of the Likert scale tends to lead to "indifferent evaluations" despite the fact that "you think people have said to you 'this is great'" because:

> ...perhaps they've avoided the extreme points on the range because of the way questionnaires are constructed and they've just gone for the safe thing which basically doesn't tell you very much
> (Richard Pemberton: 451-454).

Two participants identify "questionnaire fatigue" (Richard Pemberton: 464) as a problem with learners beginning "to resent it all...all the time from every quarter..." (Pamela Smith: 173). Non-SAC expert Pamela Smith feels that university learners nowadays get "questionnaired to death... it's just got too much..." (Pamela Smith: 169). Such questionnaire fatigue may be one of the causes of the phenomenon identified by Richard Pemberton concerning how learners complete questionnaires which he feels threatens the quality of learner feedback. He expresses his concern in terms of his perception of:

> ...the way that people answer questionnaires in Hong Kong, and particularly our students, especially when they're tired and they want to finish the questionnaire in a minute...I had a class which finished an evaluation of 25 questions in a minute which you can more or less practically only do by either going straight down or by having some kind of zig-zag pattern, so that's problematic...
> (Richard Pemberton: 456-463).

Activity-focused mini-questionnaires

Barbara Sinclair presents an alternative to questionnaires when she refers to "some kind of feedback form that they filled in regularly for every activity" (Barbara Sinclair: 227-228). This would be designed to function as an activity-focused mini-questionnaire. Having introduced the idea, however, she continues by stating that "we all know students forget to do those things or are not interested..." (Barbara Sinclair: 229-230). This type of feedback does, however, fit well with the notion of including an on-going element in an evaluation as discussed in section 7.4.1 (ii) above. A similar alternative to standard questionnaires, is the short one or two question e-mail questionnaires sent to learners in the CILL, for which the response rate is markedly higher than that for standard ten question plus questionnaires.

Observation

A number of participants refer to observation as an evaluation tool. Observation has been recognised as a valid tool in educational evaluation in the form for example of classroom observation (Ullman, 1990; Genesee & Upshur, 1996), or as a management tool (Cherrington, 1995; Germaine & Rea-Dickens, 1995). It has also been used in ELT programme evaluation (Alderson & Beretta, 1992; Weir & Roberts, 1994), as well as in the wider evaluation field, for example, as an element of Stake's *Responsive* or *Client-centred* evaluation model (Stake, 1983: Stufflebeam, 2001; Patton, 2002). Indeed, Genesee & Upshur (1996: 77) suggest that it is "basic to assessing human skills and behaviours".

Within the context of the SAC, observation could be conducted in either a formal manner as suggested by SAC teacher Andrew Morrall:

> There'd be two ways I guess...one would be to watch the students and see what they do and see if the things that are designed to attract students do attract them - see if students using the indexing system are successfully finding things...
> (Andrew Morrall: 285-288);

or in a more informal manner as in SAC consultant Lindsay Miller's suggestion:

> ...if students are actively involved in using some of the facilities, **just by casually glancing in** and you see that they're there, they're doing things, then that's effective - it's not a scientific measure but that's effective... (Lindsay Miller: 260-263).

In the post-interview e-mail questionnaire, eleven out of thirteen participants agree that observation could be utilised as an evaluation tool, but only two do so strongly. Of those agreeing, six explicitly express some degree of reservation identifying three areas of concern. SAC funder Aster Warner (PI 132) sees the observation process as possibly being intrusive. Cherrington (1995: 188/668) and Weir & Roberts (1994: 173-174) also see this as a potential drawback which, together with the fact that the observation process is an unnatural one in which both the teachers and the learners know that they are being observed, can lead to the Hawthorne Effect previously identified. The second concern arises from an observation's limitations in terms of its generally only being able to identify simple, observable behaviours and not being able to provide meaningful insights into the learning process (Richard Pemberton, PI 113; Barbara Sinclair, PI 145; Mary Spratt, PI 134). Kwan's (2002) study seems to confirm their perceptions regarding the type of data that observation can most easily yield. She reports on three issues that emerged from observation in her study: learners' time-management, the activities they undertook and their utilisation of the SAC teacher. While useful, these alone would not seem to sufficient to explain the process of SALL. Finally, in the follow-up e-mail questionnaire, two participants echo Genesee & Upshur's (1996) insistence on the need for observers to be focused on particular SAC activities (Lindsay Miller, PI 125; Wan Sau Yi PI 152).

SAC support staff member Wilkin Cheung suggests the use of observation as part of an investigative technique that, while used in fields such as restaurant classification and hotel inspections, tends not to be represented in the field of educational evaluation: the "secret" inspection. He first suggests that the evaluators act as learners to see if the SAC staff members are able to provide appropriate help:

> Try to do something like orientation and see whether the staff can help them... really help them...The evaluator try to do the same thing as the students and maybe try to ask questions to staff or to tutors and see whether they can help...;
> (Wilkin Cheung: 269-276)

and he later further suggests at least part of the evaluation is done "secretly":

> What I think is not go into the centre like a groups and then go into the centre so everyone...like us of the staff...will know that you are doing the evaluation...something like ask the student secretly...
> **Bruce**:
> Do you think it is fair to do it secretly? Would you mind if they came in one day when you were having a terrible day...
> **Wilkin**:
> It's okay.
> (Wilkin Cheung: 365-372)

While this idea is intriguing, and suggested again by SAC teacher Andrew Morrall in post-interview e-mail feedback, it would seem to be in direct confrontation with *Program Evaluation Standard* P3: "Evaluations should be designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects." (The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994: 93) In particular, it violates guidelines G and H which relate to informing participants of their participation and their rights in the evaluation.

The comments presented above, would seem to suggest that observation may indeed have a place in a SAC evaluation, but that its purpose and focus will need to be clearly outlined, achievable, and capable of generating meaningful and useful data. Care will also be needed in the preparation of the observation protocols, observation methods and methods of analysing the emergent data.

Documentation

Both SAC consultants David Gardner and Richard Pemberton point out the value of examining available SAC administrative and pedagogical documentation:

> ...and documentation, I've found it quite useful to look at people's mission statements or students' diaries or something like that
> (David Gardner: 832-834);

> ...you're going to look at...diaries, that kind of open-ended data, probably a mixture of diaries with a more kind of probing like you're doing now...
> (Richard Pemberton: 494-497).

The examination of documentation is accepted and widely used as an evaulation technique (e.g. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Gardner & Miller, 1999; Hodder, 2000), and I would expect it to form an important part of most evaluations.

Case studies

Finally, Lindsay Miller discusses the case study as an evaluative tool. In particular, he argues for the use of a number of case studies of SAC learners that would be presented as a "profile" of the SAC's learners:

> ...every teacher was allocated five students to track over one year and then you pulled them together as a profile of case studies which you could then present "here's thirty case studies of learners from different subjects" or whatever else - they (the administrators) might go for that kind of thing...so, yes, I do think that type of evaluation would be quite useful to explore...
> (Lindsay Miller: 495-500 - my clarification in parentheses).

The use of case study is common in many aspects of qualitative inquiry including within the field of programme evaluation as identified by Stake (2000) and Patton (2002) amongst others. The key to its implementation within a SAC evaluation would, I feel, be the way that it is used in terms of identifying patterns, interpreting the data, and developing assertions about the case and its relationship with other cases. There would be a need for it to be integrated with other data-types to present a multi-faceted, value-laden evaluation.

In summary, participants identify a wide range of potential tools that might be used to collect data for a SAC evaluation. The appropriacy of each of these to a particular SAC evaluation context will, as Gardner & Miller (1999) point out, depend largely on the purpose of the evaluation and how the data is intended to be used. Also to be taken into account, will be the context-specific needs and constraints that the SAC mapping will help to identify.

iii) *Data analysis and data reporting methods*

Participants focus their comments primarily on data collection, rather than its subsequent analysis or reporting, but there are some references to these two subsequent stages. In this section, I focus on three interrelated areas of interest. The first, setting the context for the other two, is the awareness of the existence of a number of potential audiences for an evaluation. This will then lead me to briefly consider the issue of measuring the performance of the SAC

against relevant criteria. Finally, I consider the notion of the evaluation report as a public relations document.

Potential evaluation audiences

Previously, in section 7.2.1, I introduced data relating to the participants' awareness of the importance of the potential evaluation audiences. When talking about the analysis, and particularly the reporting, stages, such an awareness is again evident, as seen in comments from SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair and SAC co-ordinator Richard Farmer:

> ...I think you need to cover all the angles so you'd need to be accountable to the management of the institution and the people who provide the money and the facilities...you want to show off to colleagues and professionals in the field...
> (Barbara Sinclair: 326-330);

> ...quality assurance, departmental assessment...TLQPR (Total Quality Process Review, UGC (University Grants Commission) report, PolyU (Hong Kong Polytechnic University) management committee report...so you've got all these different people...
> (Richard Farmer: 337-338 - my parentheses).

Measurement

The expectations of the evaluation audience would seem to have been in mind when two of the SAC learners express the need for a type of measurement to indicate the SAC's performance in relativistic terms. Wong Kwong Ming suggests, that since "there is some I think commonality" (among the SACs), the evaluation data should be *benchmarked* against that from other SACs (Wong Kwong Ming: 436).

The practice of *benchmarking* is widely used in the fields of manufacturing and commerce, as well as in a number of public institutions (Ammons, 1996; Cross, 1998). It involves an organisation examining its production and/or administration processes in detail and then comparing them to similar processes in other organisations that are acknowledged as performing better (Codling, 1998; Cross, 1998). It also involves establishing "numeric performance standards for today and the future" (Cross, 1998:10). When participants were asked in the post-interview e-mail questionnaire if they felt that benchmarking the performance of one SAC against another would provide useful data, responses were split, with eight participants disagreeing (four strongly) and six agreeing (three strongly). It is the four SAC learners who

agree (Wong Kwong Ming and Lawrie Yeung strongly agree), but one learner (Wan Sau Yi) qualifies his agreement by adding:

> It is a good ideal to do that. But, if the philosophy of running a SAC was different, it is meaningless.
> (Wan Sau Yi: PI 163-164)

This notion of SACs being "different" from each other has been introduced previously, in chapter six (section 6.3.1, iii), in the context of the "uniqueness" of each centre. This is recognised by SAC teacher Andrew Morrall as problematic with regard to benchmarking.

> Benchmarking would be very difficult, given that different SACs are open to different students with different needs, taking different courses. Even simple things, such as counting the percentage of students using the SAC, depends on how much it is compulsory, the location, opening hours etc..
> (Andrew Morrall: PI 140)

Among the SAC experts, only Lindsay Miller (PI 132) seems to agree with the notion of benchmarking, stating (perhaps rather weakly) that "looking and comparing is not a bad idea". The reasons that the other participants give for disagreement tend to relate to the positivistic nature of such benchmarking:

> The criteria used tend not to relate to the quality of the pedagogy and learning
> (Barbara Sinclair: PI 153);

> *Benchmarking* to me implies scores, comparable data and cut-off points....What's really important is how effectively an SAC works within its own particular context and given its own particular goals and objectives. This ties in with what I believe about developmental evaluation.
> (Richard Pemberton: PI 119-121)

The desire for some kind of "measurement" to assess a SAC's performance is understandable, particularly if it enables a SAC co-ordinator to more easily and efficiently secure further funding. It seems to me, however, that it would be , for the reasons introduced above, difficult to introduce comparative criteria that are meaningful in terms of being transparent, accurate, and easily and accurately interpretable.

The evaluation report as a PR document

With regard to the notion of the evaluation report as a PR document, Worthen & Sanders (1987: 342) remark that "the purpose of an evaluation report is directly linked to the role the evaluation was intended to play." Participants make explicit references to the selection of particular data so that, for

example, some are used to inform centre development while others are presented in order to project a particular view of the SAC for a particular audience. Weir & Roberts (1994) also note the need for selection and for the audience to have sufficient information without an obfuscating surfeit. While SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair talks of one of the functions of a report as being to "show off" the centre, (Barbara Sinclair: 329), SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton talks of " partial views" with some data that are:

> ...mainly for us but snippets "isn't this great" - that kind of stuff - that goes out and goes upstairs or to our evaluators...I wouldn't say there was any totally polarised, for one use only kind of things but we'd have different... (Richard Pemberton: 518-521).

The SAC co-ordinators and SAC consultants acknowledge that an evaluation report has elements of being a public-relations document and thus data are sometimes manipulated, and (as discussed previously in section 7.3.2, ii) the report is certainly written with the audience firmly in mind. The notion of "different reports for different audiences" (Alderson, 1992: 297) is accepted as a potential strategy in order to help ensure utilisation of the evaluation findings. Differences in such reports may be in terms of content but may also be in terms of presentation and prioritisation. It must, however, be noted that any such editing should be ethical. Three of the standards set by the Joint Committee on Standards for Evaluation relating to evaluation reporting should be noted in this regard. They are: U3 relating to the scope and selection of information; P6 regarding the discussion of findings; and A11, which focuses on the impartiality of reporting (Joint Committee on Standards for Evaluation: 1994).

A final, and interesting, variation on the view of the evaluation report as a PR tool is that of SAC consultant David Gardner. Concerning the need to demonstrate the effectiveness of SALL to learners, he suggests that extracts from the evaluation should also be made public for the SAC learners, on a notice-board in the SAC.

While elements relating to these three foci, (audience, measures and the evaluation report as a PR tool) have been introduced earlier, taken together they serve to emphasise the importance of considering the intended effect of the evaluation product on the various possible evaluation audiences.

iv) *Constraints*

When discussing a possible evaluation methodology, participants identify a number of constraints that need to be considered when deciding the evaluation tools most suitable for a particular SAC. These constraints can be grouped into three categories:

- those focusing on the SAC itself;
- feedback from learners;
- or, (as previously discussed in section 7.4.2 (ii) and here summarised) the data collection instruments.

Participants identify three elements **directly focusing on the SAC** that might act as a constraint on the evaluation process. Firstly, five participants perceive patterns of usage as a major problem when evaluating a SAC: particularly (as seen previously in section 7.3.5) in relation to any measurement of learning gain. As SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair points out, when comparing the Hong Kong "voluntary" SALL context with that of Singapore with its "required" self-access learning component, evaluation is "going to be very difficult if they're not regular attenders..." (Barbara Sinclair: 258-259). The problem of a lack of systematic patterns of usage in SAC evaluation in general (and not just in terms of learning gain) is exemplified by SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton when he asks:

> ...this casual user comes in watches a movie, may not come back again for seven or eight weeks, if ever, how can you evaluate that? (Richard Pemberton: 269-271);

and again by SAC consultant David Gardner who expresses the opinion that:

> ...I don't think you could actually do anything useful in terms of evaluation with the one-time users or even with people who drop in say twice a term...,we're not really talking about evaluating self-access, we're talking about evaluating how to get out of the sun or something like that (David Gardner: 590-596).

David Gardner continues by suggesting that:

> ...the solution to this looking at some kind of evaluation of effectiveness is to look at regular users, I think it's the only way... (David Gardner: 597-599).

Richard Pemberton (in post-interview e-mail feedback) suggests that there is only pedagogical value in SALL when it is practised over a period of time and,

correspondingly, he feels that the most valuable evaluation data is longitudinal. Such an approach does, however, seem to ignore a large group of SAC learners who use the SAC for specific purposes over a short period and not as part of an on-going programme of SALL. One way in which such learners could provide useful input for an evaluation is by asking them why they do not use the SAC more often (Richard Pemberton: 559-562).

The second perceived constraint relating to the SAC's operation is that imposed by the host institution and society at large. SAC consultant Lindsay Miller feels that "our main problem is that we work within institutions that evaluate learning in a very restricted fashion" (Lindsay Miller: 228-230). He later explains (in post-interview feedback) that he was referring to a tendency for administrators and funders to stress the need for quantitative data and to place much less value upon their qualitative counterparts. SAC teacher Sunny Chu concurs and, while discussing the use of a qualitative versus a quantitative evaluation approach, further suggests such a view reflects "society's expectations" (Sunny Chu: 324).

The third SAC-focused constraint refers to the fact that, at the time of the interviews, only one of the Hong Kong SACs has a teaching staff that is to any extent pedagogically dedicated to the SAC. SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton points out that the lack of time that SAC teachers can actually spend in the center, because of other teaching commitments, considerably limits their ability to provide valuable on-going evaluative feedback (Richard Pemberton: 628-635). In their (1997) study, Gardner & Miller report that only 43% of SAC "tutors" felt they were "completely" familiar with the systems in their SAC. Given the importance that learners place upon the role of the SAC teacher, the lack of teaching staff who identify themselves as at least partly "SAC teachers", and who feel confident in their knowledge of the SAC in which they work, is potentially a serious constraint; firstly, in that the lack of such teachers may colour learners' perceptions of the centre as a whole, and, secondly, in terms of their own involvement in, and responses to, an evaluation of the SAC.

Another constraint upon evaluation concerns the lack, and poor quality, of **feedback obtained from learners**. Richard Pemberton suggests that learners fail to give feedback concerning day-to-day matters relating to the efficient running of a SAC (Richard Pemberton: 593-600). He and SAC non-expert

teacher Mary Spratt highlight learners' reluctance to approach the SAC teacher. Mary Spratt suggests that this might be attributed to shyness on the part of the learners:

> I would suspect that in many contexts that bod (the SAC teacher) won't be tapped because students are reticent, shy for one reason or another... (Mary Spratt: 98-99 - my parentheses).

While learners' response to questionnaires is discussed above in section 7.4.2 (ii), the other feedback-related constraint that Richard Pemberton identifies concerns the quality or depth of the feedback given. In relation to questions asked of non-regular SAC users, he comments on the responses given:

> **Richard:**
> ...why haven't you used the SAC" - "well, I didn't have enough time"...but then what does that mean - it was only those ones, only a certain sample of them... why haven't they - I mean there are answers there, they have given their reasons why...
> **Bruce:**
> But surface reasons...
> **Richard:**
> Yes, that's right
> (Richard Pemberton: 559-566).

The final category of constraint concerns **the evaluation instruments themselves**, and the use of tests and questionnaires in particular. The issues, which were discussed in section 7.4.2 (ii) above, relate particularly to the appropriacy of the use of tests, questionnaires and observation in a SALL context.

In this section (7.4.2), I have examined participants' comments relating to data collection and analysis within an evaluation. Participants propose various data collection methods including tests, questionnaires, observation, analysis of administrative and pedagogical documentation, learner case studies and interviews. Participants do not discuss data analysis and reporting extensively, but the use of indicators and benchmarking are suggested as possibly being incorporated into the analysis process. It is recognised that any evaluation report would need to clearly address its audience. Three main constraints are identified. Irregular patterns of usage, factors imposed from outside the SAC and the lack of pedagogically dedicated staff are seen as limitations in the SALL context. The reticence of learners to give feedback, and concerns about its quality, are seen as constraining factors relating to data from learners. Finally, the perceived

weakness, in a SALL context, of certain evaluation instruments is also a noted constraint.

7.4.3 Who evaluates?

In the final part of the analysis of participant interview data relating to evaluation, I focus upon the personnel whom participants feel might be involved in a SAC evaluation. I examine the data with reference to three areas of discussion. The first two relate to the possibility of evaluation firstly by *insiders* and secondly by *outsiders* (also referred to as *external* and *internal* evaluators by, for example, Madaus & Kellaghan, 2000), and their respective roles. The third relates to arguments for the inclusion of both *insiders* and *outsiders* in an evaluation.

i) *Insider evaluation*

In interviews, thirteen participants give at least partial support to the idea of including *insiders* in a team evaluating a SAC. *Insiders* here are defined as *direct stakeholders* which in turn has been defined to include all those who study or work within the centre. SAC teacher Andrew Morrall expresses the notion in terms of having an opportunity to "evaluate ourselves" (Andrew Morrall: 404). This reflects a *participatory* or *co-operative* approach to evaluation which has been seen as being more likely to lead to utilisation of the evaluation findings and implementation of its recommendations (Alderson & Scott, 1992, 1994; Cousins & Earl, 1995a,b,c; Charities Evaluation Services, 1998; Robson, 2000).

SAC consultant David Gardner talks of "introversion...a kind of aspect of action learning where you get a bunch of people together and you talk about what you're doing and so on" (David Gardner: 719-723). Huberman (1995) stresses how a participatory approach is potentially very valuable in developmental terms even suggesting:

> The evaluation may matter less than the collaboration established during the evaluation - the linkages.
> (Huberman, 1995:110)

Andrew Morrall, reflecting a monitory role that Weir & Roberts (1994) see for the insider, claims that such evaluation is an on-going feature of the SAC in which he works and that it is conducted "constantly". As previously quoted, he then continues by suggesting that "a centre can be evaluated by whether or

not it constantly informally evaluates itself...or whether it sees evaluation as a 'once a year, do it for a couple of weeks and then forget it' thing..." (Andrew Morrall: 422-425).

Some participants, while generally supporting the notion of insider evaluation, identify particular direct stakeholder roles as being necessarily represented in an evaluation team. Non-SAC expert teacher Mary Spratt, clearly supporting the notion of insider evaluation, identifies participants as:

> ...being the learners, the staff who are in the centre whether they be technical staff or teaching staff whatever their place on the so-called hierarchy...
> (Mary Spratt: 324-326).

Interestingly, another non-SAC expert, Language Centre Manager Pamela Smith, also stresses the need to include the learner (Pamela Smith: 158-165). Likewise, Richard Farmer, as a SAC co-ordinator, stresses the importance of learner input and implicitly suggests the need for greater learner participation (Richard Farmer: 263-266). A SAC teacher and a SAC learner stress a role for the SAC teacher (Sunny Chu: 521; Lawrie Yeung: 111-116). SAC learner Wan Sau Yi, meanwhile, perceives the SAC co-ordinator as the most appropriate because of his knowledge of the centre (Wan Sau Yi: 151-159). In this, he echoes the views of a number of participants (Wilkin Cheung: PI 141; Lindsay Miller: PI 141; Mary Spratt: PI 150; and Yen Tung Yuk: PI 184-185), and also those of Alderson (1992) who stresses the importance of the insider's knowledge with its "experience and a knowledge of a programme that can be invaluable to an evaluation" (Alderson, 1992: 279).

On the other hand, in some cases, participants wish to limit the insiders' role. SAC consultant Lindsay Miller perceives the role of the direct stakeholders as being restricted to drawing up a list of evaluation criteria that an outsider would then use to evaluate the SAC (Lindsay Miller: 388-397). This is in contrast to Alderson & Scott's (1992: 55) view where they see the role of the outsider as "barely evaluative", his role being rather more consultative and operational in the design and post-evaluation stages.

SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair (230-235) seems to suggest a somewhat limited insider role when referring to the ad-hoc nature of possible observation data collection by SAC staff. SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming generally perceives the role of both the SAC learner and teacher as being one of subject

rather than investigator although he concedes the possible inclusion of a single SAC teacher on the evaluation team (Wong Kwong Ming: 499-505). When asked about involving learners in the evaluation process, he replies:

> I think it is better to audit the student...find out why they're not here or not familiar or regular using...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 453-454).

Possibly reflecting their backgrounds in accounting (Appendix 3), SAC learners Wong Kwong Ming (above and 380-398) and William Cheng (302-307) suggest conducting an "audit" of the SAC. In their definitions of *audit*, Chelimsky (1985) within an evaluative context, and Holmes (2000), within an educational context, describe a process that is normatively-focused and non-descriptive in nature. It involves "**rigorous and structured review** by colleagues with the aim of establishing an **accurate and objective view** of the current state of a higher education institution" (Holmes et al, 2000: 3 – my emphasis). It is probably, therefore, unsurprising that neither of these two participants suggest learners as evaluators.

Finally, Richard Farmer, while being generally supportive of the place of insiders in the evaluation process, cautions against an evaluation being "too democratic". His use of the word "democratic" has echoes of the view of the Charities Evaluation Services (1998: 4) who see insider involvement as "empowering" the users. Richard Farmer feels that this can lead to either a lack of clear decisions, or the wrong decisions being made by those who are not fully aware of the wider context and thus of the possible ramifications of any decisions (Richard Farmer: 298-303).

As a result, the use of insiders, albeit in a limited role, is justified by the experience and knowledge of the SAC which they can bring to the evaluation. On the other hand, their lack of detachment and an awareness of the wider context might lead to a lack of clarity in the decision-making part of the evaluation process.

ii) *Outsider evaluation*

In this section, the term *outsider* is defined as those who are not *direct stakeholders* as defined in section 7.2.1 (i) above. Thus, the term *outsider* (which is taken to equate with the term *external*, as used by three participants) would include evaluators from within the host institution, but not those who

generally have a physical presence in the SAC. It would also include evaluators from other institutions and representatives of funders, and may in turn also include an overseas-based "Jet-In Jet-Out Expert" (Alderson & Scott, 1992).

In the interviews, eleven participants express a degree of support for the notion of including an external element in an SAC evaluation. The analysis of data relating to the outsider as evaluator is presented in three categories: the outsider evaluators' attributes, their possible roles, and the identification of possible evaluators.

Attributes of the outsider evaluator

Participants identified two attributes of an outsider evaluator as being of particular importance: credibility, and a knowledge of SACs and SALL. SAC consultant Lindsay Miller expresses the view that "involving an external assessor or evaluator would give more credibility to any evaluation of the centre". He later states that "this assessor or evaluator's role could be quite crucial in giving a lot of credibility to any assessment" (Lindsay Miller: 371-373; 384-386). Alderson & Scott (1992: 56), likewise, suggest that an outsider evaluator's role may also be to "legitimise" an evaluation. SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton makes a similar point, but only in relation to the need for credibility in the event of internal institutional strife (Richard Pemberton: 705-709). Reflecting these two observations, SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming stresses the perceived independence of an outsider:

> I think there is more independent - I mean is more independent don't bias to some political group or something...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 420-421).

In their emphasis on evaluator credibility, these participants reflect the Joint Committee on Standards for Education Evaluation's standard U2 (J.C.E.E.: 1994: 31). According to this standard, the evaluator's credibility is based on her being "trustworthy and competent". While some of these qualities will emanate from the evaluator's approach and implementation of an appropriate, transparent methodology, her credibility will also be based on her knowledge and experience of evaluation, SACs, SALL and the local context. In this regard, David Gardner makes reference to a "knowledgeable outsider", by which he means someone with not only "topic knowledge" but also "knowledge of the context" (David Gardner: 738-739). SAC teacher Sunny Chu also

emphasises the importance of a SAC being evaluated with reference to its own context:

> ...it's good to have an outside view but, at the same time, we have to bear in mind our own constraints in our university
> (Sunny Chu: 572-573).

He also emphasizes the notion of needing to keep in mind "our own constraints" (Sunny Chu: 571-574).

Roles of the outsider evaluator

The desired attributes of an outsider evaluator are also reflected in the participants' discussion of the various roles that such a person might play in a SAC evaluation. Participants explicitly identify four potential roles for the outsider evaluator, those of expert, facilitator, suggester and confessor.

Non-SAC expert teacher Mary Spratt suggests that outsiders acting as ***experts*** may "bring insights from their experience from all places which may not be available to the staff who are on-site". She notes, however, that this is not to suggest the superiority of their judgments but rather that they can provide an "added perspective" (Mary Spratt: 347-350). Alderson (1992) concludes that they may well contribute valuable insights to an evaluation, but cautions against viewing these as necessarily being objective: as Weir & Roberts (1994) point out, outsiders do not arrive without previous knowledge, experience and opinions. SAC funder Aster Warner agrees to the notion of both insiders and outsiders with the proviso that it should not involve the evaluation becoming "too big" and that "it must retain objectivity" (Aster Warner: PI 148).

Two of the SAC consultants discuss the use of external experts. Lindsay Miller notes that such an expert, working as an observer, might "appeal more to the university administrators" in terms of judging the extent to which learning is taking place within the SAC, and that "you might prove its effectiveness and efficiency as well..." (Lindsay Miller: 278-281). As noted above, David Gardner identifies "knowledge" as a necessary attribute for an evaluator. However, reflecting the concerns of SAC teacher Sunny Chu and SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton, he argues against the "*parachute in* kind of expertise" (David Gardner: 727), i.e. a *Jet-In Jet-Out Expert* invited from an overseas institution, who has little or no knowledge of the local educational context. In a

similar vein, SAC learner Wong Kwong Ming sees the need for an expert who is "competent to assess this (the SAC)" (Wong Kwong Ming: 434 – my parentheses) and feels that such as expert:

> ...may be the people who is in the other university who are running the similar thing who is familiar with English or faculty...
> (Wong Kwong Ming: 428-430).

SAC consultant David Gardner describes the role of the outsider as someone who "doesn't come in and dictate but comes in more as a ***facilitator*** who "would facilitate (the evaluation) process", using "his or her expertise to make suggestions about ways of doing that evaluation" (David Gardner: 740-741; 776-779). This can be seen in some ways to contrast with Lindsay Miller's view, noted previously and again below, of the outsider evaluator as someone who evaluates a SAC against a checklist pre-determined by the SAC staff. In other words, David Gardner sees the outsider as an active contributor in the evaluation planning, whereas Lindsay Miller perceives the outsider's role as being simply to conduct the evaluation against pre-determined criteria.

The role of facilitator is reflected in the role identified for outsiders by SAC teacher Andrew Morrall, that of a ***suggester***. However, his evaluator does not make suggestions concerning the evaluation process, as suggested by David Gardner above, but rather summative suggestions arising from her evaluation of the SAC that the SAC staff can then either accept or reject:

> ...there is definitely a case for outsiders...to make suggestions and for us to say "yes we would like to do that but we can't for this reason" or "that's a very good idea, we'll have a go at that and see what we can do".
> (Andrew Morrall: 306-312)

Again reflecting a facilitatory and developmental role, SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton identifies the evaluator as potentially fulfilling a developmental role as ***confessor***. He feels that SAC staff are perhaps "not very up-front about kind of methodology and philosophy and stuff like that". The presence of an outsider evaluator gives them an opportunity to discuss both the issues and principles underlying both the operation of a SAC, and their own roles (Richard Pemberton: 653-660).

Finally, SAC consultant Lindsay Miller, while not explicitly excluding the roles identified above, suggests a different kind of role for the outsider evaluator. As introduced previously, he sees the SAC staff and students deciding what is to

be evaluated, and then this decision being validated by management prior to being presented to the outsider evaluator:

> ...the concept of having a group meeting of staff and students to decide how to evaluate the SAC - I think once that group agreed on a list of criteria, that list should then go to the various levels of management to say "this is how we would like to evaluate the centre, what do you think about it?"...
> (Lindsay Miller: 489-493).

The role of the outsider evaluator, having agreed that the criteria are sound, is then one of evaluating the performance of the SAC against a list of criteria deriving from those decisions and then producing an evaluation report:

> ...I think in a way it would be useful to have a checklist of things that you could evaluate and, on the basis of that, this external person could carry it out and write the report.
> (Lindsay Miller: 395-397)

This notion of evaluating a SAC against a set of criteria is reflected in Wong Kwong Ming's suggestion that the role of an outsider evaluator includes that of comparing the SAC against benchmark criteria compiled from other SACs (Wong Kwong Ming: 434-440).

Identification of outsider evaluators

When discussing potential types of outsider evaluators, participants focus primarily on three: those within the host institution but outside the SAC, "local outsiders" (i.e. those from within Hong Kong but outside the host institution), and representatives of the SAC's funders and senior level administrators.

Four participants express the view that the evaluation should include involvement from staff within the host institution who do not work within the SAC. Non-SAC expert teacher Mary Spratt and SAC teacher Sunny Chu both feel that there is a need to involve some of the classroom teachers whose students are SAC learners (Mary Spratt: 327-333; Sunny Chu: 549-551). SAC support staff member Wilkin Cheung, SAC learner William Cheng and SAC teacher Andrew Morrall, while not specifying teachers, express the view that the evaluation team should include "staff from other parts of the (university) to help us with our evaluation" (Andrew Morrall: 405-406; also, William Cheng: 293-298; Wilkin Cheung: 316). They seem, thus, to be suggesting the involvement of indirect stakeholders who have some understanding of the SAC within the university context. These outsiders, who are not so close to the

SAC that they "can't see the wood for the trees" (Richard Pemberton: PI 130), would potentially be able to provide an additional, and possibly different, perspective from that of insiders.

As noted above, Richard Pemberton and Sunny Chu both express the view that there is a need for any evaluation to proceed with reference to the local context and any concomitant constraints. Lindsay Miller elaborates on this theme when he notes:

> ...if you brought in somebody from Europe and said "do an evaluation in our centre, here's what we want you to evaluate", they might perform quite a good evaluation but they might not know the cultural setting well enough to be able to do it justice.
> (Lindsay Miller: 410-414)

Having earlier agreed the value of an outsider, he continues by putting forward the notion of a "local expert" (Lindsay Miller: 414-415) i.e. a professional within the same geographical area but from a different institution.

One participant, SAC teacher Andrew Morrall, referring to "a number of organisations which we have to report to" suggests that representatives of the SAC's funding body and senior level administrators should be involved (Andrew Morrall: 400-401).

Finally, SAC co-ordinator Richard Pemberton raises two points worthy of consideration with regard to non-local outside evaluators . Firstly, he focuses on the question of the cost of bringing in an outsider evaluator:

> Well, because that sort of thing's presumably going to cost money...you've got to think about why you want to do it...yes there are about a zillion problems but I can probably identify like 90% of those without paying for somebody like (SAC expert) Phil Riley to come in...
> (Richard Pemberton: 671-672/689-691 - my parentheses).

Secondly, he advises caution in the selection of outsiders since they will probably want to examine issues and practices that may be a "little bit sensitive" (Richard Pemberton: 676).

iii) *Including insiders and outsiders*

In the post-interview e-mail questionnaire, eight participants strongly agree, and all participants agree, that an evaluation team should include both insiders and outsiders. Richard Pemberton argues that it is "important to have multiple

perspectives" (Richard Pemberton: PI 130). Previously, in the interviews, a number of participants also imply the inclusion of both insiders and outsiders in the evaluation team, when they suggest the inclusion of "stakeholders", non-SAC teachers, other institutional staff, and funders as well as SAC staff (as noted in (i) and (ii) above). Prior to the post-interview e-mail questionnaire, it is only SAC consultant David Gardner (724-725), however, who explicitly states his support for the use of both insider and outsider evaluators, alluded to in Mary Spratt's reference (noted above) to outsiders providing "**added** perspective" (Mary Spratt: 347-350 - my emphasis).

Finally, on a related point, SAC support staff member Wilkin Cheung makes an important observation when he suggests that, while insights from both insiders and outsiders are of value, there is a need, when they are reported for the provenance of their views to be clearly stated:

> **Bruce:**
> Okay, so is it important to have both impressions or just the outsiders' impression?
> **Wilkin:**
> The result need to be divided clearly...when this is the result from the newcomers and this is....
> (Wilkin Cheung: 346-352).

Wilkin Cheung's point relates to the need to contextualise the evaluators' views. This should serve to remind us that, despite arguments for an insider, outsider or mixed evaluation, it is the evaluation's intended functions and context, together with the individual evaluator's qualifications (Alderson, 1992), that should largely determine the constitution of the evaluation team.

7.4.4 Implications

In section 7.4, I have focused on how we might evaluate a SAC. I have examined participants' comments relating to the overall approach that might be taken, the methodology employed within such an approach for the collection and analysis of such data, and finally the question of who might conduct such an evaluation.

With reference to the development of the evaluation framework, participants' comments have suggested:

- an **approach** which fits within a naturalistic, qualitative paradigm but which would allow for a quantitative element;

- an **approach** which would be fairly informal and include an on-going component, but which would also include a formalised reporting mechanism;
- an evaluation **team** which would include SAC insiders and possibly outsiders including perhaps local experts and representatives of the funding body; and which would be
- a **team** which could play various roles including those of expert, facilitator, suggester and confessor;
- a **methodology**, within which potential data collection tools might include tests, questionnaires, observation, SAC documentation, interviews and case studies; and,
- an evaluation report which should be audience-focused possibly with different versions for different audiences.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the analysis and discussion of the study data that relate to the evaluation of a SAC has been framed by three questions: why evaluate, what to evaluate and how to evaluate?

In Figure 36 overleaf, I summarise and group the data analysed in this chapter according to these same three questions. The terms in bold type are those used in the final evaluation framework that I introduce in the following chapter (section 8.3).

Why evaluate a SAC (section 7.2)

- **audience**: direct & indirect stakeholders
  - indirect stakeholders = management & funders > evaluation as an administrative requirement
- primary evaluation **goal**: formative or summative
  - formative = developmental **motivation** for centre, learners & teachers
  - summative = judgmental motivation ref. stakeholder expectations, accountability and PR

What to evaluate (section 7.3)

- need for specific evaluation **foci**
  (constraint = differing expectations of different stakeholders)
  - perceptions and activities of direct stakeholders in relation to a range of aspects of SAC (section 7.3.2, Table 6)
  - SAC facilities, systems and resources (particularly learning materials)
  - efficiency and effectiveness:
    - efficiency of procedures, staffing and systems
    - effectiveness of SAC: as a centre (materials, staff intervention and systems)
    - effectiveness in terms of learning gain
    - effectiveness in terms of its objectives/mission
- need for clear, shared understanding of key terms - **boundaries**
- agreement about what type of data (or **"truth"**) the evaluation is seeking
  - quantitative and qualitative data

How to evaluate (section 7.4)

- **approach**:
  - naturalistic, qualitative
  - place also for quantitative element
  - formal and informal aspects with on-going monitory element
- **methodology**::
  - whom to survey: learners + SAC teachers + other teachers
  - data collection methods: range including case-studies, documentation review, interviews, questionnaires, observation and tests
- data reporting methods: need to consider the audience, the type of measurement employed and the evaluation report as PR document
- evaluation **team**:
  - *insiders*: direct stakeholders
  - informed outsiders playing the roles of *expert*, *facilitator*, *suggester* and *confessor*.

Figure 36: Summary of evaluation-related interview and post-interview e-mail questionnaire data

i) *The purpose of the evaluation (WHY)*

Participants, reflecting the evident concerns in the literature, focus primarily on two inter-related aspects of the evaluation purpose: the evaluation audience and the evaluation goal. The general agreement that a variety of stakeholder roles should be represented is reflected in their recognition of the desirability

of both formative and summative goals. Thus, addressing the formative goals would provide the context and impetus for further development within the SAC, while addressing the summative goals would attempt to allay concerns relating to issues such as accountability and stakeholder expectations.

ii) *The focus of the evaluation (WHAT)*

In their comments relating to what an evaluation might focus upon, participants discuss the overall scope of an evaluation, recognising constraints that might exist within particular evaluation contexts, and concrete aspects of a SAC's operation that should specifically be evaluated. As discussed previously, these include perceptions and activities of direct stakeholders, the SAC's facilities and learning gain. Reflecting the literature relating to SAC evaluation, the notions of effectiveness and efficiency are recognised as important measures in evaluating these aspects.

iii) *The evaluation methodology (HOW)*

In considering how a SAC should be evaluated, participants recognise the need for flexibility: for the evaluation to reflect both the evaluation goals and the realities on the ground. There is recognition generally of the possibility of a qualitative approach with the inclusion of a quantitative element, perhaps in terms of on-going monitoring, which would provide much of the "hard" data often expected by stakeholders to whom the SAC is accountable. In terms of who should conduct the evaluation, there is general agreement on a preference for the involvement of direct stakeholders with informed outsiders performing roles that might be particularly useful in providing the impetus for centre development.

Chapter 8

A SAC mapping and SAC evaluation framework

8.1 Introduction

In chapter six, I examined participants' perceptions of what constitutes a SAC. What emerged from these data was a range of views on a range of related issues that demonstrate that a simple SAC definition is far from unproblematic. In chapter seven, an examination of participants' views relating particularly to how a SAC might be evaluated further emphasised the need for a prior, shared understanding of what defines a SAC. It is with a focus on this that an evaluation can be planned and conducted.

In this chapter, I bring together the threads that have emerged from the analysis presented in the previous two chapters, with relevant insights from the literature reviewed in chapter two and my own experience as the co-ordinator of a Hong Kong SAC to address two of the study objectives. In section 8.2, I address study objective (i), namely to:

> **identify the defining pedagogical and systemic characteristics of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre**;

while in section 8.3, I focus on study objective (iv), to:

> **propose a framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre**.

8.2 The SAC mapping

With reference to study objective (i), I have argued previously in chapter one that, in order to be able to evaluate a SAC, there is a prior need for a definition of what constitutes such a centre and its operation. In the same chapter, I have also argued that, at present, there exists no theoretical construct that provides such a definition. The development of such a defining construct, which I have conceptualised as a *mapping*, has, therefore, been a central focus in this PhD study as reflected in study objective (i).

The SAC mapping is intended as a description of the operation of a Hong Kong SAC and is designed to be used by the evaluation planners as a focusing tool in the evaluation of a SAC. Specifically, it is intended as a reference to assist those

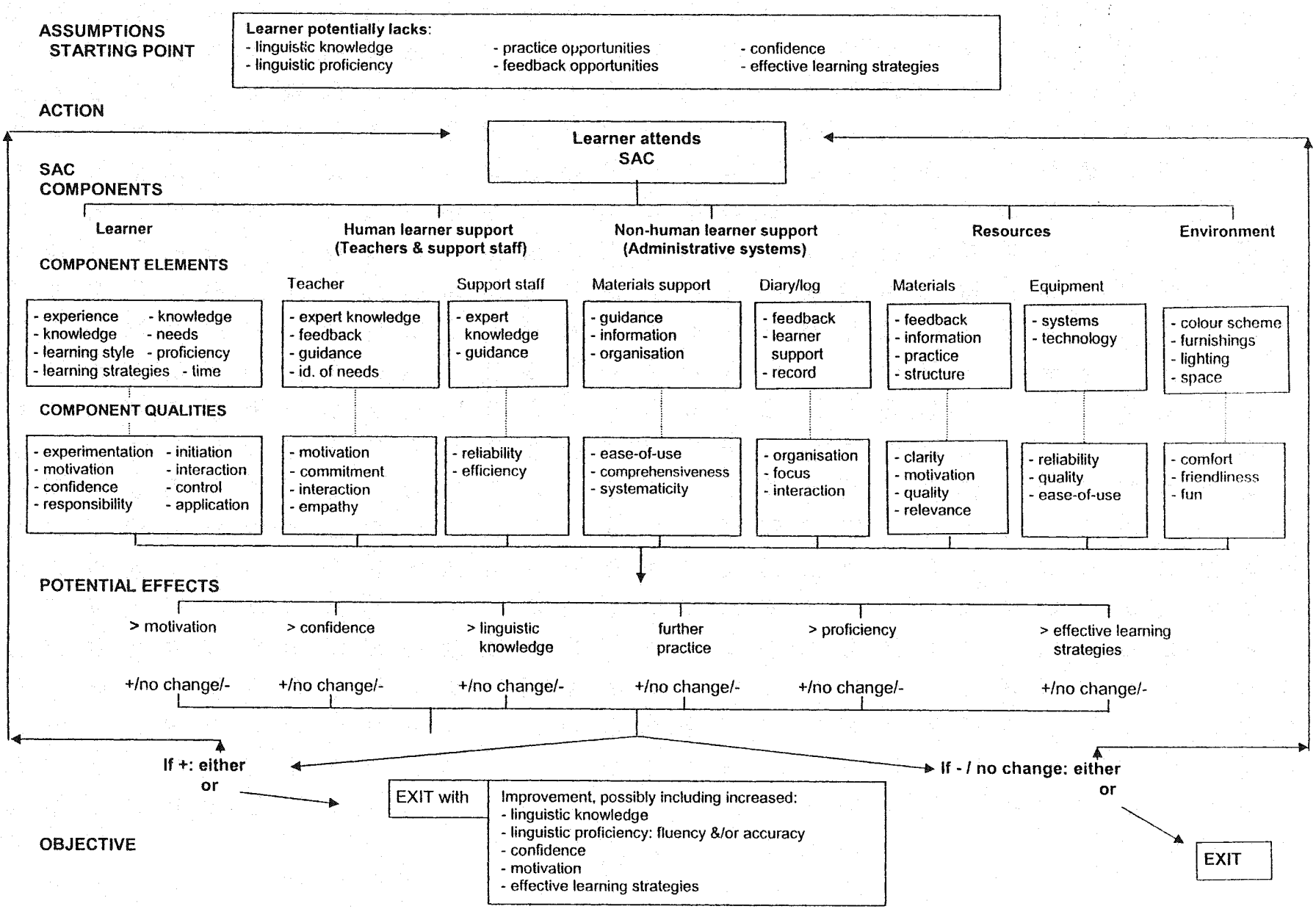
planning a SAC evaluation to develop a mapping of the target SAC. It is designed to help planners identify those elements of the centre's operation to evaluate and provide the context for decisions regarding the evaluation methodology. This does not suggest that all the Hong Kong SACs share all of the construct components or that they should not have additional ones that are not represented in this mapping. The mapping is designed to act as a focal point for an evaluation that attempts to capture the common essence of Hong Kong SACs. It is designed to be refined and adapted as appropriate for use in the evaluation of a particular centre.

In Figure 37 overleaf, and in the following section (8.2.1), I present a mapping that attempts to characterise the operation of a Hong Kong SAC. This mapping has been developed from the data derived from this study (both the interview data analysed in chapters six and seven, and the feedback on the first version of the SAC mapping referred to in chapter five, section 5.3.3.

In this figure, the SAC is represented overall in terms of the learning process since both the data and my own intuition suggest that this is clearly the central element of any SAC. The basic progression through the mapping is from top to bottom with the lines representing the learner's interaction with the various SAC components and their study progress. As can be seen, there are four main horizontal elements:

- *Assumptions* (the starting point) - language learning related weaknesses that learners' have pre-SAC study;
- *SAC components* - the five main elements that together constitute the operation of the SAC (as discussed in section 8.2.1);
- *Potential effects* - the effects that SAC study might have upon the learner; and
- *Objectives* - learner objectives, related to the initial *assumptions* which the learner achieves (or does not achieve) to varying degrees.

The learning process begins with **assumptions** of what the learner potentially (and either knowingly or unknowingly) lacks at the time of her deciding to use the SAC. While the mapping is linear in layout, it not intended to suggest that the following stages constitute a neat, linear learning process. For example, at the SAC component level, the learner clearly interacts with a number (but not necessarily all) of the SAC components to a lesser or greater degree according to her needs and learning style. Indeed, the learner herself is one of the SAC components.


ASSUMPTIONS STARTING POINT
Learner potentially lacks:
- linguistic knowledge
- linguistic proficiency
- practice opportunities
- feedback opportunities
- confidence
- effective learning strategies
ACTION
Learner attends SAC
SAC COMPONENTS
Learner
Human learner support (Teachers & support staff)
Non-human learner support (Administrative systems)
Resources
Environment
COMPONENT ELEMENTS
Teacher
Support staff
Materials support
Diary/log
Materials
Equipment
- experience
- knowledge
- learning style
- proficiency
- learning strategies
- time
- needs
- expert knowledge
- feedback
- guidance
- id. of needs
- expert knowledge
- guidance
- guidance
- information
- organisation
- feedback
- learner support
- record
- feedback
- information
- practice
- structure
- systems
- technology
- colour scheme
- furnishings
- lighting
- space
COMPONENT QUALITIES
- experimentation
- motivation
- confidence
- responsibility
- initiation
- interaction
- control
- application
- motivation
- commitment
- interaction
- empathy
- reliability
- efficiency
- ease-of-use
- comprehensiveness
- systematicity
- organisation
- focus
- interaction
- clarity
- motivation
- quality
- relevance
- reliability
- quality
- ease-of-use
- comfort
- friendliness
- fun
POTENTIAL EFFECTS
> motivation
> confidence
> linguistic knowledge
further practice
> proficiency
> effective learning strategies
+/no change/-
+/no change/-
+/no change/-
+/no change/-
+/no change/-
+/no change/-
If +: either
or
If - / no change: either
or
OBJECTIVE
EXIT with
Improvement, possibly including increased:
- linguistic knowledge
- linguistic proficiency: fluency &/or accuracy
- confidence
- motivation
- effective learning strategies
EXIT

At the **SAC component** level, the *elements* and *qualities* of each component will vary according to the individual SAC and the nature of the individual component itself. In terms of the **potential effects** of exposure to the SAC components, for each of these, the learner may experience an increase, a decrease or no change. These effects are not only experienced or measured at the end of a learner's programme of study but rather, as indicated by the arrows leading back to the learner entry point, at the end of each SAC session (or indeed within a session). The mapping makes it clear that learners either leave and return, or leave and not return; as well as leaving with or without having experienced a positive learning effect in terms of meeting any, some or all of their **objectives**. What clearly emerged from the interview data discussed in chapter six was the notion that a SAC is a unique collection of elements. The interaction of the learner with the various SAC components is at the heart of her unique and individual interpretation of what constitutes a SAC.

8.2.1 SAC components

As was shown in the *implications* at the end of each section of chapter six, the five components of the SAC mapping emerged from the data analysis. For each component, a series of constituent *elements* together with corresponding *qualities* have been identified. Having discussed these elements and qualities in the relevant sections of chapter six, I revisit them here in summary form in sections (i) and (ii) below in order to bring them together in the context of the SAC mapping (Figure 37). The component elements and qualities were primarily derived from the interview data, but have been modified in the light of subsequent post-interview feedback (as outlined in chapter 4 (section 4.5) above) and my own judgment. The *elements* and *qualities* within each component are presented in Figure 37 in alphabetical order so that no order of precedence is assumed.

i) *Component elements*

Learner

The Learner elements vary in scope from the wide-ranging and ill-defined *knowledge* (which could refer to linguistic knowledge or that of a less-defined nature), to the specific and clearly identifiable *time* (referring to the time the learner is able to make available for SALL). These elements, as with others, are designed to be more closely defined as appropriate and necessary by evaluators according to the individual SAC context. The learner's *needs* refer both to those identified or perceived by the learner,

teacher or needs analysis tool, as well as those needs that remaining undefined and unconscious but that nevertheless affect the learning process. The *learning strategies* that a particular learner employs might include strategies such as setting study goals, devising a study plan and reviewing progress. The notion of group-focused learning, that a number of participants identified, is included in the elements *peer support* and *learning strategies*.

Human learner support

In the two sub-components, *Teacher* and *Support staff*, the element *guidance* figures as it does in three other sub-components reflecting its importance within a SALL context. It is distinguished from *feedback* in that it refers to the help given to the learner to orientate herself to SALL in general or to a specific learning task. *Feedback*, on the other hand, refers to information the teacher gives in response to a learner's linguistic output. The teacher's *expert knowledge* is defined rather more specifically than the learner's *knowledge*, referred to above, in that it relates to the teacher's knowledge of SALL, the SAC materials, equipment and systems, and the target language. The support staff's *expert knowledge*, on the other hand, would generally, although not necessarily, be confined to that of the SAC materials, equipment and systems.

Non-human learner support

Two sub-components of non-human learner support are identified. *IL support* would include tools such as the initial learner orientation process, learning diaries or logs, learning plans and strategy guidance materials. *Materials support* refers to tools such as the materials classification and indexing system, and learning pathways designed to guide learners in the use of the SAC's learning materials

The *IL support* element relates mainly to non-human support provided by the SAC although it is impossible to always completely separate the non-human and human support. For example, the *feedback* provided through a (non-human) learning diary is clearly actually written by the (human) SAC teacher. Likewise, with regard to the elements *planning* and *study record*, the learner input would clearly be crucial. The *Materials support* element, *organisation*, refers to the way that a SAC organises its materials so that the other two elements of *information* and *guidance* can then be provided for learners to enable efficient and effective use of the SAC materials.

Resources

Participants identified the component of *Resources*, with its sub-components *Materials* and *Equipment* as being central to the mapping of a SAC. The learning materials in a SAC especially are perceived as pivotal to the success of individual learners and thus to the centre as a whole. In terms of their appropriacy to the SALL context, the elements that participants identified as being of particular importance to the ensuring the effectiveness of a SAC were:

- the *content* with regard to linguistic level and suitability for SALL;
- the provision of opportunities for learner *practice* of language items and subsequent *feedback* in the form of a teacher's book or answer pages; and,
- adequate *guidance* in terms of clear instructions and examples.

Environment

The data discussed in section 6.3 relating to the SAC as a physical centre, emphasised this final component, *Environment*. Two aspects in particular, were highlighted: the importance of the centre's interior learning *space*, and the fact that this should be agreeable and welcoming which can be partly achieved at least by attention to the décor and *furnishings*.

All the component elements are identifiable and, to an extent, quantifiable in that their presence (or absence) can be noted and some of them counted or otherwise measured. It is, for example, quite possible for an evaluator to count the number of computers in a centre and measure their usage in terms of the number of hours that they are in use. This type of evaluation, generally of efficiency, might lend itself to some kind of benchmarking, both against other centres and against previous and successive evaluations. It is also possible to identify elements such as *learner experience* and support staff *expert knowledge*, although it would certainly be less easy to argue for their comparative evaluation. It is for the evaluator to firstly use the SAC mapping to make decisions regarding the evaluation foci, and then to make decisions regarding the best methodology for their evaluation.

ii) *Component qualities*

In contrast, the qualities that are attributed to these elements are generally, but not always, not so easy to either physically identify or quantify. They are, therefore, sometimes overlooked. They are, however, crucial to the operation of the component elements and thus to the success of a SAC as a whole.

Learner

Relating to the qualities of the SAC learner, participants in many of their comments, reflected aspects identified in the language learning and SALL literature. Stern (1975, 1983) and Naiman et al (1978) suggest the attributes of the "good language learner", while Oxford (1990) lists the types of strategies learners might employ when learning a language. Many of the attributes or strategies that they propose are encapsulated in the *Learner* qualities identified by the study participants. For example, Stern (1975) suggests strategies that learners might use to take *responsibility* for, or *control* of (Pemberton, 1994), the language learning process
that include *planning* and socialisation (*interaction*), while Oxford's (1990) *compensation* strategies include intelligent guessing or *experimentation*. Two other attributes that are accepted as possible indicators of a successful language learner and which three of the participants identify as SAC learner qualities are *confidence* and *motivation*.

Two other qualities, *individualisation* and *interaction*, seem to be contradictory. However, as discussed in section 6.2.1.(iii), the *individualisation* that participants identify is individualisation of learning goals and objectives. While this process is by its nature individualistic, it does not preclude *interaction* between learners in the SALL process (Dickinson & Carver, 1980; Morrison, 1995).

Human learner support

Apart from *commitment* and *reliability*, and *efficiency*, referring particularly to aspects such as punctuality and work-rate, the component qualities that participants identified are related to aspects of the nature of the relationship that develops between the SAC learner and the SAC staff. I use the term *motivation* to refer to both the teacher's own motivation which will affect her performance as well as to the motivational effect the teacher should have upon the learner. While this quality was not directly derived from the data, both my own experience and the literature (for example, Stern, 1983) point to its importance. This effect would support, and would be supported by, the development of *empathy* between learner and teacher in their *interactions*.

Non-human learner support

The component elements *IL support* and *Materials support* share the quality of *efficiency* which might be measured by comparing relative levels of usage to the cost

(in financial or human effort terms) of a particular support tool (Gardner & Miller, 1999: 228-232).

IL support is also seen to have the qualities of *individualising* and *focusing* the SAC learner's learning process through guidance in processes such as planning and reviewing. It hopefully also *motivates* learners by providing them with the guidance they need to be successful in their learning. *Materials support* primarily involves the identification of appropriate materials and guidance in their efficient and effective use. The materials support needs to be *comprehensive, systematic* and enable *ease of access*, otherwise SAC learners may not be able to find the guidance they need to use particular SAC materials efficiently or effectively.

Resources

Participants identify aspects of *quality* as important for both types of SAC resources. In relation to learning materials, these aspects would include clarity of explanations and instructions, accuracy of language and answers, and appropriacy of tasks and feedback. With reference to equipment, it would include reliability and accuracy of, for example, sound reproduction for computer pronunciation playback that would in turn enable efficient use of the equipment.

A sufficient *range* of *motivating* materials *relevant* to a range of linguistic levels, and learning needs and styles is necessary in order to ensure that the SAC is able to cater to a wide cross-section of potential users. With reference to the quality of *interactivity*, Andrew Morrall, in his feedback on the first version of the SAC mapping, suggests the inclusion of the *Internet* as a SAC component. Clearly Internet-based materials in particular benefit from this quality. Finally, in relation to Barbara Sinclair's observation (quoted previously in chapter six) that a SAC's facilities can range from a "cardboard box" to "a hi-tech set of rooms" and "everything in between" (Barbara Sinclair: 14-17), the quality of *appropriacy* should be kept in mind. In other words, the amount and type of equipment should be appropriate in terms of factors such as cost (both purchase and maintenance), the availability of technical support and learners' levels of technical awareness.

Environment

When considering the environment, I have included two qualities that seem to relate less to the actual physical environment and more perhaps to the learners' **perceptions** of the centre's environment: *fun* and *welcome*. The first has been

discussed in chapter six (sections 6.2.1 (iii), 6.3.3 and 6.4.2 (ii)). I have included the second to refer to an overall perception that draws upon many aspects, some of which (such as *lighting*) are included in this component, and some of which participants have identified earlier (such as "friendliness"). Others are difficult to identify discretely but are instead implicit in a number of participant comments relating to the SAC's environment.

One quality that was identified a number of times as important was the presence and absence of *noise*. It seems clear that in a centre where students are encouraged to be interactive as well as to study quietly, the environment needs to reflect this duality of role in providing both "quiet" and "noisy" areas. Related to this *quiet/noise* quality is that of *usage* since this, in addition a being a general reference to the way learners utilise the SAC, is also intended to specifically include the notion of group, rather than just individual, modes of study.

Clearly, unlike the component elements, the component qualities such as *motivation*, *friendliness* and *comfort* are much less easy to physically identify much less measure. This may, in turn, make them difficult to identify and discretely evaluate. It is necessary, however, I feel, to recognise their importance in the SAC learning process and to recognise their place in the defining context within which any evaluation is to take place.

8.2.2 Conclusion

Finally, any SAC mapping is necessarily a great simplification of a complex meta-process that subsumes a number of components that interact not only with the learner but also with each other. They interact in both observable and non-observable ways that depend on factors determined by the individual SAC context and indeed the individual learner's expectations, needs, wants and behaviour. The value of the mapping lies not in its explanatory power but rather in its ability to visually present the SAC context and thus provide a tool for focusing the SAC evaluation.

8.3 The evaluation framework

In chapter one, I argued that there is a need for SAC evaluation. I also outlined the need for a research-based, evaluation framework. I highlighted the value of such a framework

in terms of: addressing central questions concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of a SAC; providing a SAC with developmental support and greater face validity; and, being instrumental in promoting self-access as an effective and efficient mode of language learning.

I have also, however, stressed, with support from both the literature and PhD study data, the inherent individuality of each SAC. This, as Little (1989) points out, makes their evaluation not unproblematic:

> It should be recognised from the outset that self-access systems are difficult to evaluate. This is because they are at once complex and unique to the institutional context in which they have been established.
> (Little, 1989: 62)

These two points, the need to evaluate SACs and the inherent difficulty of doing so, are central to this PhD study and have led me to propose an evaluation framework that includes a mapping of the SAC as a central feature.

Having presented a mapping of a Hong Kong SAC above in section 8.2, in this section I present the proposed evaluation framework within which such a mapping would operate. In section 8.3.1, I first discuss my use of the term "framework", remind the reader of the sources for the development of the framework, before briefly explaining the reason for the type of construct I have developed. This is followed, in section 8.3.2, by my first introducing an overview of the actual framework, before going on to examine the major, constituent components individually.

8.3.1 Developing the evaluation framework

i) *Terminology*

In chapter five (section 5.3.1), I explained why I chose to use the metaphor *mapping* to describe my conceptualisation of a SAC, thus avoiding using the term *model.* Likewise, I am using not using the term *model* to describe my evaluation construct. This is both because of the positivistic echoes of the term (as discussed in section 5.3.1), but also to avoid the impression of presenting a construct that may "trap the user within the intentions of its originator" (Hopkins, 1988: 9). In other words, I wish to avoid the idea that the construct is prescriptive, but rather to indicate that it is

intended to be flexible and adaptable with reference to the context of each individual SAC. Instead, I use the term *framework*.

The term *framework* has been used in a number of ways in the evaluation literature. For example, Lynch (1990, 1996) uses the term *Preliminary thematic framework* to refer to a collection of **guiding foci** for the evaluation. Ho uses the term to refer to "a **plan** that helps clarify the key elements of and values embodied in a proposed evaluation" (Ho, 1993: 37 - my emphasis). For both Lynch and Ho, the term is programme-specific and defining (if not prescriptive). By contrast, in this study, the term *framework* is used in the same manner as Hopkins (1988) in his paper focusing on formative evaluation for curriculum development where he describes an evaluation framework as:

> ...a relatively systematic strategy that has improvement and rationality as its raison d'etre, and is useful to the range of people who may be cast in the role of evaluator...a way of conceptualising the evaluation process and as such provides a guide to action...it really is organised common sense, a coherent and systematic guide to action.
> (Hopkins, 1988: 3)

ii) *Sources*

In chapter two, I reviewed the literature related to programme evaluation. I noted the existence of numerous examples of evaluations in the form of:

- *models* (for example, Brown, 1989; Lynch, 1990, 1996);
- *checklists* (for example, Dressel 1976; Pollard, 1989);
- *guidelines* (for example, Case, 1990; Health Communication Unit, 1998); and
- *frameworks* (for example, Gardner & Miller, 1999; Hopkins, 1988).

I also pointed out that only Gardner (1999, 2002) and Gardner & Miller (1999) have proposed in any detail how a SAC evaluation might proceed. I continued by identifying eleven programme evaluation constructs from the literature that seemed of direct relevance to this PhD study (Figure 6, section 2.7). I suggested that they shared three common foci that have in turn been the focus of the collection and analysis of the evaluation-focused data in this study: **why** evaluate, **what** to evaluate and **how** to evaluate it. These three questions, in addition to having provided foci for the study interviews, will be seen to provide one element of the evaluation framework proposed below.

The proposed framework draws upon three sources: the data derived from this study; concepts from the relevant literature; and my own knowledge and experience as a Hong Kong SAC co-ordinator.

iii) *A multi-dimensional framework*

I suggested, in chapter two (section 2.7.5), that existing evaluation constructs tend to assume a two-dimensional linearity of process. I have suggested that this might not be appropriate in the context of the SAC, an educational entity that depends for its success on the contextual flexibility and adaptability of its systems. In assuming such linearity, I suggest that the evaluation as the sum of its parts is in danger of being not coming into focus. In an article in the Economist, Joseph Nye, writing about the present place of the United States in the world, suggests that:

> When you are in a three-dimensional game, you will lose if you focus only on the top board and fail to notice the other boards and the vertical connections between them.
> (Nye, 2002: 24)

This is not to suggest the existing constructs may not be appropriate in their contexts. Indeed, the framework I propose below is open, in some way, to similar criticism since it is, as are the others, a construct that is designed to present in simple and practicable terms a process that is vastly complex. However, my framework is intended to represent a process that allows for, and emphasises, a focusing on the other "boards" and the "vertical connections between them". In providing for such a focus, it intends to enable an evaluation that is conducted for the **right reasons**, with the **right foci** and in the **right manner**.

8.3.2 A framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC

In this section, I propose the evaluation framework. I firstly present and briefly introduce the complete framework, before going on to examine the four main elements separately in greater detail.

i) *The framework*

The framework, which is presented overleaf in Figure 38, comprises four main elements. They will be discussed individually in (ii) to (iv) below. In section (v), I finally discuss the way they interact as constituent parts of the evaluation as a whole.

At the top, is the *Context* element that directly affects the *Key questions* elements and indirectly the other two elements. From left to right, the *Decisions* elements relate to decisions that have to be made at various stages of the evaluation process.

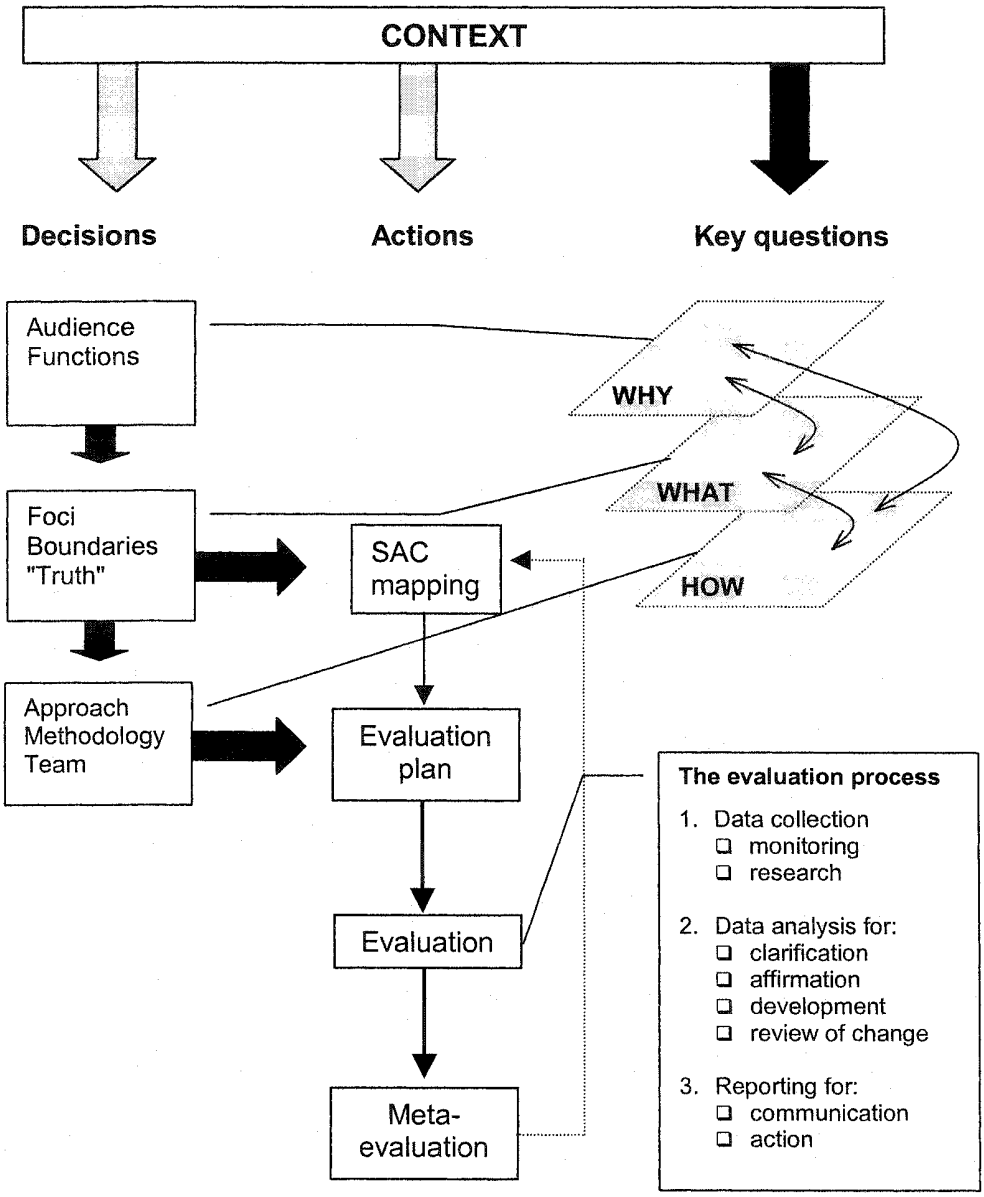


Figure 38: A framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC

The four *Actions* boxes in the middle of the figure represent the operation of the evaluation in terms of what actually occurs. The *Key questions*, that are discussed in order to reach the *Decisions* on the left of the figure, are directly linked to the *Context* in that the three foci questions (**why**, **what**, and **how**) are clearly context-dependant.

Different types of arrow are used to denote different types of relationships between the elements:

- the heavy black arrows signify the very significant influence that the *Context* has upon the three *Key questions*, the two *Decision* elements upon the *Mapping* and *Evaluation plan*, and the first two *Decision* elements upon the second and third respectively;
- the two lightly shaded arrows at the top indicate the fact that the *Context* has an indirect effect on the *decisions* and *Actions elements,* in addition to its direct effect on the *Key questions*;
- the curved, double-headed arrows indicate the repeated interaction between the *Issues* that takes place when these are discussed;
- the simple black vertical arrows between the *Actions* are indicative of a temporal progression from the first to the fourth; and, finally,
- the call-out lines from the *Decisions boxes* are used to indicate that: the *Decisions* result from discussion of the *Key questions*; and the three stages of the "Evaluation process" are component parts of the "Evaluation" *Action* element.

ii) *The Key questions and Decisions elements*

The *Key questions* are those three *key questions* that I have argued in chapter seven (section 7.5) are central to the focusing and planning of an evaluation: **why**, **what** and **how**. As noted in section (i) above, the evaluation *Decisions* result from discussion of the *Key questions*.

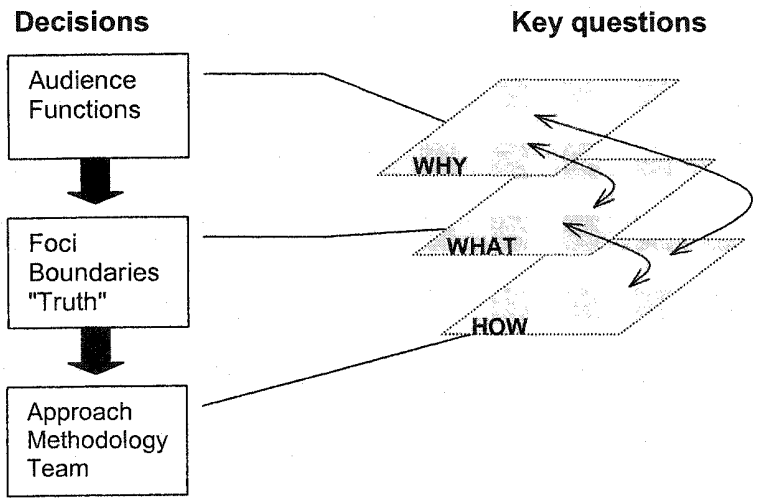


Figure 39: Framework elements 1 - *Decisions* and *Key questions*

As seen in the framework, the three questions are not discrete and isolated from each other. Instead, they are inter-dependent with decisions taken as a result of the discussion of one question impacting on, or being impacted upon by, another.

The discussion of each question should result in *Decisions* regarding the evaluation framework being made. The discussion and resulting decisions will clearly be greatly influenced by the context (as further discussed in section (iv) below). However, as presented in chapter seven, data from this study indicate that the each of the *Key questions* should at least be matched with the *Decisions* indicated in the framework. The inter-relationship between the questions and the *Decisions*, and an overview of the types of decisions to be made in order to inform the SAC mapping and evaluation plan, can be seen in Figure 36 chapter seven (section 7.5). In this figure, I have presented a summary of the analysis of the relevant PhD data that were fully discussed in the preceding sections 7.2 to 7.4. Furthermore, since, as noted above, the three *Key questions* are not discrete and isolated from each, neither are the resulting *Decisions* made in isolation from each other. Clearly, for example, a decision regarding the foci of an evaluation will affect its methodology.

iii) *The Actions element*

The *Actions* element is, as seen in isolation in Figure 40 below, linear in presentation. It would, generally, also tend be chronological in operation but not necessarily strictly so.

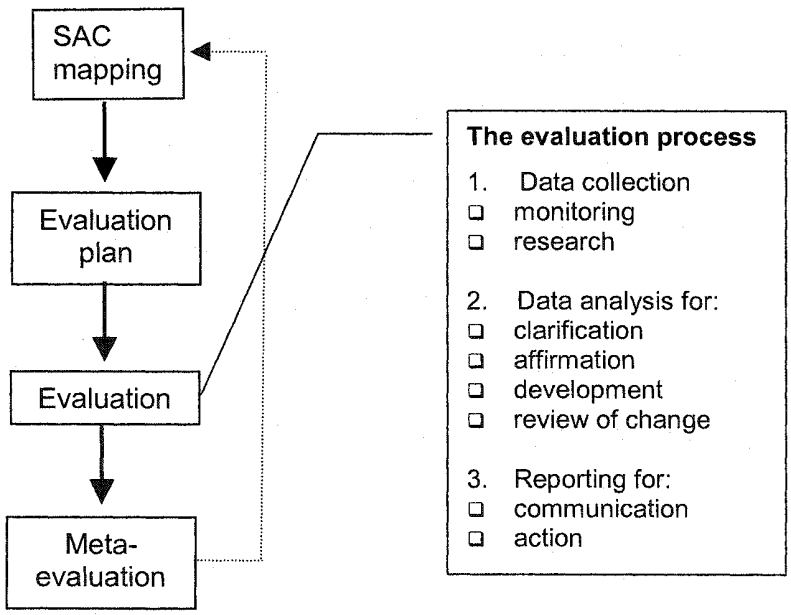


Figure 40: Framework element 2 - *Actions*

Within the element, I have identified four discrete actions that I believe are crucial to the effectiveness of any SAC evaluation: the SAC mapping, the evaluation plan, the evaluation itself and a meta-evaluation.

Mapping

The first action, that of developing a *SAC mapping*, has been discussed at length both above in section 8.2 and previously in chapters five and six. It will be derived, with particular reference to the mapping presented in section 8.2 above, and from data obtained relating to the decisions made regarding the *Key question* (**What**) relating to the evaluation content.

Evaluation plan

As noted in chapter 2 (section 2.7.4, iii), only two of the eleven evaluation models I summarised explicitly featured an *evaluation plan* as an element. However, in all nine, the development of a plan is clearly inferred, as it is in the data examined in chapter seven. Such as plan is clearly necessary in order for all the evaluation stakeholders to share the decisions made relating to the *Key question* (**Why**) regarding the evaluation methodology.

Evaluation

The "Evaluation process" box serves to focus on the actual processes involved in the implementation of the evaluation itself rather than its planning and follow-up. It serves to represent the stages of an evaluation as resulting from the evaluation plan. The stages in the process that are indicated in Figure 40 are indicative since, clearly, in any specific evaluation, they would be affected by decisions made earlier that, in turn, had informed the SAC mapping and evaluation plan.

Meta-evaluation

The *meta-evaluation* action, which refers to the process of evaluating the evaluation (Stufflebeam, 1978; Nevo, 1986; Straw & Cook, 1990), is indicated by a dotted line to indicate its potential for informing a future evaluation process, including any adaptation to the SAC mapping. While it is clearly of importance, it is considered to be beyond the scope of this study and is included in chapter nine as a suggested focus for further research in this area.

iv) *The Context element*

I use a simple (but large) box and arrows to represent the *Context*, not because it is a simple element within the evaluation, but rather to emphasise its huge importance. As discussed in chapter two (sections 2.5.4 (i) and2.7), Lynch (1996), in his *Context*-Adaptive evaluation model, suggests a "checklist, or inventory" which can be used to define the programme context. He characterises this *Context inventory* as a "step" in the model which enables the evaluator to "develop a preliminary sense of the important themes and issues" in order to "determine what is being evaluated" (Lynch, 1996: 170). While I agree that these are important tasks, I do not perceive the concept of context in the same way. Rather, I see it impacting more widely upon the evaluation and not just in terms of "setting the scene" and determining foci. I see it as including everything that might impact upon the *Key questions* and consequently upon the *Decisions* elements presented in (section ii) above, and through them upon the *Actions* presented in (section iii) above. Furthermore, the context will impact, albeit in a less direct way, on all questions, decisions and actions involved in the evaluation process. In an evaluation, each question will need to be addressed, each decision will need to be made, and action will need to be taken with specific and explicit reference to the evaluation context. This can be seen, for example, in the huge impact that the contextual element, funding, can have on the focus, scope and nature of the evaluation.

v) *Bringing together the framework elements*

Taken separately, the four individual elements comprising the evaluation framework might be said in some ways to reflect different aspects of existing, recognised evaluation practice. I believe it is the bringing together of these in an attempt to reflect more meaningfully the SAC realities, while at the same time presenting this in as simple and accessible a manner as possible, that provides the descriptive power of the framework. In showing the interaction not only between the elements but also within them, I believe the SAC mapping (Figure 37), in section 8.3.2 (i), above represents the integration of the elements described in section 8.3.2 in a way that tries to address Joseph Nye's criticism of the two-dimensional outlook in a three-dimensional game:

> When you are in a three-dimensional game, you will lose if you focus only on the top board and fail to notice the other boards and the vertical connections between them
> (Nye, 2002: 24).

8.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented two constructs which I have derived from the PhD study data, the existing literature and my own knowledge and experience as a SAC co-ordinator. The *SAC mapping* is designed to serve as a central focus in any SAC evaluation and aims to identify the defining elements that together constitute the essence of a Hong Kong SAC. The *evaluation framework* serves to represent a flexible and context-adaptable evaluation environment that can be adapted to meet the needs of an evaluation of any Hong Kong SAC.

Chapter nine

Conclusion

9.1 An end-of-year SAC vignette

It is April and the end of the second semester of the academic year in Hong Kong is approaching. The head of the English Language Centre goes to Joan, the SAC co-ordinator, to remind her that, as every year, the report on language enhancement initiatives for the University Grants Commission (UGC), the funders, will shortly be due. This means that Joan will need to prepare her annual report on the work of the SAC as one of the initiatives. Last year the funders had stressed the need for quantified evidence of the initiatives' effectiveness, this year they have requested a particular focus on qualitative data such as learners' perceptions of efficiency.

As the SAC co-ordinator, Joan needs to start the annual process of going back to various data sources including usage figures, questionnaire results and diary comments to mine it for data that are particularly relevant for this year's evaluation request. She will then collate the data and ensure that it is presented in such a way that it satisfies the funding stakeholders in the form of a formal report. She will, however, in addition, use the data to provide herself and the SAC staff with indications of areas of the centre's operation that warrant development or change.

After the head of centre has left, Joan looks around the SAC and reflects on both the very different uses the learners make of the centre (as reflected in the vignettes presented in chapter one, section 1.2), and indeed the SAC stakeholders' very different perceptions of what the centre actually is. She then considers how she might evaluate a centre with such diversity in such as way that the wishes and needs of all the various stakeholders might be met.

In her reflections, Joan's view of evaluation encompasses both developmental and judgmental functions. The developmental aspects derive from the motivation of, amongst others, herself, the SAC teachers and the SAC learners to improve the operation of the SAC in order for it to better provide an effective and efficient service to its users. The judgmental aspects are, however, more likely to derive from the demands of stakeholders, such as the SAC funders, who perceive such judgments to be necessary to inform decisions concerning the future of the SAC. Joan also, however, understands that such a binary conception of an evaluation's

functions is simplistic and that the two functions are not entirely either discrete, or independent of each other. Her mind then drifts back to the annual UGC report.

From the annual UGC reports on language enhancement initiatives (cf. Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2000, 2001, 2002) written by each of the Hong Kong universities, it is clear that evaluation of the tertiary SACs has been primarily, and fairly narrowly, focused on the summative function of justifying continued funding: there are few references to developmental issues. It is with Joan's thoughts and the practicalities of the Hong Kong SAC context in mind, that this study started.

In the following three sections, I firstly present a summarising overview of the study and re-state my view of its importance. I then go on to summarise the results of the study with reference to the five study objectives set out in chapter one. Finally, I discuss some of the theoretical and practical implications of the study and, in particular, of the two resulting constructs: the SAC mapping and the SAC evaluation framework.

9.2 Summary of study

In this study, I have set out to develop a framework for the evaluation of self-access language centres in Hong Kong. As part of the development process, I have presented a schematic representation of the operation a Hong Kong SAC which I have referred to as a *mapping*. I have argued that this construct should provide a defining focus for an evaluation undertaken using the evaluation framework.

Over the past twenty years, increasing importance has been placed on the integration of evaluation into English language programmes. This study was motivated by a lack of both a SAC evaluation construct and a theoretically-derived description of the operation of a SAC upon which an evaluation could be focused. As discussed in chapter two (section 2.3.3, i), it has been suggested that the SAC is a proto-typical post-industrial educational system (Heuring, 1997). However, if SACs are to fulfill their potential, they must be able to demonstrate their pedagogical value to all their stakeholders (not only the funders) and the wider educational audience. SAC experts David Gardner and Richard Pemberton both point out, that for the first few years of operation, the SACs in Hong Kong were under little pressure to conduct meaningful evaluations. It could be argued that

there would have been little to be gained in their undergoing a formal, rigorous evaluative process in their formative years. Donald Campbell (1983) (quoted in Patton, 1997: 187) suggests funders should "evaluate no program until it is proud." SACs like any innovative educational programme need time to go through phases of experimentation, change and consolidation. However, given their nearly eight-year history in Hong Kong, it is time for them to be subject to meaningful, coherent evaluation both in order to justify their continued funding as well as to determine those areas of their operation that can be improved upon.

This study is unique in its attempt to develop a framework that has been specifically developed for the evaluation of SACs. It has, however, also been designed with sufficient flexibility for it to be applicable to a wide range of SACs and to meet a wide range of stakeholder concerns. This study is also unique in having developed a theory of the operation of a SAC, without which, I argue, it would not be possible to meaningfully address one of the three fundamental evaluation questions i.e. what to evaluate.

Both the mapping and the evaluation framework have been derived from three sources:

- data from participants in this study;
- an extensive review of the Applied Linguistics, Evaluation and Education literatures relating to the various areas of concern; and,
- my own experience as a Hong Kong SAC co-ordinator.

With the exception of Barbara Sinclair, who was included in the study on the basis of her wide knowledge of, and experience in, the field of learner independence, the study participants have all been involved, in one role or another, in the operation of a SAC in Hong Kong. They were interviewed about their perceptions of what defines a SAC and matters relating to SAC evaluation. The interviews were semi-structured, and formed the data-set for the mindmap and NVivo data analysis processes. Following the development of the first version of the SAC mapping, the participants were contacted again to comment on this construct and to complete an e-mail follow-up questionnaire that sought to clarify, and expand upon, issues arising from the initial interviews.

9.3 Summary of study results

As stated in chapter one (section 1.4), the study has five main objectives.

9.3.1 Study objective one: Identify the defining pedagogical and systemic characteristics of a Hong Kong self-access language learning centre.

This is an enabling objective in that I have argued that there exists no coherent defining theory of the operation of a SAC upon which an evaluation framework might be based

I have presented a construct, which I refer to as a SAC *mapping*, that describes the learning process that is at the heart of a Hong Kong SAC. It seeks to recognise the special nature of a SAC as an educational entity. The SAC is described primarily in terms of a set of initial *Assumptions* concerning what the learner lacks, *Components* that the learner interacts with, and the *Potential effects* of that interaction. Each component is then described in terms of its constituent *Elements* and its desired *Qualities*. The mapping is cyclical in presentation to reflect the various ways in which learners use a SAC. In order to accommodate the range of learner type suggested in the vignettes in chapter one (section 1.1), the mapping must provide for both multiple and single use of the centre with both successful and unsuccessful outcomes.

It is, however, necessary to recognise the limitations of the mapping. As suggested in chapter five (section 5.3), maps can be perceived as authoritative and present a semblance of finality and permanence. This is not intended to be the case here. The nature of SACs as relatively experimental, post-industrial educational entities and the fact that this mapping is based, not upon one particular Hong Kong SAC, but rather stakeholders perceptions of **any one** Hong Kong SAC, renders such a goal unrealistic.

9.3.2 Study objective two: Identify a potential rationale, content and methodology for the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC.

i) *Rationale*

The rationale for the evaluation of a SAC has been identified primarily in terms of the need to take into account the evaluation audience and intended evaluation function. In terms of audience, a particular distinction has been made between the expectations and needs of the *indirect stakeholders*

(a group that includes the funders) and the *direct stakeholders* (the agents, and/or targets, of any developments resulting from the evaluation). These two groups may have different reasons for wanting to conduct an evaluation.

Study participants identified various evaluation functions, and these I have categorised as being primarily being *developmental* or *judgmental* in motivation. Clearly, within the Hong Kong SAC context, as illustrated in the vignette in section 9.1 above, the notion of evaluation as an administrative requirement cannot be ignored. This is not, however, to suggest that such a rationale should be the only, or even perhaps the primary, one to drive the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC.

ii) Content

The content of any SAC evaluation will clearly depend on the evaluation rationale. As the elements that constitute the SAC and the SALL process are complex and many, so the potential elements of a SAC evaluation are likewise. I have suggested that it would be, at the very least, unrealistic to attempt an evaluation of all aspects of a SAC's operation. I have also, however, identified five potential evaluation foci. These are: stakeholders' perceptions of aspects of the SAC; language learning and IL skills; the SAC's facilities, systems and resources; elements of efficiency; and elements of effectiveness with regard to the physical centre, the learner and the degree to which the centre meets its stated objectives.

I have also argued that there is a crucial need for agreement among all those involved in the evaluation regarding two central issues. The first is the definition of the evaluation *boundaries*, i.e. key terms that will be instrumental in developing an understanding of the evaluation process. The second is the underlying *truth* that the evaluation is seeking, in terms of the type of data and its subsequent analysis.

iii) Methodology

There was general agreement among the study participants regarding the overall approach that a SAC evaluation should adopt. This was that it should be naturalistic, but that there was a place for a quantitative element that would serve a triangulatory purpose. A need was also identified for both formal and informal aspects in order to meet the needs and expectations of different stakeholders. The methodology was discussed widely in terms of whom to

survey, possible data collection and reporting methods, and who should conduct the evaluation and various roles that they might play.

9.3.3 Study objective three: Examine existing evaluation constructs for elements that could contribute to the development of SAC evaluation.

From the many programme evaluation approaches and models discussed in the literature review, I identified eleven (Figure 6) as having particular, specific relevance to this study. These constructs were of different types and developed for different purposes, but all shared two general features: their potential applicability to the SAC context, and their accessibility and clarity of conception. I identified three questions that underlie all eleven constructs and these I have used as foundational and guiding questions in the development of the study evaluation framework. The questions are: **why** evaluate, **what** to evaluate and **how** to evaluate. Other individual notions included in the constructs were also incorporated into the study and influenced the development of the evaluation framework. An example, can be seen in the inclusion in the framework of the notion of an evaluation plan as one of the four evaluation *actions.*

It should be noted, however, that the identification of these eleven constructs is not to suggest that the others discussed had no impact upon the study. On the contrary, their influence was crucial in providing the contextual landscape within which the framework that has emerged from this study was conceived.

9.3.4 Study objective four: Propose a framework for the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC.

The construct that I propose in Figure 38 (chapter eight) is intended to be a *framework* as defined previously in chapter eight (section 8.3.1): as a "coherent and systematic guide to action" (Hopkins, !988: 3). Its multi-dimensional nature is designed to recognise the complexity of the evaluation process as a whole, in addition to the interaction between its various constituent elements. At the same time, however, it is intended to be simple enough in presentation to allow for its use as a practical organisational tool. Its design is intended to allow it to be flexible and adaptable to the context of each individual Hong Kong SAC. This flexibility also, I believe, may allow it to be generalisable to SACs in other countries. However, further research would be needed to confirm (or deny) this.

9.3.5 Study objective five: Suggest areas for further research to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the evaluation of SACs.

In chapters one and two, I indicated that this research was partly motivated by reasons relating to my work as a Hong Kong SAC co-ordinator, and consequently by the lack of a coherent framework for the evaluation of a SAC. In the six years that I have been undertaking this study, there has been a fairly large amount of published research into areas related to SALL, in particular into the notion of learner autonomy. There has, however, been less into the **operation** of SACs and, as indicated in chapter two (section 2.5), even less into the **evaluation** of the operation of SACs.

There is clearly a need to validate the two major constructs resulting from this study; the SAC mapping and the SAC evaluation framework. They have been based upon a small data-set, my own interpretation of the relevant literature and a small selection of existing evaluation constructs. The most obvious way for such validation to proceed would be for **evaluations to be conducted** using the framework and mapping, firstly in Hong Kong and then elsewhere. Resulting feedback would then provide the data for development and adaptation of the constructs. Similarly, the **development of mappings for SACs outside Hong Kong** would provide an element of wider validation as well as the opportunity for research into the notions of SACs (as a learning entity) and SALL (as a learning process) as they are applied globally. Finally, in terms of validation, the conducting of **meta-evaluations** upon any evaluations conducted using the mapping and framework clearly would clearly be of interest and potential research value.

Three other areas of potential research interest follow.

i) *Research into cause-and-effect relationships within the SAC mapping*
Beyond the scope of this study has been an investigation into the various cause-and-effect relationships that operate as a result of the various potential interactions identified in the SAC mapping. There is vast scope for research that would be of value not only directly to those involved in the operation of SACs, but also to educators more generally.

Such research has the potential to build upon existing studies such as those (for example) into the "good language learner" (cf. Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Naiman et al., 1978), the effects of technology on the learning process (cf.

Johannsen, 2000) and the role that affective factors play in the learning process (cf. O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990).

ii) *Research into assessing learning gain in SALL*

I have pointed out the difficulty of assessing learning gain in an educational environment with no common set curriculum, homogeneous learning aims or learning patterns. There are, however, two areas where further research may be of value.

Firstly, recognising the reality that some learners are following structured learning programmes within a SAC, within these contexts, pre-test and post-test focused studies might be employed to look for identifiable gain in particular areas. Secondly, the notion of encouraging learners to reflect in a more structured way upon their learning process and subsequently their perceptions of learning gain may yield analysable results. These could then be used to inform developments in aspects the SAC operation. In conjunction with the use of tests suggested above, it may be subsequently possible to identify ways in which **perceptions** of learning gain (as discussed in chapter seven, section 7.3.7) might be associated with evidence of **actual** gain.

iii) Research into evaluating the impact of the SAC on the language learning experience

While this study has focused on evaluating a particular SAC, there has been little research into the impact that use of a SAC can have on a learner's language learning experience more generally. Gardner & Miller (1997) investigated learners' views on a number of issues and included questions relating to perceived **benefits** that accrued from SAC use, but there has been no long-term study which focuses on the impact (both positive and negative) of SAC use on the language learning experience.

Clearly such a study can be seen to be important in order to validate the continued funding of SACs as part of the wider language learning provision.

9.4 Implications of the study

The significance of the findings from the study summarised above, and the two constructs that have resulted lie in the theoretical and practical implications that they hold.

9.4.1 Theoretical implications

i) *The SAC mapping*

The findings from this study have shown that, while there are different perceptions in many of the details concerning what constitutes a SAC, there is also a set of commonalities and I have synthesised these in the development of the SAC mapping. This construct provides a graphic description of the processes that underlie a SAC, and serves to illustrate and confirm their complexity.

The broad theoretical significance lies, I believe, in the fact that, in order for there to be acceptance of the notion of the SAC as a central element in the language learning process, it is vital that it be clearly defined and explained. Until one such theory is clearly explicated, there is nothing against which to compare and contrast others. It is only when a number of such theories have been developed and discussed that self-access practitioners can claim their place in the educational mainstream.

ii) *The SAC evaluation framework*

The primary theoretical implication of the framework lies, I believe, in its multi-dimensional nature. Unlike many theoretical evaluation constructs, it does not present a view of evaluation as a rather simple linear process but rather recognises its complexity in terms the interaction between the *Key questions*, *Decisions*, *Actions* and *Context*.

It is, however, a *framework* and not a *model* in as much as it does not, in itself, dictate a particular approach or methodology. Its prescription is only in terms of: the questions to be asked (not the answers): the decisions to be made (and not the decisions themselves); and, a simple recognition of the actions to be taken in, I would argue, any evaluation. A major implication lies in the recognition of the *Context* as the major determinant in addressing how the questions are to be answered and the subsequent decisions made.

9.4.2 Practical implications

The primary practical implications of the study lie in the potential application of the two resulting constructs.

i) *The SAC mapping*

There is an identifiable and immediate value in the application of the SAC mapping by two groups of educators in particular. Firstly, for SAC co-ordinators it can provide a way of conceptualising their own SAC and thus functioning as a diagnostic tool in any process of review and/or development. Secondly, for those intending to set up a SAC, it would, I argue, provide a useful starting point in the planning stage: a theory that simply, but clearly, describes the underlying SAC learning process.

From another perspective, a mapping can have explanatory power when introducing the notion of a SAC and its attendant educational philosophy. As a relatively, new and unproven educational entity, a SAC can often be the focus of both interest and, particularly when related to funding decisions, sceptical attention. Unlike a visit by indirect stakeholder funders, which (while useful) can serve to present images which can be variously interpreted, a mapping clearly outlines all of the actual constituent elements, and the interaction between these and the learner.

ii) The SAC evaluation framework

It is to be hoped that the evaluation framework might provide the basis for the planning of a SAC evaluation: this is, indeed, its intention. It is intended to be the starting point from which the evaluation is planned. It is designed as a framework for the evaluation initiators to use in the drawing-up of the evaluation plan that will then guide the evaluation in a step-by-step manner. If used effectively, it has the potential to ensure that all dimensions of the evaluation planning are considered in terms of the questions asked, the resulting decisions made and subsequent actions taken. It is intended that the centrality of the notion of *Context* within the framework might help to ensure that the type of inappropriate evaluation approach sometimes employed by outside experts with little or no understand of local conditions (cf. Alderson & Scott, 1992; Lynch, 1996; Weir & Roberts, 1994) can be avoided.

While the framework was designed for use in the evaluation of a Hong Kong SAC, it may also be that it has a wider application in the evaluation of other educational entities. With its emphasis on flexibility and the critical influence of context, it may be particularly applicable to those of an "alternative" nature which are more context-dependent and perhaps less predictable in make-up than, for example, most secondary schools within a particular educational system.

References

Alderson, J. C. (1992). Guidelines for the evaluation of language education. In J. C. Alderson, & A. Beretta (eds.), (1992). 274-304.

Alderson, J. C. (1994). Towards a theory of participatory evaluation: insights from applied linguistics. In L. Barbara, & M. Scott (eds.), (1994). 1-13.

Alderson, J. C., & Beretta, A. (eds.). (1992). Evaluating Second Language Education. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alderson, J. C., & Scott, M. (1992). Insiders, outsiders and participatory evaluation. In J. C. Alderson, & A. Beretta 1992). 25-57.

Alkin, M. C. (1969). Evaluation theory development. Evaluation Comment, 2, 2-7.

Alkin, M. C. (1972). Evaluation theory development. In C. H. Weiss (ed.), (1972). 105-117.

Alkin, M. C., & Ellett, Jr. F. S. (1990). Development of evaluation models. In H. J. Walberg, & G. D. Haertel (eds.), (1990). 15-20.

Allison, D. (1993a). Can English enhancement programmes be efficient? Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics & Language Teaching, 16, 53-62.

Allison, D. (1993b). Evaluating second language education. Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching, 16, 134-137.

Allwright, D., & Bailey, K. M. (1991). Focus on the Language Classroom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ammons, D. N. (1996). Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance & Establishing Community Standards. London: Sage Publications.

Anivan, S. (ed.). (1991). Issues in Language Programme Evaluation in the 1990s. Singapore: SAEMECO Regional Language Centre.

Aston, G. (1993). The learner's contribution to the self-access centre. English Language Teaching Journal, 47(3), 219-227.

Atherton, B. (1980). Adapting Spaces for Resource-Based Learning. London: Centre for Educational Technology.

Bachman, L. (1989). The development and use of cirterion-reference tests of language ability in language program evaluation. In R. K. Johnson (ed.), (1989).

Bachman, L. (1990). Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bailey, K. M. (1990). The use of diary studies in teacher education programs. In J. C. Richards, & D. Nunan (eds.), (1990). 215-226.

Barbara, L., & Scott, M. (1994). (eds.), Reflections on Language Learning . Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Bazeley, P., & Richards, L. (2000). The NVivo Qualitative Project Book. London: Sage Publications.

Beeching, K. (1996). Evaluating a self-study system. In E. Broady, & M. Kenning (eds.), (1996). 81-103.

Benson, P. (2002). Rethinking the relationship of self-access and autonomy. HASALD Newsletter, 3-7.

Benson, P. (1994). Self-access systems as information systems: questions of ideology and control. In D. Gardner, & L. Miller (eds.), (1994). 3-12.

Benson, P. (2001). Teaching & Researching Autonomy in Language Learning. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education.

Benson, P., & Toogood, S. (2002). Learner Autonomy 7: Challenges to Research & Practice. Dublin: Authentik.

Benson, P., & Voller, P. (eds.). (1997). Autonomy & Independence in Language Learning . London: Addison Wesley Longman.

Beretta, A. (1992). Evaluation of language education: an overview. In J. C. Alderson, & A. Beretta (1992). 5-24.

Beretta, A. (1986). Toward a methodology of ESL program evaluation. TESOL Quarterly, 20(1), 144-155.

Beretta, A. (1992). What can be learned from the Bangalore evaluation. In J. C. Alderson, & A. Beretta (eds.), (1992). 250-273.

Beretta, A., & Davies, A. (1985). Evaluation of the Bangalore Project. English Language Teaching Journal, 39(2), 121-127.

Berk, R. A., & Rossi, P. H. (1990). Thinking about Programme Evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Beswick, N. (1977). Resource-Based Learning . London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Bickman, L. (1987a). The functions of program theory. In L. Bickman (ed.), (1987a). 5-18.

Bickman, L. (ed.). (1987b). Using Program Theory in Evaluation . San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Billows, F. L. (1961). The Techniques of Language Teaching. London: Longman.

Blaker, J. M., & Burns, T. (2000). Investigation into Independent Learning Centres in New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong & England. Unpublished report: UNITEC Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

Bloom, B. S., Krathwohl, D. R., & Masia, B. B. (1964). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. London: Longman.

Blue, G., & Grundy, P. (1996). Team evaluation of language teaching and language courses. English Language Teaching Journal, 50(3), 244-249.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). Qualitative Research for Education. MA, USA: Allyn & Bacon.

Booton, P., & Benson, P. (1996). Self-Access: Classification & Retrieval . London: The British Council.

Borich, G. D. (1990). Decision-oriented evaluation. In H. J. Walberg, & G. D. Haertel (eds.), (1990). 31-35.

Boud, D. (Ed.). (1988a). Developing Student Autonomy in Learning. London: Kogan Page.

Boud, D. (1988b). Moving towards autonomy. In D. Boud (ed.), (1988b). 17-39.

Breen, M. P., & Candlin, C. N. (1980). The essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching. Applied Linguistics, 1(2), 89-112.

Breivik, P. S. (1998). Student Learning in the Information Age. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.

Broady, E., & Kenning, M. (1996). Promoting Learner Autonomy in University Language Teaching. London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching & Research.

Brookes, A., & Grundy, P. (1988). Individualisation & Autonomy in Language Learning. ELT Documents 131. London : Modern English Publication & the British Council.

Brookfield, S. (1985a). Self-directed learning:a critical review of research. In S. Brookfield (ed.), (1985a). 5-16.

Brookfield, S. (ed.). (1985b). Self-Directed Learning: from Theory to Practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. (1993). Self-directed learning, political clarity, and the critical practice of adult education. Adult Education Quarterly, 43(4), 227-242.

Brown, G. (1983). Discourse Analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, J. D. (1989). Language program evaluation: a synthesis of existing possibilities. In R. K. Johnson (ed.), (1989). 222-241.

Brown, J. D. (1988). Understanding Research in Second Language Learning: A Teacher's Guide to Statistics and Research Design. London: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, J. D., & Pennington, M. C. (1991). Developing effective evaluation systems for language programs. In M. C. Pennington (ed.), (1991). 3-18.

Brumfit, C. J. (1984). Communicative Methodology in Language Teaching: the Roles of Fluency & Accuracy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brumfit, C. J., & Johnson, K. (1979). The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching. London: Oxford University Press.

Bruner, J. (1993). The ethnographic self and the personal self. In P. Benson (ed.), (1993). 2-26.

Bruner, J. (1960). The Process of Education . Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1963). Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Design in Research. Chicago: Rand MacNally.

Candy, P. C. (1989). Constructivism & the study of self-direction in adult learning. Studies in the Education of Adults, 21 , 95-116.

Carvalho, D. (1993). Self-Access: Appropriate Material. Manchester: The British Council.

Case, D. D. (1990). The Community's Toolbook: The Ideas, Methods & Tools for Participatory Assessment, Monitoring & Evaluation in Community Forrestry. Rome: Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

Centre for Independent Language Learning . (1998). A study of student usage of the Centre for Independent Language Learning. Unpublished internal report, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Chambers, F. (1994). Removing confusion about formative and summative evaluation: purpose versus time. Evaluation and Program Planning, 17(1), 9-12.

Charities Evaluation Services. (1998). Involving Users in Evaluation. London: Charities Evaluation Services.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: objectivist & constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (2000). 509-536.

Charmaz, K. (2002). Qualitative interviewing & Grounded Theory analysis. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A. Holstein (eds.), (2002). 675-694.

Chelimsky, E. (1985). Comparing & contrasting auditing & evaluation. Evaluation Review, 9(4), 483-503.

Chelimsky, E. (1997). The political environment of evaluation & what it means for the development of the field. In E. Chelimsky, & W. R. Shadish (eds.), (1997). 53-68.

Chelimsky, E., & Shadish, W. R. (1997). Evaluation for the 21st Century. London: Sage.

Chen, H. T. (1990). Issues in constructing program theory. New Directions for Program Evaluation, 47, 7-18.

Chen, H. T., & Rossi, P. H. (1983). Evaluating with sense: the theory-driven approach. Evaluation Review, 7(3), 283-302.

Chen, H. T., & Rossi, P. H. (1989). Issues in the theory-driven perspective. Evaluation & Program Planning, 12, 299-306.

Chen, H. T., & Rossi, P. H. (1980). The multi-goal, theory-driven approach to evaluation: a model linking basic & applied social science. Social Forces, 59(1), 106-122.

Cherrington, D. J. (1995). The Management of Human Resources. Englewoods Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Clark, A. (1999). Evaluation Research. London: Sage Publications.

Clark, J. (1982). Resource-Based Learning for Higher & Continuing Education. London: Croom Helm.

Clark, J. L. D. (1969). The Pennsylvania Project and the "Audio-Lingual" vs. "Traditional" question. Modern Language Journal, 53(6), 388-396.

Clemente, M. A. (2001). Teachers attitudes within a self-directed language learning scheme. System, 29(1), 45-67.

Codling, S. (1998). Introduction to Benchmarking in Business. Aldershot, UK: Gower.

Cohen, A. (1998). Strategies in Learning & Using a Second Language. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.

Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1994). Research Methods in Education. London: Routledge.

Coleman, H. (1992). Moving the goalposts: project evaluation in action. In J. C. Alderson, & A. Beretta (eds.), (1992). 222-246.

Cook, T. D. (1997). Lessons learned in evaluation over the past 25 years. In E. Chelimsky, & W. R. Shadish (eds.), (1997). 30-52.

Cook, T. D., & Reichardt, C. S. (1979). (eds.), Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Evaluation Research . London: Sage.

Cordray, D. S., Bloom, H. S., & Light, R. J. (eds.). (1987). Evaluation Practice in Review. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cordray, S. C. (ed.). (1985). Utilizing Prior Research in Evaluation Planning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Corner, C. (1999). The agency of mapping: speculation, critique and invention. In D. Cosgrove (ed.), (1999). 213-252.

Cosgrove, D. (1999a). Mapping meaning. In D. Cosgrove (ed.), (1999a). 1-23.

Cosgrove, D. (1999b). Mappings. London: Reaktion Books.

Cotterall, S., & Crabbe, D. (eds.). (1999). Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Defining the Field & Effecting Change. Fankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Cotterall, S., & Reinders, H. (2002). Fortress or bridge? Learners' perceptions & Practice in Self Access Language Learning. Tesolanz, 8, 23-38.

Cousins, J. B., & Earl, L. M. (1995a). The case for participatory evaluation: theory, research, practice. In J. B. Cousins, & L. M. Earl (eds.), (1995a). 3-18.

Cousins, J. B., & Earl, L. M. (eds.). (1995b). Participatory Evaluation in Education. London: Falmer Press.

Cousins, J. B., & Earl, L. M. (1995c). Participatory evaluation in education: what do we know? where do we go? In J. B. Cousins, & L. M. Earl (eds.), (1995c). 159-180.

Crabbe, D. (1993). Fostering autonomy from within the classroom: the teacher's responsibility. System, 21, 443-452.

Cronbach, L. J. (1982). Designing Evaluations of Educational & Social Programs. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cronbach, L. J., & Associates. (1980). Toward Reform of Program Evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cross, M. (1998). The Benchmarking Sourcebook. London: B.T.Batsford.

Curran, C. (1976). Counseling-Learning in Second Languages. Apple River, Ill: Apple River Press.

Dahler-Larsen, P. (2001). From programme theory to constructivism: on tragic, magic and competing programmes. Evaluation, 7 (3), 331-349.

Dakin, J. (1973). The Language Laboratory & Language Learning. London: Longman.

Dam, L. (ed.). (2001). Learner Autonomy: New Insights (AILA Review 15). Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquee.

Darasawang, P. (1996). A proposal to evaluate a learner training programme. In L. Dickinson (ed.), (1996). 34-39.

Davies, A., Brown, A., Elder, C., Hill, K., Lumley, T., & McNamara, T. (1999). Dictionary of Language Testing. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davies, S., Dwyer, E., Heller, A., & Lawrence, K. (1991). An investigation of a timetabled self-access session in a general English programme. Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics, Number 2, 37-49.

Davis, J. (1998). Everything old is new again: self-assessment as tradition in community art centers. In R. E. Stake (ed.), (1998).

Denzin, N. K. (1970). The Research Act. (1st ed.). Chicago: Aldine.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). The Research Act. (3rd ed.). Eagle Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Denzin, N. K. (1970). Sociological methods : a sourcebook. Chicago: Aldine.

Denzin, N. K. (1997). Triangulation in educational research. In J. P. Keeves (ed.), (1997). 318-322.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000a). The discipline & practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (2000a). 1-29.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.). (1994). Handbook of Qualitative Research. London: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.). (2000b). Handbook of Qualitative Research. 2nd. ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Detaramani, C., & Chan, S. I. (1999). Learners' needs, attitudes & motivation towards the self-access mode of language learning. RELC Journal, 30(1), 124-157.

Dewey, J. (1916). Democracy and Education. New York: The Free Press.

Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy & motivation: a literature review . System, 23(2), 165-174.

Dickinson, L. (1978). Autonomy, self-directed learning and individualisation. In ELT Documents 103: Individualisation in Language Teaching (pp. 7-28). London: The British Council.

Dickinson, L. (1996). Proceedings of the International Conference "Autonomy 2000: The Development of Learning Independence in Language Learning". Bankok: The British Council.

Dickinson, L. (1987). Self-instruction in Language Learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dickinson, L., & Carver, D. (1980). Learning how to learn: steps towards self-direction in foreign language learning in schools. English Language Teaching Journal, 35(1), 1-7.

Diller, K. C. (1981). Individual Differences in Language Learning Aptitude. Rowley,. Mass., US: Newbury House.

Dressel, P. L. (1976). Handbook of Academic Evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Drew, F., & Ottewill, R. (1998). Implications for the increasing of OALF for course design & delivery. Language Learning Journal , 17, 75-80.

Eisner, E. W. (1976). Educational connoisseurship and criticism: their form and function in educational evaluation. Journal of Aesthetic Education, (10), 135-150.

Esch, E. (1989). Keeping things going: evaluation & development. In D. Little (ed.), (1989).

Esch, E. (1997). Learner training for autonomous language learning. In P. Benson, & P. Voller (1997). 164-176.

Esch, E. (1994a). Self-access, not self-service. In E. Esch (ed.), (1994a). 63-67.

Esch, E. (ed.). (1994b). Self-Access & the Adult Language Learner. London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching & Research.

Farmer, R. (1994). The limits of learner independence in Hong Kong. In D. Gardner, & L. Miller (eds.), (1994). 13-28.

Farmer, R. & Sweeney, E. (1994). Self-access in Hong Kong: a square peg in a round hole? In Occasional Papers in Language Teaching. Hong Kong: ELT Unit, Chinese University of Hong Kong. 24-30.

Favretti, R. R., Silver, M., Gasser, R., & Tamburini, F. (1994). The Self-Access Facility in a Language Centre. Bologna, Italy: Universita degli Studi di Bologna.

Fernandes, V., & Nicolaides, C. (2002). Centro de auto-acesso: uma forma de desenvolver autonomia. In Anais do II Forum Internacional de Ensino de Linguas Estrangeiras. Pelotas, Brazil: Universidade Catolica de Pelotas e Universidade Federal de Pelotas. (2002).

Fetterman, D. M. (1997). Empowerment evaluation & accreditation in higher education. In E. Chelimsky, & W. R. Shadish (eds.), (1997).

Fetterman, D. M., & Pitman, M. A. (1986). Educational Evaluation. London: Sage Publications Inc.

Fielding, N., & Lee, R. (eds.). (1991). Using Computers in Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Firestone, W. A. (1987). Meaning in method: the rhetoric of quantitative and qualitative research. Educational Researcher, 16-21.

Fishman, D. B. (1992). Postmodernism comes to Program Evaluation. Evaluation and Program Planning, 15, 263-270.

Fitzgerald, S., Morrall, A., & Morrison, B. J. (1996). Catering for individual learning styles: experiences of orienting students in an Asian self-access centre. In L. Dickinson (ed.), (1996). 55-69.

Flick, U. (1998). An Introduction to Qualitative Research. London: Sage Publications.

Flinders, D. J. (1992). In search of ethical guidance: constructing a basis for dialogue. Qualitative Studies in Education, 5(2), 101-116.

Flynn, D. J. (1992). Information Systems Requirements: Determination & analysis. London: McGraw-Hill.

Forss, K., Rebien, C. C., & Carlsson, J. (2002). Process use of evaluations: types of use that precede lessons learned and feedback. Evaluation, 8(1), 29-45.

Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Herder & Herder.

Fretchling, J., & Sharp, L. (eds.). (1997) User-friendly Handbook for Mixed Method Evaluations [Web Page]. URL http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/EHR/REC/pubs/NSF97-153/start.htm [1998].

Gahan, C., & Hannibal, M. (1998). Doing Qualitative Research Using QSR NUD*IST. London: Sage Publications.

Gardner, D. (2002). Evaluating self-access language learning. In P. Benson, & S. Toogood (eds.), (2002). 48-54.

Gardner, D. (1999). The evaluation of self-access centres. In B. J. Morrison (ed.), (1999). 111-122.

Gardner, D., & Miller, L. (eds.). (1994). Directions in Self-Access . Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Gardner, D., & Miller, L. (1999). Establishing Self-Access. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gardner, D., & Miller, L. (1997). A Study of Tertiary Level Self-Access Facilities in Hong Kong. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong.

Garrison, D. R. (1992). Critical thinking & self-directed learning in adult education: an analysis of responsibility and control issues. Adult Education Quarterly, 42(3), 136-148.

Geddes, M., & Sturtridge, G. (1982). Individualisation. London: Modern English Publications.

Genesee, F. (2001). Evaluation. In R. &. N. D. Carter (eds.), (2001). 144-150.

Genesee, F., & Upshur, J. A. (1996). Classroom-based evaluation in second language education . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Germaine, K. P., & Rea-Dickens, P. (1995). Some relationships between managment, evaluation and developemnt. In P. Rea Dickens, & A. F. Lwaitana (eds.), (1995). 157-174.

Gil-Mendieta, J., & Hamza, M. H. (eds.). (1998). Computers & Advanced Technology in Education. Calgary: IASTED/ACTA Press.

Ginsberg, L. H. (2001). Social Work Evaluation. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Glaser, B. G. (1992). Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs. Forcing. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. G. (ed.). (1994). More Grounded Theory: a Reader. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. G. (1978). Theoretical Sensitivity. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. New York: Aldine Publishing.

Greaves, C., & Teng, A. (1998). The Virtual Language Centre: An integrated language learning platform on the world-wide web. In J. Gil-Mendieta, & M. H. Hamza (eds.), (1998). 107-111.

Green, P. S. (1975). The Language Laboratory in School. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd.

Greene, J. C. (1994). Qualitative program evaluation: practice and promise . In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (1994). 530-544.

Greene, J. C. (2000). Understanding social programs through evaluation. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (2000). 981-999.

Greene, J. C., & Abma, T. A. (eds.). (2001). Responsive Evaluation. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Greenwood, J. (1985). Bangalore revisited: a reluctant complaint. English Language Teaching Journal, 39(4), 268-273.

Gregory, A. (2000). Problematizing participation: a critical review of approaches to participation in evaluation theory. Evaluation, 6(2), 179-199.

Gremmo, M.-J. (1988). Autonomie dans l'apprentissage: l'evaluation par les apprendants d'un systeme auto-dirige. In H. Holec (ed.), (1988). 107-120.

Gremmo, M. J., & Riley, P. (1995). Autonomy, self-direction and self access in language teaching and learning: the history of an idea. System, 23(2), 151-164.

Guba, E. G. (1990). The Paradigm Dialog. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guba, E. G. (1978). Towards a methodlogy of naturalistic enquiry in educational evaluation. Los Angeles: University of California.

Guba, E. G. (1987). What have we learnt about naturalistic evaluation? In D. S. Cordray, H. S. Bloom, & R. J. Light (eds.), (1987). 23-43.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (1994). 105-117.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). Effective Evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). Fourth Generation Evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry . Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1997). Naturalistic & rationalistic enquiry. In J. P. Keeves (ed.), (1997). 86-91.

Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (eds.). (2002). Handbook of Interview Research. London: Sage Publications.

Hamilton, D., Jenkins, D., King, C., MacDonald, D., & Partlett, M. (1977). Beyond the Numbers Game: a Reader in Educational Evaluation. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Hammond, M., & Collins, R. (1991). Self-Directed Learning: Critical Practice. London: Kogan Page.

Hamp-Lyons, L., & Condon, W. (2000). Assessing the Portfolio. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Harding-Esch, E. M. (1982). The open access sound & video library of the University of Cambridge: progress report & development. System, 10(1), 13-28.

Hargreaves, P. (1989). DES-IMPL-EVALU-IGN: an evaluator's checklist. In R. K. Johnson (ed.), (1989). 35-47.

Harlen, W., & Elliott, J. (1982). A checklist for planning or reviewing an evaluation. In R. McCormick (ed.), (1982). 296-304.

Harri-Augstein, S., & Thomas, L. (1991). Learning Conversations. London: Routledge.

Harris, C. W. (1960). Encyclopedia of Educational Research. New York: MacMillan.

Harris, J. (1990). The Second Language Programme-Evaluation Literature: Accommodating Experimental and Multifaceted Approaches. Language, Culture & Curriculum, 3(1), 83-92.

Hayhoe, R. (1984). Contemporary Chinese Education. London: Croom Helm.

Healey, M. (1998). Resource-based Learning in Geography. Cheltenham: Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education.

Henner-Stanchina C., & Holec H. (1985). Evaluation in an Autonomous Learning Scheme. In P. Riley (ed.), (1985). 255-263.

Henner-Stanchina C., & Riley, P. (1978). Aspects of autonomous learning. In E. Smyth (ed.), (1978). 76-97.

Heuring, C. (1997) What's going on? Issues of power & autonomy in education [Web Page]. URL http://www.nie.ac.sg:8000/~wwwnie/think/papers/index.html [1997].

Hill, B. (1994). State of the art: self-managed learning. Language Teaching, 27, 213-223.

Ho, J., & Crookall, D. (1995). Breaking with Chinese cultural traditions: learner autonomy in English Language Teaching. System, 23(2), 235-243.

Ho, S. W. (1993). The Evaluation of Training in the Hong Kong Civil Service. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Hong Kong.

Holec, H. (1981). Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Holec, H. (1980). Autonomy & Foreign Language Learning. Strasburg: Council of Europe.

Holec, H. (1985a). On autonomy: some elementary concepts. In P. Riley (ed.), (1985a). 173-190.

Holec, H. (1985b). Taking learners' needs into account in self-directed learning. In P. Riley (ed.), (1985b). 263-275.

Holmes, A., & Brown, S. (eds.). (2000). Internal Audit in Higher Education. London: Kogan Page.

Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1995). The Active Interview. London: Sage Publications.

Holt, M. (1981). Evaluating the Evaluators. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Annual Report on English Language Enhancement Programmes. 2000: Unpublished report.

Hong Kong Polytechnic University. (2001). Annual Report on English Language Enhancement Programmes. Unpublished report.

Hong Kong Polytechnic University. (2002). Annual Report on English Language Enhancement Programmes. Unpublished report.

Hopkins, D. (1988). Evaluating for development: a strategy for the evaluation of curriculum change at the local level. Evaluation & Research in Education, 2(1), 1-10.

Hopkins, D. (1989). Evaluation for School Development. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Hopkins, D. (1993). A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Hopkins, D., & West, M. (2002). Evaluation as school improvement: a developmental perspective from England. In D. Nevo (ed.), (2002). 89-112.

Hornby, A. S. (1950). The situational approach in language teaching: A series of three articles. English Language Teaching, 4, 98-104, 121-128, 150-156.

House, E. R. (1978). Assumptions underlying evaluation models. Educational Researcher, 4-12.

House, E. R. (1983). Assumptions underlying evaluation models. In G. F. Madaus, M. S. Scriven, & D. L. Stufflebeam (eds.), (1983). 45-64.

House, E. R. (1986). New Directions in Educational Evaluation. London: Falmer Press.

Huberman, M. (1995). The many modes of participatory evaluation. In J. B. Cousins, & L. M. Earl (1995). 103-111.

Hughes, A. (1996). Language Testing for Language Teachers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Illich, I. (1971). Deschooling Society. New York: Harper & Row.

Jackson, M. (1997) IMEPL 2 - Survey on Resource Based Learning [Web Page]. URL http:/www.lgu.ac.uk/deliberations/rbl/impel.htm [2001].

Jacobs, C. (2000). The evaluation of educational innovation. Evaluation, 6(3), 261-280.

Janesick, V. J. (2000). The choregraphy of qualitative research design: minuets, improvisation & crystalization. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (2000). 379-400.

Janesick, V. J. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design: metaphor, methodolatry & meaning. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (1994). 209-219.

Johannsen, D. H. (2000). Computers as Mindtools for Schools: Engaging Critical Thinking. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merril.

Johnson, R. K. (ed.). (1989). The Second Language Curriculum . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. (1994). The Program Evaluation Standards: How to Assess Evaluations of Educational Programs. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jones, J. F. (1995). Self-access and culture: retreating from autonomy. English Language Teaching Journal, 49(3), 228-243.

Karlsson, L., Kjisik, F., & Nordlund, J. (1997). From Here to Autonomy. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.

Keating. (1963). A Study of the Effectiveness of Language Laboratories. New York: Institute for Administrative Research, Teachers College.

Keeves, J. P. (ed.). (1997a). Educational Research, Methodology, and Measurement: an International Handbook. Oxford: Elsevier Science.

Keeves, J. P. (1997b). Methods & processes in educational research. In J. P. Keeves (ed.), (1997b).

Keeves, J. P., & Sowden, S. (1997). Descriptive data, analysis of. In J. P. Keeves (ed.), (1997b). 296-305.

Kelly, R. (1996). Language counselling for learner autonomy: the skilled helper in self-access learning. In R. Pemberton, E. S. L. Li, W. F. Or, & H. D. Pierson (eds.), (1996). 93-114.

Kenny, B. (1993). For more autonomy. System, 21(4), 431-442.

Kershaw, G. (1993). Self-access centres: the fads and the facts. Thai TESOL Bulletin, 5(4), 48-58.

Kibel, B. M. (Unknown) Results mapping [Web Page]. URL http://www.pire.org/resultmapping/INTRO.htm [1999].

Kiely, R. (2001). Classroom evaluation - values, interests and teacher development. Language Teaching Research, 5(3), 241-261.

King, J. A. (1995). Involving practitioners in evaluation studies: how viable is collaborative evaluation in schools? In J. B. Cousins, & L. M. Earl (eds.), (1995). 86-103.

Klassen, J., Detarami, C., Lui, E., Patri, M., & Wu, J. (1998). Does self-access language learning at tertiary level really work? Asian Journal of English Language Teaching, 8, 55-80.

Knowles, M. (1980). The Modern Practice of Adult Education: from Pedagogy to Androgogy. Chicago: Follet.

Knowles, M. (1975). Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Teachers & Learners. New York: Association Press.

Kohonen, V. (1992). Experiential language learning: second language learning as cooperative learner education. In D. Nunan (ed.), (1992). 14-39.

Krueger, R. A. (1994). Focus Groups: a Practical Guide for Applied Research. London: Sage Publications.

Kushner, S. (2000). Personalizing Evaluation. London: Sage Publications.

Kvale, S. (1996). InterViews. London: Sage Publications Inc.

Kwan, L. L. (2002). Study Strategies of Hong Kong University Students in a Self-Access Centre. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Kwan, L. L., & Hamp-Lyons, L. (2001). Different learning patterns in self-access. RELC Journal, 32(2), 63-79.

Lamb, T. (1996). Self-management in the secondary school language classroom. In Proceedings of Autonomy 2000: the Development of Learning Independence in Language Learning King Mongkut Institute of Technology, Bangkok.

Laverty, C. (1998) What is Resource-Based Learning? [Web Page]. URL http://stauffer.queensu.ca/inforef/tutorials/rbl/rblintro.htm [2001].

Lawson, M. J. (1997). Concept mapping. In J. P. Keeves (ed.), (1997b). 290-296.

Lazarus, M. (1988). Evaluating Educational Programs. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Le Compte, M. D., & Goetz, J. P. (1982). Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research. Review of Educational Research, 52(1), 31-60.

Lewkowicz, J. A., & Nunan, D. (1999). The limits of collaborative evaluation. TESOL Quarterly, 33(4), 681-700.

Lin, L. Y. (1992). Survey on the timetabled self-access hour in the Gaya Teacher TRaining College, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Unpublished report.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Denzin, N. K. (2000). The seventh moment: out of the past. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (2000). 1047-1065.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. London: Sage.

Lipsey, M. W., & Pollard, J. A. (1989). Driving toward theory in program evaluation: more models to choose from. Evaluation & Program Planning, 12, 317-328.

Lister, M. (1994). Student feedback on the effectiveness of self-access study: a report on work in progress. In R. R. Favretti, M. Silver, R. Gasser, & F. Tamburini 1994). 101-108.

Little, D. (1991). Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems. Dublin: Authentik.

Little, D. (1989). Self-Access Systems for Language Learning:a Practical Guide. Dublin: Authentik.

Littlewood, W. (Unpublised conference presentation notes). Co-operative & collaborative learning tasks as pathways towards autonomous interdependence.

Littlewood, W. (1981). Communicative Language Teaching: an Introduction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Littlewood, W. (1997). Self-access: why do we want it and what can it do? In P. Benson, & P. Voller (eds.), (1997).

Locke, K. (2001). Grounded Theory in Management Research. London: Sage Publications.

Long, H. B., & Associates (eds.). (1997). Expanding Horizons in Self-Directed Learning. Oklahoma: College of Education, University of Oklahoma.

Long, M. H. (1984). Process and product in ESL program evaluation. TESOL Quarterly, 18(3), 409-425.

Lynch, B. K. (1990). A context-adaptive model for program evaluation. TESOL Quarterly, 24(1), 23-42.

Lynch, B. K. (1992). Evaluating a program inside and out. In J. C. Alderson, & A. Beretta (eds.), (1992). 61-95.

Lynch, B. K. (2000). Evaluating a project-oriented CALL innovation. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 13(4-5), 417-440.

Lynch, B. K. (1996). Language Program Evaluation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lynch, B. K. (1991). The role of program evaluation in Applied Linguistic research. Issues in Applied Linguistics, 2(1), 84-86.

Lynch, B. K. (1988). Toward a Context-Adaptive Model for the Evaluation of Language Teaching Programs. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles. Dissertations Abstract International 48: 2264A.

Lynch, T., Wang, Y. Y., Anderson, K., & Thiyagarajah, R. (1999). Consultancy as dialogue: experiences from a Malaysian ESP project. RELC Journal, 30(1), 62-78.

Ma, B. (1994). A study of independent learning: the learner training programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In E. Esch (ed.), (1994). 140-145.

Mackay, R. J., & Palmer, J. (1981). Language for Specific Purposes: Program Design & Evaluation. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

Mackay, R., Wellesley, S., Tasman, D., & Bazergan, E. (1998). Using institutional self-evaluation to promote the quality of language & communication training programmes. In P. Rea-Dickens, & K. P. Germaine (eds.), (1998). 111-131.

Madaus, G. F., & Kellaghan, T. (2000). Models, metaphors & definitions in evaluation. In D. L. Stufflebeam, G. F. Madaus, & T. Kellaghan (eds.), (2000). 19-31.

Madaus, G. F., & Stufflebeam, D. L. (2000). Program evaluation: a historical overview. In D. L. Stufflebeam, G. F. Madaus, & T. Kellaghan (eds.), (2000). 3-18.

Madaus, G. F., Stufflebeam, D. L., & Scriven, M. S. (eds.). (1983a). Evaluation Models: Viewpoints on Educational & Human Services Evaluation . Boston: Klujer-Nijhoff.

Madaus, G. F., Stufflebeam, D. L., & Scriven, M. S. (1983b). Program evaluation: a historical overview. In G. F. Madaus, D. L. Stufflebeam, & M. S. Scriven (eds.), (1983b). 3-22.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1995). Designing Qualitative Research. London: Sage.

Martyn, E. (1994). Self-access logs: promoting self-directed learning. In D. Gardner, & L. Miller (eds.), (1994). 65-78.

Mason, J. (1996). Qualitative Researching. London: Sage.

Mayo, E. (1933). The human problems of an industrial civilization. New York: MacMillan.

McCafferty, J. (Undated). A Consideration of a Self-Access Approach to the Learning of English, mimeograph. London: The British Council.

McCall, J. (1992). Self-Access: Setting up a centre. Manchester: The British Council .

McCormick, R., Byrner, J., Clift, P., & James, M. (eds.). (1982). Calling Education to Account. London: Heineman Educational.

McDevitt, B. (1996). The self-access language learning centre, University of Abertay Dundee: history of a project. Language Learning Journal, 13, 67-69.

McDonough, J., & McDonough, S. (1997). Research Methods for English Language Teachers. London: Arnold.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). Case Study Research in Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1985). A critical theory of self-directed learning. In S. Brookfield (ed.), (1985). 17-30.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative Data Analysis. London: Sage Publications.

Miller, L. (1992). Self-Access Centres in S.E.Asia. Hong Kong: City Polytechnic of Hong Kong.

Miller, L., & Gardner, D. (1994a). Directions for research into self-access language learning. In D. Gardner, & L. Miller (eds.), (1994a). 167-174.

Miller, L., & Gardner, D. (1994b). Directions in Self-Access Language Learning. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Miller, L., & Rogerson-Revell, P. (1993). Self-access Systems. English Language Teaching Journal, 47, 228-233.

Mishler, E. G. (1991). Representing discourse: the rhetoric of transcription. Journal of Narrative & Life History, 1(4), 255-280.

Mitchell, R. (1990). Evaluation of second language teaching projects and programmes. Language, Culture & Curriculum, 3(1), 3-16.

Mitchell, R. (1992). The 'independent' evaluation of bilingual primary education. In J. C. Alderson, & A. Beretta (eds.), (1992). 100-140.

Moore, C. (1992). Self-Access: Appropriate technology. Manchester: The British Council.

Moore, M. G. (1973). Toward a theory of independent learning and teaching. Journal of Higher Education, 64(12), 661-679.

Morgan, D. L. (1997). Focus Groups as Qualitative Research. London: Sage Publications.

Morrison, B. J. (1999). Experiments & Evaluation in Self-Access Language Learning . Hong Kong: Hong Kong Association for Self-Access Learning & Development.

Morrison, B. J. (1993). Setting up a self-learning unit in China. English Studies: Issue 10.

Morrison, B. J. (2002). The troubling process of mapping & evaluating a self-access language learning centre. In P. Benson, & S. Toogood (eds.), (2002). 55-64.

Morrison, B. J. (1995). Working in groups in Beijing & Hong Kong: experience of a group-access approach to language learning. In Hong Kong Polytechnic University: Working Papers in ELT & Applied Linguistics 1 (1). 105-118.

Murphy, D. F. (1995). Developing theory and practice in evaluation. In P. Rea-Dickens, & A. F. Lwaitana (eds.), (1995). 10-27.

Naiman, N., Fröhlich, M., Stern, H. H., & Todesco, A. (1978). The Good Language Learner. Ontario: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Nevo, D. (1986). The conceptualisation of educational evaluation: an analytical review of the literature. In E. R. House (ed.), (1986). 15-29.

Nevo, D. (2002). Dialogue evaluation: combining internal and external evaluation. In D. Nevo (ed.), (2002). 3-16.

Noble, P. (1980). Resource-Based Learning in Post-Compulsory Education. London: Kogan Page.

Novak, J. (1990). Concept mapping: a useful device for science education. Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 27(10), 937-949.

Nunan, D. (ed.). (1992). Collaborative Language Learning and Teaching . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1997). Designing & adapting materials to encourage learner autonomy. In P. Benson, & P. Voller (eds.), (1997). 192-203.

Nunan, D. (1988). The Learner Centred Curriculum. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1992). Research Methods in Language Learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1989). Understanding Language Classrooms. Cambridge: Prentice Hall.

Nunan, D., & Harrison, I. (1998). Contextual factors in evaluating curriculum innovation & change. In E. Li, & G. James (eds.), (1998). 211-219.

Nye, J. (2002). The new Rome meets the new barbarians. The Economist, (March 23rd), 23-25.

O'Dell, F. (1992). Helping teachers to use a self-access centre to its full potential. English Language Teaching Journal, 46(2), 153-159.

Ödman, P. J., & Kerdeman, D. (1997). Hermeneutics. In J. P. Keeves (ed.), (1997). 185-192.

O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). Questionnaire Design, Interviewing & Attitude Development. London: Pinter Publishers.

Owen, J. M., & Rogers, P. J. (1999). Program Evaluation: Forms & approaches. London: Sage Publications.

Owens, R. G. (1982). Methodological rigour in naturalistic inquiry: some issues & answers. Educational Administration Quarterly, 18(2), 1-21.

Oxford, R. (1990). Language Learning Strategies: What every teacher should know. Rowley, Mass., US: Newbury House.

Palmer, H. E. (1923). The Oral Method of Teaching Languages. Cambridge: Heffer.

Partlett, M., & Hamilton, D. (1977). Evaluation as illumination: a new approach to the study of innovatory programmes. In D. Hamilton, D. Jenkins, C. King, B. MacDonald, & M. Partlett (eds.), (1977). 6-22.

Patton, M. Q. (1987). Creative Evaluation. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative Evaluation & Research Methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods. London: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (1978). Utilization-focused Evaluation. (1st ed.). Beverley Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (1986). Utilization-focused Evaluation. (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (1997). Utilization-focused Evaluation: The New Century Text. (3rd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (1996). A World Larger than Formative and Summative. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pawson, R., & Tilley, N. (1997). Realistic Evaluation. London: Sage Publications.

Pemberton, R., Ho, S., Lam, J., & Toogood, S. (1999). Developing a self-directed English language learning programme for post-graduate students. In B. J. Morrison (ed.), (1999). 1-24.

Pemberton, R., Li, E. S. L., Or, W. F., & Pierson, H. D. (eds.). (1996). Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning . Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Pemberton, R., Toogood, S., Ho, S., & Lam, J. (2001). Approaches to advising for self-directed language learning. In L. Dam (2001). 16-25.

Pennington, M. (1998). Designing language programme evaluations for specific purposes. In E. Li, & G. James (eds.), (1998). 179-193.

Pennington, M. C. (ed.). (1991). Building Better English Language Programs . Washington: NAFSA.

Peterson, R. A. (2000). Constructing Effective Questionnaires. London: Sage Publications.

Piper, A. (1994). Ecologia: the assumptions, expectations & strategies of modern language students working in a self-access learning environment for the first time. Language Awareness, 3(1), 11-27.

Plymouth Polytechnic. (1975). Learning Resources Centre Services: Information Package. Plymouth: Plymouth Polytechnic.

Poland , B. D. (2002). Transcription quality. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A. Holstein (eds.), (2002). 629-649.

Polland, R. J. (1989). Essentials of Program Evaluation: A Workbook for Service Providers. Unpublished manuscript.

Pollitt, C., & Summa, H. (1997). Performance auditing: travelers' tales. In E. Chelimsky, & W. R. Shadish (eds.), (1997). 86-108.

Popham, W. J. (1972). Must all objectives be behavioural? Educational Leadership, 29(7).

Prostano, E. T., & Prostano, J. S. (1987). The School Media Centre. 4th ed.). Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

Provus, M. M. (1971). Discrepancy Evaluation. Berkeley: McCutchan.

Race, P. (2001). The Lecturer's Toolkit. London: Kogan Page.

Raddon, R., & Dix, P. (1989). Planning Learning Resource Centres in Schools & Colleges. Aldershot, UK: Gower.

Rauelchakul, P. (1996). Moving toward independent learning at Chaiwanwithaya Secondary School by establishing a self-access centre. In L. Dickinson (ed.), (1996). 195-205.

Rea-Dickens, P. (1994). Evaluation and English language teaching. Language Teaching, 27, 71-91.

Rea-Dickens, P. (1998). Integrating & managing evaluation in the English language teaching curriculum. In E. Li, & G. James (eds.), (1998). 194-210.

Rea Dickens, P. (1995). Introduction. In P. Rea Dickens, & A. F. Lwaitana (eds.), (1995). 1-8.

Rea-Dickens, P., & Germaine, K. P. (1992). Evaluation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rea-Dickens, P., & Germaine, K. P. (eds.). (1998a). Managing Evaluation & Innovation in Language Teaching: Building Bridges. London: Longman.

Rea-Dickens, P., & Germaine, K. P. (1998b). The price of everything and the the value of nothing: trends in language programme evaluation. In P. Rea-Dickens, & K. P. Germaine (eds.), (1998b). 3-20.

Rea Dickens, P., & Lwaitana, A. F. (eds.). (1995). Evaluation for Development in ELT. London: Modern English Publications & The British Council.

Rea, P. M. (1983). Evaluation of educational projects, with special reference to English language education. In 1983).

Reichardt, C. S., & Cook, T. D. (1979). Beyond qualitative versus quantitative methods. In T. D. Cook, & C. S. Reichardt (eds.), (1979). 7-32.

Reinders, H. (reply@hayo.nl). (2002, June 20). Autonomy & educational policy. E-mail to Bruce Morrison (ecbruce@polyu.edu.hk).

Reinders, H. (2000a). Do It Yourself. A learner's perspective on learner autonomy & self-access language learning in a proficiency programme. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Groningen, Netherlands.

Reinders, H. (2000b). Self-Access Language Learning in the English Proficiency Programme. Unpublished internal report: Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.

Revell, R., & Sweeney, S. (1993). In Print. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, H. (1999). Learners' Perceptions of Learning Gains in Self-Access. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Victoria University, Wellington.

Richards, J. C., & Nunan, D. (eds.). (1990). Second Language Teacher Education. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rogers, T. S. (1986). Approaches & Methods in Language Teaching. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .

Richards, L. (1997). Computers and qualitative analysis. In J. P. Keeves (ed.), (1997). 286-290.

Richards, T. J., & Richards, L. (1994). Using computers in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (1994). 445-462.

Riley, P. (1996). The blind man and the bubble: researching self-access. In R. Pemberton (ed.), (1996). 251-264.

Riley, P. (ed.). (1985). Discourse and Learning . London: Longman.

Riley, P. (1997). The guru & the conjurer: aspects of counselling for self-access. In P. Benson, & P. Voller (eds.), (1997). 114-131.

Riley, P., & Zoppis, C. (1985). The sound and video library. In P. Riley (ed.), (1985). 286-298.

Rippey, R. M. (ed.). (1973). Studies in Transactional Evaluation. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

Rivers, W. M. (1983). Communicating Naturally in a Second Language : Theory and Practice in Language Teaching . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rivers, W. M. (1972a). The foreign language teacher and cognitive psychology. In W. M. Rivers 1972a). 109-130.

Rivers, W. M. (1972b). Speaking in Many Tongues: Essays in Foreign Language Teaching. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.

Robson, C. (2000). Small-Scale Evaluation. London: Sage Publications.

Rogers, C. R. (1969). Freedom to Learn. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill.

Rogers, P. J., Hacsi, T. A., Petrosino, A., & Huebner, T. A. (eds.). (2000). Program Theory in Evaluation: Challenges & Opportunities. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rogers, P. J., Petrosino, A., Huebner, T. A., & Hacsi, T. A. (2000). Program theory evaluation: practice, promise, and problems. New Directions for Evaluation , 87, 5-13.

Rose, A. D. (1997). From self-culture to self-direction: an historical analysis of self-directed learning. In H. B. Long, & Associates (eds.), (1997).

Rossi, P. H., & Freeman, H. E. (1993). Evaluation: a Systematic Approach. (2nd. ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Rossi, P. H., Freeman, H. E., & Lipsey, M. W. (1999). Evaluation: a Systematic Approach. (6th. ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Rossi, P. H., Freeman, H. E., & Wright, S. R. (1979). Evaluation: a Systematic Approach. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Rowsell, L. V., & Libben, G. (1994). The sound of one hand clapping: how to succeed in independent language learning. Canadian Modern Language Review, 50(4), 668-687.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). Qualitative Interviewing: the Art of Hearing Data. London: Sage Publications.

Rubin, J. (1975). What the 'good language learner' can teach us. TESOL Quarterly, 9, 41-51.

Ruechakul, P. (1996). Moving towards independent learning at Chaiwanwithaya Secondary School by establishing a self-access centre. In Proceedings of Autonomy 2000: the Development of Learning Independence in Language Learning .

Ryan, S., Scott, B., Freeman, H., & Patel, D. (2000). The Virtual University. London: Kogan Page.

Sacks, H. (1992). Lectures on Conversations (G.Jefferson, ed.; Vol. 2). Oxford: Blackwell.

Schalock, R. L. (2001). Outcome-based Evaluation. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Schatzman, L., & Strauss, A. L. (1973). Field Research, Strategies for a Natural Sociology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Scherer, A. C., & Wertheimer, M. (1964). A Psycholinguistic Experiment in Foreign Language Teaching. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J. (eds.). (1998). Self-Regulated Learning: from Teaching to Self-Reflective Practice. New York: Guilford Press.

Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, Interpretist Approaches to Human Inquiry. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (1994). 118-137.

Scriven, M. S. (1983). Evaluation ideologies. In G. F. Madaus, D. L. Stufflebeam, & M. S. Scriven (eds.), (1983). 229-260.

Scriven, M. S. (1991). Evaluation Thesaurus . Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

Scriven, M. S. (1971a). Goal-free Evaluation, Part 1. NIE 2A.

Scriven, M. S. (1971b). Goal-free Evaluation, Part 2. NIE 2B.

Scriven, M. S. (1967). The methodology of evaluation. In R. W. Tyler, R. M. Gagne, & M. S. Scriven 1967). 39-83.

Scriven, M. S. (1997). Truth & objectivity in evaluation. In E. Chelimsky, & W. R. Shadish (eds.), (1997). 477-500.

Seale, C. F. (2002). Computer-assisted analysis of qualitative interview data. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A. Holstein (eds.), (2002). 651-670.

Sechrest, L., & Sidani, S. (1995). Quantitative & qualitative methods: is there an alternative? Evaluation & Program Planning, 18(1), 77-87.

Seidman, I. (1998). Interviewing as Qualitative Research. New York: Teachers College Press.

Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Leviton, L. C. (1991). Foundations of Program Evaluation. London: Sage Publications.

Sheerin, S. (1997). An exploration of the relationship between self-access and independent learning. In P. Benson, & P. Voller (eds.), (1997). 54-65.

Sheerin, S. (1989). Self-Access. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sheerin, S. (1991). State of the art: self-access. Language Teaching, 24(3), 153-157.

Shepherd, J., Hopkins, A., & Potter, J. (1992). The Sourcebook. Harlow, Essex: Longman.

Silver, M. (1994). Investing in self-access at a university language and linguistics center. In R. R. Favretti, M. Silver, R. Gasser, & F. Tamburini (eds.), (1994). 1-12.

Silverman, D. (2000). Analyzing talk & text. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Silverman, D. (2001). Interpreting Qualitative Data. London: Sage Publications.

Simons, H. (2002). School self-evaluation in a democracy. In D. Nevo (ed.), (2002). 17-34.

Sinclair, B. (1996). Activate your English: Pre-intermediate. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sinclair, B. (1999). Wrestling with a jelly: the evaluation of learner autonomy. In B. J. Morrison (ed.), (1999). 95-110.

Sizer, J. (1982). Performance indicators for institutions of higher education under conditions of financial stringency, contraction & changing needs. In R. McCormick et al. (eds.), Calling Education to Account (pp. 66-77). London: Heineman Educational.

Smith, J. K., & Heshusius, L. (1986). Closing down the conversation: the end of the qualitative-quantitative debate among educational inquirers. Educational Researcher, 15(1), 4-12.

Smith, N. L. (1997). Evaluation models & approaches. In J. P. Keeves (ed.), (1997). 217-225.

Smith, P. D. (1970). A Comparison of the Cognitive and Audio-Lingual Approaches to Foreign Language Instruction: the Pennsylvania Foreign Languages Project. Philadelphia: The Centre for Curriculum Development, Inc.

Smyth, E. (ed.). (1978). Individualisation in Language Learning: ELT documents 103. London: The British Council.

Spradley, J. P. (1979). The Ethnographic Interview. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

Stake, R. E. (1998). Advanced in Program evaluation, Volume 4. Stamford, Conn.: JAI Press.

Stake, R. E. (1977). An approach to the evaluation of instructional programs (program portrayal v analysis). A paper delivered at the AERA annual meeting in Chicago, 4th April, 1972. In M. Partlett, & D. Hamilton (eds.), (1977). 161-162.

Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (2000). 435-454.

Stake, R. E. (1967). The countenance of educational evaluation. Teachers' College Record, 68(7), 523-540.

Stake, R. E. (1983). The discrepancy evaluation model. In G. F. Madaus, M. S. Scriven, & D. L. Stufflebeam (eds.), (1983). 287-310.

Stake, R. E. (1976). Evaluating Educational Programmes: the need and the response. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Stake, R. E. (1975). Evaluating the Arts in Education: a Responsive Approach. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill.

Stake, R. E. (1972). The seven principal cardinals of educational evaluation. Handout for presentation by R.E.Stake AERA annual meeting, Chicago, 4th April, 1972.

Stake, R. E. (1999). Summary of evaluation of reader focused writing for the veterans benefits administration. American Journal of Evaluation, 20(2), 323-343.

Stake, R. E., & Trumbull, D. J. (1982). Naturalistic generalizations. Review Journal of Philosophy & Social Science, 7, 1-12.

Staples, M. (1995) Making the Most of Resource-based Learning [Web Page]. URL http://litc.sbu.ac.uk/publications/outlooks/reply1.html [2001].

Star, M. (1994). Evaluating self-access centres. In D. Gardner, & L. Miller (eds.), (1994). 157-166.

Stenhouse, L. (1980). Curriculum Research & Development in Action. London: Heinenman Educational.

Stenhouse, L. (1975). An Introduction to Curriculum Research & Development. London: Heinemann Educational.

Stern, H. H. (1983). Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stern, H. H. (1975). What can we learn from the good language learner? The Canadian Modern Language Review, 31, 304-318.

Strauss, A. L. (1987). Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques & Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory. 2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of Qualitative Research. London : Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded Theory methodology: an overview. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (1994). 273-285.

Straw, R. B., & Cook, T. D. (1990). Meta-evaluation. In H. J. Walberg, & G. D. Haertel (eds.), (1990). 58-60.

Strevens, P. (1977). New Orientations in the Teaching of English. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stufflebeam, D. L. (2001). Evaluation Models. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Stufflebeam, D. L. (1978). Meta evaluation: an overview. Evaluation & the Health Professions, 1(1), 17-43.

Stufflebeam, D. L. (1971). The relevance of the CIPP evaluation model for educational accountability. Journal of Research & Development in Education, 5(1), 19-25.

Stufflebeam, D. L., Foley, W. J., Gephart, W. J., Guba, E. G., Hammon, R. L., Merriman, H. O., & Provus, M. M. (1971). Educational Evaluation & Decision-Making. Ithaca, Ill: Peacock.

Stufflebeam, D. L., Madaus, G. F., & Kellaghan, T. (eds.). (2000). Evaluation Models: Viewpoints on Educational & Human Services Evaluation. (2nd. ed.). Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Sturtridge, G. (1992). Self-Access: Preparation & training. Manchester: The British Council.

Sturtridge, G. (1997). Teaching and learning in self-access centres: changing roles? In P. Benson, & P. Voller (eds.), (1997). 66-78.

Suchman, E. A. (1972). Action for what? A critique of evaluative research. In C. H. Weiss (ed.), (1972). 52-84.

Swales, J. M. (1990). A context-restrictive model for program evaluation? TESOL Quarterly, 24(2), 761-763.

Tallmadge, J. (1997). Meeting the Tree of Life: a teacher's path. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Taylor, L., & MacFarlane, M. (1997). International Express. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Terrell, T. D. (1977). A natural approach to second language acquisition and learning. Modern Language Journal, (61), 325-336.

Thorpe, M. (1988). Evaluating Open & Distance Learning. London: Longman.

Toffler, A. (1970). Future Shock. Bodley Head: Pan.

Toffler, A. (1980). The Third Wave. New York: Morrow.

Tough, A. M. (1979). The Adult's Learning Projects: a Fresh Approach to Theory & Practice. Austin, Tex.: Sage Publications.

Tribble, C. (2000). Designing evaluation into educational change processes. ELT Journal, 54(4), 319-327.

Trim, J. L. M. (1984). Across the Threshold : Readings from the Modern Languages Projects of the Council of Europe. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Tsang, E. (1999). Resistance to self-access learning. In B. J. Morrison (ed.), (1999). 25-42.

Tudor, I. (1996). Leaner-centredness as Language Education. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tumposky, N. (1982). The learner on his own. In M. Geddes, & G. Sturtridge (eds.), (1982). 4-7.

Tyler, R. W. (1950). Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tyler, R. W. (1942). General statement on evaluation. Journal of Educational Research, 35, 492-501.

Ullman, R. (1990). Using complementary approaches to evaluate second language programmes. Language, Culture & Curriculum, 3 (1), 20-38.

Ullman, R., & Geva, E. (1985). Expanding our evaluation perspective: what can classroom observation tell us about core French programs. Canadian Modern Languages Review, 42(2), 307-323.

University of Western Australia, C. f. S. D. (2000) Alternative Modes of Teaching & Learning [Web Page]. URL http://www.csd.uwa.edu.au/altmodes/of_delivery/resource-based_learning.html [2002].

Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. (1996). Focus Group Interviews in Education & Psychology. London: Sage Publications.

Voller, P. (1997). Does the teacher have a role in autonomous language learning? In P. Benson, & P. Voller (eds.), (1997). 98-113.

Walberg, H. J., & Haertel, G. D. (1990). Encyclopedia of Educational Research. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Wan M.bin A. (1994). Learning English in self-access centres: the MPKB experience. Unpublished workshop handout.

Wardrop, E., & Anderson, K. (1992). An investigation into learners' reactions to learner training for self-access listening. In Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics 3 1992). 135-145.

Weir, C. (1997). Successful evaluation in language programmes. Mimeograph.

Weir, C., & Roberts, J. (1994). Evaluation in ELT. Oxford: Blackwell.

Weiss, C. H. (1972). Evaluating Action Programs: Readings in Social Action & Education. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Weiss, C. H. (1997). Theory-based evaluation: past, present, and future. New Directions for Evaluation, 76, 41-55.

Weiss, C. H. (2000). Which links in which theories shall we evaluate? New Directions for Evaluation , 87, 35-45.

Weitzman, E. A. (2000). Software & qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), (2000). 803-820.

Wenden, A. (1991). Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy. London: Prentice Hall International.

Wengraf, T. (2001). Qualitative Research Interviewing. London: Sage Publications.

Wholey, J. S. (1979). Evaluation: Promise & Performance. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.

Wholey, W. R. (1987). Evaluability assessment: developing program theory. In L. Bickman (ed.), (1987). 77-92.

Wolf, R. M. (1990). Questionnaires. In H. J. Walberg, & G. D. Haertel (eds.), (1990).

Worthen, B. R., & Sanders, J. R. (1987). Educational Evaluation: Alternative Approaches & Practical Guidelines. New York: London.

Worthen, B. R., & Sanders, J. R. (1973). Educational Evaluation: Theory and Practice. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Worthen, B. R., & White, K. R. (1986). Evaluating Educational and Social Programs. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff.

Yeung, L., & Hyland, F. (1999). Bridging the gap: utilising self-access learning as a course component. RELC Journal, 30(1), 158-174.

Yeung, S. F. (2002). A comparison of the vocabulary self-correction strategy and the current methdology of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong EFL classrooms. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Zimmerman, B. J. Developing self-fulfilling cycles of academic regulation: an analysis of exemplary instructional models. In D. H. Schunk, & B. J. Zimmerman (eds.), (1-20.

Zimmerman, B. J., & Schunk, D. H. (eds.). (1989). Self-Regulated Learning & Academic Achievement: Theory, Research & Practice . New York: Springer-Verlag.

Appendix 1

Examples of evaluation models and approaches

Model/approach	Author
Adversary-oriented models	Guba
CIPP (Context, input, process & product)	Stufflebeam (et al)
Context-adaptive	Lynch
Countenance	Stake
Creative	Patton
Discrepancy	Provus
Educational Connoisseurship	Fetterman
Empowerment	Fetterman
Fourth Generation	Guba & Lincoln
Goal-free	Scriven
Illuminative	Parlett & Hamilton
Impact	Rossi & Freeman
Implementation	Patton
Participatory	Alderson
Process-oriented models	Stufflebeam
Product-oriented models	Scriven/various
Realistic	Pawson & Tilley
Responsive	Stake
Review panels	Various
System	Rossi, Freeman & Wright
Transactional	Rippey
Tylerian	Tyler
Utilization-focused	Patton

Appendix 2

Interview consent form (initial)

Project title: A study of the extent to which existing models of evaluation in education and language learning can be applied to a self-access language learning environment

Student's name: Bruce Morrison

Supervisor's name: Prof. Liz Hamp-Lyons

- The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and any personal details will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audio-taped during the interview.

Name of subject:

Signed:

Dated:

I have explained the study to the subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher's signature:

Participant identification consent form

Project title: A study of the extent to which existing models of evaluation in education and language learning can be applied to a self-access language learning environment

Student's name: Bruce Morrison

Supervisor's name: Prof. Liz Hamp-Lyons

- The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- In addition, I now agree to my name and the attached personal details being identified in the PhD thesis

Name of subject:

Signed:

Dated:

I have explained the study to the subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher's signature:

Appendix 3

Interview study profiles

Name	Cheng, William	WCG
PhD study role	Expert - SAC learner	
Affiliation	Hong Kong accountancy firm	
Notes	• accountant • SAC Alumni member. • At the time of the study, he used the SAC 2-3 evenings per week for approximately 1.5 hours per session.	
Rationale for participant selection	• Two learners (WCG & WKM) had, in informal discussions with me previous to the PhD study, expressed an interest in the processes involved in the running of the SAC. • He is a mature part-time student who, through regular SAC use, is consciously familiar with the operation of a particular SAC. • In his role as an accountant, he is involved in evaluative procedures in his work.	

Name	Cheung, Wilkin	WC
PhD study role	Expert - SAC support staff member	
Affiliation	The Centre for Independent Language Learning The English Language Centre The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	
Notes	• He has worked as an Audio-Visual Assistant in the CILL since 1998 • His job duties include both technical and clerical duties related to the running of a SAC	
Rationale for participant selection	• His experience as a SAC stakeholder working in a SAC provides him with insights into its operation from a non-academic viewpoint • His view of the SAC's operation includes perceptions of the roles of the SAC co-ordinator and teachers, learners and technical/clerical staff.	

Name	Chu, Sunny	SC
PhD study role	Expert - SAC teacher	
Affiliation	The Centre for Independent Language Learning The English Language Centre The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	
Notes	• He has worked as a teacher in the CILL since 1998. • His duties in the SAC include learner counselling, learner diary feedback, materials development and involvement in its on-going development.	
Rationale for participant selection	• His experience working as a dedicated SAC teacher (initially with no other duties or responsibilities) provides him with rich insights into the operation of a SAC.	

Name	Farmer, Richard	RF
PhD study role	Expert - SAC co-ordinator	
Affiliation	Freelance	
Notes	• He was previously co-ordinator for the SAC in the English Department of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University that preceded the setting-up of the CILL.	
Rationale for participant selection	• He was involved in the setting-up of two SACs in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and was thus one of the SAC "pioneers" in Hong Kong. • He has published in the related fields of independent language learning and learner autonomy.	

Name	Gardner, David	DG
PhD study role	Expert - SAC consultant	
Affiliation	The English Centre The University of Hong Kong	
Notes	• He is a Senior Instructor.	
Rationale for participant selection	• He has been involved in SALL since 1989. • He was involved in the setting-up of two SACs in the English Centre of the Hong Kong University in 1995 and was thus one of the SAC "pioneers" in Hong Kong. • He has wide SAC research experience • He has co-authored with Lindsay Miller, a number of publications including the book "Establishing Self-Access" which is recognised as the foremost publication in the field to date. • He has published in the related fields of independent language learning and learner autonomy. • He is familiar with all SACs in Hong Kong. • He has been very involved in the development of SALL in general in Hong Kong. In particular, he has worked with the Hong Kong government in helping to set up SALL facilities in secondary schools	

Name	Miller, Lindsay	LM
PhD study role	Expert - SAC consultant	
Affiliation	Department of English The City University of Hong Kong	
Notes	• He is an Associate Professor in Language Education responsible for co-ordinating service English language courses.	
Rationale for participant selection	• He set up a SAC in Thailand in 1989. • He was involved in the setting-up of the SAC in the English Centre of the City University of Hong Kong and was thus one of the SAC "pioneers" in Hong Kong. • He has been interested in SALL and IL for the past fifteen years and has extensive SAC research experience. • He has co-authored with David Gardner, a number of publications including the book "Setting-up Self-Access" which is recognised as the foremost publication in the field to date. • He has published in the related fields of independent language learning and learner autonomy. • He is familiar with all SACs in Hong Kong • He has been very involved in the development of SALL in general in Hong Kong. In particular, he has worked with the Hong Kong government in helping to set up SALL facilities in secondary schools.	

Name	Morrall, Andrew	AM
PhD study role	Expert - SAC teacher	
Affiliation	The Centre for Independent Language Learning The English Language Centre The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	
Notes	• He has worked as a teacher in the CILL since its opening. • His duties in the Centre include learner counselling, learner diary feedback, materials development and involvement in its on-going development.	
Rationale for participant selection	• His experience working as a dedicated SAC teacher (initially with no other duties or responsibilities) and his involvement in the setting-up of the centre provides him with rich insights into the operation of a SAC. • He has been very involved in the setting-up and running of the SAC's computer-based resources.	

Name	Pemberton, Richard	RP
PhD study role	Expert - SAC co-ordinator	
Affiliation	The Language Centre Hong Kong University of Science & Technology	
Notes	• He is a Senior Instructor with special responsibility for the running of the Language Centre SAC.	
Rationale for participant selection	• Has been interested in SALL since 1981 and involved since 1991. • In 1993, he set up the SAC in the Language Centre of the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology and was thus one of the SAC "pioneers" in Hong Kong. • He has wide SAC research experience • He has published in the related fields of independent language learning and learner autonomy. • He is familiar with all SACs in Hong Kong.	

Name	Sinclair, Barbara	BS
PhD study role	Expert - SAC researcher	
Affiliation	School of Education University of Nottingham	
Notes	• She is Senior Lecturer and director for post-graduate courses.	
Rationale for participant selection	• She has been interested in IL since 1981 and SALL since 1984. • She has published widely, and is a respected figure, in the field of independent language learning and learner autonomy. • She has not been directly involved in the work of a SAC but has conducted SAC-focused research.	

Name	Smith, Pamela	PS
PhD study role	Non-expert - language centre manager	
Affiliation	The English Language Centre The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	
Notes	• As manager of the English Language Centre (ELC) within which the CILL operates, she is familiar with the SAC but has no direct SAC experience. • She has no prior explicit interest in SALL or related fields.	
Rationale for participant selection	• She is a major SAC stakeholder in that she is responsible for making strategic and financial decisions that directly affect the SAC's operation.	

Name	Spratt, Mary	MS
PhD study role	Non-expert - teacher	
Affiliation	The English Language Centre The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	
Notes	• She is familiar with the CILL but has no direct SAC experience. • She has been involved with research into learner autonomy mainly focusing classroom-based teaching.	
Rationale for participant selection	• She is a very experienced English language teacher and teacher-trainer with a wide knowledge and a variety of interests. As an ELC teacher whose students use the CILL, she is also a CILL stakeholder. Thus, she was included as a participant on the basis of providing an informed, but non-SAC expert, stakeholder voice.	

Name	Wan, Sau Yi Kenny	WS
PhD study role	Expert - SAC learner	
Affiliation	HK Polytechnic University	
Notes	• She is a post-graduate research student in the Department of Building Services Engineering. • She is a regular SAC learner.	
Rationale for participant selection	• She is a mature student who, through regular SAC use, is consciously familiar with the operation of a particular SAC. • In her role as a researcher, she is familiar with many of the concepts that enable her to contribute to the discussion not only of what defines a SAC, but also issues relating to SAC evaluation.	

Name	Wong, Kwong Ming	WKM
PhD study role	Expert - SAC learner	
Affiliation	Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation	
Notes	• He is an auditor • He uses the SAC once or twice per week for between 1 and 3 hours per session.	
Rationale for participant selection	• Two learners (WCG & WKM) had, in informal discussions with me previous to the PhD study, expressed an interest in the processes involved in the running of the SAC. • He is a mature part-time student who, through regular SAC use, is consciously familiar with the operation of a particular SAC. • In his role as an auditor for the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation, he is involved in evaluations.	

Name	Warner, Aster*	AW
PhD study role	Non-expert - SAC funder	
Affiliation		
Notes	• She has been involved in the work of a SAC funding body	
Rationale for participant selection	• She is included in the role of a representative of a major SAC stakeholder. • It is important to gain insight into the views of the funding bodies since any evaluation may likely be used to (at least partially) base future funding decisions upon.	

*This is a pseudonym

Name	Yen, Tung Yuk Raymond	YT
PhD study role	Expert - SAC learner	
Affiliation	Hong Kong Polytechnic University	
Notes	• 2nd year undergraduate student in the Department of Computing • He is a regular SAC learner.	
Rationale for participant selection	• Through regular SAC use, he is consciously familiar with the operation of a particular SAC. • He is known to me as a student who is very able and willing to express himself both fluently and knowledgeably on his work in the SAC.	

Name	Yeung, Lawrie	YL
PhD study role	Expert - SAC learner	
Affiliation	Own company	
Notes	• He is chief administrator and owner of a Hong Kong SME (Small & Medium Enterprise). • SAC member for approximately five years • He uses the centre fairly regularly - generally at least once a week.	
Rationale for participant selection	• He is a mature Alumni member who, through regular SAC use over five years, is consciously familiar with the operation of a particular SAC. • In his role as a company administrator, he is familiar with many of the concepts that enable him to contribute to the discussion not only of what defines a SAC, but also issues relating to SAC evaluation.	

Appendix 4

Interview framework for participants: SAC expert - teacher, co-ordinator, consultant and researcher

1. Background
- name
- affiliation
- degree, and type, of familiarity with CILL
- degree of familiarity/involvement with self-access

2. Self-access
- definition of self-access learning to a non-expert
- description of a SAC: physically & pedagogically
- types of activity learners most commonly engage in, in a SAC - why
- aspects of the language-learning experience a SAC can be most/least effective in supporting

3. Evaluating self-access
- definition of an effective SAC
- the elements of a SAC that are essential to its effectiveness
- importance of evaluating a SAC
- elements of a SAC to be evaluated
- possibility of evaluation of learner progress
- place of efficiency in the evaluation of a SAC
- evaluation participants

Interview framework for participant: SAC expert - SAC support staff member

1. Background
- name
- affiliation
- degree, and type, of familiarity with CILL
- degree of familiarity/involvement with self-access

2. Self-access
- definition of self-access learning to a non-expert
- its value to Hong Kong tertiary students

3. Evaluating self-access
- importance of evaluating a SAC for UGC
- definition of an effective SAC
- elements of a SAC to be evaluated
- possibility of evaluation of learner progress

Interview framework for participant: SAC non-expert - SAC funder

1. **Background**
- name
- affiliation
- degree, and type, of familiarity with CILL
- degree of familiarity/involvement with self-access

2. **Self-access**
- definition of self-access learning as a non-expert
- its value to Hong Kong tertiary students

3. **Evaluating self-access**
- definition of an effective SAC
- the elements of a SAC that are essential to its effectiveness
- importance of evaluating a SAC
- elements of a SAC to be evaluated
- possibility of evaluation of learner progress
- place of efficiency in the evaluation of a SAC

Interview framework for participants: SAC experts - learners

1. **Background**
- name
- affiliation
- degree, and type, of familiarity with CILL
- degree of familiarity/involvement with self-access

2. **Self-access**
- reasons for using CILL
- activities engaged in, in CILL
- aspects of the language-learning experience CILL is most/least effective in supporting
- desired changes to CILL

3. **Evaluating self-access**
- definition of an effective SAC
- the elements of a SAC that are essential to its effectiveness
- elements of a SAC to be evaluated
- possibility of evaluation of learner progress
- place of efficiency in the evaluation of a SAC
- evaluation participants

Appendix 5

Interview follow-up e-mails

The following e-mail was sent to six participants. I was, as noted in chapter four (section 4.5) unable to contact Richard Farmer. Lindsay Miller replied on the phone and so his response was not recorded but it was included in the analysis from notes. I have, however, included both the outgoing e-mails.

> Dear
> Some time ago now, you kindly helped me by being interviewed about self-access, CILL and possible ways of evaluating the Centre. I have been working with the data from your interview and have a couple of questions and/or points that I need to clarify.
> If you had time, I would really appreciate it if you could respond a.s.a.p. so that I can get on to the next stage of the study.
> Many thanks
> Bruce

The following are the extracts from the interviews followed by specific questions asked/points raised and the participants' responses

.....

1. Sunny Chu: SAC expert - teacher

Upon reflection, Sunny Chu, unfortunately, only felt able to comment on extract C.

A.

**Question:*
Okay, do you feel that that service is part of a SAC?...the 1-to-1 help
**Response:*
Yeah, and we are meant to provide 1-to-1 help...it doesn't really matter if it's writing or reading or what....even speaking but unfortunately they can't monopolise our time and also they can't benefit - for speaking it must be in a group - more like 1-to-1 (??)....I think that's not really authentic.

- could you summarise what you meant in the last two lines: particularly about not "benefitting" and "that" (what?) not being "authentic"

B.

You mention that the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a SAC might be whether it meets the learners' needs.

- how, in your view, could we determine if a Centre is/is not meeting the students' needs?

C.

**Question:*
Yes, but who would be reading this report...who would it be given to - the learners?

**Response:*
No...to the management to justify....
**Question:*
Why not to the learners?
**Response:*
Why not to the learners.....to the learners...to the tutors...
**Question:*
Why the learners...would you want to give it to the learners...would you feel that would be appropriate?
**Response:*
Would they be interested in a report like this first of all and, if they're interested, and then they can see this is the learning pattern...this is the way that they use a centre...they will use a centre like a library - not making the best use of the resources but who would be interested?....but I think the tutors would be interested and I think they can use this evaluation report as a means to help them to improve....

- could you clarify, with hindsight, if you feel it would/would not be useful for learners to see the results of an evaluation of the SAC?

Reply

The centre is set up for the learners and they should be given a chance to read the evaluation report. It's not fair if they are not given the chance to do so.

.....

2. Richard Farmer: SAC expert - co-ordinator

As stated above, I was unable to contact Richard Farmer.

A.

- you talk about getting evaluation data from learners on you programmes: do you try to get any data from your "drop-in" learners - and, if so, how?

- can you see any way that such an informal approach to data gathering might be included in a more formal approach to evaluation?

.....

3. Lindsay Miller: SAC expert - consultant

A.

**Response:*
...just by casually glancing in and you see that they're there, they're doing things, then that's effective - it's not a scientific measure but that's effective...

**Response:*
Well, I suppose their engagement in the activities - again through observation, as opposed to results..

- you twice mention the role observation might play in evaluation, could you elaborate a bit on: a) how you might see such an informal method might fit into a formal valuation framework; and b) who would do such observation, how and when?

.....

4. Andrew Morrall: SAC expert - teacher

A.

*Response:
...sometimes SA is very free and sometimes it's more controlled.

*Response:
Self-access is where the student or the learner controls what they study, when they study it and how they study.

- these seem to be contradictory views of self-access...any comment that could clarify your view?

Reply

Well, it depends on the centre. In CILL all the students are volunteers and they are in charge of their learning so they decide what to study, when to study and how - with help from the teacher if they need it. But there are other SACs where the students have to go and sometimes they are even told exactly what they have to study etc. Also, within CILL, students can decide to relinquish some of their control by asking the teacher for more guidance.

B.

*Question:
Okay and how would we do that - this evaluation, what sort of methodology?
*Response:
There'd be two ways I guess...one would be to watch the students and see what they do and see if the things that are designed to attract students do attract them

- observing the students: who would do it, how and when?

Reply

It would have to be done secretly to try to avoid influencing the students, so it might be done by student assistants or research assistants. How and when would depend on what was being

C.

.*Response:
...now, in a way, IL is not efficient because you're asking non-expert students to partially take over the teacher's role of materials selection, marking, assessment in general - in fact the whole creation of a study programme, needs analysis - which they're not expert in and they don't have as much

experience as a normal teacher so especially at the start of learning how to be an independent learner, it is not efficient....it only becomes more efficient than, for example, classroom teaching when the student is familiar with analysing their own needs, is familiar with planning what they want to do, is familiar with studying something using study strategies that they prefer using, and is familiar with self-assessment and then feeding back into another needs analysis planning stage

- what, in your view, would the best way(s) that a centre could help the learner become more "expert"?

Reply

1) Have learning strategy sheets that a teacher could put in a diary, for example if the teacher sees that the learner is learning vocabulary, he/she could put in a sheet on a strategy. We could have different sheets for different strategies, e.g. one on vocab books, one on card systems and one on creating a story using the new words.
2) Have the self-diagnostic materials prominently displayed, e.g. 'What kind of learner are you?' activities and placement tests.

.....

5. Richard Pemberton: SAC expert - co-ordinator

A.
- you talk about getting evaluation data from learners on you programmes: do you try to get any data from your "drop-in" learners - and,

If so, how?

Reply

Simple answer: no, as it's intrusive for 'quickie' users, and they're not likely to be long-term users/provide evidence of learning.
Exceptions:
(a) those sts currently being interviewed by David Gardner's RA for an ALP research project into evaluating the effectiveness of SALL (continued overleaf)

(b) occasional qu'aires that we do for anyone who happens to be in the SAC within a given week. These were done in the early years, getting info about materials, areas etc. they liked/found useful/wanted improved etc. For the work involved in devising the qu'aires and analysing the data, we didn't usually feel that we got very worthwhile data out of these. However, that doesn't mean that we won't decide to use them for particular porposes at some point in the future.

B.

**Response:*
Yeah..in an ideal world, I suppose you could say "I notice you've been here for the last 200 days, mind telling me about it" (LAUGHS) but...

- can you see any way that such an informal approach to data gathering might be included in a more formal approach to evaluation?

Reply

'Might' in the sense of possible given someone with a research agenda/grant: yes, you could do snapshot interviews with different learners (David G's interviews) or even work out a methodology for drop-in users over time (if you could persuade them to be interviewed or complete a diary every time they dropped in).

'Might' in the sense of will we actually do it: no. (a) We've got enough data to analyse from our sts on self-directed courses/modules. (b) I'd rather focus on them anyway, as they make obtaining longitudinal data far easier to collect. (c) I'd like to get to a position where the majority of our users were doing course-related or programme-related learning, as that seems to be the way to go if we want sts to be able to do SALL over a period of time, and really develop their language skills - i.e. I don't think it's worth putting an emphasis on casual users. That might change over time, but that's my thinking at the moment.

.....

6. **SAC researcher Barbara Sinclair**

A.

**Response:*
people as they go out and asking them...but I think it needs to be done face-to-face to some extent, even if it's just the manager walking round saying "Oi, you what do you think of that then?" - that would be a kind of informal gathering of views...but to make it more formal for research purposes you

- can you see anyway that such informally gathered data might be incorporated into a more formal evaluation format?

Reply

Hmm only in the form of a report made by the person gathering the comments - and that would have the usual problems of validity. Nevertheless,I think going around and asking people informally about their opinions, how they're getting on etc., performs a different function. It shows that the SAC is interested in the individual and might encourage reticent people to come forward and ask for support. Perhaps, on deeper reflection, it's a function more related to counselling than evaluation.

B.

You mention the Learning Portfolios used at Teasek Poly. Can you see this type of approach having value for a centre where all the students are voluntary and "drop in"?

Reply

The thing about portfolios is they take time and effort to maintain - who's going to do that unlesss it's mandatory? I think you'd have to offer some kind of benefit to drop-in students, like some credits towards their degree (the approach they take at Temasek), so that keeping a portfolio becomes an alternative way of earning assessment points. Of course, it would be fab if all students could be induced to keep records of their work in a personal portfolio - and some might do this voluntarily - but, knowing how pragmatic HK students are, I guess you'd need to have it assessed in some way.

C..

**Response:*
Yeah....but you can go to their faculties and ask their tutors how their grades are going and what they've noticed....you do a

- is there any way that such information might be related to the effect of the SAC?

Reply

Not directly, I would think. That's always the problem - there are too many variables to take into consideration. However, if you were doing a case study on a student, this type of information might provide useful triangulation in the sense that it would be good to see whether any tutors have noticed any differences in their English proficiency (I mean in the student's proficiency.)
(continued overleaf)

I don't actually think it will ever be possible to scientifically eliminate all other variables so that you could prove a direct relationship between self-access learning and increased proficiency. It's the holy grail of autonomy! I'm afraid we can only listen to what people tell us - the students, the tutors. If they construct their reality so that think they can attribute their success to one thing or another, I feel we have to listen to them.

.....

5. Non-SAC expert teacher Mary Spratt

Mary Spratt responded but, unfortunately, did not address the point raised. Her reply is, however, included below.

A.

**Question:*
..and there's a tricky one there, how would you go about seeing if the perceptions of the co-ordinators match the perceptions of the learners..the perceptions of what exactly - perceptions of the learners' progress?
**Response:*

Perceptions..the learners' perceptions of the usefulness of the facility which will be partly progress - it depends what you mean by "progress", progress could be a feeling of making headway in your proficiency, it might also be a feeling of greater involvement and motivation - and I suppose the feeling that this space allows you to follow up on what you're interested in following up on.

- can you give me any idea how we might capture these learners' perceptions?

Reply

Some thoughts:

1. What about measuring some sense of "empowerment" about using the centre i.e. how confidently do students come in and know what to find, that they can find, how to do etc. Like going to a supermarket that you know well!
2. My thoughts/feelings about learner autonomy is that what we need to be working on with students is not so much making decisions about their learning needs as motivating them to learn and feeling confident about being able to learn and make progress. If students are motivated and confident then the LA can/will follow but vice versa doesn't work. If this is the case....I don't know how to complete this re. CILL evaluation.

Appendix 6

Post-interview follow-up e-mail questionnaire

The questionnaire is in two parts. The first focuses on the elements that the interview participants have identified as defining a SAC. The second considers some issues that arose concerning possible ways of evaluating a SAC. There are 14 items in total.

Some of the questions/statements below include a Likert scale choice, some just ask for comment, and others include both. Comments would be much appreciated as they obviously give a much clearer indication of your views than a simple one-in-four choice between pre-determined options.

The Likert scale is as follows. Please select one option by typing "X" next to it.

SA	A	D	SD
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Thank you again for your help

Bruce

.....

Part 1: Defining a SAC

1. *Experimentation*, on the part of the learner and in terms of their language learning, can play an important aspect of the learning process in a SAC.
   - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
   - Please comment:

2. A SAC should be: "a fun, noisy, interactive, environment" where "students should be allowed…to come and talk and make noise and have fun."
   - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
   - Please comment:

3. Self-Access Language Learning (SALL), when defined as a mode of learning, is a major reason why learners study English in a SAC rather than in other educational venues such as a library (for example).
   - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
   - Please comment:

4. A SAC should explicitly help learners to develop their independent learning skills.
   - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
   - Please comment:

5. Learner control over the learning process is necessary in order for SALL to be successful.

   - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
   - Please comment:

6. Study participants identified eight aspects of the SAC teacher's role. These were, the teacher as:
   - a consultant;
   - a counsellor;
   - a guide;
   - a language expert;
   - a trained professional;
   - having one-to-one contact with a learner;
   - a tutor;
   - a person for the learner to talk to about the learning process.

   Can you identify any others? If so, please comment:

7. Learner peer support (perhaps in the form of group-focused SALL) is important in order for SALL to be successful.

   - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
   - Please comment:

8. It is important for the SAC to be a "one-stop-shop" in terms of providing learners with the following in one location:
   - a wide range of materials available at various levels, catering to a variety of learning styles;
   - easy access to learning materials;
   - an appropriate level of equipment;
   - an efficient infrastructure in terms of human and non-human resources.

   - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
   - Please comment:

9. What qualities do you think it would be important for non-teaching SAC support staff (either clerical or technical) to display in their work?

   - Please comment:

Part 2: Evaluating a SAC

10. Do you feel an evaluation of a SAC should be primarily judgmental or developmental in focus (or both)? Please explain your rationale and briefly suggest any way(s) in which you feel this decision might impact on the design of an evaluation.

    - Please comment:

11. Observation has been suggested as a useful evaluation tool.

    - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
    - Please comment:

12. Benchmarking the performance of one Hong Kong SAC against another would provide useful data for the making of strategic and tactical decisions.

    - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
    - Please comment:

13. An evaluation team should include both "insiders" (i.e. those either learning or working within the SAC) and "outsiders".

    - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
    - Please comment:

14. A SAC evaluation should:

    a) fit within a naturalistic, qualitative paradigm;

    - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
    - Please comment:

    b) allow for a quantitative element;

    - To what extent would you agree? SA Ax D SD
    - Please comment:

    d) be fairly informal:

    - To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
    - Please comment:

d) be on-going in nature:

- To what extent would you agree? SAx A D SD
- Please comment:

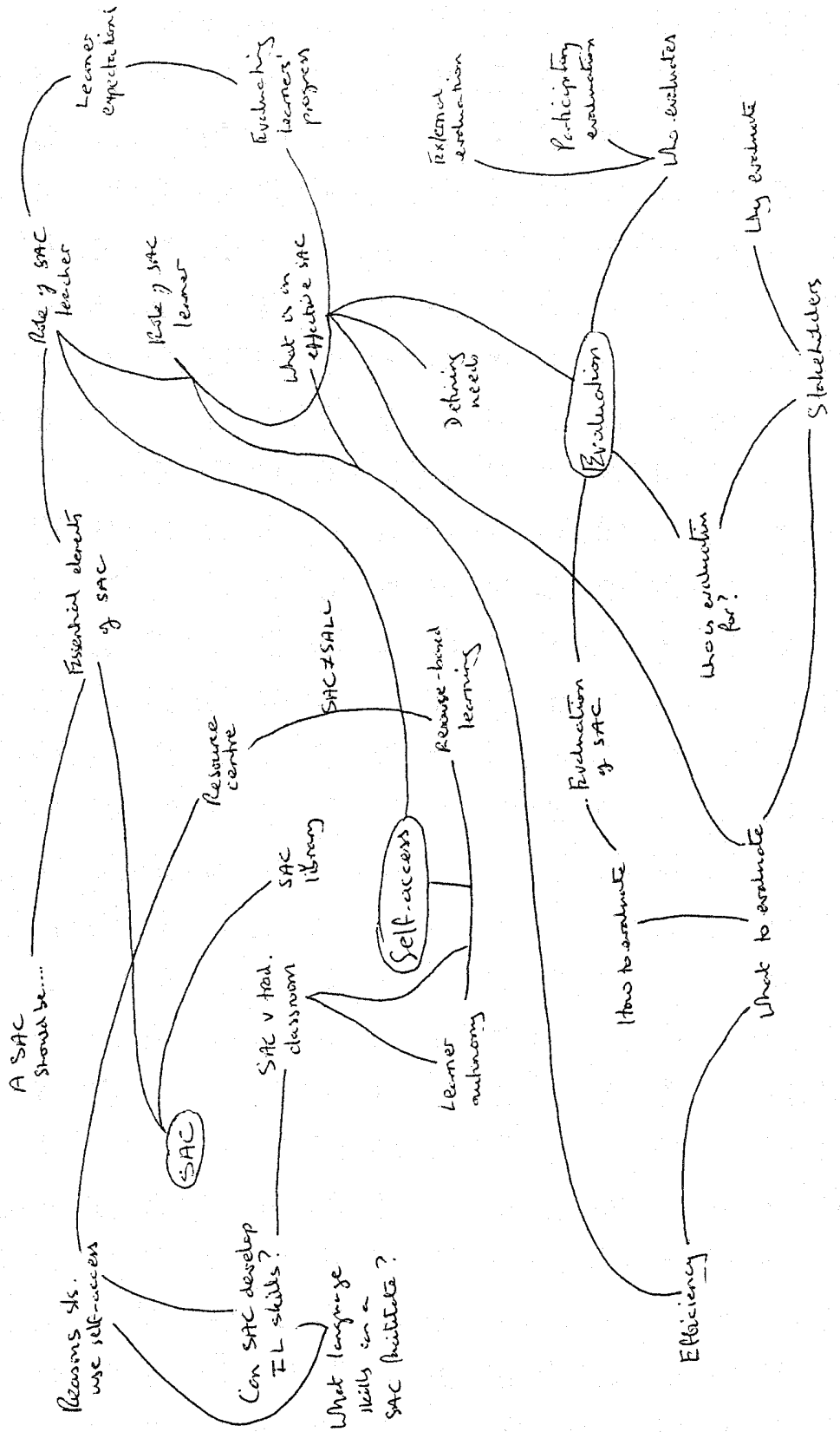
d) include a formalised reporting mechanism:

- To what extent would you agree? SA A D SD
- Please comment:

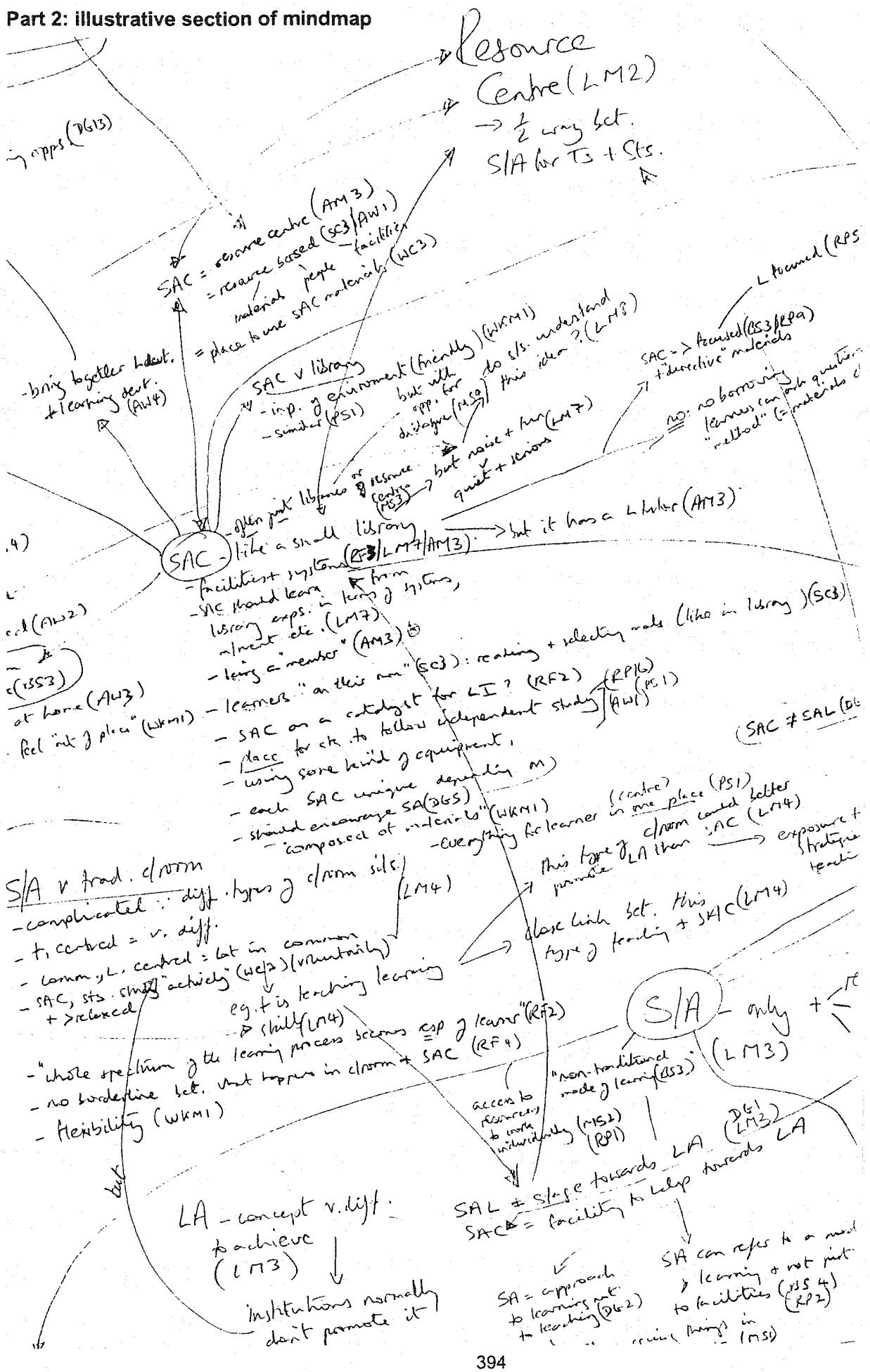
Appendix 7

Mindmap

Part 1: summary overview of main sections deriving from initial coding process



Part 2: illustrative section of mindmap



Appendix 8

Definition of SAC: mindmap categories

Category		References (person + line reference)
MM1 Overall		
MM1.1: SAC could be anything from…	1	BS3
MM1.2: a unique collection of elements	1	DG3
MM2 SAC as a resource centre/resource-based	**5**	**AM3/AW1/LM2/SC3/YT1**
MM2.1: SAC = resource centre or library	1	MS3
MM2.2: noise & fun/friendly	3	LM7/MS4/WKM1
MM3 SAC v library	**10**	**AM3/BS3/LM7/MS4/ SC3/ PS1/RF5/RP5/WC3/YT1**
MM3.1: SAC as library	2	PS1/WC5
MM3.2: library + teacher	4	AM3/LM8/MS4/WC3
MM3.3: need for library-like systems	1	LM7
MM3.4: learners selecting and reading materials on their own	1	SC3
MM3.5: no borrowing	1	WC3
MM3.6: SAC language-focused	3	BS3/ RF5/RP5&9
MM3.7: membership	1	AM3
MM4 SAC v "traditional teacher-centred classroom	**4**	**LM/WC/RF/WKM**
MM4.1: many different types of classroom	1	LM4
MM4.2: no borderline between SAC & classroom/different types of classroom	2	LM4/RF4
MM4.3: SAC & communicative classroom: lots in common (>LI in communicative classroom?)	1	LM4
MM4.4: students are more active, relaxed, motivated	2	WC3/YT1
MM4.5: learners are responsible for whole learning process	1	RF1
MM4.6: more flexibility	3	WKM1/WS1/YT1
MM5 SAC is not = SALL	**3**	**DG2/BS3/SC4**
MM5.1: SALL = stage towards LI SAC = facility to help towards LI	2	DG2/LM3
MM5.2: SALL = mode of learning	3	BS3&4/DG2/RP2
MM5.3: SALL = method of learning	1	WC1
MM6 Role of SAC		
MM6.1: provide range of learning opportunities	1	DG13
MM6.2: bring together language devt. & learning devt.	1	AW4
MM6.3: catalyst for LI/ enable learners to study without SAC	1	RF2
MM6.4: encourage SALL	2	DG5/YL3
MM6.5: non-self-access programmes in SAC?	2	RP13&20/SC4
MM7 Essential elements of SAC		
MM7.1: human support	16	All
MM7.2: teachers	9	AM3/BS3/PS2/RP5/SC3/WC1/WCG2/WKM3/YT1
MM7.3: support staff	1	AM7
MM7.4: resources (in general)	2	AM7/WS5
MM7.5: materials	4	WC1/WCG2&5/WKM3/YT1
MM7.6: materials classification/accessibility of materials	3	PS1/WC7/WS5
MM7.7: techniques for learning	1	RF2
MM7.8: manager	1	BS8
MM7.9: pleasant environment	2	BS8/WKM1

MM7.10: experimentation	1	DG4
MM7.11: guidance for learners	6	PS1/WC1/WCG1/WS1/YL2&3/ YT2
MM7.12: structure for language learning	2	WCG1/YT2
MM7.13: evaluation of learner progress	2	WCG1/YL5
MM8 SAC should be...		
MM8.1: pleasant environment	1	AM3
MM8.2: noisy & fun	2	AM3/LM7
MM8.3: convenient/everything in one place (a centre!)	2	AM3/PS1
MM9 Reasons learners use SAC		
MM9.1: non-judgmental	1	AM4
MM9.2: individualized	1	AM4
MM9.3: friendly	1	WKM1
MM9.4: independent study/"self-learning"	4	AW1/PS1/RP16/WKM1
MM9.5: not individual	3	DG4/MS7/RF3
MM9.6: ref. a "place/centre"	3	AW1/PS1/RP16
MM9.7: watching videos	1	AM4
MM9.8: using e-mail	1	AM4
MM9.9: developing/practising listening skills	3	AM4/AW2/LM8
MM9.10: lack of space at home	1	AW3
MM9.11: equipment	1	AW1
MM9.12: materials	1	WKM1
MM9.13: language improvement	10	AM5/AW2/DG7/MS7/RP10/SC4/ WC6/WKM1/WS2/YT1
MM10 Role of the SAC teacher		
MM10.1: central to success of SAC	2	WC1/WCG1
MM10.2: 1-to-1 tutoring/counselling role	5	SC4/WKM1/WCG1&2/YL1&2/YT2
MM10.3: "professional" judgement	1	WKM1
MM10.4: IL awareness raising	1	SC5
MM10.5: answers questions	4	BS3/WC3/WS4/YL1,2,&3
MM10.6: help learners study	4	MS6/ RF3/RP8/WKM1
MM10.7: help learners identify needs	3	DG12/PS1/WCG1
MM10.8: talk about learning/"learning conversations"	2	BS3/RP8
MM10.9: review progress	1	WKM1
MM10.10: "human touch"	3	PS1/WC1/WCG1
MM10.11: suggest study programme	2	PS1/WCG1
MM10.12: proactive role	1	WCG1
MM10.13: SA v programmed learning	2	BS4/WCG3
MM10.14: learners expect an editing service	1	SC4
MM10.15: importance of teacher personality	1	PS1
MM11 Role of the SAC learner		
MM11.1: learners as "customer"	1	SC5
MM11.2: need to learn study method	1	WCG6
MM11.3: decide aims etc.	2	RF2/WC3
MM11.4: responsible for whole learning process	1	RF2
MM11.5: initiate learning	1	WKM1
MM11.6: learner "controls"	1	AM2
MM11.7: learners do things as they want	2	MS1/WS3
MM11.8: learner makes decisions	2	RP1/SC3
MM11.9: but in practice...	2	BS3/SC4
MM11.10: inefficiency of learner taking teacher role	1	AM11
MM11.11: focus on process of learning not just product	1	SC4
MM11.12: danger of time-wasting/confusion	4	BS4/WC1/WCG1/YT1

Appendix 9

Evaluation of SAC: mindmap categories

Category		References
MM12 Tension		
MM12.1: need for evaluation to be naturalistic & personal	2	LM10/RP22
MM12.2: admin. focus on efficiency not effectiveness	1	LM10
MM12.3: HK institutions view of evaluation	1	LM10
MM12.4: required (see 13.1 below)		
MM13 Why evaluate a SAC?		
MM13.1: required/expected	4	AW8/LM10/SC6/WC8
MM13.2: accountability	5	AM12/BS7/DG15/MS8/RF8
MM13.3: self-improvement/development	4	AM8/BS7/RF8/SC7
MM13.4: job satisfaction/pride	4	AM8/BS7/PS1/SC7
MM13.5: judge validity as alternative to classroom	3	AW5/RP26/SC6
MM13.6: evidence of effectiveness for learners, teachers & others	2	DG15/MS8
MM13.7: measure "value-added" quotient	1	AM8
MM13.8: find out if learning is taking place	1	SC6
MM13.9: sharing of good practices	1	AW5
MM13.10: evaluation as integral part of pedagogy	1	MS8
MM14 What to evaluate		
MM14.1: learners' perceptions	7	AM9/BS10/MS9/SC6/WS5/YL5/YT4
MM14.2: SAC procedures	1	AM9
MM14.3: learners' progress/gain	5	AM10/AW7/DG17/YL5/YT4
MM14.4: physical centre	2	AM9/WC8
MM14.5: learners interested in "results" not "process"	1	SC6
MM14.6: 3 foci: cost-effectiveness + quality of outcomes + sustainability	1	AW8
MM14.7: 2 foci: efficiency for institution + effectiveness for learners/teachers	1	DG19
MM14.8: need for focus	1	RP24
MM14.9: staff perceptions	2	RP31/YT4
MM14.10: extent SAC meets its objectives	1	WKM1
MM15 Who is a SAC evaluation for?		
MM15.1: learners	2	DG15/ LM16
MM15.2: SAC staff	2	DG15/ LM16
MM15.3: SAC managers	1	LM16
MM15.4: administrators	1	LM16
MM15.5: stakeholders	1	LM18
MM15.6: different sections aimed at different stakeholders	1	BS12
MM15.7: audience will affect type/content of evaluation	2	MS15/RP25

MM16 How to evaluate a SAC		
MM16.1: needs for evaluation to be naturalistic & personal	1	LM10
MM16.2: need for quantitative & qualitative data	2	RP22/WCG1
MM16.3: observation	2	AM8/LM17
MM16.4: ask users	5	AM6/BS10/RF10/WC8/YT4
MM16.5: ask non-SAC staff	3	AM12/BS9/YT4
MM16.6: weakness of tests	3	BS10/DG16/SC6
MM16.7: covert evaluation	1	WC9
MM16.8: formal v informal	3	AM12/RF8/RP19
MM16.9: find out what learners are doing	1	RF10
MM16.10: benchmarking and inter-centre comparison	1	WKM1
MM16.11: feedback form	1	BS9
MM16.12: reticence of respondents	1	RP27
MM16.13: surface v deep reasons	1	RP27

MM16.14: interviews	4	BS9/RP23/YL5/YT4
MM16.15: weakness of questionnaires	1	RP21
MM16.16: learner self-assessment of gain	2	AW7/RP18
MM16.17: eg. evaluation process	1	DG21
MM16.18: audit	1	WKM1
MM17 Who evaluates		
Internal		
MM17.1: academic & administrative staff	1	AM9
MM17.2: include learners and/or support staff?	2	PS1/WKM1
MM17.3: academic staff of SAC and ELC	1	MS16
MM17.4: SAC academic staff doing on-going informal evaluation	1	AM12
MM17.5: users' committee	1	RP30
MM17.6: manager and/or audit office	2	WCG1/WS6
External		
MM17.7: expert opinion of effectiveness & efficiency	4	AM9/DG20/LM10/MS17
MM17.8: > credibility/objectivity	4	LM13/SC6/WC9/WKM1
MM17.9: need to keep PolyU context in mind	1	SC8
MM17.10: "confessional" role	1	RP32
MM17.11: cost implications	1	RP33
MM17.12: as counter-balance to external threat	1	RP34
MM17.13: need local (HK) expert	1	LM13
MM17.14: to give suggestions	2	AM9/DG20
MM17.15: stakeholders but need familiarity with SAC	1	AM9
MM17.16: internal to ELC, external to SAC	1	PS1
MM17.17: need both but clearly separate reports	1	WC9
Participatory evaluation		
MM17.18: danger of too much democracy	1	RF10
MM17.19: to id evaluation focus and methodology	1	LM13
MM17.20: any stakeholders (multiple viewpoint)	2	BS13/SC8
MM18 Evaluating learners' progress		
MM18.1: learner profiles (HKUST)	1	LM14
MM18.2: voluntary v non-voluntary learners	2	LM4/RP17
MM18.3: learner portfolios	1	BS10
MM18.4: random sampling?	1	LM14
MM18.5: at language item level	1	MS12
MM18.6: necessary?	2	LM12/RP17
MM18.7: progress review for learners	3	WKM1/WS5/YL5
MM18.8: learner self-assessment	4	AW17/RP18/WKM6/WS5
MM18.9: possible?	2	BS10/PS1
MM18.10: role for tests/"milestones"	3	WCG1/WS5/YL5
MM18.11: measure the meeting of needs	1	DG11
MM19 What is an effective SAC?		
MM19.1: good management	1	LM11
MM19.2: organised facility	1	LM11
MM19.3: good PR	1	LM11
MM19.4: learner commitment/engagement	1	LM11
MM19.5: learner progress (see above)	1	LM11
MM19.6: development of IL skills	2	LM11/RF7
MM19.7: effective in different ways	1	LM11
MM19.8: meets learners' needs	4	DG9&10/MS13/SC5/YT3
MM19.9: meets needs of teachers and university	1	DG9&10
MM19.10: meets learners' interests	1	MS13
MM19.11: materials etc. appropriate for learners levels	1	MS13
MM19.12: meets "educational ideals"	1	SC5
MM19.13: wide range of activities for different skills, styles & approaches	1	RF7
MM19.14: learners able to "chart progress"/see improvement	2	RF7/WCG1
MM19.15: different stakeholders have different views of effectiveness	1	BS6
MM19.16: user satisfaction	2	AW6/YT3
MM19.17: performance of graduates	1	AW6

MM19.18: meets its purpose	2	DG13/RP12
MM19.19: learners' effective usage	1	MS11&13
MM19.20: customised index system	1	RP6
MM19.21: staff	2	RP14/WCG1
MM19.22: effectiveness of individual aspects of individual facilities	1	WKM1
MM19.23: not necessary to show/volley ball team analogy	1	LM12
MM20 What is an efficient SAC?		
MM20.1: procedures easy and not too time-consuming	1	BS11
MM20.2: staff to deal with any problems	1	BS11
MM20.3: materials up-to-date & in good condition	1	BS11
MM20.4: SAC as a service	1	BS11
MM20.5: important to show efficiency for resourcing justification	1	DG18
MM20.6: no. of staff: no. of tasks	1	MS14
MM20.7: staff and conditions enable effective performance of tasks	1	MS14
MM20.8: efficiency to be measured in terms of effectiveness	1	MS14
MM20.9: usage, repeat usage & sustained usage	3	AW6/DG14/PS1
MM20.10: usage figures not very useful	2	MS10/RP3
MM20.11: ...but...no learners = something wrong!	1	RP15 (ref. LM12)
MM20.12: materials easy to find	1	RP28
MM20.13: learners' use of facilities	2	PS1/WCG1

Appendix 10

Definition of SAC: NVIVO nodes

Set & categories (from Coding Report)		References (person+line reference)	Tree node address
Set: Existing educational facilities (NVEEF)			
NVEEF1: language lab as self-access resource	1	LM99-104	*Language lab. as self-access*
NVEEF2: SALL & Communicative Language Teaching	1	LM46-80	*SALL & CLT*
NVEEF3: SAC compared to library	10	AM34-48/55-57/124-128; BS21-29/37-42; DG686-696; LM124-132/137-147; 56-57/81-86; PS38-39; RP102-110/154-157/177-183; SC16-23/57-58/485-486; WC42-46/51-55/124-131; WKM271-285; YT32-38	4.1.1
- SAC as library	6	LM124-132; MS56-57; PS38-39; RP102-111; SC57-58; WC123-131	
- fun & noise	3	AM55-57; LM142-147; WKM271-285	
- "learners on their own"	1	SC21-23	
- library + "advisor"/"teacher" etc.	5	AM36-40; BS26-28/37-42; MS81-85; RF6-2; RP154-157	
- library + pedagogical role	3	DG693-696; RP177-183; WC42-46 (+ all above refs)	
- ref. classification system	2	AM44-45; WC51-54	
- collection of resources	2	AM34-46; RP102-110	
- SAC has focused (ELT) collection of materials	4	AM124-128; BS21-25; LM128-132; RP107-110	
- SAC more technologically advanced	1	LM129-132	
- application of library systems to SAC	2	LM137-147; WC51-54	
NVEEF4: SAC compared to "traditional" classroom			4.1.2
- no borderline between them	3	LM41-50; MS25-29; RF120-123	
- learners independent of "formal" classroom	1	AW32-33	
- SAC = learner focused	1	AM9-15	
- self-access opportunities in the classroom	1	DG146-150	
- controlled v uncontrolled environments	2	LM109-112; WC103	
- instant, individualised feedback	2	SC159-165; WKM74-79	
- motivation	2	WC89-91/189-193; WCG250-254	
- SAC as element of self-access	1	DG80-92	
- SAC = individualised study	1	WKM52-64	
NVEEF5: SAC as a resource centre	7	AM34-37/84-91/218-224; AW6-8; MS42-44/56-57; RP18-22; SC29-34; WKM13-18 YT19-22/73-74	4.1.5
- SAC = resource centre + teacher	2	AM34-37; WKM13-18	
- SAC = resource centre + pedagogical role (plus refs. above)	1	RP18-22	
- collected resources in one place	2	AM84-91; PS15-17	

Set: SAC as a physical centre (NVPC)			
NVPC1: ideal SAC			4.6
- user friendly environment	4	AM53-54; BS208-211; WC307; WKM270-276	
- noise and fun	2	AM54-57; LM145-147	
- conveniece: all resources in one place	2	AM84-91; PS15-17	
- learner choice	1	BS122-133	
- management	1	BS199-200	
- materials	2	BS202-206/298-300; DG359-363	
- need for efficiency	1	BS293-308	
- caters for wide range of learner types	1	RF191-200	
NVPC2: what makes a centre effective?			3.2.4.4
- depends on from whose viewpoint	2	AM173-174/187-190; BS142-170	
- value-added criteria	1	AM242-257	
- materials usage	1	BS147-150	
- learner progress/learning	3	BS152-157; LM263-269; SC340-345	
- environment & physical layout of centre	3	BS157-159; RP304-306; WC307-308	
- levels of usage	4	AW73-75; BS166-168; DG402-404; LM260-262/351-355	
- management	2	BS199-200; LM295	
- meets needs of stakeholders	2	DG262-266; MS240-241	
- staff commitment	1	LM256-260	
- need for support staff	2	AM204-215;BS142-170/199-213	
- using the centre/accessing materials	4	BS142-170/199-213; MS240-246; RF190-200; RP295-307	
- caters for wide range of learner types	1	RF191-200	
- quality of materials	2	BS293-308; RP300-304	
- need for teacher	2	AM205-214; WCG184-190	
- quality of teacher support	1	RP299-300	
NVPC3: what makes a centre efficient?			3.2.4.2
- examples of efficiency	4	BS293-308; DG620-628; RP578-588; WKM388-398	
- usage	3	DG620-628; PS76-83; WKM388-392	
- sufficient learning opportunities	1	DG632-637/662-670	
NVPC4: SAC - definition (refs. to "centre" or a place for self-access study)	6	AM34-37; AW6-8; BS12-16; LM32-34; WC7-9; WKM13-18	4.1
- elements of self-access/SAC	1	DG61-73	
NVPC5: SAC systems	2	LM137-142; WS79	*SAC systems*
NVPC6: SAC as a service	2	BS300-303; SC225-227	4.1.3
NVPC7: SAC resources	12	AM35-37; AW6-8/18-22; BS12-16/23-28; DG44; MS12-121; PS63-68; RF6-29; RP102-110; SC26-29/31-48; WC7-8/18-19; WCG14-15/178-179; WKM13-18	*SAC resources*
NVPC8: the need for a centre for SALL			4.1.4
- SAC as space	4	AM79-83; AW30-34; MS7-13/37-38; RP321-324	
- SAC as convenience	2	AM84-86/90-91; DG83-85	
- centre not necessary	3	BS90/106-111; DG80-83; MS7-13/37-38	
- opportunity for experimentation	1	DG85-91	
- to encourage & facilitate SALL	1	DG91-92	
NVPC9: SAC as part of the uncontrolled learning environment	1	LM111-112	4.1.6
NVPC10: uniqueness of each SAC	1	DG63-67	4.1.7

NVPC11: SAC learning materials			4.8
- potential difficulties for learners in using materials effectively	1	AM142-147	
- materials at different levels	1	BS201-205	
- variety of materials	1	YL16	
- need for constant materials review and update	1	YL72	
- see also "SAC compared to library" (above)			
Set: Learning process (NVLP)			
NVLP1: feedback for learner	2	WKM115-129/346-349; YL52	*Feedback for learner*
NVLP2: inefficiency of IL	2	AM377-398; WCG56-59/153-157	*Inefficiency of IL*
NVLP3: SALL & learner autonomy	4	DG23-25; SC11-14; WKM233-234; YT109-113	*Learner autonomy*
NVLP4: learning logs	1	AW108-111	*Learning logs*
NVLP5: learning strategies	1	LM56-64	*Learning strategies*
NVLP6: language learning & IL in a SAC	5	AW6-8/52-56; RF120-123; RP18-22; WC188; WKM15-16	*LL & IL in SAC*
NVLP7: self-learning	3	WKM14-16/28-35; WS44; YL16/32	*Self-learning*
NVLP8: learners' needs & goals	10	AW18-22/51-56; BS58-72; DG273-289/317-323/349-356/681-690; MS108-115; RF136-144; SC166-174/229; WCG18-23/74-80/114-116/124-126; WS24; YL11; YT27	4.4.1
NVLP9: learners' activities	11	BS51-75; DG180-188/244-248/368-371/399-402; LM172-188/195-207; MS116-123/135-138; RF35-41/78-84; RP198-209; SC58-63; WC139-145; WKM162-166/170-182; WS12; YL11	4.4.2
NVLP10: learners' activities - fun	3	AM55-63; BS70-75; LM145-147/180-181/184-187	4.4.2.1
NVLP11: role of a SAC	6	AW16-22/30-34/52-56; DG349-356/693-696; LM32-34; MS176-178; RF43-58; RP321-324	4.10
NVLP12: role of CILL	2	AM194-202; WC188	4.5.2
NVLP13: learner support - non-human	12	AM44-45/136-147; AW52-54/108-111; BS205-206; DG681-690/693-696; MS90-92/242-246; RF65-67/93-96/100-107/111-116/199-200; RP177-183; WC44-46; WCG98-110/223-230/245-265; WKM102-109/115-117/122-129; WS32-26; YL16/44	4.3.1
NVLP14: support staff role	3	AM205-214; SC47-48; WC70-79	4.2.2.1
NVLP15: teacher role	10	AM112-114/205-214; BS32-48; DG681-690; MS96-102; RF72-75174-180; RP167-172; SC134-146/159-165/205-207; WC28-33; WKM16-18/23-24/30-33/74-79/88-97/138-149; YT21-22	4.2.1.1
NVLP16: experimentation in SALL	1	DG105-117	*Experimentation in self-access*
NVLP17: progress review	3	MS221-230; WKM88-97/102-109; WCG21-23/61-62/114-116/223-227/245-265	*Progress review*
NVLP18: Richard's motivated student	1	RP265-269	*Richard's motivated student*

NVLP19: teacher v student control	1	AM9-16/26-27	*Teacher~student control*
NVLP20: learning materials	2	AM142-147; BS21-25/200-205	4.8
NVLP21: directed SALL	5	AM11-15; BS11-12/73-85/125-132/247-259; RP261-286/401-415/418-427; WCG98-110/223-230/245-265;YT86-88	4.9
NVLP22: learner support - human	13	AM36-40; BS26-28/212-213; DG681-690/693-696; MS81-85/90-92/96-105/108-115; PS23-27/39-42/90-93; RF65-67; RP154-157; SC11-14/189-194; WC213-214; WCG16-17/56-59; WKM16-18/88-97/102-109/122-129/137-149; YL16/24/28/44; YT21-22/37-38/122-130	4.3.2
NVLP23: teacher as consultant	8	AM112-113; BS26-28/35-37; RF72-75; SC130-132/142-146/159-165; WCG52-53; WKM30-33/78-79; WS12; YL44	4.2.1.2
NVLP24: teacher as guide	6	AM113-114; LM126-127; PS41-43; WCG16-17/18-21; WS12; YT124-127	4.2.1.3
NVLP25: teacher as expert	4	BS26-28/37; WKM149; WS32; YL44	4.2.1.4
NVLP26: teacher to talk about learning	7	BS40-48; DG681-684; MS99-102; RP167-172; WCG18-21/133-135/153-157; WKM138-142; WS12	4.2.1.5
NVLP27: teacher to answer questions	9	AM36-40; BS32-35; DG681-684; RP167-172; WC28; WCG18-21/182-183; WS32; YL16/20/24/28; YT21-22	4.2.1.6
NVLP28: teacher to review progress	2	WCG18-21; WKM88-97/142-143	4.2.1.7
NVLP29: teacher to give feedback	3	SC159-165; WKM142-149; YL52	4.2.1.8
NVLP30: teacher compared to librarian	1	BS37-42	*Teacher v librarian*
NVLP31: teacher as editor	1	SC205-207	*Teacher as editor*
NVLP32: learners' motivation	6	SC204-210; RP265-271; WC89-91/189-193; WS16; YL20; YT50-55	4.4.3
NVLP33: definition of SALL	8	AM9-15/26-27; BS8-11; DG38-55/61-73/105-111; LM23-34; MS16-19/42-44; RF33-41/76-78; RP12/14-22; SC9-14	2.1
NVLP34: "active learning"	1	WC81-85/189-193	2.3
NVLP35: flexibility of learning in SAC	10	AM11-15/26-27/199-202; AW18-19; BS8-11/125-132; DG359-363; MS16-19; SC9-11; WC96-103; WKM53-56; YL20; YT60-61	4.4.4
NVLP36: group access	5	BS133-136; DG66-73; MS42-44; RF78-84; YL24	4.4.5
NVLP37: teacher to help develop IL	2	RF72-75; WS12	4.2.1.9
NVLP38: enabling role for SAC	1	RF48-55	*Enabling role for SAC*
NVLP39: learner choice	5	AM26-27; BS9-11/ 125-132; DG105-110; MS16-19; SC9-11	*Learner choice*
NVLP40: self-access as an approach to learning	1	DG25-30	*SA as an approach to learning*
NVLP41: learner reticence to approach teacher	3	MS97-99; RP593-600; YT76-78	*Learner reticence to approach teacher*
NVLP42: learners' access to materials	1	AM142-148	*Learners' access to materials*

NVLP43: non-judgmental nature of SAC	1	AW19-21	*Non-judgmental nature of SAC*
NVLP44: uniqueness of SALL for each learner	1	DG63-68	*Uniqueness of SA for each learner*
NVLP45: tests	2	WCG28-30/99-106/223-227; YL80/88	*Regular v non-regular users*
NVLP46: regular v non-regular users	4	BS258-259; DG562-566/576-581/590-592/597-599; RP554-555; WCG245-265	*Tests*
NVLP47: constraints of SAC	7	AM134-138/144-147; BS11-12; DG186-191/194-203/317-323; LM73-79; WCG56-59; WS40; YT62-64/214-216	4.7
NVLP48: language improvement in a SAC	8	DG179-203/273-276/383-395/558-562; LM158-166/172-181/183-187; MS113-123; RP199-212/250-252; SC 57-63; WC 188; WCG 16-17; WKM 54-56/300-303/307-311	*Language improvement in a SAC*
NVLP49: elements of SALL	1	DG 42-55/80-92	*Elements of SAL*
NVLP50: limited understand of SAC role	2	AW 3-8; WC 7-9	*Limited understand of SAC role*
NVLP51: teacher scepticism	2	SC 87-89/166-170/199-200/204-210/394-395; PS 21-29	*Teacher scepticism*
NVLP52: teacher pro-active v reactive role	1	RF 178-180	4.2.1.11
NVLP53: Hong Kong self-access context	2	DG 194-203/209-229; SC 569-574	*Hong Kong SA context*
NVLP54: teachers' needs ref SALL	1	DG 284-293	*Teachers' needs ref SAL*

Appendix 11

Evaluation of SAC: NVIVO nodes

Set & categories (from Coding Report)		References (person+line reference)	Tree node address
Set: Why evaluate a SAC (NVWHY)			
NVWHY1: judging if learning is taking place	2	WCG194-206; YT136-140	*Judging if learning is taking place*
NVWHY2: lack of need for evaluation	1	RP58-61	*Lack of need for evaluation*
NVWHY3: feedback for learner	1	WKM115-130/346-349	*Feedback for learner*
NVWHY4: progress review	4	MS221-230; WC123-125/222-226/244-264; WCG20-22/60-61/113-115; WKM88-98/102-109	*Progress review*
NVWHY5: functions of evaluation	11	AM173-177/231-240/242-250/251-257/430-434; AW61-65; BS142-170/180-190/321/326-330/336-349; DG417-422/426-435/442-451/471-483/662-670; LM511-521/559-562; MS56-57/147-165/282-292; PS99-105; RF230-235/245-248/250/255-257; RP532-533; SC450-457/493-494; WCG285-289	3.2.1
- expectations of stakeholders	8	AM173-177/234-236; AW61-65; BS142-170; DG417-422; MS150-151; PS104-105; RP532-533; WCG285-289	
- accountability/show cost-effectiveness	7	AM246-258; BS166-170/327-329; DG417-422/669-670; MS147-152; PS99-100; RF230/250; WCG285-289	
- part of development cycle	4	AM236-238; BS185-187/338-340; RF231-234; SC493-494	
- job satisfaction	5	AM238-240; BS183-185; DG429-431; LM559-560; PS100-103	
- promotional functions	4	AM430-431; BS329-332/345-349/426-429/471-481;LM512-517/560-562; RF245-247/255	
- sharing of good practices	1	AW61-65	
- different functions for different audiences	2	BS142-170/321; MS282-292	
- to justify existence	3	BS181-182; DG417-422/434-435/442-451; MS156-157	
- to inform SAC managers	1	MS160-165	
NVWHY6: audiences	7	BS142-170/311-313/321-332/340-349; DG417-422/426-435/442-451/471-483/620-628; LM511-521/559-562;MS282-301; RF337-341; RP487-491/504-508/516-520; SC471-489	3.2.2
- conflict of audience needs	1	BS165-170	
- addressing all audiences	2	BS311-313; MS294-301	
- institution/administration/funders	7	BS143-147; DG417-422/475-476/620-628; LM519-521; MS284-291; RF337-338; RP504-509/516-520; SC474	
- SAC manager	3	BS147-152/341-345; MS160-165/284-290; RP504-509	
- students	4	BS152-160; DG448-451/471-473; LM513-515; SC483-487 (learners – no)	
- SAC staff	5	BS342-344; DG426-431; LM515-517; MS288-290; SC487-489	

- outsiders	3	BS345-349; DG431-435/442-448; LM560-562;	
- parents	1	DG477-482	
- different evaluation for different audiences?	1	BS324-332	
NVWHY7: SAC & volley-ball team	1	LM330-342/351-360	*SAC & volley-ball team*
NVWHY8: evaluation report as PR	2	BS329-332/345-349; LM515-516 (Also see NVWHY5)	*Evaluation report as PR*
NVWHY9: stakeholders	4	AM159-174/187-190/234-235/263-264/304-306; BS142-170/354-358; LM489-493/511-521; MS324-333 (Also see NVWHY6)	3.2.3.1
NVWHY10: feedback loop	2	AW78-79; RF231-235/262-269	*Feedback loop*
Set: What to evaluate in a SAC (NVWHAT)			
NVWHAT1: evaluation checklist	1	LM388-397	*Evaluation checklist*
NVWHAT2: evaluation focus – micro & macro	1	AW122-130	*Evaluation focus – micro & macro*
NVWHAT3: judging if learning is taking place	3	WC195-205; WS52; YL80/88	*Judging if learning is taking place*
NVWHAT4: language learning & IL in a SAC	7	AW6-8/52-56; DG558-562; RF120-123;RP18-22; SC246-251; WC188; WKM15-16	*LL & IL in a SAC*
NVWHAT5: progress review	3	MS221-230; WCG20-22/60-61/113-115/123-125/222-226/244-264; WKM88-97/102-109	*Progress review*
NVWHAT6: scope of evaluation	1	DG764-775	*Scope of evaluation*
NVWHAT7: uniqueness of SALL for each learner	1	DG63-68	*Uniqueness of SAL for each learner*
NVWHAT8: focus of evaluation	10	AM263-267/271-280/350-365/422-425; AW122-130; BS142-170/199-213/237-239/303-308; DG417-422/426-435/422-451/554-560/765-768; LM255-259/386-397; MS330-337; RP513-522; WC284-287; WKM380-383; YL72	3.2.4
- need for focus	2	DG765-768; LM386-397	
- different focus for different stakeholders	2	BS142-170; RP520-522	
- stakeholder perceptions	5	AM263-264; BS142-170; DG418-421; LM386-397; RP520-522	
- self-evaluation by SAC staff	1	AM264-267/271-280/422-426	
- learner progress/learning gain	4	AM353-361; AW125; BS152-157/237-239; DG419-421/554-560	
- SAC materials, procedures & facilities	4	AM271-281; BS148-149/155-160/201-206; WKM382-383; YL16/72	
- environment	2	AM278-280; BS208-212	
- cost effectiveness & efficiency	3	AW122-124; BS303-308; DG417-419	
- sustainability	2	AW125-130; MS335-337	
NVWHAT9: efficiency	12	AM373-390; AW73-77; BS166-170/293-308; DG620-628/632-637/662-670; LM244-246; MS147-152/195-197/271-276; PS76-83; RP34-45/315-321/578-588; WCG200-201; WKM326-330/379-398; WS79/88-107; YL36-40	3.2.4.2

- inefficiency of IL	1	AM373-390	
- usage	7	AW73-74; BS166-168; DG625-628; PS76-83; RP36-45/315-321; WCG200-201; WKM326-329/380-382/388-392	
- systems	2	BS293-297; RP:578-588	
- cost effectiveness	2	DG625-628/669-670; MS147-152	
- materials	1	BS298-300	
- staffing	2	BS303-308; MS271-275	
NVWHAT10: learner	1	BS221-223	3.2.4.3
NVWHAT11: evaluating learners' progress	10	AM355-365; AW98-105/108-111; BS247-249/258-282; DG554-566/576-581/590-592/597-599; MS172-178/205-207/218-230; PS123-130; RF209-214; SC340-349/353-356/387-397; WS52; YL100	3.2.4.3.1
NVWHAT12: learner perceptions	10	AM153-155; BS269-282; MS160-165/172-178/228-230; RF209-214/218-219/322-325; WC259-264/307; WKM:195-207; WCG201-207; WS52; YL100; YT151-161	3.2.4.3.2
NVWHAT13: effectiveness criteria	15	AM153-155/187-190/205-214/223-224/242-250/251-257; AW73-77/78-79/79-82; BS:142-170/199-213/329-332; DG262-266/357-367/402-404/417-422/426-435; LM255-269/271-277/295-305/330-342/351-360; MS195-197/205-207/240-246/275-276; RF190-200; RP250-256/295-307; SC225-227/234-241/276-280/297-299/340-349; WC177-190/200-202; WCG202-205; WKM382-383/397-398; WS88-107; YL36-40/45-52/60; YT122-131 (Also see NVLP49)	3.2.4.4
- difficulty in identifying effectiveness criteria / possible conflict of criteria	2	AM153; BS142-170	
- supports macro-environment	1	AM187-190	
- resources	4	AM223-224; BS147-150/200-204; RP300-304; WC177-179	
- usage / user satisfaction	7	AW73-77/78-79; BS166-168; DG299-305/402-404/417-419; LM260-263/271-275/351-355; MS195-197; RP296-299; WCG307-308	
- profile	2	BS143-147; DG295-297	
- learner progress	6	BS152-157; DG419-421; LM271-277; MS205-207; SC340-349; WC200-202	
- systems / facilities	5	BS157-160/199-200/205-208; DG295-297; LM295-297; RP304-307; WC177-190	
- learner support	4	BS204-205/212-213; RP299-300; WC181-190; WKM382-383	
- environment	3	BS208-212; RP306-307; WCG307	
- meeting stakeholder needs	4	DG262-266; MS240-242; RF190-193; SC225-227/297-299	
- meeting SAC purpose	4	DG357-367; RF190; RP250-256; WKM397-398	
- range of learning opportunities	1	RF191-200	
- performance of graduates	2	AW80-82; LM263-269	
- = (or not =) to cost effectiveness	2	AM: 246-250; BS166-168	
NVWHAT14: feedback loop	2	AW78-79; RF231-235/262-269	*Feedback loop*

NVWHAT15: stakeholders	4	AM159-174/187-190/234-235/263-264/304-306; BS142-170/354-358; LM489-493/511-521; MS324-333	3.2.3.1
NVWHAT16: interviews	3	AM288-289; WKM346-349; YT151-153	*Interviews*
NVWHAT17: language improvement in a SAC	10	DG179-203/273-276/383-395/558-562; LM158-166/172-181/183-187; MS113-123; RP199-212/25-252; SC57-63; WC188; WKM54-56/300-303; WS12/42-44; YL11/16; YT27	*Language improvement in a SAC*
NVWHAT18: observation	2	AM285-288; LM260-263	*Observation*
NVWHAT19: enabling role for SAC	1	RF47-56	*Enabling role for SAC*
NVWHAT20: learners' access to materials	1	AM142-147	*Learners' access to materials*
NVWHAT21: limited understanding of SAC role	2	AW3-8; WC7-9	*Limited understanding of SAC role*
NVWHAT22: SAC resources	6	AM35-37; AW6-9/18-23; PS63-68; RF6-29; RP102-110; WKM13-18	*SAC resources*
NVWHAT23: SAC systems	1	LM137-142	*SAC systems*
NVWHAT24: learner self-evaluation	3	AW98-102/105-111; RF163-168/218-222;RP235-241/381-386	3.1
Set: How to evaluate a SAC (NVHOW)			
NVHOW1: empirical evidence	2	BS279-281; RF213-214	*Empirical evidence*
NVHOW2: evaluation checklist	1	LM388-397	*Evaluation checklist*
NVHOW3: interviews	4	AM288-289; WKM346-349; WS87; YL100/104	*Interviews*
NVHOW4: learning logs	2	AW108-111; RP491-498	*Learning logs*
NVHOW5: observation	2	AM285-288; LM260-263	*Observation*
NVHOW6: outsider as confessor	1	RP653-655	*Outsider as confessor*
NVHOW7: outsider as credible	3	LM371-373/384-386; RP705-709; WKM417-423	*Outsider as credible*
NVHOW8: outsider as expert	1	DG726-727	*Outsider as expert*
NVHOW9: outsider as facilitator	1	DG739-742	*Outsider as facilitator*
NVHOW10: outsider as suggester	1	AM306-312	*Outsider as suggester*
NVHOW11: regular v non-regular users	6	BS258-259; DG562-566/576-581/590-592/597-599; RP554-555; WC244-253; YL80/100; YT151-152	*Regular v non-regular users*
NVHOW12: tandem evaluation	1	WKM424-430/441-449	*Tandem evaluation*
NVHOW13: student reports in evaluation	1	AM320-339	*Student reports in evaluation*
NVHOW14: participants	1	DG826-836	3.2.3
NVHOW15: stakeholders	5	AM159-174/187-190/234-235/263-264/304-306; BS142-170/354-358; LM489-493/511-521; MS324-333; YT195-197/199-206	3.2.3.1

NVHOW16: who evaluates	7	AM251-253/292-313/400-403; DG721-724/751-756/826-836; LM388-393; RF273-274/279-285/294-303; SC521/525-538/543-551; WCG280; 316-329; WKM450-479/499-505	3.2.3.2
NVHOW17: outside evaluators	9	AM300-312; DG724-726/731-734/737-742; LM277-289/371-373/377-386/388-397/410-415/420-423; MS346-350; RP637-667/671-672/688-691/704-709; SC569-574; WCG342-355; WC284-298; WKM415-440	3.2.3.2.1
NVHOW18: self-evaluation	3	AM402-407/422-425; WS52/155-159; YL110-116	3.2.3.2.2
NVHOW19: who to survey	9	AM336-345/410-415; BS371-383; DG834-836; MS330-336; RF308-311/332-336; WCG257-258; WS87; YL100/104; YT151-152/165-188	3.2.3.3
NVHOW20: methodology	5	AM285-289/410-415; LM228-237/330-342; RF249/262-269; SC324-328; WC302-309	3.2.5
NVHOW21: on-going evaluation	5	AM402-406/422-425; AW75-82; RP578-588; YL80; YT128-130	3.2.5.1
NVHOW22: informal evaluation	6	AM422-434; BS320-235; LM260-269/309-310/531-542; RF262-269; RP391-392/578-588; WKM346-349	3.2.5.2
NVHOW23: data collection	5	BS227-239/279-282; DG830-836; LM492-499; RP491-498/554-555/627-628/629-735; WCG269-276/365-377	3.2.5.3
NVHOW24: test	9	AW98-105; BS227-239; DG495-504/526-534; LM309-314/337-342; MS218-230; SC367-381; WC28-30/99-106/223-227; WS52-66; YL80	3.2.5.3.1
NVHOW25: portfolio	2	BS247-259; LM430-449/458-471	3.2.5.3.2
NVHOW26: questionnaire	3	RF329-332/341-343; RP444-464/467-475/485-498; YT153-156	3.2.5.3.3
NVHOW27: informal data collection	6	AM422-434; BS230-235; LM260-269/309-310/531-542; RP391-392; WKM346-349; WS115-139	3.2.5.3.4
NVHOW28: reporting	5	BS326-332; DG463-467/793-804; RP517-520; SC487-489; WCG343-355	3.2.5.4
NVHOW29: formal evaluation	1	RF262-269	3.2.5.5
NVHOW30: benchmarking	1	WKM413-416/433-440	3.2.5.6
NVHOW31: constraints	3	LM228-246; RP269-272/559-566/593-600/628-635; WC201-207	3.2.6
NVHOW32: (constraints-) stakeholders	1	LM239-246/500-502	3.2.6.1
NVHOW33: case study	1	LM491-499	*Case study*
NVHOW34: audit	2	WC302-309; WKM379-398	*Audit*
NVHOW35: scope of evaluation	1	DG765-768	*Scope of evaluation*
NVHOW36: learner reticence to approach teacher	2	MS97-99; RP593-600	*Learner reticence to approach teacher*
NVHOW37: local outside evaluator	3	DG731-734; LM410-415/420-423; RP688-691	*Local outside evaluator*

Appendix 12

Definition of SAC: mindmap & NVIVO data
(For document references, see Appendices 8 and 10)

Mindmap categories	NVIVO categories	
EEF: Existing educational facilities **Also: ref. Roles of teacher & learner (*Learning process*)**		
EEF1. SAC v library EEF2. SAC v traditional teacher-centred classroom		
EEF1. SAC v library		
A. *SAC as library*		
MM3.1: SAC as library	NVEEF3: SAC as library	6
MM3.3: need for library-like systems	NVEEF3: ref. classification system	3
	NVEEF3: application of library systems to SAC	2
MM3.4: learners selecting and reading materials on their own	NVEEF3: "learners on their own"	1
MM3.7: membership		1
	NVEEF3: collection of resources	2
B. *SAC as library + teacher/pedagogical role*		
MM3.2: library + teacher	NVEEF3: library + advisor/ teacher	7
	NVEEF3: library + pedagogical role	3
	NVLP30: teacher compared to librarian	1
C. *Differences between SAC and library*		
MM3.5: no borrowing		1
MM3.6: SAC language-focused	NVEEF3: SAC has focused (ELT) collection of materials	5
	NVEEF3: fun and noise	3
	NVEEF3: SAC > technologically advanced	1
	NVEEF3: ref. classification system	2
	NVLP36: group access	5
EEF2. SAC v "traditional" teacher-centred classroom		
A. *Difficulty in comparison*		
MM4.1: many different types of classroom		1
MM4.2: no borderline between SAC & classroom/different types of classroom	NVEEF4: no borderline between them	3
MM4.3: SAC & communicative classroom: lots in common (>LI in communicative classroom?)	NVEEF4: self-access opportunities in the classroom	2
	NVEEF2: SALL & Communicative Language Teaching	1
	NVLP34: active Learning	1

B. *SAC as learner-focused and individualized*		
MM4.4: students are more active, relaxed, motivated	NVLP34: active Learning NVLP18: Richard's motivated student NVLP32: learners' motivation	2 1 6
MM4.5: learners are responsible for whole learning process		1
MM11.6: learner controls	NVLP19: teacher v student control	1
MM11.7: learner do things as they want	NVLP39: learner choice	6
MM11.8: learner makes decisions	NVEEF4: SAC = learner focused	3
MM11.9: but in practice...		2
	NVEEF4: learner independent of "formal" classroom	1
	NVEEF4: instant, individualised feedback	2
	NVEEF4: individualised study	1
	NVLP36: group access	5
C. *Flexibility and lack of teacher control in SAC*		
MM4.6: more flexibility		3
	NVEEF4: controlled v uncontrolled environment	2
	NVPC9: SAC as part of the uncontrolled learning environment	1
	NVLP16: experimentation in SALL	1
	NVLP43: non-judgmental nature of SAC	1
PC: Physical centre **Also: ref. Existing educational facilities**		
PC1. A SAC as a facility for SALL PC2. A SAC as a resource centre PC3. SAC elements PC4. Reasons learners use a SAC		
PC1. A SAC as a facility for SALL		
A. *A SAC is not SALL*		
MM5.1: SAL = stage towards LI SAC = facility to help towards LI, (therefore SAC encourages SAL?)	NVLP3: SA & learner autonomy	2 5 (1)
MM5.2: SALL = mode of learning		3
MM5.3: SALL = method of learning		1
B. *Need for a centre for SALL*		
	NVEEF4: SAC as an element of self-access	1
	NVPC8: centre not necessary	3
	NVPC8: SAC as convenience	2
	NVPC8: opportunity for experimentation	1
	NVPC8: to encourage & facilitate SALL	1
C. *Uniqueness of each SAC*		
MM1.1: SAC could be anything from...		1
MM1.2: a unique collection of elements	NVPC10: uniqueness of each SAC	1
PC2. A SAC as a resource center		

A. *A SAC as a resource center*		
MM2.1: SAC = resource center or library	NVEEF5: SAC v RC	7
	NVEEF5: collected resources in one place	2
A SAC as a resource centre plus teacher/ pedagogical role		
	NVEEF5: resource center + teacher	2
	NVEEF5: resource center + pedagogical role	1
PC3. SAC elements		
A. *Environment*		
MM8.1: pleasant environment	NVPC1: user friendly environment	4
MM8.2: noisy & fun	NVPC1: noise & fun	2
B. *"One-stop-shop"*		
MM8.3: convenient/everything in one place	NVPC1: convenience: all resources in one place NVPC3: sufficient learning opportunities NVPC8: SAC as convenience	2 1 2
	NVPC1: caters for wide range of learner types	1
	NVPC6: SAC as a service	2
C. *Learner support - human*		
MM7.1: human support (general)	NVLP22: learner support - human NVPC2: staff commitment	13 1
MM7.2: teachers	NVPC2: need for teacher NVLP15: teacher role NVLP22: need for teacher NVPC2: quality of teacher support	9 10 13 1
MM7.3: support staff	NVPC2: need for support staff NVLP14: support staff role	2 3
MM7.7: techniques for learning		1
MM7.11: guidance for learners	NVPC2: using the centre/accessing materials	10
	NVPC2: environment & physical layout of centre	3
MM9.5: learning not individual	NVLP36: group access	5
D. *Learner support - non-human*		
MM7.6: materials classification/accessibility of materials	NVPC2: using the center/accessing materials NVLP42: learners' access to materials	7 1
MM7.12: structure for language learning		2
	NVPC5: SAC systems	2
	NVLP13: danger of learner dependence	1
	NVLP14: support staff as learning resource	3
E. *Resources*		
MM7.4: resources (in general)	NVPC7: SAC resources	13
MM7.5: materials	NVPC1: materials NVPC1: learner choice NVPC2: quality of materials NVLP20: learning materials NVPC11: SAC learning materials	6 1 2 2 3
	NVPC7: equipment	5
F. *Efficiency*		
	NVPC1: need for efficiency	1
	NVPC3: examples of efficiency	4

G. *Experimentation*		
MM7.10: experimentation		1
	NVPC1: learner choice	1
	NVPC8: opportunity for experimentation	1
	NVLP16: experimentation in SA	1
PC4. Reasons learners use SAC		
A. *Ref. to a place or a space*		
MM9.1/9.3: non-judgmental/friendly	NVPC 1: user-friendly environment	4
MM9.6: ref. a "place/centre"	NVPC8 & NVEEF4 - see above (PC1B)	3
MM9.10: lack of space at home	NVPC8: SAC as space	4
B. *Use of resources (ref. Resources, PC3E above)*		
MM7.2: teachers	NVPC2: need for teacher NVLP15: teacher role - see above NVPC2: need for teacher (PC3A) NVPC2: quality of teacher support	9 10 2 1
MM9.7: watching videos		1
MM9.8: using e-mail		1
MM9.11: equipment	NLPC7: equipment NVPC7: computers NVPC7: video NVPC7: hi & low tech.	7 3 3 2
MM9.12: materials	NVPC7: materials NVPC7: books NVPC7:videos NVPC7: audio cassettes NVPC7 & NVPC11: language-focused materials NVPC7: learner training materials NVPC11: materials at different levels	9 5 3 2 2 1 1
	NVPC7: centrality of resources (quote)	1
C. *Language improvement*		
MM9.9: developing/practising listening skills	NVLP9: developing/practising listening skills	5
MM9.13 language improvement	NVLP48: language improvement in a SAC	12
	NVLP48: language improvement as aim of SAC	4
	NVLP49: receptive v productive skills	2
D. *Mode of learning*		
MM5.2: SAL = mode of learning	NVLP10: learners' activities – fun	5
	NVLP33: definition of SAL	8
MM5.3: SAL = method of learning		1
MM9.2: individualized	NVEEF4: SAC = individualised study	2
MM9.4: independent study/self-learning	NVLP7: self-learning	6
	NVLP35: flexibility of learning in SAC	10
LP: Learning process		
LP1. Role of the SAC LP2. Role of the SAC learner LP3. Role of the SAC teacher		
LP1. Role of the SAC		
A. *A dual focus - language learning & LI*		
MM6.2: bring together language devt. & learning devt.	NVLP6: language learning & IL in a SAC	5
	NVLP12: role of CILL	2

B. *Enabling role*		
MM6.1: provide range of learning opportunities	NVLP35: flexibility of learning in SAC	10
MM6.3: catalyst for IL/ enable learners to study without SAC	NVLP2: how to increase the efficiency of IL	3
	NVLP6: LL & IL in SAC	5
MM6.4: encourage SAL	NVPC8: to encourage and facilitate SALL	2
MM7.10: experimentation	NVLP16: experimentation in SALL	1
	NVLP38: enabling role for SAC	1
C. *Resource centre role*		
PC2 (above)		
	NVLP20: learning materials	2
	NVLP42: learners' access to materials	1
D. *Learner support role*		
PC3A/B (above)		
LP3 (above)		
MM6.5: non-SA programmes in SAC?		2
E. Constraints on role of SAC	NVLP4: learning logs	1
	NVLP21: directed SALL	5
	NVLP42: learners' access to materials	1
	NVLP45: tests	2
	NVLP2: inefficiency of IL	2
	NVLP46: regular v non-regular users	4
	NVLP47: constraints of SAC	7
LP2. Role of the SAC learner		
A. *Learner autonomy*		
MM11.1: learner as "customer"		1
MM11.3: decide aims etc.	NVLP8: learners' needs & goals	11
MM11.4: responsible for whole learning process		1
MM11.5: initiate learning		1
MM11.6: learner "controls"	NVLP19: teacher v student control	1
MM11.7: learners do things as they want	NVLP39: learner choice	6
MM11.8: learner makes decisions		2
MM11.9: but in practice...		2
MM11.10: inefficiency of learner taking teacher role	NVLP2: inefficiency of IL	2
	NVLP3: SALL & learner autonomy	4
	NVLP34: "active" learning	1
	NVLP40: self-access as an approach to learning	1
	NVLP44: uniqueness of SALL for each learner	1
B. *Activities*		
MM7.10: experimentation	NVLP16: experimentation in SALL	1
MM9.5: not individual	NVLP36: group access	5
	NVLP5: learning strategies	1
	NVLP7: self-learning	3
	NVLP9: learners' activities	11
	NVLP10: learners' activities - fun	3
	NVLP45: tests	2
C. *Constraints*		
MM10.14: learners expect an editing service	NVLP31: teacher as editor	1
MM11.2: need to learn study method		1
MM11.3: decide aims etc.	NVLP8: learners' needs & goals	11
MM11.11: focus on process of learning not just product		1
MM11.12: danger of time-wasting/confusion		4

	NVLP2: inefficiency of IL	2
	NVLP18: Richard's motivated student	1
	NVLP32: learners' motivation	6
	NVLP41: learner reticence to approach teacher	3
	NVLP46: regular v non-regular users	4
LP3. Role of the SAC teacher **A. *The importance of the SAC teacher***		
MM10.1: central to success of SAC		2
	NVLP22: learner support - human	14
B. *Teacher as expert consultant or guide*		
MM10.2: 1-to-1 tutoring/counselling role	NVLP23: teacher as consultant	9
MM10.3: "professional" judgement	NVLP25: teacher as expert	4
	NVLP24: teacher as guide	6
C. *Teacher to talk about learning*		
MM10.4: IL awareness raising		1
MM10.6: help learners study	NVLP37: teacher to help learner develop IL skills	5
MM10.7: help learners identify needs		3
MM10.8: talk about learning/"learning conversations"	NVLP26: teacher to talk about learning	7
MM10.11: suggest study programme		2
	NVLP43: non-judgmental nature of SAC	1
D. *Teacher to give feedback & review learner progress*		
MM10.5: answers questions	NVLP27: teacher to answer questions	9
MM10.9: review progress	NVLP17: progress review NVLP28: teacher to review progress	3 2
	NVLP1: feedback for learner NVLP29: teacher to give feedback	2 3
E. *Importance of the teacher's personality*		
MM10.10: "human touch"	NVLP22: learner support - human	13
MM10.15: importance of teacher personality		1
F. *Teacher direction in a SAC*		
MM10.12: proactive role		1
MM10.13: self-access v programmed learning		2
	NVLP21: directed SALL	5

Appendix 13

Evaluation of SAC: mindmap & NVIVO data
(For document references, see Appendices 9 and 11)

Mindmap categories	NVIVO categories	
WHY: Why evaluate a SAC **WHY1. Evaluation as an administrative requirement** **WHY2. Possible evaluation audiences** **WHY3. The possible functions of an evaluation**		
WHY1. Evaluation as an administrative requirement MM13.1: required/expected	NVWHY5: expectations of stakeholders NVWHY5: different functions for different audiences	11 2
WHY2. Who an evaluation is for **Also ref. NVWHY6**	NVWHY2: lack of need for evaluation NVWHY7: SAC & volley-ball team	1 1
A. *Direct stakeholders*		
MM15.5: stakeholders	NVWHY9: stakeholders	4
MM15.6: different sections aimed at different stakeholders		1
MM15.1: learners	NVWHY6: students	4
MM15.2: SAC staff	NVWHY6: SAC staff	5
MM15.3: SAC managers	NVWHY6: SAC manager	4
B. *Indirect stakeholders*		
MM15.5: stakeholders	NVWHY9: stakeholders	4
MM15.6: different sections aimed at different stakeholders		1
MM15.4: administrators	NVWHY6: institution/ administration/ funders	7
	NVWHY6: outsiders	3
	NVWHY6: parents	1
WHY3. The possible functions of an evaluation **Also ref. NVWHY5: functions of evaluation** **A. *Developmental functions***		
MM13.3: self-improvement/development		4
MM13.4: job satisfaction/pride	NVWHY5: job satisfaction	6
MM13.8: find out if learning is taking place	NVWHY1: judging if learning is taking place NVWHY3: feedback for learner	3 1
MM13.9: sharing of good practices	NVWHY5: sharing of good practices	1
MM13.10: evaluation as integral part of pedagogy	NVWHY5: part of development cycle	5
MM18.7: progress review for learners	NVWHY4: progress review	6
	NVWHY5: to inform SAC managers	1
	NVWHY10: feedback loop	2
B. *Judgmental functions*		
MM13.2: accountability	NVWHY5: accountability/to show cost-effectiveness	7

MM13.7: measure "value-added quotient" (Also ref. MM20 & NVWHAT 9)	NVWHY5: to justify existence	4
MM13.6: evidence of effectiveness for learners, teachers & others		2
(Also ref. WHAT4)		
MM13.5: judge validity as alternative to classroom		3
	NVWHY5: promotional functions	4
	NVWHY8: evaluation report as PR	2
WHAT: what to evaluate in a SAC		
WHAT1. The scope & limits of an evaluation WHAT2. The focus of an evaluation WHAT3. Efficiency WHAT4. Effectiveness WHAT5: Learner progress		
WHAT1. The scope of an evaluation		
A. *Need for focus*		
MM14.8: need for focus (Also ref. WHAT2)	NVWHAT8: need for focus	3
	NVWHAT8: focus of evaluation	10
MM14.6: 3 foci: cost-effectiveness + quality of outcomes + sustainability		1
MM14.7: 2 foci: efficiency for institution + effectiveness for learners/ teachers		1
	NVWHAT1: evaluation checklist	1
	NVWHAT6: scope of evaluation	1
B. *Constraints*		
MM14.5: learners interested in "results" not "process"	NVWHAT8: different focus for different stakeholders	3
	NVWHAT7: uniqueness of SAL for each learner	1
WHAT2. The focus of an evaluation **Also: ref. NVWHAT8** **A. *Focus on stakeholders***		
MM14.1: learners' perceptions	NVWHAT12: learner perceptions	11
	NVWHAT16: interviews	3
MM14.3: learners' progress/gain (Also ref. WHAT5)	NVWHAT8: learners' progress/learning gain	6
	NVWHAT3: judging if learning is taking place	3
MM14.9: staff perceptions	NVWHAT8: self-evaluation by SAC staff	3
MM16.4: ask users		5
MM16.5: ask non-SAC staff	NVWHAT8: stakeholder perceptions	6
	NVWHAT15: stakeholders	4
	NVWHAT18: observation	2
	NVHOW19: who to survey	9
B. *Focus on learning* **Also ref. WHAT 5**		
MM14.3: learners' progress/gain	NVWHAT3: judging if learning is taking place	7
	NVWHAT11: evaluating learners' progress	10
MM14.5: learners interested in "results" not "process"		1
MM14.7: 2 foci: efficiency for institution + effectiveness for learners/teachers		1
MM18.6: evaluating learner process - necessary?	NVWHAT11: evaluating learners' progress	12
MM18.7: progress review for learners	NVWHAT5: progress review	5

MM19.5: learner progress	NVWHAT11: evaluating learners' progress	11
MM19.8: meets learners' needs		4
MM19.14: learners able to "chart progress"/ "see improvement	NVWHAT5: progress review	4
MM19.18: meets its purpose		2
	NVWHAT2: evaluation focus - micro & macro	1
	NVWHAT4: LL & IL in a SAC	7
	NVWHAT8: focus of evaluation	10
	NVWHAT12: learner perceptions	10
	NVWHAT13: effectiveness criteria	15
	NVWHAT17: language improvement in a SAC	10
C. *Focus facilities/systems*		
MM14.2: SAC procedures (Also ref NVWHAT3&4)	NVWHAT9: systems	3
MM14.4: physical centre	NVWHAT8: environment	3
	NVWHAT8: SAC materials, procedures & facilities	4
	NVWHAT8: different focus for different stakeholders	2
	NVWHAT8: sustainability	2
	NVWHAT13: resources	4
	NVWHAT13: systems/facilities	5
	NVWHAT19: enabling role for SAC	1
	NVWHAT20: learners' access to materials	1
	NVWHAT21: limited understanding of SAC role	2
	NVWHAT22: SAC resources	6
	NVWHAT23: SAC systems	1
D. *Focus on efficiency* **Ref. WHAT3** **E. *Focus on effectiveness*** **Ref. WHAT4** **WHAT3. Efficiency** **Also ref. NVWHAT9** **A. *Why focus on efficiency?***		
MM20.4: SAC as a service		1
MM20.5: important to show efficiency for resourcing justification		1
MM20.8: efficiency to be measured in terms of effectiveness		1
	NVWHAT9: efficiency	12
	NVWHAT9: inefficiency of IL	1
B. *Usage*		
MM20.9: usage, repeat usage & sustained usage	NVWHAT9: usage	7
MM20.10: usage figures not very useful		2
MM20.11: ...but...no learners = something wrong!		1
MM20.13: learners' use of facilities		2
	NVWHAT9: cost-effectiveness	2

C. *Systems & procedures*		
MM20.1: procedures easy and not too time-consuming		1
MM20.3: materials up-to-date & in good condition		1
MM20.12: materials easy to find	NVWHAT9: materials	2
D. *Staff*		
MM20.2: staff to deal with any problems	NVWHAT9: staffing	2
MM20.4: SAC as a service		1
MM20.6: no. of staff: no. of tasks		1
MM20.7: staff & conditions enable effective performance of tasks		1
WHAT4: Effectiveness **Also ref. NVWHAT13** **A. *Why focus on effectiveness?***		
MM19.7: effective in different ways		1
MM19.15: different stakeholders have different views of effectiveness		1
MM19.23: not necessary to show: volley ball team analogy		1
	NVWHAT8: focus of evaluation	10
	NVWHAT13: effectiveness criteria	15
	NVWHAT13: difficulty in identifying effectiveness criteria / possible conflict of criteria	2
B. *The SAC as a physical centre*		
MM19.1: good management		1
MM19.2: organised facility	NVWHAT13: environment	4
MM19.11: materials etc. appropriate for learners levels		1
MM19.20: customised index system		1
MM19.21: staff		2
MM19.22: effectiveness of individual aspects of individual facilities		1
C. *The learner*		
MM19.4: learner commitment/engagement	NVWHAT13: meeting stakeholder needs	5
MM19.5: learner progress (also ref. WHAT5)	NVWHAT11: evaluating learner progress NVWHAT13: learner progress	11 6
MM19.6: development of IL skills		2
MM19.8: meets learners' needs	NVWHAT13: range of learning opportunities	5
MM19.9: meets needs of teachers and university		1
MM19.10: meets learners' interests		1
MM19.13: wide range of activities for different skills, styles & approaches		1
MM19.14: learners able to "chart progress"/ see Improvement		2
MM19.16: user satisfaction	NVWHAT13: usage/user satisfaction	8
MM19.17: performance of graduates	NVWHAT13: performance of graduates	2
	NVWHAT13: learner support	4
MM19.19: learners' effective usage		1

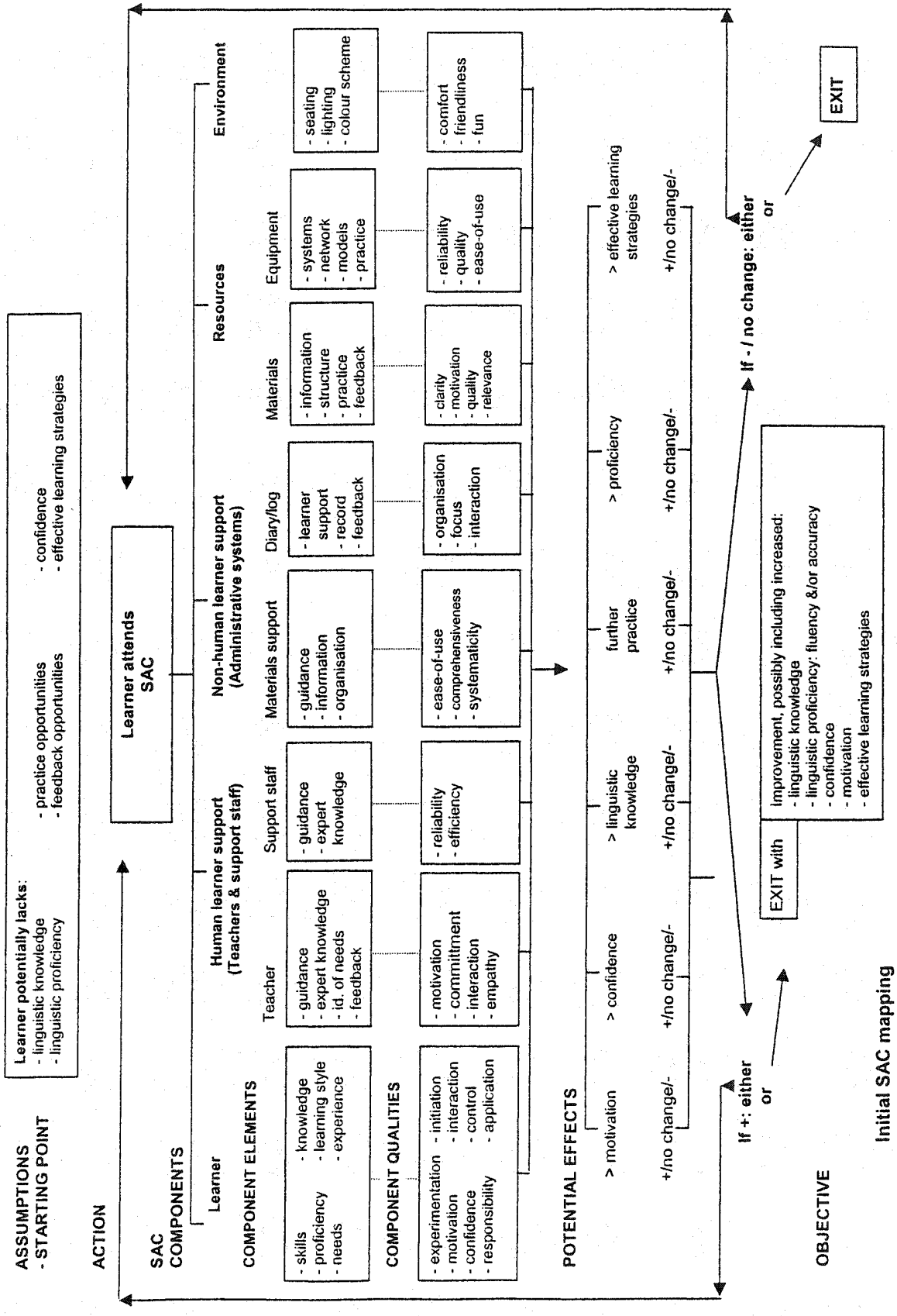
E. *SAC objectives*		
MM19.3: good PR		1
MM19.12: meets "educational ideals"		1
MM19.18: meets its purpose		2
	NVWHAT13: meeting stakeholder needs	4
WHAT5: Learner progress		
A. *Should an evaluation attempt to evaluate learner progress?*		
MM18.1: learner profiles (HKUST)		1
MM18.2: voluntary v non-voluntary learners	NVHOW11: regular v non-regular users	7
MM18.6: necessary?		2
MM18.9: possible?	NVWHAT7: uniqueness of SALL for each learner	3
	NVWHAT11: evaluating learners' progress	10
	NVWHAT12: learner perceptions	10
B. *Possible ways of evaluating learner progress* (also ref. HOW)		
MM16.16: learner self-assessment of gain	NVWHY7: SAC & volley-ball team	3
MM18.3: learner portfolios	NVHOW25: portfolio	2
MM18.5: at language item level		1
MM18.7: progress review for learners	NVWHAT5: progress review NVWHY3: feedback for learner	5 1
MM18.8: learner self-assessment	NVWHAT24: learner self-evaluation	5
MM18.10: role for tests/"milestones"	NVHOW24: test	10
MM18.11: measure the meeting of needs	NVWHAT13: meeting stakeholders' needs	4
	NVWHAT11: evaluating learner progress	10
	NVHOW4: learning logs	2
	NVHOW11: regular v non-regular users	6
	NVWHAT12: learner perceptions	10
HOW: How to evaluate a SAC		
HOW1: Approach HOW2: Data collection & analysis HOW3: Who evaluates		
HOW1. Approach **Also: ref. HOW3. Who evaluates** **A. *Paradigm***		
MM12.1/16.1: needs for evaluation to be naturalistic & personal		2
MM16.2: need for quantitative & qualitative data	NVHOW1: empirical evidence	4
B. *Formal v informal evaluation*		
MM16.7: covert evaluation		1
MM16.8: formal v informal	NVHOW22: informal evaluation NVHOW29: formal evaluation	6 1
	NVHOW20: methodology	5
	NVHOW21: on-going evaluation	5
	NVHOW34: audit	2
	NVHOW35: scope of evaluation	1

HOW2. Data collection & analysis **Also re. NVHOW20: methodology**		
A. *Data collection methods*		
MM16.3: observation	NVHOW5: observation	2
MM16.9: find out what learners are doing		1
MM16.11: feedback form		1
MM16.14: interviews	NVHOW3: interviews	7
	NVHOW20: methodology	5
	NVHOW24: test	9
	NVHOW26: questionnaire	3
	NVHOW23: data collection	5
	NVHOW27: informal data collection	6
B. *Data analysis & reporting*		
MM16.10: benchmarking & inter-centre comparison	NVHOW30: benchmarking	1
MM16.17: eg. evaluation process		1
MM16.18: audit	NVHOW34: audit	2
	NVHOW28: reporting	5
	NVHOW33: case study	1
C. *Constraints*		
MM16.6: weakness of tests	NVHOW24: test	9
MM16.12: reticence of respondents	NVHOW36: learner reticence to approach teacher	2
MM16.13: surface v deep reasons		1
MM16.15: weakness of questionnaires	NVHOW26: questionnaire	3
	NVHOW11: regular v non-regular users	6
	NVHOW31: constraints	3
HOW3. Who evaluates? **Also ref. NVHOW16**		
A. *Insider evaluation*		
MM17.1: academic & administrative staff		1
MM17.2: include learners and/or support staff?	NVHOW13: student reports in evaluation	3
MM17.3: academic staff of SAC and ELC	NVHOW18: self-evaluation	4
MM17.4: CILL academic staff doing on-going informal evaluation	NVHOW22: informal evaluation	6
MM17.5: users' committee		1
MM17.6: manager and/or audit office		2
	NVHOW15: stakeholders	5
	NVHOW16: who evaluates	7
	NVHOW21: on-going evaluation	5
	NVHOW32: (constraints) stakeholders	1
	NVWHAT3: judging if learning is taking place	3
	NVHOW13: student reports in evaluation	1
B. *Outsider evaluation* MM17.7: expert opinion of effectiveness & efficiency	NVHOW8: outsider as expert	4
MM17.8: > credibility/objectivity	NVHOW7: outsider as credible	5
MM17.9: need to keep PolyU context in mind	NVHOW21: on-going evaluation	6
MM17.10: "confessional" role	NVHOW6: outsider as confessor	1
MM17.11: cost implications	NVHOW16: who evaluates	8
MM17.12: as counter-balance to external threat	NVHOW7: outsider as credible	3
MM17.13: need local (HK) expert	NVHOW37: local outside evaluator	3

MM17.14: to give suggestions	NVHOW10: outsider as suggester	2
MM17.15: stakeholders but need familiarity with SAC	NVHOW13: student reports in evaluation NVHOW15: stakeholders NVHOW32: (constraints) stakeholders	1 5 1
MM17.16: internal to ELC, external to SAC		1
MM17.17: need both but clearly separate reports		1
	NVHOW2: evaluation checklist	1
	NVHOW9: outsider as facilitator	1
	NVHOW12: tandem evaluation	1
	NVHOW17: outside evaluators	9

Appendix 14

Initial SAC mapping



Initial SAC mapping

Appendix 15

Post-analysis feedback request letter

Dear

It is now some considerable time since you kindly helped me by agreeing to be interviewed for my PhD study which focuses on the evaluation of self-access English language learning centres (SACs).

I have finally completed the data analysis and am writing to ask for your help once again. It will, I hope, take no longer than about 20 minutes of your time.

I have attached two Microsoft Word documents to this message.

1. **A brief questionnaire**, the aims of which are as follows.
a. To check the degree of consensus among those interviewed on a number of issues
b. To ask for some elucidation of, and/or feedback on, some points made
c. To obtain further data relating to certain points

If you would be so kind as to complete the questionnaire electronically and e-mail it back to me, I would be very grateful.

2. **A schematic representation of a SAC** based upon the interview data. It is not intended to represent a particular, existing SAC but rather to provide a possible representative framework of the operation of a Hong Kong SAC. It is intended that, with reference to this, the elements of an evaluation model might be developed.

Any comments you might be able to make regarding any aspect of this representation would again be very gratefully received.

Thank you in anticipation.

Please get back to me if you have any questions.

With best wishes

Bruce Morrison

Appendix 16

Post-analysis NVivo feedback data

Part A: NVivo nodes

NVivo nodes under "Follow-up questionnaire data" node	NVivo sub-nodes (if any)
Benchmarking	
Environment	
Evaluators	
Experimentation	
Explicit learner training	
Learner control	
Learner peer support	
Nature of evaluation	Evaluation paradigm
	Formality of evaluation
	Formality of reporting
	Ongoing evaluation
Observation	
One-stop-shop	
Reasons for use of SAC	
Role of SAC evaluation	
SAC teacher roles	
Support staff qualities	

Part B - Questionnaire responses

Question 1: *Experimentation* by the learner can play an important part in the learning process in a SAC

Andrew Morrall
1. For language learners, all utterances are experiments in communication to
2. some extent, so it's not SAC-specific. It's important for a SAC to provide feedback.

Aster Warner
1. experimentation is essential to active self-study.

Barbara Sinclair
5. Experimentation is a crucial part of most learning anywhere (I exclude, for
6. example, learning dangerous sports or skills, such as parachuting!).
7. Unfortunately, learning tasks devised for students by others can often be very
8. directive. This is often the case in SACs, where task designers try to 'make up
9. for' the fact that learners will have no 'teacher'.

David Gardner
1. Not just in a SAC. Surely this is true of any learning.

Lindsay Miller
2. It is only by experimenting with the learning environment that learners will find
3. out how successfully they can use it. A demonstration, by a tutor or other user,
4. can only serve a limited purpose. The learners needs to find things out for
5. himself.

Mary Spratt
6. It can play an important part but I imagine that many students may not
7. experiment as they want to get as much benefit as possible out of their time
8. and therefore stick with the tried and trusted. A counsellor on-hand could
9. prompt experimentation or some advertising of activities/ focusses.

Pam Smith
1. I think students need to realise that different people have different learning
2. style.

Sunny Chu
1. Students can learn to set learning goals, try new methods and learning aids
2. and reflect on their learning experiences.

Wan Sau Yi
1. Learner can decide the best learning program for her/him to learn the
2. language and the content on each learning period is much more flexible. It is
3. importance for the learner to set his/her targets/objectives.

Wilkin Cheung
5. They need to experiment and they do. They need to experiment because they
6. need to find a suitable way for them to study.

Wong Kwong Ming
1. In my experience, the practice in speaking in English has been spent me a lot
2. of effort. May be I'm lucky during the last three years, there were many
3. chances for me to conduct the Systems Safety Audit with the native speakers.

4. Therefore, I quite sure there is a significant step for those persons who want to
5. be fluency in English.

Yen Tung Yuk

1. I think it should base on developmental focus. A SAC is not an examination
2. center, but is a learning one. It should encourage participants to learn by
3. "try-and-error" strategy.

Question 2: A SAC should be: "a fun, noisy, interactive, environment".

Andrew Morrall

5. Some students want to do quiet self-study. There should be separate areas for
6. noisy and quiet activities.

Aster Warner

2. The environment does need to be enjoyable, but it also needs to cater for a
3. variety of learning styles, including quiet independent study. The center
4. therefore needs careful design to offer a range of learning spaces to suit
5. learning styles. Overall the main priority is to be informal, comfortable, friendly,
6. and interactive, with a degree of fun.

Barbara Sinclair

7. Of course, there must be places where learners can work collaboratively and
8. this may cause some noise. On the other hand, this should not be situated so
9. that 'fun & noisy' work interferes with the quiet study of others who wish to
10. work individually. Yes, SAC learning should be interactive, but that can also
11. interacting with materials and other resources, including the 'counselor' or
12. 'adviser' on duty.

David Gardner

3. I think it should have the potential to be but it doesn't "have to" be (which for
4. me is the implication of "should be". I think the potential should be there for
5. those who want it.

Lindsay Miller

6. I agree to some extent. It really depends on the type of SAC in which the
7. learners are working. If it is a young learners SAC then I would expect a lot of
8. noise. Also, if the purpose of the SAC was to give the learners an environment
9. in which to practice speaking skills then also it should be noisy. However, I can
10. imagine a situation, in a university - for instance, where the focus is on
11. academic work. Then there might be a more 'serious' environment.

Mary Spratt

6. I think this should be part of a SAC. Others may prefer a more library like
7. atmosphere. I suppose a SAC needs to cater for differing learning styles and
8. different focusses of learning.

Pam Smith

3. However should not seem dead, dull and boring.

Richard Pemberton

1. My rating here would come in between A and D. Yes, it should be a place
2. where you can make fun and noise. But it should also be a place where you
3. can carry out quiet learning. Ideally, there should be separate areas where
4. 'noisy' activities can take place without disturbing other users. Where SACs
5. have an open-plan design, then places where e.g. conversations are taking

place need to be as far away as possible from places where quiet learning is going on, and the people who are speaking will need to keep their voices reasonably low. Different people have different tolerance levels as far as noise is concerned, and we cannot ignore those who need quiet - just as we can't ignore those who need somewhere to talk and have a laugh. So, I would say that an SAC should be somewhere between a Library and a coffee shop in terms of noise level - and preferably designed so that both levels of noise can be catered for.

Sunny Chu

Interactive environment is particularly essential for developing productive skills i.e. speaking and writing. Some students may prefer a quite, serious environment, however.

Wan Sau Yi

Students should be allowed to talk and make noise in a certain area inside the SAC. It is possible to divide the SAC area into several specific areas for different purposes.

Wilkin Cheung

Different activities need quiet or noise, but generally need for quiet.

Wong Kwong Ming

If they are making noise due to the associated activities, I'll totally tolerate. Otherwise, there is no point to accept it.

Yen Tung Yuk

It depends on the approach of the center. Some centers may prefer participants merely self-learning inside, e.g. reading grammar books, listening with head phones and browsing English websites by their own. Example - the Language Learning Center at Hong Kong Central Library. Others may prefer participants learning a language through activities such as chatting with friends(or strangers /native speakers), playing games etc. Of course for the second approach, much more resources are needed e.g. separated rooms for different activities, guidelines from teachers etc.

Question 3: Self-Access Language Learning (SALL), as a mode of learning, is a major reason why learners study English in a SAC rather than in other educational venues such as a library (for example).

Andrew Morrall

Rather, it's the availability of a wider range of language-learning resources, including a teacher.

Aster Warner

Independent study could be provided in a library setting as well as an SAC – i.e. the library of other venue operates as a 'virtual' SAC offering the same materials in a slightly different setting. However, the need for lively interactive learning may be less easy to offer in a library given the priority for quiet study.

Barbara Sinclair

Hmm, not quite sure what you mean here. If you mean that SACs will provide more varied learning opportunities than a library, then, yes, I agree that probably is attractive to the learner. I think it may have more to do with availability of exciting resources and facilities than a love of SALL, per se,

17. though.

David Gardner
6. I can't answer this question. Whichever way I answer, it will imply I believe
7. learners do not study English in other venues. I don't know if that is true. I also
8. think that not all learners come to a SAC because of SALL "as a mode of
9. learning" (and that is, itself, difficult to define). My own research shows that a
10. major (maybe the major) reason learners come to a SAC is to watch movies.
11. Maybe that's a mode of learning but they often define it as relaxation.

Lindsay Miller
15. I am sure that some learners do 'study' English in libraries (for example), but
16. the whole purpose of the SAC is to provide a dedicated facility which promotes
17. language learning. Also, it is more difficult to practice language skill such as
18. speaking in a library.

Mary Spratt
9. I think they may sometimes see a SAC as a kind of library but one in which
10. language resources are very conveniently concentrated.

Pam Smith
6. They may well study in the library. The facilities may be the attraction of an
7. SAC. However I think the name and the association with mode help.

Richard Pemberton
14. SACs are usually much better equipped for language learning than Libraries in
15. terms of physical (and often human) resources.

Sunny Chu
6. * Teacher support
7. * Image - a centre dedicated for language learning

Wan Sau Yi
7. The teachers in SAC help a lot on studying English. The feedback and
8. guideline from them are useful, which can't be found in other educational
9. venues.

Wilkin Cheung
4. They come to CILL mainly when they have a problem to solve.

Wong Kwong Ming
9. If they focus in English Grammar, I'll agree the arrangement. For those
10. studying in Pronunciation, I personally recommend them to take in the SALL,
11. ideally there should have a tutor for help.

Yen Tung Yuk
12. I think most people would like to go to a SAC rather than libraries (some public
13. libraries do provide self-learning materials) mainly for two reasons: a. They
14. think a SAC is more "professional" than a library; b. They think SACs provide
15. more resources than libraries. Resources may include help from professionals
16. (e.g. English teachers), more supplementary materials (exercise books,
17. dictionaries, multimedia supplies etc.)

Question 4: A SAC should explicitly help learners to develop their independent learning skills.

Andrew Morrall
13. Compulsory learner training programs are sometimes disliked by students,
    e.g.
14. the old one in SEP. However, help for students who want it, and implicit help
15. are good.

Aster Warner
16. This is essential to aid progression and to ensure learners are able to carry
17. forward their learning independently.

Barbara Sinclair
18. Oh yes! What else would you expect me to answer? I think an SAC has a
19. duty to provide some learning opportunities which provide explicit
20. development of the metacognitive knowledge and langauge learning skills that
21. can help a language learner become more effective and more independent in
22. their learning. Learners may decide they don't need to use their opportunities.

David Gardner
12. I am hesitant about this because it depends on your definition of "develop". I
13. would say at least learners should be helped to reflect on their learning skills. I
14. definitely think learning skills development cannot be prescriptive.

Lindsay Miller
16. Some learners may not feel happy about taking on an autonomous role in their
17. language learning. Especially if they are used to traditional teaching methods.
18. The SAC should encourage learner independence, but other formats of
19. helping learners make use of the SAC are also appropriate. Also, the way in
20. which the specially prepared materials are presented to the learners may
21. mean that the independence in implicit in the materials.

Mary Spratt
11. Yes, providing students see the relevance and participate willingly - again
12. maybe a series of advertised 'tips' would be useful

Pam Smith
7. Yes but not to the exclusion of offering help with English.

Richard Pemberton
16. Definitely. For me developing independent learning skills is the most important
17. goal of an SAC (at least ours). If it is a place where teachers direct students to
18. access particular materials, or where students do a certain number of
19. compulsory hours learning per week, then it becomes, respectively, a
20. Resource or Practice Centre. Still a Self-Access Centre if you take the literal
21. meaning of 'accessing materials by yourself', but not if you take it to refer to a
22. centre that promotes independent learning, as I do. And if we are aiming to
23. develop independent learning skills, then I believe we have to be explicit about
24. it. If students don't know what the aim of an institution is, they get confused.
25. And if they think the aim is merely to help develop language skills, then that is
26. what they will use it for. That's not so bad in terms of language skills
27. development (although it's questionable how much they can improve in very
28. small amounts of time), but the problem comes when they stop using the
29. centre - what learning skills will they take with them? Because students are
30. with us for such a short time (in terms of hours) and because they will need
31. language-learning skills (as opposed merely to language skills) for the rest of

32. their working lives, I believe we should focus on developing those skills
33. (alongside developing language skills, of course - not in a vacuum), and be
34. explicit about it.

Sunny Chu
10. Because many of them are not able to do so. To some other students, the
11. "explicit help" serves as a good reminder.

Wan Sau Yi
10. For me, I have my own way to learn English but sometime I need advice from
11. others to improve and enhance my learning skills. It is importance to have
12. guidelines from professional.

Wilkin Cheung
6. Main purpose is to learn English but we also need to tell them how to study.
7. We are a SAC and so the students need to study on their own.

Yen Tung Yuk
18. Perhaps let me define the main objective of a SAC – teaching participants on
19. learning a language independently rather than simply teaching them a
20. language.

21. Everyone has its own pace of learning. But I think a SAC should guide the
22. students on how to learn efficiently.

Question 5: Learner control over the learning process is necessary in order for SALL to be successful.

Andrew Morrall
13. Students can also learn if they are given guidance. Student should be given
14. the opportunity and encouragement to take control, but if their preferred
15. learning style is to be dependent, this is a form of independent decision about
16. their learning process. Students may also believe that guidance is more
17. efficient, as they may not be experts; e.g. in materials selection and self-
18. assessment.

Aster Warner
13. Control but with guidance and support

Barbara Sinclair
23. Depends what you mean by 'control' and what you mean by 'successful'. I
24. would suggest that a measure of learner control of the learning process is
25. important for SALL to be successful for the learner. Some learners will be
26. able to exercise more control than others and at different times. Learning to
27. take control is a gradual process and the SAC would need to support this
28. developmentally.

David Gardner
15. It is crucial. But this does not exclude providing support. I also think some
16. learners need to build up to taking complete control and they should be
17. supported in that developmental stage.

Lindsay Miller
22. I think that I strongly agree with this, but it may be difficult to achieve right at
23. the beginning. Learners may need a lot of help to get started, but once they

24. have been shown the facilities and how to use them then it should be up to the
25. learners to take control of their learning - or not.

Mary Spratt
13. Yes, students enjoy and benefit from this sense of empowerment. Also in
14. terms of life long learning this is an important skill to develop. Maybe this is a
15. skill that is built up gradually and should not be expected initially i.e. it needs
16. nurturing.

Pam Smith
8. Not happy about the word 'control' - 'input' is better.

Richard Pemberton
35. If learners do not control their learning, their learning will be teacher-
36. dependent. And when there's no longer a teacher to depend on...

Sunny Chu
9. "Partial" control over the learning process can make SALL successful as well.

Wilkin Cheung
8. The teacher help them is better because sometimes they go the wrong way.
9. Sometimes what the student think is not the good way.

Yen Tung Yuk
21. Everyone has its own pace of learning. But I think a SAC should guide the
22. students on how to learn efficiently.

Question 6: Study participants identified eight aspects of the SAC teacher's role. These were, the teacher as:

- **a consultant;**
- **a counsellor;**
- **a guide;**
- **a language expert;**
- **a trained professional;**
- **a tutor;**
- **a person for the learner to talk to about the learning process.**

Can you identify any others? If so, please comment

Andrew Morrall
17. * a materials writer
18. * a resource developer (e.g. indexes)
19. * a SAC administrator
20. * a researcher

Aster Warner
13. a learning friend, a mentor, someone who knows what to do if there are
14. problems with equipment or materials

Barbara Sinclair
29. A sounding board for ideas about learning? A mentor? I'm thinking Vygotsky
30. here, ZPD, having someone who can lead learners to consider and learn to
31. articulate their feelings and experiences about language learning so that such
32. reflection becomes internalised. But, that could be incorporated into any of
33. the roles already suggested.

David Gardner
18. Resource manager, organiser, facilitator

Lindsay Miller
26. Does 'counsellor' refer to language counselor, or other types of counselor? I
27. can imagine a student with some emotional problems getting a bit of friendly
28. advice from a SAC counsellor and then getting on with his study.

Richard Pemberton
37. Motivator. This is similar to/implied in some of the above roles, perhaps, but
38. has been mentioned to us by some students, who have seen us as (a) a
39. friendly face, someone to cheer them up and encourage them to keep going,
40. and also (b) someone to apply a bit of pressure - not perhaps openly as a
41. teacher might, but the fact that they have a meeting with us, say, in a week's
42. time, applies a bit of pressure for them to make sure that they do some work in
43. the intervening period, so that we have something to discuss. This might
44. appear to conflict with a non-directive role for SAC Advisers, but as long as
45. we're not actually directing the learning paths the learners take, I think it's OK,
46. and is similar to the role of peers e.g. in groups that meet once a week for
47. discussions. As some learners have said, particularly when there are a lot of
48. demands on their time, we help to "keep them on track".

Sunny Chu
10. A friend who can listen to their problems (Some mature students would like to
11. see the teacher as a friend, not a counsellor)

Yen Tung Yuk
23. Everyone has its own pace of learning. But I think a SAC should guide the
24. students on how to learn efficiently.

Question 7: Learner peer support (perhaps in the form of group-based SALL) is important in order for SALL to be successful

Andrew Morrall
21. A student's preferred learning style may be to work alone, e.g. when watching
22. a video or using CALL at their own pace, not the pace of a group.

Aster Warner
15. Learners want peer support as much as tutor support. It also aids in language
16. practice

Barbara Sinclair
34. Social learning theory again.

David Gardner
20. I think SALL can be successful without peer support so I have to disagree with
21. your statement as it implies that SALL cannot be successful without peer
22. support. However, I do think many learners benefit from working in peer
23. groups and I think it is worth trying to get it organised. But I don't think it should
24. be imposed on learners.

Lindsay Miller
29. Some learners do not like working with others. Learners should be allowed to
30. make use of peer support systems only if they like them.

Mary Spratt
17. Yes, this is probably useful for some learners and on some learning focusses.
18. Students certainly seem relieved when they hear they can go to CILL in
19. groups/ pairs.

Pam Smith
9. It could be successful without this though peer support would give an added
10. dimension.

Richard Pemberton
49. Useful, but not essential. I think dialogue is very important, but that does not
50. have to be student: student.

Sunny Chu
12. Many students (full-time students in particular) are not quite independent yet;
13. they like to do things together, especially outside the classroom.

Wilkin Cheung
12. Because this will more encourage them to come. Sometimes when they come
13. on their own, they become less and less interested.

Wong Kwong Ming
14. It'll totally depend on the learner's attitude or objectives. It'll help when they
15. need to practice the conversation in English.

Yen Tung Yuk
25. Group studying is also an interesting and effective activity for most people. Yet,
26. some may find themselves capable of memorizing a long list of vocabulary
27. items in a very short time and these kinds of people may prefer learning
28. individually to spending most of the learning time with other participants.

Question 8: It is important for the SAC to be a "one-stop-shop" in terms of providing learners with easy and efficient access to a wide range of materials and appropriate equipment in one location

Andrew Morrall
23. One-stop-shop = convenience = efficient use of time.

Aster Warner
18. This saves on time, and releases the learner's efforts for learning. An
19. integrated service is of high added value.

Barbara Sinclair
35. That would be fantastic - but realistic?

Lindsay Miller
24. Most SACs are in only one location, but this may be a financial consideration
25. rather than a pedagogical one. For instance, if a school had lots of money
26. then they might consider setting up a discussion room, or a noisy area apart
27. from the quieter SAC.

Mary Spratt
20. The well motivated and well aware learner can probably use a SAC
21. successfully in this way. Other students may need more prolonged contact to

22. benefit more from its potential.

Richard Pemberton
51. SACs provide a useful one-stop-shop source of materials and equipment, but
52. they are also a useful source of advice about materials (and equipment)
53. available elsewhere. This has become increasingly clear to me over the last
54. couple of years as resources on the web have increased and improved.

Sunny Chu
14. This "one-stop-shop" concept would suggest convenience.

Wan Sau Yi
13. I don't have to spend much more time to find relevant materials or reference
14. books in other place.

Wilkin Cheung
12. Because it is a more easy way to do. With an easy service they will pay more
13. attention.

Wong Kwong Ming
13. Provide adequate tables, chairs and small cubicles.

Yen Tung Yuk
29. I think most people would like to go to a SAC rather than libraries (some public
30. libraries do provide self-learning materials) mainly for two reasons: a. They
31. think a SAC is more "professional" than a library b. They think SACs provide
32. more resources than libraries. Resources may include help from professionals
33. (e.g. English teachers), more supplementary materials (exercise books,
34. dictionaries, multimedia supplies etc.)

Question 9: What qualities do you think it would be important for non-teaching SAC support staff (either clerical or technical) to display in their work?

Andrew Morrall
25. Friendliness and competence.

Aster Warner
20. -up to date knowledge and skills of what materials and services are on offer,
21. how to access them and how to operate equipment
22. - a friendly, customer-oriented manner
23. - interest in learning and in language skills improvement
24. - having used at least some of the facilities and materials

Barbara Sinclair
36. They need to be:
37. - approachable and welcoming
38. - ready to help or get help
39. - knowledgeable about administrative and access procedures
40. - flexible
41. - smiley
42. - warm
43. - organised
44. - available
45. - alert

David Gardner
24. I suppose the same as in other non-teaching posts; clerical and technical
25. expertise. Sorry, did I misunderstand the question?

Lindsay Miller
28. Well organized, able to speak the students language (if in a monolingual
29. situation), patient, non-judgmental (do no think questions are silly),
30. approachable. (enough?)

Mary Spratt
23. Friendliness, helpfulness, efficiency, knowledge of university's teaching set
24. ups and the ins and outs of the ELC's courses, understanding of the
25. philosophy of CILL, an acceptable level of English

Pam Smith
11. Friendliness, patience, courtesy.

Richard Pemberton
55. - the usual clerical skills (wordprocessing, filing, record-keeping etc.)
56. - ability to post documents to the web (not major: can be learned easily)
57. - ability to learn
58. - adaptability
59. - interest in the job (this is not a routine job and lack of interest soon transmits
60. itself to users)
61. friendly personality
62. - sense of humour/ability not to get upset by problems
63. - ability to interact with colleagues, students and teaching staff
64. - the confidence to report problems and make suggestions to superiors (this
65. may not be there on the first day of work, but the potential for it to develop in
66. time should be there)
67. - (in the case of HK) ability to communicate in Cantonese and English; PTH
68. (Putonghua) skills also useful

Sunny Chu
14. To put materials in order and give technical support

Wan Sau Yi
15. Politeness, friendliness, helpful

Wilkin Cheung
14. Be able to help with technical problems. Be instant.

Wong Kwong Ming
16. Provided that the material arranged in SAC in a systematic way and effective
17. to deal with malfunction equipment.

Yen Tung Yuk
35. Most important thing – good language backup as they are going to serve
36. different participants and teachers speaking in different languages.

Question 10: Do you feel an evaluation of a SAC should be primarily judgmental or developmental in focus (or both)? Please explain your rationale and briefly suggest any way(s) in which you feel this decision might impact on the design of an evaluation.

Andrew Morrall
25. It depends on the purpose of the evaluation! There is a lot of overlap, in that if
26. a development is suggested, it implies a judgment that something is lacking.

Aster Warner
25. Both judgmental and developmental - in order to sharpen outcomes and assist
26. development. The evaluation would therefore need to have components of
27. measurable performance and also the opportunity to visit an SAC and
28. meet staff and students.

Barbara Sinclair
46. It depends on whom the evaluator is accountable to and the real reasons for
47. the evaluation: to justify the existence a SAC within an organisation
48. (judgmental): to look at ways in which the SAC could be made more
49. responsive to the needs of its users (judgmental and developmental), i.e.,
50. whether the evaluator is responsible to someone who is more concerned with
51. financial considerations than pedagogy.

David Gardner
26. This is a huge question. I think it can be one, or the other, or both, depending
27. on the purpose of the evaluation. I have explained my rationale and the impact
28. on the design in some depth in various publications. My opinions haven't
29. changed.

Lindsay Miller
31. The evaluation should be both. At the planning stage there should be some
32. consideration as to how the SAC is going to develop and some procedures put
33. in place so as to monitor its progress. This may be an internal form of
34. evaluation. On the other hand, some external evaluation should also be
35. attempted. E.g. ask an outside body to come in at different times in the
36. process of developing the SAC and evaluate on the basis of agreed criteria.
37. The SAC should also have an ongoing user evaluation process, and perhaps
38. a user group who evaluates and suggests improvements. This would all be
39. part of the developmental evaluation process.

Mary Spratt
25. Both or one or the other - Evaluations can be undertaken for different reasons,
26. which all have their place within an institution. The focus might alter who
27. carries out the evaluation, what is evaluated, the criteria that are used for
28. evaluation and how feedback is handled. Personally, I believe that all
29. evaluations, even if carried out for judgmental purposes, should be able to be
30. used developmentally.

Pam Smith
12. Any evaluation should be both. Inevitably though it involves judgment first.

Richard Pemberton
69. Developmental, primarily. If it's judgmental, then people will probably find ways
70. to be less than frank - either for the sake of PR, or to save their jobs. From my
71. experience of teaching evaluations, I'm not sure that the two approaches can
72. be successfully combined. So I would prefer the developmental, 'bottom-up'
73. approach to evaluation. On the other hand, if a top-down system has been
74. imposed, and bureaucrats want numbers, let's give them what they want!

75. I suppose one way of combining the two approaches would be to have them
76. both but keep them separate: have one section of the report that went

77. upstairs, and another for internal use. That might be a good compromise. I'm
78. talking as someone who hasn't had to undergo an intensive SAC evaluation
79. yet, so these are just untested ideas.

Sunny Chu
15. Evaluation should be developmental rather than judgmental in focus.

16. Problems in judgmental evaluation:
17. 1. Some aspects of performance not relevant to the centre will be included
18. 2. Some performance standards not appropriate to the centre will be set
19. (some can be too high to be realistic while some too low to reflect the real
20. potential of the centre)

21. Suggested design of an evaluation:
22. 1. Aspects of performance crucial to the centre will be identified by the
23. stakeholders
24. 2. Standards of each aspect of performance will be jointly set by the centre
25. stakeholders and non-centre bodies e.g. external examiners
26. 3. Performance gaps will be identified and areas for improvements will be
27. suggested

Wilkin Cheung
15. Judgmental & developmental.

Wong Kwong Ming
18. I think it should be both. As the world changes rapidly, the existence of SAC
19. will be mainly based on the judgmental, whilst the re-form or re-organized will
20. be highly depended on the developmental to copy with the changes,
21. especially end-users' need.

Question 11: Observation has been suggested as a useful SAC evaluation tool.

Andrew Morrall
27. For observation of staff performance in a SAC to be effective, it would have to
28. be very long-term, which is probably impractical.

Aster Warner
29. Possibly, but it would be important not to distort outcomes by an intrusive
30. process.

Barbara Sinclair
52. Observation would be a useful way of ascertaining some things about the
53. SAC, e.g., no.s of visitors, whether students tend to work individually or in
54. groups, which facilities or materials are used and how much, whether
55. administrative procedures work smoothly, whether staff are doing their jobs.
56. However, observation can't tell you much about how the learners are learning.

David Gardner
30. I think I might have been one of those who suggested it (Establishing Self-
31. Access, p236).

Lindsay Miller
40. Yes, but the people who do the observation need to know what they are
41. looking for. There are many ways to do this and each may result in a different

42. perspective on the facility and its users. E.g. technical, support staff, teachers,
43. SALL staff, users may all offer different observations on a SAC.

Mary Spratt
31. Really? How? I suppose you could quantify things through observation but
32. there are many other aspects that could not be reached by observation.

Pam Smith
13. Observation of what or whom?

Richard Pemberton
80. I agree that it's good not to rely on simple quantitative evaluation tools, but I'm
81. not sure exactly what 'observation' would involve. If it's on a global level (e.g.
82. observation of how the centre is used over the course of a day), then that
83. would be very useful. If it involved observation of a particular learner, that
84. could also be useful, although of course some behaviours would be
85. observable and other

Sunny Chu
28. - I think we shouldn't have a pre-observation checklist (to avoid subjectivity as
29. far as possible)
30. - Observation data can be used for drawing conclusions.

Wan Sau Yi
16. Observation with an objective questionnaire is a useful evaluation tool.
17. Personal behavior sometime cannot be explained in wordings even you asked
18. the participant.

Wilkin Cheung
16. Best for observer to try out the centre as a user.

Wong Kwong Ming
22. I agreed in principle. It would be helpful to have a measurable tool for
23. evaluation.

Question 12: Benchmarking the performance of one Hong Kong SAC against another would provide useful data for the making of strategic and tactical decisions

Andrew Morrall
29. Benchmarking would be very difficult, given that different SACs are open to
30. different students with different needs, taking different courses. Even simple
31. things, such as counting the %age of students using the SAC, depends on
32. how much it is compulsory, the location, opening hours etc.

Aster Warner
31. There is a real opportunity to share and build good practice. Both the baseline
32. and the benchmarking tool would need to be jointly developed to gain real
33. ownership and identify objectives and goals.

Barbara Sinclair
57. Benchmarking and league tables are bad news. Great for administrators who
58. like neat ways of comparing things, but, in the end, the criteria used tend not
59. to relate to the quality of the pedagogy and learning. There is also the danger
60. of all SACs becoming uniform in approach and design, of criteria for

61. benchmarking leading to conformity. This could constrain research and
62. development and is, ultimately, antithetical to autonomy.
63. Yes, I feel strongly about this, working as I do, in a context which is highly
64. regulated and accountable, and is becoming ever more so. There are tangible
65. detrimental effects on all of those engaged in learning /teaching.

David Gardner
32. I'm not sure what you mean by strategic and tactical decisions but I can't see
33. much use for comparing SACs which have different goals (which I think is true
34. of HK SACs).

Lindsay Miller
44. Only if the one that was being used as the benchmark was an outstanding
45. SAC and everyone agreed on this. Perhaps it is better to have an idealized
46. SAC and try to measure all the SACs against this? All SAC cater to different
47. populations and so it may be difficult to use the performance of one SAC
48. against another. But looking and comparing is not a bad idea.

Mary Spratt
33. Probably each SAC fulfills a slightly different function within its general
34. learning context. Benchmarking one SAC against another would be unlikely to
35. acknowledge this sufficiently.

Pam Smith
15. Not sure how you "benchmark performance". What is meant by performance?
16. Certainly comparing SACs would be beneficial.

Richard Pemberton
86. 'Benchmarking' to me implies scores, comparable data and cut-off points. I'm
87. not at all sure that this is possible with SACs, let alone desirable. Each SAC
88. has its own context, purpose and approach. Even assuming there was some
89. simple way to compare usage of SACs in the different institutions (number of
90. users per day?), such a comparison would be invalid as we'd not be
91. comparing like with like (e.g. some institutions would have language majors,
92. others wouldn't; some would have referral systems, others wouldn't; sizes of
93. centres would vary etc.). I'm dead against anything that could be used to
94. create a sort of 'league table' because then we're into judgments and
95. superficial comparisons. What's really important is how effectively an SAC
96. works within its own particular context and given its own particular goals and
97. objectives. This ties in with what I believe about developmental evaluation. I
98. think the important thing is not how SACs compare with each other, but how
99. the current performance of each SAC meets its goals and compares with its
100. performance at the previous evaluation. The secondary school OFSTED
101. reports in the UK might be one type of model in this respect (although, of
102. course, these involve a heavy amount of judgmental evaluation too - I'm only
103. focusing on the developmental aspects of their reports). The inspectors say
104. something like: "In the last report, a number of areas were targeted for
105. improvement. You've met or exceeded targets A, B and C, but there's still a
106. lot of work to be done in area D."

107. However, I would be in favour of the sharing of reports between SAC
108. managers (particularly where managers had been involved in evaluating
109. each other's centres) - on the understanding that the information was
110. confidential, and not to be shared with bosses/administrators etc. Any way,
111. the framework/conditions of sharing could be worked out, but some sort of
112. sharing of reports (at least in sharing examples of good practice/ways of
113. handling problems) would be beneficial to all.

Sunny Chu
31. I think that's not necessary. Students have different characteristics and this
32. may therefore affect the difference in performance of SACs. For example HKU
33. Engineering students, in general, have a better Use of English score than
34. PolyU students. HKU students, unlike PolyU students, are not required to do
35. mandatory English courses. This may help to explain why the needs, interests
36. and learning strategies of HKU Engineering students going to SAC would be
37. different from those of PolyU Engineering students.

Wilkin Cheung
17. Not really because it would all the SACs the same, and will may be a problem
18. because the observers (are subjective).

Wan Sau Yi
19. If there are common performance index for benchmarking, it is a good ideal to
20. do that. But, if the philosophy of running a SAC was different, it is meaningless

Wong Kwong Ming
24. It will help the person-in-charge to allocate the resources on the major or
25. critical functions when it was previously mis-matched.

Question 13: An evaluation team should include both "insiders" (i.e. those either learning or working within the SAC) and "outsiders".

Andrew Morrall
33. It should include stake-holders and experts.

Aster Warner
34. Agree, but it must retain objectivity and shouldn't be too big!

Barbara Sinclair
66. Although, again, it depends on the purpose of the evaluation. Certainly, an
67. internal review would seem a proper thing to do.

Lindsay Miller
49. It is only by inviting outsiders in that we find out that what we are doing is good
50. or not. On the other hand, those inside a school should have the most relevant
51. information to conduct an evaluation.

Mary Spratt
36. Yes, an insider can source contextual information much quicker whereas an
37. outsider may be better able to view systems.

Pam Smith
16. Those learning are especially important.

Richard Pemberton
114. Yes, important to have multiple perspectives - viewpoints from users, SAC
115. teaching and non-teaching staff, and other university staff (both in the
116. Language Dept and other depts). Also useful to have the viewpoint of
117. someone outside the institution (e.g. someone with a knowledge of SACs
118. from another institution). Insider, expert knowledge is invaluable, but
119. sometimes when you're very close to the data, you can't see the wood for the
120. trees, and an outsider will be able to make suggestions that would not have

121. occurred to the insider.

Sunny Chu
38. The insiders know the operation of their SAC while outsiders can see the
39. centre operation from a different angle. In the evaluation exercise, they can
40. jointly work out the various aspects of performance and their standards.

Wan Sau Yi
21. Outsiders can give you some reasons on not joining the SAC or their
22. opinions/perceptions on this kind of SAC.

Wilkin Cheung
19. The externals would have no idea about the centre.

Wong Kwong Ming
26. I prefer to have outsiders performing in evaluation since they have an
27. adequate independent to voice out the important issues.

Yen Tung Yuk
37. Insiders should play a more important role over outsiders. Outsiders provide
38. evaluation in comparatively more objective sense.

Question 14a: A SAC evaluation should be primarily qualitative rather than quantitative in nature;
&
Question 14b: A SAC evaluation should include a quantitative element

Andrew Morrall
34. I think there is a role for both qualitative & quantitative elements.

Aster Warner
35. Qualitative aspects to include user satisfaction and feedback. Quantitative
36. element to include student recruitment and retention, and measurable
37. progress and outcomes from feedback, assessment and tests.

Barbara Sinclair
68. Again, depends on the purpose and who is going to read the report. My guess
69. is that, in HK, tables of crunchy statistics would be welcomed (as they were in
70. Singapore), but I think a qualitative component would add much greater
71. insight to an evaluative report.

72. Most administrative/management systems get off on statistics.

David Gardner
35. Depends entirely on the purpose of the evaluation. If it is to find out how much
36. a SAC gets used then why not count heads? Evaluations which consist only of
37. quantitative data are unlikely to tell you much about the learning process but
38. they may be useful for appeasing funders.

39. (Qualitative element) You said "should" I say "could".

Lindsay Miller
52. As far as the staff are concerned then I think this is true. There is only so
53. much value in knowing how many users did this and that, but why they did it,
54. and what they thought of it is of more use to the staff and developers of SACs

55. The powers which give the funding to SAC usually want quantitative
56. evaluations. Therefore, these need to be carried out in order to secure further
57. funding. Also, it is easier to quantify things and this type of information can be
58. used in user literature.

Mary Spratt
38. Yes, because you're talking about contribution to learning which cannot be
39. accessed quantitively very easily, even on the level of proficiency.

40. (Quantitative) Yes for things such as usage figures, possibly measures of
41. student proficiency and motivation, staff usage.

Pam Smith
17. It is important to know how many "customers" you receive and when.

Richard Pemberton
122. Learning (and this is primarily what SACs are about - facilitating learning) is
123. not easily measured in terms of numbers. Much of what we do results in
124. changes not easily measurable - and often many years after students have
125. left us! Improvements in e.g. readiness to carry out independent learning can
126. be measured using Likert scales (and indeed this might be useful data to
127. present if superiors want 'hard data') but this sort of questionnaire data is
128. rather suspect in my mind. As someone (Phil Riley?) said: "What counts
129. cannot be counted".

130. Yes: (a) it will please some evaluators, but more importantly, (b) it's good to
131. have a range of data types, to see things from different angles. A purely
132. qualitative approach could be just as open to criticism as a purely
133. quantitative one.

Sunny Chu
41. I think the issue of teaching and learning can best be expressed in qualitative
42. terms. Quantitative data are supposed to be interpreted to support a claim
43. made.

Wilkin Cheung
20. Sometimes more students come in than can do successful self-learning.
21. Because it also - for example, a number of students can successfully do the
22. self-learning but how many?

Wong Kwong Ming
28. It will be perfect if it is quantitative. However, it is quite hard. When adopting
29. the qualitative element, its arrangement should be in a systematic way and the
30. completeness of coverage should be considered.

Yen Tung Yuk
39. Example like frequency of participation, how many pages of a person's own
40. notebook have been written etc. (they are relatively minor)

Question 14c: be fairly informal

Aster Warner
38. Agree, but with sufficient rigour of process and reporting.

Barbara Sinclair
73. I doubt that an informal report to an external or managerial body would go
74. down too well and would perpetuate the image of 'language workers',
75. especially English teachers/tutors, as academically less worthy than other
76. subject areas. I do think we have an image problem to battle.

David Gardner
40. There are many purposes for evaluating a SAC. Some of them may be best
41. achieved by informal evaluations. Such evaluations would probably make
42. participants feel less threatened and perhaps this would increase the quality of
43. data. They may also be a way to make participants feel involved. But some
44. evaluations may need a more formal and structured approach. I imagine the
45. latter would be more reputable if their results were presented to administrators
46. and funders.

Lindsay Miller
59. To some extent. However, evaluation needs to be taken seriously and be seen
60. to be a main part of the SACs development. But, feedback of an on-going
61. nature can, and should be built into the system. E.g. regular staff meetings to
62. talk about what is going on in the center. Staff can then feed in to this their
63. personal experiences and observations.

Mary Spratt
42. I'm not sure what 'informal' mighty mean in this context. An evaluation would
43. probably need to be quite rigorous in its design and information collection so
44. this is not informal. But any contact with staff and users would probably be
45. more fruitful if carried out in an informal style.

Richard Pemberton
134. I hope I haven't misunderstood the question: I'm taking 'informal' to be related
135. to a largely qualitative evaluation that includes a lot of 'opinions' of users, and
136. doesn't run to hundreds of pages - otherwise it will be prohibitive to produce
137. in terms of time and energy.

Sunny Chu
44. An evaluation is aimed at improving the teaching and learning effectiveness,
45. and there is no need to make such an "everyday matter" formal.

Wilkin Cheung
46. Informal but it should be planned.

Wong Kwong Ming
29. The evaluation has to be formally conducted.

Question 14d: be on-going in nature

Andrew Morrall
35. The on-going elements would not be so formal and therefore not so much
36. work - would also tend to be less intensive.

Aster Warner
39. Agree, but should have summative events and evaluation at regular intervals.

Barbara Sinclair
77. Well, done regularly and referring to previous evaluations so that changes,
78. improvements are continually in focus.

David Gardner
47. Depends on the purpose. Evaluation is time consuming and tiring. Over
48. evaluating has an impact on learners and staff. To make all evaluation on-
49. going would be a waste of resources and may have a negative effect.

Mary Spratt
46. Again, I'm not too sure what 'ongoing' means here. If it means 'over an
47. extended period of time' as opposed to a snapshot view I think I would agree
48. as this would be able to give a fuller and more representative reflection of the
49. operation.

Richard Pemberton
138. I think the important thing is not how SACs compare with each other, but how
139. the current performance of each SAC meets its goals and compares with its
140. performance at the previous evaluation. The secondary school OFSTED
141. reports in the UK might be one type of model in this respect (although, of
142. course, these involve a heavy amount of judgmental evaluation too - I'm only
143. focusing on the developmental aspects of their reports). The inspectors say
144. something like: "In the last report, a number of areas were targeted for
145. improvement. You've met or exceeded targets A, B and C, but there's still a
146. lot of work to be done in area D."

147. I'm taking 'ongoing' to refer to the developmental nature of the evaluation.

Sunny Chu
44. On-going evaluation will give suggestions for improvement. This is necessary
45. as the university top management would like to know how money is spent.

Wilkin Cheung
47. Because staff will need to have preparation.

Yen Tung Yuk
41. Example like frequency of participation, how many pages of a person's own
42. notebook have been written etc. (they are relatively minor)

Appendix 17

Four Hong Kong SAC mission statements

The only mission statements that are included in this appendix are those that are clearly displayed either in the SAC or on the SAC's webpages.

1. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Centre for Independent Language Learning
The CILL's aims are to provide a variety of state-of-the-art language learning opportunities to all PolyU students (and staff) which can cater for individual students' learning needs and learning styles. Its stated mission is:

- to assist students in acquiring the language skills they need for their studies and future career;
- to encourage the development of independent learning skills.

2. The City University of Hong Kong

Self-Access Language Learning Centre
City University - **a new learning environment**. Often you decide what you learn and how. For example, what kind of term paper are you going to write? What will it be about.
Basically, you get the chance to be your own boss: you can learn many things on your own and you do not have to have a teacher or tutor to tell you what to do. The SAC is full of resources that you can use by yourself ***to improve your English.***
Using the SAC starts you on the road to independent learning - a fast, efficient and above all, a satisfying way to learn.

- Learn what you want to learn, not what someone else tells you to learn.
- **Do it at your own pace and in your own time.** You can get advice at any time from the Language Learning Advisors but here in the SAC is your opportunity to set your own pace and be your own boss.

3. The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology

Self-Access Centre
The SAC is a facility that fosters the development of learner autonomy and lifelong language-learning skills among the HKUST community. Our purpose is to provide resources, opportunities and support to help learners take control of their own learning.
The objectives of the SAC are:

- **To provide a supportive environment for autonomous language learning**

by making available and easily accessible a large variety of learning materials, media and activities, and providing orientation and advice on what is available, where to find it, and how it can be used.

- **To help learners develop the ability to control their own learning**

by raising their awareness of the possibilities for language learning both inside and beyond the SAC; by helping them to identify their specific needs, set goals, choose appropriate learning materials and strategies, and evaluate their progress; by incorporating self-directed learning into Language Centre

courses; and by advising colleagues on how to support the development of learner autonomy in our students.

- **To continually evaluate and develop the service we provide**

by conducting investigative and evaluative research within the field of self-directed learning and learner autonomy so as to ensure a dynamic and effective provision of learning environment and advice; and by soliciting user feedback through a variety of channels.

The SAC also seeks, wherever possible, to promote the development of learner autonomy to the wider community.

4. The Chinese University of Hong Kong

The independent Learning Centre

The ILC is a self-access language learning facility where both CUHK students and staff can take advantage of a wide range of learning materials to improve their language skills in Chinese and English.