

**The Asian EFL Journal**  
**Professional Teaching Articles**  
**August 2016**  
**Issue 94**



**Senior Editors:**  
**Paul Robertson and John Adamson**

**Production Editor:**  
**Nahla Bacha**



Published by the English Language Education Publishing

Asian EFL Journal  
A Division of TESOL Asia Group  
Part of SITE Ltd Australia

<http://www.asian-efl-journal.com>

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editor@asian-efl-journal.com  
Publisher: Dr. Paul Robertson  
Chief Editor: Dr. John Adamson  
Production Editor: Dr. Nahla Bacha

ISSN 1738-1460

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## **Multimodal materials in teaching genre-based writing: A way to promote Students' multimodal literacies**

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### **Abstract**

In the last few years, the teaching of writing has been conducted by using a single mode, that was a written text. This condition did not make the students get multimodal literacies because they were only able to write a text. Nowadays, the teaching of writing should not be conducted through a single mode, but it should use several modes called multimodal teaching. Multimodal teaching raises a number of issues for pedagogy, literacy, learning and assessment. Multimodal research shows that talk is not always the primary mode in the classroom and the same seems to hold true for the English classroom (Kress et al, 2001). A complex of modes, including talk, pictures, visual communication, action, gesture, gaze, posture and movement, contribute to teaching and learning. Multimodal teaching may include multimodal methods and multimodal materials. In this study, the researcher shows how multimodal materials are provided in the teaching of Genre-Based Writing. The subjects of this study are 25 third semester English Department students of Dian Nuswantoro University who take a Genre-Based Writing course. The teaching and learning process is conducted in four stages: building knowledge of the field (BKOF), modelling, joint construction, and independent construction. The multimodal materials given in this course are not

only in the form of text, but also pictures and audio visuals. It is expected that multimodal materials used in this teaching will enhance the students' awareness in understanding several text types (genres) and promote their multimodal literacies.

**Keywords:** genre-based writing, multimodal materials, multimodal literacies, teaching, text.

## **Introduction**

Multimodal teaching contributes to literacy, learning and assessment. Multimodal research shows that one mode is not enough to be applied in the classroom, and the same seems to hold true for the English classroom (Kress *et al*, 2001). A complex of modes, including talk, visual communication, action, gesture, gaze, posture and movement, contribute to teaching and learning. The point is that the affordances of different modes will shape (produce) curriculum entities in specific ways. In other words, the various modes available have different socially shaped (and material) potential for “carrying information” (Kress *et al*, 2001).

The multimodal character of the classroom is also central to how students learn. Different modes demand different intellectual work from pupils and this work “fill up” the concepts to be learnt in different ways (Jewitt & Kress, 2002). The range of representational resources made available through visual communication (e.g., spatial relations, colour), for example, enable the expression of kinds of meaning that would be difficult, or perhaps impossible, in language (Jewitt *et al*, 2000). Multimodality in the classroom also challenges the assumptions about learning (as a linguistic process) and the traditions embedded in educational assessment. The multimodal character of teaching and learning means that each student is involved in making personal sense of the combination of modes as they are organized in the classroom. The task before the student is to know what signs from this multimodal ensemble or their experiences in the classroom, to include and what to exclude from their accounts in order to construct an appropriate response (or text) for assessment. The student is involved in the complex work of processing information starting with the multimodal resources available in the classroom and moving to a more restricted modal

response in the form of writing. Multimodal teaching can be applied in all skills, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing (Jewitt & Kress, 2002).

Writing, one of the skills taught in English classrooms, is fundamental in learning to think and express one's thoughts in ways that reach others. The ability to use language coherently and powerfully and to write in ways that connect with others across cultural boundaries and within communities is essential to active citizenship and to success in almost any profession. Writing is not only a tool for communication, but it also serves as a means of learning, thinking, and organizing knowledge or ideas. In other words, writing is a complex activity involving some stages of composition task completion (Watskins, 2004). Undoubtedly, this skill particularly in an EFL context (i.e., Indonesia) has been considered one of the most difficult skills for learners to master. The difficulty is due not only to the need to generate and organize ideas using the appropriate choices of vocabulary, sentence, and paragraph organization but also to turn such ideas into a readable text along with a particular rhetoric pattern (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Moreover, Indonesian learners often encounter difficulties in transferring ideas from their native language--Indonesian into the target language--English. This case calls for teachers greater attention to help the learners to be successful in the writing skill.

Therefore, teaching writing should be viewed in both cognitive and humanistic perspectives as Foong (1999) points out. In the cognitive perspective, writing is thought of as a process of forming concepts and forging the new structure of ideas on the basis of a certain purpose, audience, and language use (Kirsznner & Mandell, 2000). In this sense, writing is considered as the process of writing, involving such activities as pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing in which the activities are reflective and recursive. In the humanistic view, writing is seen as an expressive mode through which student writers use writing as a means of exploring and discovering meaning by themselves and developing their own voices. In this regard, the students are encouraged to generate their own ideas by writing freely so that they can express their ideas without interruption. The teacher acts as a facilitator whose task is to promote a supportive learning atmosphere, which provides students opportunities to write about their own ideas and discover their voices rather than act as a judge whose task is to identify

students' errors. In this regard, EFL teachers should not consider writing as a product in which they greatly emphasize grammatical and lexical accuracy in students' compositions, but they are required to allow students to focus on their ideas and then encourage the students to work on that accuracy in the revision stage. There are several approaches that can be applied to teach writing. One of them is the genre-based approach.

Today, genre is one of the most important and influential concepts in language education, signifying what Ann Johns in Hyland (2004, p.3) has recently referred to as “a major paradigm shift” in literacy studies and teaching. In teaching Writing, especially in *Genre-Based Writing*, the students are asked to write texts in certain genres. In this case the students are not only to write texts they want, but they have to consider the texts' social function, schematic structures, and their lexico-grammatical features. Genre-based teaching of writing is concerned with what learners do when they write. An understanding of the concept allows writing teachers to identify the kinds of text that students will have to write in their target occupational, academic, or social contexts and to organize their courses to meet these needs. Curriculum materials and activities are therefore devised to support learners by drawing on texts and tasks directly related to the skills they need to participate effectively in the world outside the ESL classroom. For writing teachers, genre pedagogies promise very real benefits (Hyland, 2004, p.4). The concept of genres enables teachers to look beyond context, composing processes, and textual form to see writing as an attempt to communicate with readers – to better understand the ways that language patterns are used to accomplish coherent, purposeful texts. Genre is a useful concept because it pulls together language, content, and contexts, offering teachers a means of presenting students with explicit and systematic explanation of the ways writing works to communicate. In genre-based writing teaching, the students study in contexts where English is taught as a second or foreign language, and they learn to write for different purposes and in different genres. In teaching Writing, the teacher should focus not only in one mode, the language used in the classroom for example, but also in other modes such gesture, gaze or movement that support the success of the teaching. All teaching and learning in the classroom should involve a range of modes including speech, writing, gesture, gaze, body-posture,

movement, and so on- in other words teaching and learning in the classroom are multimodal. These modes are expected to support the teaching and learning process in the classroom and help the students understand the lesson easily. Based on the significance of genre-based learning described above and problem above, this study will develop multimodal materials for the teaching of genre-based teaching. By this model, it is expected that the students will have better skills in writing English texts and also have other multimodal literacies besides writing.

### **Mode and Multimodality**

Mode is a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning. Images, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack and 3D objects are examples of modes used in representation and communication. Phenomena and objects which are the product of social work have meaning in their cultural environments: furniture, clothing, 'have' meaning, due to their social making, the purposes of their making and the regularity of their use in social life.

The introduction of the concepts of mode and multimodality produces a challenge to hitherto settled notions of language. After all, if all modes are used to make meaning, it poses the question whether some of this meaning are merely a kind of reduplication of meanings already made in, say, speech or writing- maybe for relatively marginal reasons such as 'illustration' or for aesthetic reasons such as 'ornamentation'- or whether they are full of meanings, always quite distinct from other modes.

Multimodality is an approach that represents more than one mode (semiotic source). It has been developed over the past decade to systematically address much-debated questions about changes in society; for instance, in relation to new media and technologies.

Multimodal approaches have provided concepts, methods and a framework for the collection and analysis of visual, aural, embodied, and spatial aspects of interaction and environments, and the relationships between these.

In "Contending with Terms," Lauer (2009) writes that *multimodal* was a term coined by the New London Group in 2000 in order to talk about how "communication is not limited to one mode" or "realized through one medium."



The transition from composition for a page on a page to the “more fluid medium of a screen” opens up a world of possibility, but also a wealth of new visual and textual (and auditory) design choices. Lauer points to Cynthia Selfe’s use of a simplified definition for multimodal writing that effectively dislodges it from theories of semiotics and puts it in the hands of teachers by simply defining it as anything that moves beyond the alphabetic.

Multimodal texts are defined as texts which communicate their message using more than one semiotic mode, or channel of communication. Examples are magazine articles which use words and pictures, or websites which contain audio clips alongside the words, or film which uses words, music, sound effects and moving images. As soon as you start to take this idea seriously, you realize that, in a sense, all human communication is intrinsically multimodal. We rarely read, write, receive or send messages to one other in a single mode. In spoken language, for example, words are often accompanied by facial gestures, hand movements and so on. This paralanguage is communicative, and is hard to separate from words as we engage in the process of interpretation. An email message may be thought of as written text, but it is accessed via a series of visual icons on a computer, is read in the context of a website or desktop screen, and may contain iconic representations of the sender’s mood such as emoticons (or ‘smilies’), or unusual punctuation added by the sender for emphasis. Email communication is often quite ‘speech-like’, too, so can be said to contain elements of spoken language (more on this later).

### **Multimodality in the Classroom**

The understanding that effective teaching and learning in the classroom is not accomplished through language alone has been of interest to some educational researchers, even before a dominant focus on multimodality emerged. For example, Lawn (1999) observes that many teachers do not recognize the impact of the classroom, as the material environment, on teaching. Englund (1997, p. 277) also enjoins that the teacher possesses different possibilities in the construction of a lesson experience for the students and these potentials are “concretized in different ways in different classrooms”. Classroom arrangements and display have also been considered as providing pedagogic resources, serving to transmit the

pedagogic practices and “fundamental regulatory principles” that govern a school (Daniels, 2001: 169). Kress et al. (2005, p. 18) conclude that “subjects, actualized in particular classrooms, can be inflected in radically different ways, from patriarchal to democratic”. This is consistent to Seaborne & Lowe’s (1977) earlier argument that a building literally ‘makes’ a teaching method. Despite this, research into pedagogic discourse and interaction between teacher and students has traditionally tended to focus on an analysis of classroom language alone (see, for example, Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Mercer, 2000 and Walsh, 2006; 2011). More often than not, the emphasis has been on verbal exchanges, while downplaying or neglecting the meanings made in the teacher's use of gesture, positioning and movement in the classroom.

As discussed earlier, the concentration on just the linguistic aspect of classroom interaction, however, fails to account for the combination of semiotic resources that together, rather than separately, construct the teaching and learning experience. Kress (2003, p. 35) explains that “language alone cannot give us access to the meanings of the multimodally constituted messages; language and literacy now have to be seen as partial bearers of meaning only”. In fact, Kress et al. (2005) demonstrate that even in an English classroom, language may not always be the dominant semiotic resource. In a similar vein, Bourne and Jewitt (2003) investigate the ways in which the interpretation of a literary text is mediated and (re)construed through social interactions. Their work suggests how multimodal analysis of pedagogic discourse contributes to a more complete understanding of the teaching and learning in the classroom. Flewitt (2006, p. 46) also argues that “language is only one tool in a range of human semiosis, and that individuals’ choices of semiotic modes are motivated by a complex web of interconnecting personal, institutional and social factors”.

In light of this, O’Halloran (2007b, p. 79) explains, “the study of linguistic discourse alone has theoretical limitations which have the potential to simplify and distort the actual nature of pedagogical practice”. Hence, the focus of educational research can benefit from moving beyond an emphasis on language to examine the other meaning making resources as well. This presents deeper and broader insights on how the classroom experience is constructed for students.

## **Multimodal Teaching and Learning**

Multimodal teaching is instruction that uses the combination of various communicative modes (sound, images such as graphs or pictures, video, written text, transcribed speech) within a text. We talk of multimodal text because understanding that text implies understanding the interaction among all its components in the different formats. The challenge for linguists working in the field of language teaching is the need to conduct theoretical research on both the multimodal text structure and on the possible ways to adapt and integrate these multimodal texts into the design of pedagogical material.

In recent years, the use of multimedia in conjunction with hypermedia have been successfully applied to many e-learning environments in order to both enhance these environments and to cater to a wider variety of student learning styles (Birch & Gardiner, 2005; Sankey & St Hill, 2009; Sprague & Dahl 2009). Neuroscience research has also revealed that, significant increases in learning can be accomplished through the informed use of visual and verbal multimodal learning (Fadel, 2008, p. 12). In other words, students may feel more comfortable and perform better when learning in environments that cater for their predominant learning style (Cronin, 2009, Omrod, 2008). This is known as the “meshing hypothesis” (Pashler et al. 2008, p. 109). It has also been seen that presenting material in a variety of modes may also encourage students to develop a more versatile approach to their learning (Hazari, 2004)

## **Multimodal Text**

Multimodal texts are defined as texts which communicate their message using more than one semiotic mode, or channel of communication. Examples are magazine articles which use words and pictures, or websites which contain audio clips alongside the words, or film which uses words, music, sound effects and moving images. As soon as we start to take this idea seriously, you realize that, in a sense, all human communication is intrinsically multimodal. We rarely read, write, receive or send messages to one other in a single mode. In spoken language, for example, words are often accompanied by facial gestures, hand movements and so on. This paralanguage is communicative, and is hard to separate from words as we engage in the process of interpretation. An email message may be

thought of as written text, but it is accessed via a series of visual icons on a computer, is read in the context of a website or desktop screen, and may contain iconic representations of the sender's mood such as emoticons (or 'smilies'), or unusual punctuation added by the sender for emphasis. Email communication is often quite 'speech-like', too, so can be said to contain elements of spoken language (more on this later).

A text may be defined as multimodal when it combines two or more semiotic systems. There are five semiotic systems in total:

- a. Linguistic: comprising aspects such as vocabulary, generic structure and the grammar of oral and written language
- b. Visual: comprising aspects such as color, vectors and viewpoint in still and moving images
- c. Audio: comprising aspects such as volume, pitch and rhythm of music and sound effects
- d. Gestural: comprising aspects such as movement, speed and stillness in facial expression and body language
- e. Spatial: comprising aspects such as proximity, direction, position of layout and organization of objects in space.

Examples of multimodal texts are:

- a. a picture book, in which the textual and visual elements are arranged on individual pages that contribute to an overall set of bound pages
- b. a webpage, in which elements such as sound effects, oral language, written language, music and still or moving images are combined
- c. a live ballet performance, in which gesture, music, and space are the main elements.

Multimodal texts can be delivered via different media or technologies. They may be live, paper, or digital electronic.

Texts provide the means for communicating and form an important part of study in an English reading program. It is important to understand how the characteristics of texts impact on reading comprehension, in particular the similarities and differences between traditional print-based and multimodal texts. Shared characteristics may include an understanding of: the author's intent, the social purpose of a text or genre, how it is structured, whether it adheres to that

structure, how well it is written, the subject matter, vocabulary, language choices, the reading level, and other surface features (Pardo, 2002). However, Anstey (2002) proposed that there are key differences with multimodal texts. For example, there may be a blurring of genres as multimodal texts become more hybrid and intertextual in nature, with the notion of text continuing to change as technology and society changes.

### **Genre-Based Writing Teaching**

Genre is one of the most important and influential concepts in language education, signifying what Ann Johns in Hyland (2004, p.3) has recently referred to as “a major paradigm shift” in literacy studies and teaching. Genre-based writing teaching is concerned with what learners do when they write. An understanding of the concept allows writing teachers to identify the kinds of text that students will have to write in their target occupational, academic, or social contexts and to organize their courses to meet these needs. Curriculum materials and activities are therefore devised to support learners by drawing on texts and tasks directly related to the skills they need to participate effectively in the world outside the ESL classroom. In genre-based writing teaching, the students study in contexts where English is taught as a second or foreign language and they learn to write for different purposes and in different genres. In teaching writing, especially in Genre-Based Writing, the students are asked to write texts in certain genres. In this case, the students are not only to write texts they want, but they have to consider the texts’ social function, schematic structures, and their linguistic features. In genre-based writing teaching, the teaching-learning cycle is based on the assumption that in order to write effectively, students first need to have an extensive understanding of and familiarity with the topic they are writing about. They also need models of the genre they are learning to write, in order to have a clear idea of what it is that they are working towards. They need some support and guidance in learning how to organize what they know about the topic into an appropriate written text. They need opportunities to apply what they have learned about writing the text, as they ‘go it alone’ and write independently (Hammond, 1992, p.21)

There are four stages in genre-based writing teaching (Hyland, 2004, p.128) as follows:

1. Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF)

This stage is the point at which overall knowledge of the cultural and social context of the topic is built and developed. It is important for all learners to have an understanding of the topic before being expected to write about. Classroom tasks and activities at this stage enable learners to:

- a. Explore cultural similarities and differences related to the topic or text type.
- b. Practice grammatical patterns relevant to the topic or text type.
- c. Build up and extend vocabulary relevant to the topic or text type.

2. Modeling of Text

This stage involves introducing the learners to a model of the genre they will be writing. In this stage, there is explicit focus on analyzing the genre through a model text related to the course topic. This stage involves preparing the learners for writing by:

- a. Focusing on genre
- b. Discussing the social function/purpose of the genre
- c. Discussing the schematic structure of the genre
- d. Discussing the grammatical features of the genre.

3. Joint Construction of Text

At this stage, the aim is for the teachers to work with the learners to construct a similar text. The teacher first needs to assess the extent of the learners' knowledge and understanding of the field. Further work may need to be done before the actual construction of the texts begin. For example: gathering relevant information, researching the topic through additional reading. The emphasis at this stage is on the teacher providing guidance and support in order to convert and reshape language from spoken to the written mode.

4. Independent Construction of Text

Before moving on to this stage, the teacher needs to assess if the learners are ready to construct the text independently. Independent construction occurs only after group or pair construction has shown that the learners have gained control of the field and the mode. Classroom tasks and activities at this stage enable

learners to: incorporate knowledge of schematic structure and grammatical features into their own writing, produce written texts that approximate control of the genre, read other examples of the genre in contexts outside the classroom, feels confident about writing the genre in contexts outside the classroom.

### **Multimodal Materials in Genre-Based Teaching of Writing**

There are several multimodal materials used in teaching Genre-Based Writing course. They are written text, picture, and also audio visual. These multimodal materials are given in four stages of the teaching process. They are BKOF (Building Knowledge of the Field, modelling of text, dependent construction of the text, and independent construction of the text.

In the stage of BKOF (Building Knowledge of the Field), the materials used in the teaching process are only in the form of written texts. The students are invited to explore cultural similarities and differences related to the topic or text type, practice grammatical patterns relevant to the topic or text type, and build up and extend vocabulary relevant to the topic or text type.

In modelling of the text, the materials used are in the form of written text, pictures, and also audio visual. Written texts are used to give a model of a certain genre for example procedure text, or recount. Pictures are used to give the additional materials so that the students may understand the text well. Audio visual is also used to make the class more interesting by presenting a video showing the schematic structure of the text. For example, in procedure text, the students are given a video that shows how to accomplish something.

In dependent construction, the students are expected to work in groups and present certain text types together with the picture or the audio visual, and they should explain to the other students about the social function of the text, the schematic structure of the text, and the language features of the text.

In the last stage, the independent construction of the text, the students have to write certain multimodal text type. It includes the written text and also the picture or the audio visual.

## **Multimodal Literacies**

Multimodal literacy refers to meaning-making that occurs through the reading, viewing, and understanding, responding to and producing and interacting with multimedia and digital texts. It may include oral and gestural modes of talking, listening and dramatizing as well as writing, designing and producing such texts. The processing of modes, such as image, words, sound and movement within texts can occur simultaneously and is often cohesive and synchronous. Sometimes specific modes may dominate. For example, when processing screen-based texts the visual mode may dominate whereas the mode of sound may be dominant in podcasts.

There are two significant themes emerging from current research into multimodal literacy and these considerations have implications for classroom practice. The first theme is the effect of the technological changes that are inherent in reading, writing and producing 'on screen' compared with reading and writing print-based texts. The second theme is related to the changes that are occurring in the social practices of literacy which have changed and expanded exponentially with the development of Web 2.0 technology.

Unsworth (2002) and Walsh (2006) discuss the changed nature of literacy within new communicative contexts and explore the differences in pedagogy needed for 'multimodal literacy' combined with traditional literacy practices. The term 'multimodal literacy' was first proposed by Jewitt and Kress (2003) in their eponymous edited volume to represent the understanding and competency in the diverse modes through which meanings are made.

Jewitt and Kress (2003) argue that information and knowledge are constructed in multimodal texts and discourses which require a multimodal literacy to fully access their meanings. Based on Kress and Jewitt's work, it appears that the notion of multimodal literacy has two dimensions. The first dimension is with respect to the prevalence of multimodal texts, specifically though multimedia texts afforded by the digital media, hence stressing the need for a literacy to produce and access information. The second dimension concerns the recognition that the experience of teaching and learning is intrinsically multi-semiotic and multimodal.



Hence, there is a need to understand how the lesson experience is constructed through the teacher's use of a repertoire of semiotic resources as embodied in his/her pedagogy. Appreciating the functional affordances and constraints of these semiotic resources and modalities as well as how they are co-deployed in the orchestration of the lesson can provide understandings which may lead to more effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

## **Conclusion**

Multimodal texts are defined as texts which communicate their message using more than one semiotic mode, or channel of communication. Examples are magazine articles which use words and pictures, or websites which contain audio clips alongside the words, or film which uses words, music, sound effects and moving images. As soon as we start to take this idea seriously, we realize that, in a sense, all human communication is intrinsically multimodal.

A multimodal teaching raises a number of issues for pedagogy, literacy, learning and assessment. Multimodal research shows that talk is not always the primary mode in the classroom and the same seems to hold true for the English classroom (Kress et al, 2001). A complex of modes including talk, picture, visual communication, action, gesture, gaze, posture and movement contribute to teaching and learning. Multimodal teaching may include multimodal method and multimodal materials.

The multimodal materials given in this course are not only in the form of text, but also pictures and audio visual. It is expected that multimodal materials used in this teaching not only enhance the students' awareness in understanding several text types (genres) but also promote their multimodal literacies, such as understanding and creating multimodal texts.

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## Chinese College Students' Perceptions of Influence of Quality of Life on L2 Achievement

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### **Abstract**

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined quality of life (QOL) as “an individual’s perceptions of their position in life, in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns”. Although much research had been done to investigate factors pertinent to learners’ achievement in second language (L2) acquisition, there have been insufficient attempts to explore the influence of QOL on college learners’ L2 achievement through a qualitative approach. Adopting the framework of QOL developed by the WHO, the present study surveyed 404 Chinese college students’ perceptions of how QOL influenced their English achievement (EA). Facets in life that influenced the EA of these Chinese learners were ranked and depicted, and a model of the influence of QOL on college learners’ EA was proposed. Implications of the findings were also addressed for improving L2 learners’ achievement with respect to QOL.

**Keywords** English achievement, Quality of life, EFL, Learners’ perception

## **Introduction**

Research in second/foreign language (L2) acquisition has produced an abundance of invaluable information for both researchers and educational practitioners. The goal of language educators is how to assist learners to achieve the highest learning results. Therefore, factors pertinent to L2 learning outcomes have been widely focused on, and issues pertaining to maximizing language achievement have always been the main concerns of professionals in the L2 fields. For instance, in the psycholinguistic field, motivation and attitude towards L2 learning were concluded to be crucial predictors of L2 achievement (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Zhang & Kim, 2013). In the sociolinguistic field, parents' educational levels and social economic status were also found to be important predictable factors of language achievement (Dale, Harlaar, & Plomin, 2012; Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 2000). In addition, peers, parents, teachers, and mentors all play an essential role in influencing motivation, attitude, and achievement in L2 learning (Samimy & Rardin, 1994; Takahashi, 1998; Yan & Horwitz, 2008). As for the environment, research also reports a positive association of L2 outcomes with campus bilingual environment or native-speaking teachers (de Jong, 2002; López & Tashakkori, 2006; Ma, 2012). Further, time spent at home reading, and opportunities to use the second language outside of classrooms, are other factors found in studies to influence L2 achievement (Carhill, Suárez-Orozco, & Páez, 2008; Roberts, 2008).

Research on factors pertinent to students' L2 achievement also includes teachers' characteristics, curriculum, instruction, successful learners' characters, age, learning strategies, living areas, etc. (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Akbari & Allvar, 2010; Andrews, 1999; Byun, et al., 2011; Chen & Goh, 2011; Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Fakeye, 2012; Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011; White, Munoz, & Collins, 2007; Yan & Horwitz, 2008). However, among the various factors studied in L2 acquisition, learners' quality of life (QOL) was rarely taken into consideration. Since a factor in L2 learning is usually investigated independently from other factors, and because any of the fields researched in L2 learning (e.g. psycholinguistic or sociolinguistic studies) are related to the learner — a whole person — it was considered worthwhile to synthesize the factors in the fields of L2 acquisition from a holistic perspective using the



framework of QOL. Since all the fields of research in L2 acquisition work together for the benefit of the learners to excel in their language achievement, taking a macro/holistic view on the learners could potentially synthesize and confirm the value of research done in the fields that are normally conducted separately in different perspectives. This approach could also reveal aspects that were overlooked in the past, which can serve as a complement to the research in those fields.

The term QOL was first used after World War II (Meeberg, 1993), and the research on QOL in sociology was originally undertaken to examine the development of the living conditions in a society. Later, in the medical field, the concept of human health evolved from simply being the absence of illness to the idea of a whole person's health, expanding the concept of health or health care to encompass an individual's physical, psychological, social, and environmental health. In other words, the notion of health had changed from no need of medical treatment to eventually include whole life satisfaction, or QOL (Schneider, 1976; WHO, 1998).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined QOL as “an individual's perceptions of their position in life, in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns” (WHOQOL Group, 1998, p.551). To obtain more complete and accurate information on the QOL of people around the world in order to improve their health or service in health care, the WHO undertook the task of developing the WHOQOL questionnaire over a ten year period, beginning in 1991 (Skevington, Sartorius, Amir & the WHOQOL-Group, 2004). Through the collaborative teamwork of 20 field centers in 18 countries, the WHOQOL development group collected 1,800 items relevant to an individual's different aspects of life. The WHOQOL development team reduced the original 1,800 items down to 236, and then down further to 100 items. The items were then categorized into 29 facets in six domains for the questionnaire and tested in different cultural settings, collecting data from 11,053 participants around the world for the development of the measurement (WHOQOL Group, 1998). After the development of the questionnaire, WHOQOL-100, numerous studies were conducted adopting the questionnaire as an instrument (Hwang & Tang, 2012).

Due to the fact that the development of the cross-cultural measurement of the WHOQOL was originally designed for providing better health care service in different cultural settings, most of the research conducted in this area was directly related to medical issues. Therefore, attention was paid to such matters as evaluating the efficacy of medical treatment on certain diseases or developing a revised WHOQOL questionnaire for use towards different subjects in different settings, because the WHOQOL questionnaire allowed adjustments for culture differences (Jaracz, Falfoss, Górna, & Baczyk, 2006; Leung, Wong, Tay, Chu, & Ng, 2005; Schmidt, et al., 2006; Trento, et al., 2004; Yao, Wang, & Chung, 2007). Among the extensive studies done with respect to QOL, however, there were several reported positive correlations between QOL and educational levels (Regidor, et al., 1999; Skevington & the WHOQOL Group, 2010). Thus, it was considered worthwhile to further explore the relationship between QOL and students' learning, with the focus on achievement in learning English as a foreign language. In addition, since most completed research in the areas of QOL or L2 acquisition took a quantitative approach, a qualitative analysis from learners' perceptions was believed to be unique and could generate essential information to complement existing quantitative research.

In summary, since the notion of QOL took a holistic approach to a person's life, and learning also relates to the whole life of a person, an interdisciplinary study on how QOL influences learning English as a foreign language was believed to be valuable for several reasons. First, it helps to bring the micro examinations in the L2 studies to a macro point of view in the research of those fields. Secondly, taking advantage of the research done in the field of QOL which concerned a whole person's various aspects of life, the need for more information on L2 acquisition or education policy making - which also relate to the whole person- might be revealed. Thirdly, since most of the prior research in L2 acquisition investigated relationships between specific variables had been quantitative in nature, a qualitative approach that includes participants' perceptions on how the multiple aspects of their lives influence their L2 achievement could yield valuable supplementary information, contributing to the genuine improvement of L2 learning. Last but not least, the data generated by the Chinese participants in this study could supplement the existing literature of QOL

or L2 acquisition, of which most participants were westerners (Flowerdew, 2001; Uysal, 2012). Since QOL and L2 learning involve cultural contexts, contribution from the Chinese, who make up a considerable portion of the world's population, is indispensable for the completeness of the research information in these fields.

Accordingly, the present study investigates the influence of QOL on learning English as a foreign language as experienced by Chinese college students. To achieve this goal, the following research questions were probed:

1. What factors in QOL influenced learners' EA as perceived by the college students in the study?
2. Why did participants think these factors of QOL influenced their EA?

### **Review of Literature**

In this section, the documented literature relevant to the study is presented, including the QOL assessment, the WHOQOL-BREF, and related research on QOL.

### **Development of Quality of Life Assessment WHOQOL-BREF**

The WHOQOL-BREF (Appendix A) is the abbreviated version of WHOQOL-100. It was developed for use in situations where a short questionnaire was more appropriate because of the time limitations or purposes of studies. The WHOQOL-BREF encompasses 26 questions, including one question on overall QOL, one question on general physical health, and 24 questions taken from the original 24 facets in the WHOQOL-100, with a question from each facet to retain the complete construct of the holistic concept of QOL (WHO, 1998).

The 26 items in the WHOQOL-BREF are in a five-point Likert scale for assessing the following facets/aspects in the four domains of life defined by the WHOQOL group (Skevington, Lotfy, Connell, & the WHOQOL Group, 2004): (1) physical health: pain and discomfort, energy and fatigue, sleep and rest, dependence on medication, mobility, activities of daily living, and working capacity; (2) psychology: positive feelings, negative feelings, self-esteem, thinking, learning, memory and concentration, and body image; (3) social relationships: personal relations, sex, practical social support; (4) environment: financial resources, information and skills, recreation and leisure, home

environment, access to health and social care, physical safety and security, physical environment, and transport.

Analyzing the data of 11,053 respondents from 20 field centers in 18 counties, the WHOQOL Group reported the following statistics regarding the reliability and validity of the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire: (1) concurrent validity with WHOQOL-100: the correlations in the four domains ranged from 0.89 (for social domain) to 0.95 (for physical domain); (2) internal consistency: Cronbach alpha values in the four domains ranged from 0.66 (for social domain) to 0.84 (for physical domain); (3) discriminant validity: t-test analyses showed statistically significant differences between ill and well people; (4) test-retest reliability: correlations ranged from 0.66 (for physical domain) to 0.87 (for environment domain); (5) confirmatory factor analysis: the Comparative Fit Index reached 0.900; (6) multiple regression analysis showed that all four domains made a significant contribution to explaining variance observed in the general facet relating to overall QOL and general health (WHOQOL Group, 1998).

### **Research on Quality of Life**

To observe and analyze the status and development of people's living conditions, many countries have established indicators to assess the QOL in their societies. For example, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EUROFOUND) surveyed around 30 countries in Europe and established a European QOL database to provide pertinent information for public administration, including indicators in the following aspects: health, employment, income, education, family life, social life, housing and environment, work-life balance, community life, public services, and life satisfaction (EUROFOUND, 2012). Similarly, Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. developed Jacksonville Community QOL Indicators for measuring Americans' well-being in nine domains: education, economy, natural environment, social well-being, arts, recreation and culture, health, government, transportation, and public safety (JCCI, 2012). However, due to the fact that respondents differed in what they perceived as important or valuable in life, there were not universally agreed-upon indicators for providing definitive evidence of the complex concept of QOL, though consensus had been reached that measurement of QOL should be

multidimensional and incorporate fundamental aspects that influenced people's life directly (Hass, 1999; Hwang & Tang, 2012).

While one major aim of measuring QOL had been to better inform policy makers for implementing more far-sighted decisions for the improvement of social well-being and the effectiveness of government programs, some studies, however, showed that individuals did not experience better happiness even though their objective life conditions, such as economics or environment, had improved (Li, et al. 1998; Liu, 1980; Schneider, 1976). The evaluation of QOL, therefore, evolved from objective measurement to also including a subjective assessment of QOL (Campbell, 1976; Felce & Perry, 1995).

Besides establishing social indicators for assessing people's satisfactions with their life quality, another area that has received extensive attention in the past two decades and has shed significant light upon the improvement of medical efficacy was health-related QOL research (Davis, Waters, Shelly, & Gold, 2008; Feng, 2007; Ibrahim, Björnsdottir, Alwan, & Honore, 2014; Liang et al., 2005; Wahl et al., 2009). In this flourishing trend of QOL research, some adopted available QOL instruments while others translated or developed tools for various groups (Tayyem, Atkinson, & Martin, 2014; Torisson, Stavenow, Minthon, & Londos, 2016; Yao & Wu, 2009). Furthermore, attempts have also been made to identify the determinants/predictors of QOL (Chung & Chung, 2009; Fernández-Ballesteros, Zamarrón, & Ruíz, 2001; Huang, 2005). Nevertheless, the majority of research on QOL has focused on general populations or diseased people rather than on students who constitute a critical proportion of the current and future society.

QOL in the education field has not received its fair share of research effort although in the last decade there has been a growing interest in education-related QOL studies. For example, in a large-scale survey of 9,404 participants in 13 countries on the relationship between their QOL and education levels, Skevington and the WHOQOL Group (2010) revealed that people's QOL associated with education levels positively and significantly in all the four domains — physical, psychological, social, and environmental, from no education, primary education, to secondary education levels, and that education levels proved to be a predictor of a better QOL in the environment domain, from no education to tertiary

education. Most other researchers investigated QOL for improving students' learning. An exemplary study conducted by a major UK university evaluated students' satisfaction with different aspects of their college life, including psychological, social, and financial supports, as well as accommodation and departmental environment (Audin, Davy, & Barkham, 2003). The study suggested that information on students' satisfaction with noise, ability of study, ability to sleep, and their relationships with other students could help the school to improve the accommodation aspect in the university and that information on students' satisfaction with academic issues such as teaching quality, timetabling, assessment, workload, and access to resources could provide feedback to departments for advancing learning.

Similar to research in the medical field, educational researchers have tried to identify factors associated with students' QOL besides assessment. Factors reported associating with university students' QOL include school mate relationships, sense of coherence, stress, gender, interest in the area of study, confidence in career development, hometown location, physical exercise, degree of internet addiction, etc. (Greimel et al., 2016; Krzepota, Biernat, & Florkiewicz, 2015; Liu, 2009; Rania, Siri, Bagnasco, Aleo, & Sasso, 2014; Zhang et al., 2012). One interesting finding was that married students or college students in love perceived better QOL (Rakizadeh & Hafezi, 2015; Zhou & Li, 2010)

Despite the wealth of literature on the global evaluation or health-related QOL studies, mostly in sociology or medical fields, few addressed issues related to L2 learning. To the author's knowledge, the present study is the first attempt to link L2 research to QOL. As a quantitative paradigm was the main methodology adopted, how or why QOL impacted learning has not been well documented. In this regard, the qualitative approach could produce insightful information to the QOL research in L2 learning.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research design of the present study took a qualitative approach to address the research questions. It was pointed out by qualitative researchers that “it is clear that the interactions between and among individual variables take different forms in different contextual settings, and the perspectives of the learners can offer important insights into these relationships” (Yan & Horwitz, 2008, p. 175). LeCompte and Goetz (1982) also argued in favor of the contributions of qualitative research to scientific progress, saying that “by admitting into the research frame the subjective experiences of both participants and investigator, ethnography may provide a depth of understanding lacking in other approaches to investigation” (p.32). Introspection was the qualitative technique applied in the study. It was asserted that this self-report, self-observation, and self-revealing procedure could gain a deeper understanding of the interplay of intricate factors pertaining to the inquired phenomena (Samimy & Rardin, 1994). In addition, the qualitative information gained could overcome the limitations of isolating single specific inquiry from the broader context in many quantitative studies (Nunan, 1992). Therefore, self-reports or reflections of the participants was considered an appropriate approach for the investigation of the research questions in the study, which explored the relationship between the broad concept of QOL and the variable college L2 learners’ EA.

### **Subjects**

A total of 404 Chinese college students aged 19–20 participated in the study. They were freshmen in ten classes taking a required course, English 101, from eight departments at National Quemoy University, Taiwan, in the 2012-2013 school year. The eight departments were Applied English, Electronic Engineering, Food Science, Civil Engineering, Sports and Leisure, Ocean and Coastal Management, Architecture, and International Affairs. The majority of the Chinese participants (97%) were born in Taiwan, and a very small portion (3%) were Chinese from Mainland China, Malaysia, or Hong Kong.

## **The Data**

The participants in the study were surveyed on their perceptions of the influence of QOL on their EA. Using the framework of the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire, the participants were asked to express their perceptions of how various facets of their life influenced their EA. Through the participants' introspection on their college life and EA, reasons for these perceptions were elicited.

Each participant was asked to finish the five-point scale questionnaire first. They were then asked to choose from the 26 facets in life addressed in the questionnaire with regard to what facets they perceived as influencing their EA, as well as the specified rationales for the choices made (Appendix B). Confidentiality of the data was assured to the participants and the importance of giving genuine information was emphasized. I also checked the response sheets when they were turned in to ensure the participants' compliance with the directions.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected was first checked to remove incomplete or invalid responses. A total of 1,772 statements were generated by 399 participants who correctly followed the instructions of the data collection procedure. The collected data was then analyzed in the following procedure (adopted from Boyatzis, 1998): 1) The number of votes to each facet perceived by the participants as factors influencing their EA were tallied; 2) The rationales in each facet that students perceived as factors influencing their EA were Xeroxed, cut into slips, and grouped facet by facet; 3) The rationales given in each facet were read intensively, and recurring ideas in each facet were looked for and recorded; 4) In each facet, patterns/themes were identified and similar information was grouped together by looking for similarities and differences in the recurring ideas; 5) The rationales in each chosen facet were tallied according to theme; 6) The identified facets/factors were related to the model of influence of QOL on EA.



## **Findings**

**Research Question 1:** What factors in QOL influenced learners' EA as perceived by the college students in the study?

As shown in Table 1, participants identified most of the variables measured in the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire as factors influencing their EA. Since individualized instruction is an important indicator in high quality education, in the present study factors were taken into consideration if they were perceived by more than 5% of participants as something affecting their EA. This means that, in an average class size of 30 college students, at least one student experiences the facet as influential to his or her EA. In this study, 19 out of the 26 facets in life were perceived by more than 20 participants ( $N=399 \times 5\%$ ) as influencing factors of EA. When the class size increased, for instance, to 60 students in a class, almost all facets of life in the WHOQOL-BREF influenced students' EA in some ways.

The top five facets that participants perceived as influencing their EA were concentration, sleep, energy, negative feelings, and information. One difference found between English majors and non-English majors was that friends' support and living a meaningful life were considered important by English majors more so than by non-English majors. Non-English majors regarded the availability of information as important to their EA more than English majors. Overall, all students indicated that concentration was the top factor affecting their EA, and that having enough sleep and energy was vital to their EA. In addition, negative feelings such as melancholy, despair, anxiety, or depression were perceived by more than one-third of the participants as influencing their EA.

In summary, the college students in the study indicated whether various facets in life influenced their EA. The responses showed that, more or less, almost all the facets in life played a role in EA, with some of the facets having influenced more participants, and other only affecting a small portion.

**Table 1** Votes of facets in QOL as influencing EA

Overall	1	Overall quality of life	70	8
	2	General health	95	6
Physical health	3	Pain and discomfort	87	7
	4	Medication dependency	9	23
	10	Energy and fatigue	190	3
	15	Mobility	13	22
	16	Sleep and rest	232	2
	17	Ability to perform daily activities	25	19
	18	Work capacity	47	12
Psychological	5	Positive feelings (enjoying life)	46	14
	6	Spirituality (meaningful life)	68	9
	7	Concentration	290	1
	11	Body image and appearance	2	25
	19	Self-esteem	47	12
	26	Negative feelings	136	4
Social Relationships	20	Personal relationships	53	11
	21	Sexual activity	1	26
	22	Social support (friends' support)	61	10
Environment	8	Physical safety and security	15	21
	9	Environment (pollution, noise, traffic)	33	18
	12	Financial resources	41	16
	13	Information accessibility	102	5
	14	Leisure activities	39	17
	23	Home environment	46	14
	24	Health service accessibility	5	24
	25	Transport	18	20
Total	26 items	24 facets + 2 overall questions	1,772	26

**Research Question 2:** Why did participants think these factors of QOL influenced their EA?

To answer this research question, the rationales expressed by the participants were clustered into patterns/themes and then tallied by the themes. For each facet, the percentage of participants whose statements were under the categorized themes was presented along with examples in the themes. Additional examples are presented in Table 2 for reference. In most facets, the participants expressed more agreeing rationales, especially in the facets in which participants had common experiences, such as money or sleep. However, in a few facets, such as work ability or self-esteem, the participants expressed more divergent views, probably due to their diverse experiences or unique perceptions of the facet. In addition, some descriptions of the facets in the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire differed slightly from the original descriptions adopted by the WHOQOL Development Group. For example, the question in the measurement for the facet “Sleep and rest” was referred to as “How satisfied are you with your sleep?” For a clearer understanding of the research results, the descriptions reported in this section adopt the exact words used in the questionnaire. The first two general items in the questionnaire were treated as two facets, which led to 26 facets presented here. The following show the reasons participants gave for perceiving a facet as influential on EA.

**Concentration.** Among the facets that were perceived by students as factors influencing their EA, concentration was chosen as number one. The rationale for selecting this factor was stated by most participants (68%) in either a direct or reverse statement they experienced in the past, “only if an individual concentrates will learning occur.” For example, “Concentrating in class made me perform better on tests,” and, “I am easily distracted; therefore, my learning effectiveness was low.” Other rationales given for choosing this factor were diverse. Students’ concentration levels or situations were affected by factors such as environment (e.g., library, computer, or roommate), interest, sleep, challenge level of learning contents, English abilities, medication, lazy characteristics, etc. All these influenced their concentration and EA.

**Sleep.** The second factor influencing participants' EA was sleep. Most students (70%) gave reasons from their experiences of lacking sufficient sleep, while others (18%) affirmed that a good night's sleep could advance learning effectiveness due to having a clearer mind, enough energy, a better memory, and being able to better concentrate. For example, "Not having enough sleep made me sleepy in class and unable to concentrate, which resulted in my very bad learning effectiveness."

From students' statements regarding this factor, it was obvious that the majority of participants in the study experienced the negative influence of sleeplessness on their energy, motivation to go to class, attentiveness in class, mood to study, memory ability, and English learning results. It was also clear that students' physical condition affected their psychological facets such as mood or impetus to learn.

**Energy.** Like the facets of concentration and sleep, the majority of participants (89%) gave rationales on how energy influences EA in either direct or reverse statements. With good energy, students could persevere in learning, concentrate on studying, be attentive in class, and have a clear mind to study and learn well. Without sufficient energy, students would feel sleepy in class or in studying, could not concentrate, did not want to learn or to attend classes, and could not absorb information. For example, "Energy affected learning situations in class," and, "Learning English takes a lot of energy." Here, the relationship between sleep and energy, and the relationship between physical condition and psychological factors in learning, were explicated in students' statements.

**Negative feelings.** A high percentage of participants (88%) among those who perceived negative feelings as a facet influencing their EA stated that with positive feelings or a joyful heart, they could concentrate on learning and that their effectiveness, or quality of studying, was high. On the other hand, negative feelings caused a loss of desire to study, affecting the value of learning, diminishing concentration in class or on learning, and even losing the confidence to acquire English. For example, "When I feel happy, I can concentrate on studying," and, "When I was not in a good mood, I spent a lot of time studying but gained only half of the total results, which made me even more disheartened."

Further, the interrelationship among affective factors in the psychological

domain was demonstrated. Motivation, attitude, confidence, concentration, and desire to learn English were influenced by negative feelings such as melancholy, despair, anxiety, or depression. That is to say, negative feelings were associated with students' EA.

**Information availability.** In this facet, most participants (78%) who perceived information as a factor influencing their EA expressed the importance of information availability for learning English. The information they obtained on the internet was helpful to learning English because they could access learning resources, relate knowledge, and find answers to their questions in vocabulary, sentences, or problems. For example, "Easily accessed information helped me to learn English with clear goals, such as taking the TOEIC test," and, "There are a lot of learning resources on the Internet."

**Health.** The majority of participants (87%) among those who perceived health as one facet influencing their EA stated that with good health, the effectiveness of study was high and an unhealthy body would affect their concentration, energy, study efficacy, and motivation to learn. For example, "Health is the number one necessary condition of learning," and, "Health affects your mental state."

**Pain.** Most participants (82%) who perceived pain as a facet that influenced their EA stated that pain affected their concentration and study effectiveness, motivation, or mood to study or go to class. For example, "I sometimes had a headache, which affected my concentration and thoughts," and, "Sometimes I had a stomachache and could not think/reason properly."

**Quality of life.** 70% of the participants among those who chose this factor stated that QOL affected their study effectiveness, mood, and concentration. Others expressed that QOL affected their time schedule, willingness to go to class, atmosphere in learning English, etc. For example, "Quality of life affects the quality of my English study," and, "With good quality of life, I don't have to worry about this or that and can concentrate on studying."

**Meaningful life.** 73% of the participants among those who perceived feeling their life was meaningful as one facet influencing their EA stated that feeling like they lead a meaningful life gave them motivation to work hard, learn English, and live a goal of pursuing life to the fullest. For example, "When I feel my life is

meaningful, I tend to learn actively,” and, “If you feel life is meaningful, you have greater passion to pursue your goals.”

**Friends’ support.** 84% of participants among those who indicated that friends’ support was important for English learning stated that they received spiritual support (54%) or concrete help (30%) with learning English from their friends. For example, “If your friends do not study, or keep on annoying you when you study, it’s really hard to concentrate,” and, “When I lost the desire to study or felt anxious, a word from a friend smoothed out my emotions.”

**Interpersonal relationships.** The participants, who voted for this facet, stated that a good interpersonal relationship was helpful to their learning (61%) and was influential in their desire to learn (15%). For example, “An interpersonal relationship affects my confidence and uplifts my mood to study,” and, “In my opinion, communication is the most effective way of learning English.”

**Work ability.** The participants in this facet (39%) expressed that work capacity was related to learning efficacy. For example, “With good work capacity, you can finish the assignment on time,” and, “if you do not get things done quickly, you are not able to study when you need to.”

**Self-esteem.** To the participants (45%) who perceived self-esteem as one facet influencing their EA self-esteem affected the results of learning, motivation to learn, and success in learning. For example, “If you like yourself, your mood will be optimistic and active,” “Only if you have confidence in yourself will you succeed,” and, “Having confidence will make people more courageous to try, break through, and not to be fearful.”

**Home environment.** The participants (85%), who perceived home environment as one facet influencing their EA stated that home environment could affect their concentration, effectiveness in learning, mood, and sleep. For example, “A poor living environment affects health,” “Home environment influences conditions for sleep,” and, “The poor condition of my living environment made me unable to sleep well. So, I did not have the energy to concentrate in class.”

**Enjoy life.** The participants (56%) who voted for this facet stated that whether they could enjoy their life influenced their study effectiveness, motivation to study, concentration in studying, and whether they could enjoy learning English

or not. For example, “If I do not enjoy my life, then I do not have the motive to study, either,” “One who knows how to enjoy life could learn English intentionally as well as extend their perspectives and global views,” and, “Enjoying life gives one greater motive to reach higher.”

**Financial resources.** Participants (92%) who perceived money as one facet that influenced their EA indicated that with money they could afford to purchase related learning materials, did not have to work part time, and could concentrate on learning. For example, “No money, no English,” “If you can’t eat until you’re full, you cannot concentrate on studying,” and, “If I have enough money for living expense and tuition, I do not have to work part time on weekends and can have time to study.”

**Leisure activities.** Students (65%) who chose this facet as a factor influencing their EA stated that leisure activities helped with learning effectiveness, relaxing mood, and releasing tension. For example, “An appropriate amount of leisure time could reduce some pressure and promote concentration on learning,” and, “Suitable leisure activities could foster efficacy of working.”

**Environment.** Most of the participants (87%) among those who voted for this facet stated that their environment influenced their learning effectiveness, concentration, mood, physical health, and mental state. For example, “A good studying environment can promote learning results,” “The environment affects people’s mood,” “Environmental health influences mental condition,” and, “A poor living environment has a negative effect on health and learning.”

**Activities of daily living.** Participants (48%) who voted for this facet expressed that their ability to perform daily living activities influenced their EA in the way of concentration, time management, and learning effectiveness. For example, “A daily life schedule will affect my time for reviewing learning content and doing homework,” and, “If you don’t perform daily life activities well, you will be distracted and cannot concentrate on learning.”

**Table 2** Reasons for facets in life perceived as influential on EA

Facet in life	Reasons for perceiving the facet as influential on EA
Concentration	“Concentrating in studying or concentrating in class is the key to successful learning.” “Sometimes my thoughts wandered in class, so I missed some contents or key points.” “Actually, I could not concentrate easily, because too many things distracted me. I always forgot to study.”
Sleep	“Sleep quality is highly related to mood and learning conditions.” “Sufficient sleep and rest double the efficacy of learning.” “Sometimes I did not sleep well the night before, so I fell asleep in class and did not understand what the lesson was about.”
Energy	“Only with enough energy could one persevere in studying.” “Energy relates to concentration.” “No energy, no impetus to go to class or study.”
Negative feelings	“Mood affects learning quality. When I’m not in a good mood, I don’t want to study.” “Negative feelings affected my concentration and made me unable to calm down to study.” “When I had negative feelings, nothing was important to me and I did not want to go to class.”
Information availability	“I found some English articles on the Internet and improved my reading and writing abilities.” “Suitable information on life helped me to gain additional English knowledge.” “Besides learning in class, I learned English through television, computer, etc.”
Health	“A severe allergy made me unable to concentrate on studying.” “Every morning I had a runny nose, which drove me crazy and I couldn’t be attentive to the teacher in class.” “Recently, my body has been weak and I could not learn well.”
Pain	“When my body ached, the learning effectiveness was low even though I forced myself to study.” “When I had sore muscles, I just wanted to rest.” “When I had serious menstrual



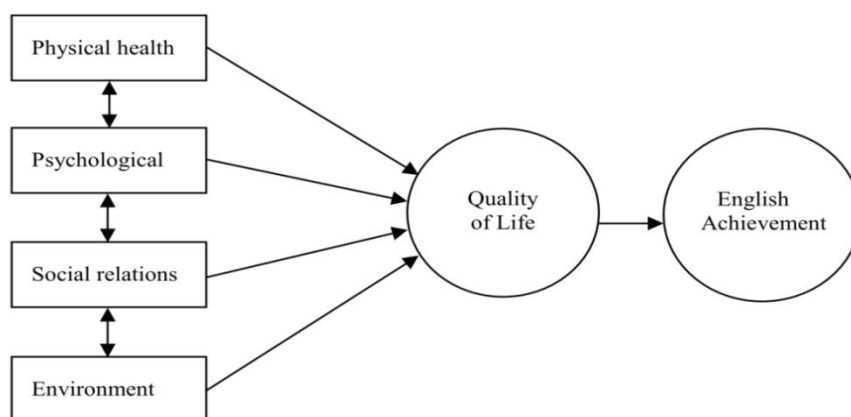
	cramps, I could not do anything.”
Quality of life	“Only with good overall quality of life can one be in a good mood and be motivated to study.” “Good overall quality of life is very pivotal because it affects a lot of things.” “I feel that only with a good quality of life can I achieve learning effectiveness.”
Meaningful life	“When I feel my life is meaningful, I can do many significant things.” “If you feel meaningless in life, then everything is meaningless.” “When people lose their direction in life and feel life is meaningless, they will not concentrate on studying.”
Friends’ support	“Support and encouragement of friends is a powerful spur.” “To me, if no one supports me, I lose motivation to move forward.” “Without support of friends, I don’t have any confidence to overcome difficulties when I am frustrated.” “With friends’ reciprocal support or encouragement, English studying time becomes effortless.”

### **Discussion**

The above results of the study disclosed that the participants perceived not only QOL as an overall factor influencing their EA, but also various facets that contributed to their QOL. Adopting the framework proposed by the WHO for evaluating QOL, which encompasses the physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains of a person’s life, the study showed that most facets in the four domains were perceived by the participants as factors influencing their EA. The findings on the participants’ perceptions of the influence of QOL on their EA coincided with the existing research on L2 learning in psychological, sociolinguistic, environment, and pedagogical fields. For example, concentration or attention, affective variables (such as self-esteem), social support (such as parents’ support or peer interaction), home environment, or computer usage in classrooms, have all been documented as factors associated with L2 learning outcomes (Carhill, Suárez-Orozco, & Páez, 2008; Chapelle & Jamieson, 1986; Rudasill, Gallagher, & White, 2010; Samimy & Rardin, 1994; Yan & Horwitz,

2008). That is to say, the first 14 facets chosen by the participants as influential factors to their EA, from the top facet, concentration, to the 14th facet, home environment,” (see Table 1) echoed the earlier research results on L2 learning. Other facets that some participants perceived as associating with their EA have not been researched extensively, such as leisure activities, noise and pollution in the environment, or the ability to perform daily activities; they require further investigation. Even though some of the factors might seem to be out of the language educator’s field of endeavor, acquiring comprehensive knowledge of all factors pertinent to L2 acquisition is believed to be beneficial to language professionals.

Furthermore, the findings of the study not only demonstrate how and why the participants perceived facets in life to affect their EA, but also revealed an interrelated and integrated relationship among the facets. For example, the facets of health, pain, and sleep all affected energy and concentration. In other words, facets in the physical domain as well as facets in the psychological domain interplayed. Similarly, the facets in the psychological domain, such as negative feelings and concentration, were mutually affected, and the facets in the social domain, such as friends’ support and interpersonal relationships, also influenced facets in the psychological domain, such as mood and motivation to learn. Moreover, the facets in the environment such as financial support, leisure activities, and physical environment had an impact on the physical domain (e.g. sleep) and on the psychological domain (e.g. concentration, mood, and motivation to learn English). As perceived by the participants in the study, all facets in the four domains played a role in their EA and were integral in influencing holistic learning. Thus, from the results of the study, the following model of influence of QOL on EA is proposed. The model shows the integrated relationship of the four domains of the participants’ QOL and the influence of QOL on their EA.



**Figure 1.** Model of influence of QOL on EA

The model makes sense from another perspective in human behavior. According to Maslow (1943), L2 learning is a self-actualization behavior. A great number of studies in L2 acquisition explored the effect of input factors on language outputs or the relationship between various factors pertaining to language learning, whether in psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, or pedagogical areas. However, the basic human needs such as health, safety, love and belonging, and self-esteem, as identified in Maslow’s theory of hierarchy of needs (1943), were often assumed to readily exist for pursuing a goal for self-actualization (learning a second language) among learners. The results of this study echo Maslow’s theory in the way that students perceived basic physical, psychological, and social needs such as sleep, energy, concentration, and negative feelings, as influential for their EA. As in previous research, those factors are the predictable factors pertaining to L2 learning outcomes such as motivation, attitude, self-confidence or peer influence (Samimy & Rardin, 1994; Yan & Horwitz, 2008). This finding could serve as a valuable reminder for language educators to reexamine the underlying assumption that students come to class with physical and psychological readiness for learning, as well as the assumption that students have an ideal environment for pursuing goals in language learning outside of the classroom.

These findings also provide important information for school policy makers not to underestimate the importance of school health services, dormitory management, education in students’ time management, counseling services to address students’ emotional difficulties, and job demands for teachers. For

example, as the demands on college teachers in academic performance remains, teachers are not likely to spend as much time as necessary to assist students in gaining their highest level of success when they have time-consuming needs outside of class. In this atmosphere of excessive pressure for academic performance in college, such as the need to get published, among many other requirements, college teachers are always faced with the dilemma of time allocation. The results of the study show that students' negative feelings influenced their EA, and a main source of students' negative feelings came from pressure in schoolwork or frustration in school performance. If teachers could spend more time assisting students in developing their learning skills, thereby increasing students' learning success, improved language learning could be better anticipated.

Furthermore, since students' physical, psychological, social, and environmental conditions all play an essential role in laying the foundation for optimal language learning results, it is crucial that educators in language learning incorporate related knowledge, resources, and endeavors to meet the needs of the whole learner to reach his or her goal of maximizing learning achievement. This means teamwork and interdisciplinary studies on the holistic needs of learners are necessary and should be encouraged.

## **Conclusion**

The concern for language learners as whole persons has attracted growing interest. The present study took a qualitative approach to examine the association between a broad concept, QOL, and college L2 learners' EA, adopting the framework of a whole person's health concept developed by the WHO Quality of Life Group. The results of the analysis show that most of the facets in life in the WHOQOL framework played a role in influencing the participants' EA, with some facets perceived by more participants as influential, and other facets perceived to be influential by fewer participants. Since qualitative data involves subjective perceptions and interpretations of the individual's different experiences, the cutline of determining to what extent a facet was regarded as influential to EA in the study was not drawn based on a statistical technique, such as chi-square, but on the commonly acknowledged golden philosophy in education that all students

are equal, all students can learn, and all students deserve respect. Following this principle of acknowledging every learner's experiences, and from the rationales given for their assertions, it was concluded that participant's perceived QOL as influential to their EA.

In addition, the study also found interrelation and interaction relationships among the facets of life that influenced the participants' EA. This led to the establishment of the model on the influence of QOL on EA. The model not only confirms the existing evidence on the impact of factors affecting L2 achievement previously investigated in the child development, psychological, sociolinguistic, and pedagogical fields, but also sheds light on the direction for future research for factors whose importance have been underestimated in L2 acquisition.

This study has several implications for educational practice. With the full knowledge of factors influencing students' learning, language teachers could have more appropriate expectations of students and themselves. When a college student appears uninterested in class, it might be for many non-academic reasons, such as insufficient sleep or negative feelings from a social relationship, rather than inadequacy of instruction. When a language teacher strives to advance learning outcomes, he or she also possesses a broader understanding of the students' various needs both in and outside of the classroom. This thorough understanding of the whole learner could increase effectiveness, not only in class instruction, class management, and class interaction, but also in remedial instruction and personal assistance to different students with learning difficulties. Furthermore, in cases where language educators also serve as school administrators or educational policy makers, they could support facilities or policies that promote students' physical, psychological, social, and environmental needs or health, with the knowledge that these will contribute to a learner's language proficiency.

Finally, since learning a second language has always involved biological, cultural, and situational determinants, when inference needs to be made from the study, it should be remembered that the findings were drawn from a Chinese contextual environment, which possesses distinctive social and cultural characteristics. In addition, subjective interpretations were inevitable in the analysis of the qualitative data, even though reliability and validity of the study had been carefully monitored in the process of data collection and analysis. A

better practice would be to employ more than one collaborator in the analytic process (Nunan, 1992). Limitations to the study also include the framework of the WHOQOL questionnaire used in the study, which is subject to cultural differences and was not developed for language acquisition purposes. Nevertheless, the interdisciplinary information offered in the study is believed to be original, practical, and informative for professionals in L2 acquisition. Future studies could apply a different approach, such as using different quantitative analyses to corroborate the contributing weight of the various facets of QOL to the EA of learners at various age levels.

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## **Acknowledgments**

I thank Dr. John Adamson for his insightful comments on earlier versions of the article. I am also grateful to Dr. Nahla Bacha for reading the manuscript and making useful suggestions.

## **Appendix**

### **Appendix A**

#### WHOQOL-BREF Questionnaire Items

1. How would you rate your quality of life?
2. How satisfied are you with your health?
3. To what extent do you feel that physical pain prevents you from doing what you need to do?
4. How much do you need any medical treatment to function in your daily life?
5. How much do you enjoy life?
6. To what extent do you feel your life to be meaningful?
7. How well are you able to concentrate?
8. How safe do you feel in your daily life?
9. How healthy is your physical environment?
10. Do you have enough energy for everyday life?
11. Are you able to accept your bodily appearance?
12. Have you enough money to meet your needs?
13. How available to you is the information that you need in your day-to-day life?
14. To what extent do you have the opportunity for leisure activities?
15. How well are you able to get around?

16. How satisfied are you with your sleep?
17. How satisfied are you with your ability to perform your daily living activities?
18. How satisfied are you with your capacity for work?
19. How satisfied are you with yourself?
20. How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?
21. How satisfied are you with your sex life?
22. How satisfied are you with the support you get from your friends?
23. How satisfied are you with the conditions of your living place?
24. How satisfied are you with your access to health services?
25. How satisfied are you with your transport?
26. How often do you have negative feelings such as blue mood, despair, anxiety, depression?

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### **Appendix B**

Among the 26 items in the questionnaire, which ones do you think influence your English learning achievement? (Please start from the most influential one.)

I think the facet in question \_\_\_\_\_ influences English learning achievement \_\_\_\_\_ because

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I think the facet in question \_\_\_\_\_ influences English learning achievement \_\_\_\_\_ because

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I think the facet in question \_\_\_\_\_ influences English learning achievement because

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