A Case Study of Two Taiwanese Students with Hearing Loss Navigating the English as a Foreign Language Requirement at Their University

Yu Chen

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A CASE STUDY OF TWO TAIWANESE STUDENTS WITH HEARING LOSS NAVIGATING THE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT AT THEIR UNIVERSITY

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies

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Dedication

There are many people I would like to dedicate this study to in the whole process of my studies. First, I would like to thank to my former students with hearing loss who inspired and supported me to conduct the study. Being your teacher changed my view of life and I am grateful to have had a chance to work with you. Second, I would like to thank the informants of the study, especially the first informant who helped me recruit many participants and provided crucial information for the study. To all the participants of the study, thank you for your contributions and time, and I have learned so much from each of you. It was an honor for me to get to know all of you and I am grateful to have your support. To each member of the doctoral group, I would like to thank you for your help and encouragement. It has been a quite a journey and because of you, this journey has been more meaningful. To my family and friends, thank you for your unconditional love and support. I am so blessed to have all of you in my life.
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A CASE STUDY OF TWO TAIWANESE COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH HEARING LOSS NAVIGATING THEIR UNIVERSITY’ ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

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ABSTRACT

Many institutions of higher education (IHE) students in Taiwan now need to meet the English proficiency requirement to earn their higher education degrees. In this case study, I intended to a) provide the opportunity for IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan to share their opinions, thoughts, and experiences of learning English as a foreign language in higher education institutes; and b) understand how English as a foreign language policies and educational practices contribute to create opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing loss. The research question I intended to examine was “what are the perceptions of the lived experiences of students with hearing loss in a Taiwanese IHE within the policy environment of English as a gatekeeper?” The focuses of the study were a) how do Taiwanese IHE students with hearing loss perceive their experiences learning English as a foreign language in IHEs; and b) how do the current policies and educational practices related to learning English as a foreign language serve to construct barriers and opportunities for IHE students with hearing loss?
I conducted two interviews with two primary participants who were current Taiwanese students with hearing loss at one IHE and one interview with each of secondary participants who were associated with the primary participants’ English learning. These secondary participants were the English teacher of the alternative English class, the English teacher of the general English class, one Chinese teacher, one tutor, two resource center staff members, and two study peers. I also performed three classroom observations at the alternative English class and collected documents that were related to these students’ English learning. I used thematic analysis to analyze the data and the major findings of this study were: (a) the hegemony of English, (b) audism, (c) inequity of educational policy, and (d) accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

According to Dua (1994), “Language is the production, distribution, and circulation of knowledge, linguistic and cultural capital” (p. 89). Learning languages creates a platform for people from different parts of the world, classes, races, genders, and social statuses to exchange and share experiences, thoughts, values, and knowledge. Language learning and its policy correspond with people’s identities, voices, rights, opportunities, cultures, and benefits people. Some languages like English have a superior world status for political, social, linguistic, and economic reasons. Holborow (1999) stated that more than 1.4 billion people in the world live in countries where English has official status. Holborow also pointed out that 90 percent of international trade in Asia and the Pacific is performed and completed in English, and English has superior status in 75 territories across the world. To enhance and ensure worldwide economic and political status, many non-native English speaking countries put an emphasis on English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) education.

Taiwan is one of the countries that values and stresses the importance of English education. It is an island located in Southeast Asia, which includes one major island and several much smaller offshore islets (Chen, 2006). Taiwan plays a crucial role in international trade, business, and politics, and English has a unique status and prestige to ensure the maintenance of Taiwan’s international status. Ju (2009) claimed that even though English is a foreign language in Taiwan, it has found its way into almost every corner of Taiwan in the era of the global village.
Many industries desire to increase their popularity, extend their international markets, and assure their compatibility; therefore, having English language and professional certifications are desirable to employers and sometimes a requirement for employment. Also, the government of Taiwan has played a major role in promoting its international trade market and political status, starting in the Taiwanese educational system. All students in Taiwan, including students with hearing loss, now need to meet the English language requirements starting at the third grade (Hu & Zhou, 2005; Su, 2006), and English has been one major gatekeeper for the majority of the current graduates of institute of higher education (IHEs) (Shih, 2010; Tsai & Tsou, 2009). The term *English as a gatekeeper graduation requirement* was translated literally from the Mandarin term [英文畢業門檻]. In this study, it is the graduation requirement for the majority of IHE students in Taiwan to earn their IHE degrees. Without passing the English proficiency requirement each IHE requests, students are not able to complete their IHE studies, and therefore, English serves as a gatekeeper.

English is an international language that attracts people across the globe to learn it as a second or foreign language, and it is also considered as an asset that leads to success in the twenty-first century job market (Tsai & Tsou, 2009). To meet government requirements and the trend of the job markets, more and more IHEs in Taiwan now use an English proficiency test as a major component of graduation requirements. Students with hearing loss studying in one of these IHEs also need to meet this requirement to earn the college degree. Learning oral languages in the hearing world can be a challenge to students with hearing loss and I will discuss this issue in detail in Chapter Two. Learning a foreign language without adequate curriculum planning, methods, assessment, and
learning environment that cater to the educational needs of students with hearing loss can cause additional barriers (Mittelman & Quinsland, 1991), and decrease their right to learning and opportunities.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) defined the *emic* perspective as the insiders’ view that relies upon insights from the participants to inform findings. Denzin and Lincoln further explained that researchers committed to the *emic* perspective examine the experiences, feelings, and perceptions of the people researchers study, rather than imposing a framework of their own that might distort the ideas of the participants. In this study, I attempted to bring in the *emic* perspective in this study through interviews with IHE students with hearing loss, since the purpose of this study was to understand their students with hearing loss perceptions of learning English as a foreign language and the English language proficiency requirement in the higher education institutes in Taiwan. I contended that their voices are crucial and valuable for educators, policy makers, medical professionals, and other people with disabilities, in both local and global levels—their voices count and matter.

**Background of the Problem**

Students with hearing loss typically have lower academic performance than peers without hearing loss and difficulty learning languages (Lin & Chen, 2003; Yang & Lay, 2005). As I discussed previously, many IHE students in Taiwan now need to meet the English language proficiency requirement, which serves as a gatekeeper for student to earn their higher education degrees. In the following sections, I will include the key elements that are important to students with hearing loss’ education, academic performance, language learning, and success.
History of education in Taiwan. Taiwan, known as the Republic of China, is about 36,000 square kilometers (Oladejo, 2006). Several countries colonized Taiwan before it became an independent governed island from Mainland China. The Dutch colonized Taiwan from 1624 to 1662 in the south; Spain colonized Taiwan between 1626 and 1642 in the north and Japan occupied it in 1895 to 1945 (Chen, 2006). Its educational system was greatly influenced by Japanese colonization. Japanese rulers implemented an educational policy in Taiwan that made Japanese an official language and Mandarin an elective language during those 50 years of colonization (Chen, 2006; Hu & Zhou, 2005). Smith (1981) pointed out that the Japanese defeat in World War II led to the retrocession of Taiwan to the Chinese government and thus to the reorganization of the educational system and educational policy of Taiwan.

Language education. The history of language education in Taiwan involved several different languages. As I stated in previous paragraph, Taiwan was a colony of Japan and Japanese was the official and national language in Taiwan for 50 years (Oladejo, 2006). He noted that approximately 50 percent of the population during the Japanese colonization could speak and understand Japanese. By the end of the colonization in 1946, Mandarin, one of several Chinese spoken languages, became the national and official language in Taiwan (Oladejo, 2006; Van den Berg, 1985). In addition, the Chinese writing system continues to act as the official written language of Taiwan. According to Oladejo, more than 70 percent of the Taiwanese population speaks Taiwanese fluently. The writing system of Taiwanese is based on Chinese characters but has not been developed enough to represent all the distinctive sounds of Taiwanese. Oladejo also stated that other languages like Hakka and indigenous languages—Amis,
Nataoran, Atayal, Babuza, Bunun, Kanakanabu, Kavalan, Kulan-Pazeh, Paiwan, Puyuma, Rukai, Saaroa, Saisiyat, Taroko, Thao, Tsou, and Yami—only have a spoken form and thus cannot be the national and official language in Taiwan. As a result, people from different spoken language backgrounds learn and use Mandarin as the official spoken language and the Chinese writing system as the official written language in school and public in Taiwan.

**The influence of Confucianism.** Confucianism also plays an important role in Taiwanese education. Chinese people have been guided for more than 25 centuries by the teachings of Confucius in both their societal and personal development. The essence of Confucianism seeks to provide all people with an education that includes both basic knowledge and moral precepts (Kang, Lovett, & Haring, 2002). A major tenet of Confucianism posits that without proper education, the opportunities to have a successful life and a higher social status are limited. Chou (2014), summarizing the work of numerous scholars, discussed the influence of Confucianism in Taiwan in the following:

Taiwanese society has been heavily influenced by Confucian values, such as political authoritarianism, social structure, human network, and education (Yao, 2000). Consequently, Taiwan’s society places much emphasis on credentials and the practice of examination systems. The latter originated from imperial China, a period that lasted for more than one thousand and thirty years (694–1895). This system was used as a tool for social control by the ruling class by selecting intellectuals for the governing class through public examinations. Up until now, Taiwan’s society is still under the influence of this examination tradition, which requires a great deal of hard work via drills and practices. Most
Chinese/Taiwanese parents are convinced that effort matters more than innate ability if their children want to improve their school grades (Hwang, 2012; Stevenson and Lee, 1996). Consequently, schools in Taiwan prioritize effort, persistence, and rigidity, which requires more time studying (Zhou, 2000). (p. 2) It is within this context that I conducted this case study, in which the issues of examination, English language proficiency requirement, and their impact on students with hearing loss were prominent.

In order to provide more opportunities to people in Taiwan and so that people can pursue a better quality of life, twelve years of compulsory education is now required for all school-aged students. Hu and Zhou (2005) identified several channels available for junior high school graduates to earn a high school degree; a) the college preparatory high schools, b) vocational high schools, and c) five-year junior colleges. High school graduates can choose from the postsecondary two-year junior college or the four-year higher education institutes to earn the bachelor degree. In the following section, I will discuss the history and current issues of higher education in Taiwan, with notions of international aspects.

Higher education. According to Chou and Wang (2012), World War II was a turning point in the development of higher education internationally. They remarked that before the 1950s, only a few individuals from the upper classes could be admitted to IHEs, since higher education was primarily an elite-oriented education aiming to develop qualified intellectuals for nations and talent for the social mainstream. The United States has been the pioneer of higher education internationally; therefore, I will discuss the
history of the higher education expansion in the United States and Taiwan in the following sections.

**The United States.** In the United States, the first wave of higher education expansion occurred during 1865 to 1890 when many liberal arts colleges were promoted to research comprehensive universities (Thelin, 2004; Trow, 2001; Cheng & Jacob, 2012). According to these researchers, the second wave of higher education came along with the establishment of community colleges. After World War II, as these researchers documented, the third wave of higher education expansion increased the enrollment of higher education institutions up to 50 percent. By 2011, the total number of degree-granted higher education institutes is over 4,000 in the U.S. (Institutes of Education Sciences, n.d).

**Taiwan.** Following the lead of U. S. educational policies, Taiwan engaged in a substantial expansion of higher education to foster talent and address their economic development and social needs (Chou & Wang, 2102; Cheng & Jacob, 2012). According to Cheng and Jacob, only one university and three junior colleges existed in Taiwan in 1950s, with a total enrollment of 4,000. After 60 years, the number of IHEs had grown to 163, including 147 universities or colleges and 16 junior colleges; the total enrollment exceeded 1.2 million (Cheng & Jacob, 2012).

Since 1994, the expansion of higher education has been one of the key education policies in Taiwan (Cheng & Jacob, 2012). Over the past decade, the number of IHEs in Taiwan increased by 40 percent, among which public universities increased by over eight percent and private universities by over 64 percent, including upgraded vocational and technical colleges (Chou & Wang, 2012). The college entrance rate in Taiwan has been
more than 90 percent for a few years (Joint Board College Recruitment Commission, 2011), mainly due to the large number of IHEs, low birth rate, and small number of students.

Equality of higher educational opportunity is a major dimension of the reconstruction of social resources and a crucial mechanism of social mobility (Cheng & Jacob, 2012). The goals of expanding higher education supposedly, are to nurture advanced personnel for national development, fulfill individual potential capacity, and realize the ideal of achieving equal educational opportunities (Chou & Wang, 2012). Due to higher education expansion, most senior high school graduates in Taiwan now have opportunities to pursue higher education, including students with hearing loss. However, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan imposed the English language proficiency requirement for IHE graduates in 2004, and so far 90 percent of the higher education institutes have used this policy as a graduation requirement for their students (He, Chou, Su, Chiang, & Chen, 2013). Taiwanese IHE students now are facing more challenges to meet all graduation requirements, and I will discuss this issue in detail in the statement of the problem and Chapter Two. Before going into the current issues of the English language proficiency requirement for most IHE graduates, it is important to understand the history of English as a foreign language (EFL) and its impact on people internationally, including Taiwan.

**English as a foreign language education.** English education has been one major element in education in many non-English speaking countries. Ann (2001) asserted that English is an extremely prestigious language that is learned as a second language with great frequency; it is also the world’s *lingua franca*. This lingua franca has been a global
trend for decades, which I will also discuss more in detail in Chapter Two. In the following sections, I will include an overview of the history of English education in different non-English speaking countries that include South Africa, the Philippines, Spain, Turkey, and Taiwan.

**International perspectives.** English has played a major role for years in educational, political, social, and economical life in many *periphery* countries, as Phillipson (1992) stressed. Kachru (1985) identified those countries using English as a second language as the inner circle countries, and those countries using English as a foreign language as the expanding circle. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss some examples of those countries using English as a second language and as a foreign language.

In South Africa, English is a second language and has been playing a critical role in political, educational, and social life, and people who have learned English hold a privileged status. McLean and McCormick (1996) reported that out of all languages that are recognized in South Africa; English has a privileged position and is a co-official language along with Afrikaans since the early 19th century. English in South Africa, as McLean and McCormick claimed, is the lingua franca for both pragmatic and symbolic purposes. That is, English is one official language South Africans use in education, government, and media; English is also one major factor to determine socioeconomic status.

Similar to South Africa, English is also taught as a second language and has a great influence on Filipino politics, education, and people’s socioeconomic status (Sibayan & Gonzalez, 1996). The Philippines were colonized by the United States from
1898 to 1946, and English has played a major role in Filipino education. Educated Filipinos use English to discuss technical and academic matters, and the majority of theses and dissertations are written in English. Not only the higher educated, upper class Filipinos use English in their daily life for varied purposes. English is also the preferred language among people from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds. Sibayan and Gonzalez pointed out that the middle class and the middle lower class use English in daily conversation so their status can be viewed more favorably, and English language skills also create more overseas job opportunities for Filipinos.

English is a foreign language in some European countries, and it plays a major role in their education systems. In Spain, for instance, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education is introduced in the third year of elementary schooling, and now in some parts of Spain four-to-five-year old children learn it in school education (Pinilla-Padilla, 2006). In Turkey, Ministry of National Education initiated a major reform in English language teaching by introducing EFL elementary education in 1997 (Kirkgöz, 2006). The trend of making EFL education one curriculum in the early stages of education is increasing in different parts of the world.

English was introduced for a religious reason in South Korea. Shin (2007) discussed that English was initially introduced in Korea with Christianity, which was a symbol of egalitarianism and democratism to undermine the corrupt feudal ruling class of the late Chosen Dynasty from 1392 to 1910. Shin noted that after the period of Japanese colonization from 1910 to 1945, English reentered South Korea with the U.S. army and the U.S. Military Government from 1945 to 1948, which made English a regular subject in secondary schools in Korea since 1945.
In China, English has a long history in its education and economy. Wang (2007) stated that English was established as a compulsory course in middle schools in the late Qing Dynasty in 1902, with students attending a total 1,444 hours throughout the middle school years. Wang also stated that the first 15 years after the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Russian was the predominant foreign language in China. English replaced Russian as the primary foreign language in early 1970s due to the open-door policy which forged diplomatic ties between China and the United States for the purposes of science, technology, business, and tourism. In the following section, I will discuss the history of English education of Taiwan, and explain its social, political, economic, and educational significance.

**Taiwan.** Like many countries in the world, English enjoys a unique status and prestige in international communication, trade, diplomacy, and education in Taiwan (Oladejo, 2006). As Oladejo pointed out, English has been the only compulsory foreign language, and one of the two compulsory languages in education in Taiwan. I will discuss the history of English education in Taiwan in the following paragraphs and details of current English education policy in Chapter Two.

The government of Taiwan has put an emphasis on English education for decades. English education began in secondary schools in Taiwan in 1949, with students learning it for six hours per week during two 20-week semesters per year. IHE students had to complete a three-credit-hour English language course within the first school year (Su, 2006; Zhang, 1992). In 1998, the Ministry of Education announced that English instruction would move from senior high schools to elementary schools, starting in 2001.
According to Su, English became a requirement for fifth-graders in 2001 and third-graders in 2002, with students learning it for 90 minutes per week.

English acts as a gatekeeper for further educational opportunities in Taiwan. English has been one requirement students must meet in addition to the Subject Competency Test for senior high school graduates, the New System of Diversified University Admission, or the Joint College Entrance Exam (Ho, 2004; Hu & Zhou, 2005). Tsai and Tsou (2009) also noted that English is an asset that can lead to success in the twenty-first century job market. As a result, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan started to implement the English language proficiency requirement for IHE graduates in 2004 (He, Chou, Su, Chiang, & Chen, 2013), and many IHEs have followed this policy. This gatekeeping policy reinforces the status of English in education and job opportunities. This impacts current IHE students, including students with hearing loss, because they now must pass this requirement in order to graduate from IHEs. In the following section, I will include the history of special education in Taiwan, with a focus on deaf education, as well as a notion of the impact of English as a gatekeeper in higher education institutes on current IHE students with hearing loss.

**Special education and deaf education.** Special education has been emphasized in many developed and developing countries in the educational system for a few decades. Deaf education plays a crucial role in educational systems in some countries, mainly due to the increasing population of Taiwanese people with hearing loss and more acknowledgement and awareness of the deaf community. In the following sections, I will discuss the major history of special education and deaf education in different countries,
focusing on the influence of the policies of the United States and Indonesia before discussing special education in Taiwan.

**International perspectives.** The United States has influenced special education throughout the world. Special education has been also one focus in its educational system. In the 1950s in the United States, the majority of deaf students were educated in residential schools (Swisher, 1989). One changing point for students with hearing loss or other disabilities in the U. S. happened in 1975. Li (1997) stated that the most significant and influential piece of special education legislation involved the passing of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Swisher also pointed out that since the passing of PL 94-192, more students with hearing loss are educated in public schools and are attending universities and community colleges. Since then, students with hearing loss and other disabilities in the United States have been given more access to education, services, and support, adequate programming, a suitable environment, and equipment to meet their needs (Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Shogren, 2012).

In some developing countries, the foundation and awareness of special education is still under development. For example, in Branson and Miller’s (2004) study, they conducted research in north Bali, Indonesia, in a school for students with hearing loss. They found that there is no Indonesian deaf community and no natural Indonesian sign language. In the villages of north Bali, people with normal hearing and people with hearing loss share the same hereditary rituals and social obligations in the same communities. No structured special or deaf education and service is provided to students with hearing loss in Indonesia; these students are required to learn lip-reading and oral
language, since sign language is not fully developed and constructed. Although Taiwan has its own sign language, not all people with hearing loss use sign language as the primary language mode in Taiwan, and I will discuss it more in Chapter Two.

**Taiwan.** Educating students with disabilities in educational institutions in Taiwan has a forty-year history (Ho, 2004). Li (1997) remarked that the legal status of the education of students with disabilities in Taiwan is similar to the United States. According to Li, the Regulation for a Nine-Year Compulsory Education of 1968, the Rule for Implementation of Special Education of 1970, the Criterion of Assessment and Guidance of Children with Disabilities of 1974, the Regulation of Special Education of 1975, and the Special Education Law of 1984—modeled after the policies in the United States—are all related specifically to individuals with special needs in Taiwan. Smith (1981) also identified that according to the 1968 Act in Taiwan, that children with disabilities were entitled to an opportunity to reach their fullest potential as human beings. Many acts and policies have been established in Taiwan to ensure and protect the rights and needs among students with disabilities.

In Taiwan, special education refers to education for the students with visual impairments, hearing loss, intellectual disabilities, physically disabilities, and the gifted. There are a total of 25 special schools in Taiwan, which includes four for general special education, three for the students with the visual impairments, four for the students with hearing loss, nine for students with intellectual disabilities, and five for students with physically disabilities. The schools provide instruction only up to the senior vocational high school level (Hu & Zhou, 2005). Since 1963, the government has made great efforts to include students with disabilities in higher education, and the first special admission
measure was the Examination-free Admission System to colleges for blind and deaf students established in the same year (Ho, 2004).

According to Smith (1981), children with hearing loss in Taiwan were once viewed as intellectually disabled. A new attitude toward these children appeared with the introduction of Western medical and diagnostic techniques. Special education in some Western countries, including the United States, has impacted the education of students with hearing loss in Taiwan. Smith brought up the fact that many Taiwanese teachers of students with hearing loss have been influenced by Western ideas of special education. Wu (2007) also confirmed the Western influences on Taiwanese special education include factors. The resource room-based mainstreamed program was provided to students with hearing loss in Taiwan in 1975 and inclusive education was introduced to students with disabilities in Taiwan in 1990s. To conclude, Western countries have played a critical role in English education and special education in Taiwan.

Without adequate educational settings, assessment, and accommodations, I argue that English learning and its role as the gatekeeper in higher education may function to socially construct disability for IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan. I will discuss this in detail in my theoretical framework. In the following sections, I will discuss the current issues of English as a foreign language for IHE students with hearing loss.

Statement of the Problem

English has become the international language for business and commerce, science and technology, the Internet, entertainment and sports, and one-quarter of the world’s population uses English as a first, second, or foreign language (Crystal, 2000; Su, 2006). As stated previously, English acts a gatekeeper for people in Taiwan in many
different ways. Ho (2004) asserted that two common tests, Chinese and English, must be taken in the admission screening in addition to other subjects based on the requirements of various departments from IHEs. Now many IHE students, including students with hearing loss, need to fulfill English language requirements to earn higher education degrees. In the following sections, I will discuss the issues of English education, English as a gatekeeper for IHE graduates, and IHE students with hearing loss learning English as a foreign language.

**English as a foreign language (EFL).** As stated in the background of the problem, English has been a primary subject in compulsory education in Taiwan for years, and the attention from its government and decision makers on English education has been increasing. The government in Taiwan encourages IHEs to have the English proficiency requirement for their graduates, and more and more IHEs follow this trend in order to maintain or improve their compatibility and national rank, as well as having more opportunities to receive government funding. As stated previously, the low birth rate and an increasing number of IHEs make IHE entrance rate high. However, being able to graduate under the English as a gatekeeper policy can be difficult, particularly for students with hearing loss.

Chang (2006) stated that the graduation rate is less than 40 percent at universities and 20 percent at colleges since the government in Taiwan instituted English graduation requirements. For IHE students generally and students with hearing loss, this policy may extend their graduation date and create more language barriers. To increase graduation rates, many IHEs offer alternative classes for students who cannot pass the level of English proficiency test their IHEs require. These alternative classes include using
English for special purposes. Students with hearing loss often need to fulfill this alternative English class instead of passing an English proficiency test to obtain an IHE degree.

**Students with hearing loss learning EFL.** For some IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan, alternative classes to meet their regular class requirements based on their Individualized Support Program (ISP) are available, especially in English classes. If they cannot meet the standard of an English proficiency test, which is likely, they too have to take and pass those English alternative classes like other students. However, whether these alternative classes are successful in supporting IHE students with hearing loss in their English learning has not been systematically investigated.

**First language.** Huteson (2003) stressed the fact that the government of Taiwan and most Taiwanese regard people with hearing loss as physically disabled. People with hearing loss in Taiwan who use sign language as their primary language mode, as Huteson further pointed out, are viewed as intellectually deficient and *languageless* (p. 12). Their linguistic difference may turn out to be the cause of their disability, simply because the majority of people in Taiwan do not use nor understand their language. For some students with hearing loss in Taiwan, English may not just be the foreign language; it can be the third or fourth language.

As stated previously, English in Taiwan is the only compulsory foreign language, and Mandarin is its only one compulsory local spoken language (Oladejo, 2006). Other spoken languages, Taiwanese, Hakka, and indigenous languages, were introduced in school education as the mother-tongue languages in late 1980s (Chen, 1996; Heylen, 2005; Hsiau, 1997; Sandel, Chao, & Liang, 2006). According to Sandel et al., more than
80 percent of the population in Taiwan speaks these languages in addition to the official language—Mandarin. Yet, these commonly used spoken languages do not have the superior status as English in education, employment, economy, and politics. In Taiwan, students with hearing loss whose mother tongues are other than Mandarin and are also learning English, the additional language they need to learn and achieve in school, face difficulties. If they do not have access to adequate learning methods, assessment, or environments, English learning may be insufficient and meaningless for students with hearing loss in Taiwan.

**Educational setting.** In Taiwan, class size is commonly large in many classrooms. Liao (2010) found that most IHE students in Taiwan stay with more than 40 of the same classmates in most classes until they graduate. This phenomenon is also common in elementary and secondary schools. Since English is a requirement starting at the third grade, many students with hearing loss learn this foreign language in a large class size, which can be a disadvantage for students with hearing loss developing English skills.

**Identification and intervention.** Huteson (2003) indicated that the shortage of audiologists can cause a delay in identification and intervention of hearing loss. According to him, the ratio of audiologists to the general population in Taiwan is 1:200,000, in comparison to 1:22,000 in the United States. Huteson stressed the problems of under-identification and misdiagnosis of hearing loss in Taiwan; these can make people with hearing loss a marginalized minority. For these people, education, policy, the medical system, and society frames what might otherwise as a difference as a disability, when such linguistic difference is not valued and their linguistic traits are ignored and
diminished. I will discuss the importance of early identification and intervention in Chapter Two.

**Disadvantages of socioeconomic status.** Most families of students with hearing loss in Taiwan are of low socioeconomic status (Huteson, 2003; Lin, 2002). Affording additional English classes in cram schools or hiring private tutors may be unattainable and can cause additional financial burden to these families. As a result, for students with hearing loss, the only accessible way to develop English skills heavily relies on school education; their chances of achieving English requirements and receiving higher education diploma relies on educators, policy makers, and medical professionals.

Wang (2012) argued that based on the equity rule, it is essential to allocate resources based on individuals’ traits and merits in order to fulfill personal potential and promote social productivity. Wang indicated that fairness is achieved not through one-size-fits-all education but instead through differential education. As Wang claimed, it is important to tailor education to individual needs and to offer opportunities to foster individual choices and diverse development. I argue that for IHE students with hearing loss, the English proficiency requirement may contribute to the social construction of disability and create barriers to accessing educational opportunities unless appropriate modifications and support are provided. As Wang concluded, achievement in a variety of pyramids of excellence should be based on a diverse set of criteria and standards.

**Purpose of the Study**

Students with hearing loss learning a foreign language receive very limited attention in the research literature, and not many research studies have focused on their voice and opinions about learning English as a foreign language. Since English is a
requirement in school education, a crucial element for opportunities for employment, and a primary language for the global economy, understanding the perceptions of English learning among IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan is necessary. In this research, I intended to a) provide the opportunity for IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan to share their opinions, thoughts, and experiences of learning English as a foreign language in higher education institutes; and b) understand how English as a foreign language policies and educational practices contribute to create opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing loss. I argue that their voices and opinions of English as a foreign language learning can help educators and policy makers reexamine, reevaluate, and perhaps revise English education, to provide these students equal access and opportunity to grow in language, education, and career development.

Questions to be Addressed

The research question of this study focused on current IHE students with hearing loss learning English in IHEs—what are the lived experiences of students with hearing loss in a Taiwanese IHE within the policy environment of English as a gatekeeper. I addressed the issues related to the following sub questions: a) how do Taiwanese IHE students with hearing loss perceive their experiences learning English as a foreign language in IHEs; and b) how do the current policies and educational practices related to learning English as a foreign language serve to construct opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing loss.

Operational Definitions

*English as a foreign language (EFL):* In this paper, I used this term to refer to people learning and using English in a country where English is not an official language,
the primary language of most inhabitants, nor a second language.

*Hearing loss*: I defined hearing loss as identified by professionals and screening with a wide range of degrees—mild to profound hearing loss.

**Theoretical Framework**

From a sociocultural standpoint, the concept of experiences in the social situation of development is critical to understanding the way individuals construct their systems of meaning (Mahn, 2008). From an ecological perspectives, how people perceive themselves is strongly influenced by their interactions with others (Bogdan & Knoll, 1995). As Danforth and Rhodes (1997) argued, language, thought, interaction, politics, history, and culture are the keys to make the meaning of human in living contexts; disabilities are commonly explained and interpreted as political and social artifacts by professionals and normal people. The human brain, eye, ear, or limb are not just physical organs, and an impairment of these organs leads to a reconstruction of social relationships and to a displacement of all systems of behavior (Gindis, 1999; Vygotsky, 1983). As Gindis and Vygotsky argued, disability is perceived as an abnormality, and it is viewed and defined in the social context.

Breckenridge and Vogler (2001) also maintained that concepts of citizenship, the economy, and the body are embedded in understandings of what constitutes well being, which generally exclude or marginalize the forms or realities of disability. Disability, in the “able” citizen’s lens, is identified and described differently, compared to the social construction of disability perspective, which I employed as the theoretical framework of this study. I will discuss social construction of disability in detail in the following section.
Social construction of disability. Devin and Pothier (2006) interpreted that citizenship is not just an issue of individual status; it is a practice that locates individuals in the larger community. Foucault (1972-1977) stated that people with power determine the definition and interpretation of true knowledge. According Kincheloe and McLaren (2002), a critical social theory focuses the issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matter of race, class, and gender. As they emphasized, ideologies, discourses, education, religion, other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system. According to Gindis (1999), Vygotsky, one of the most well-known and respected psychologists and learning theorists, viewed disability not as a biological or psychological impairment, but as a socio-cultural developmental phenomenon. Jones (1996) identified the significance of distinguishing between the biological fact of disability and the handicapping social environment that makes a person disabled. As Jones argued, if people can and are willing to remove and eliminate the physical, social, and emotional barriers of the disabling environment, many people will not get labeled as disabled.

School education. Gindis (1999) affirmed that human development is a socio-genetic process carried out in social activities. De Valenzuela (2015a) emphasized that adaptive devices, environment, expectation, attitudes, training, compensatory strategies, and assumptions are the key elements that construct a condition a person has as a disability. From a sociocultural standpoint, as Gindis stressed, education leads development, which is the result of social learning through the internalization of culture and social relationships. From a critical perspective, McLaren (1994) maintained that knowledge acquired in school or anywhere is never neutral or objective but is ordered
and structured in particular ways. Akamatsu and Cole (2004) emphasized that schools are the most significant change agents at the societal and the individual level. In school education, students with disabilities receive special education and services, primarily based on the diagnosis. The diagnosis, as Danforth and Rhodes (1997) argued, does not provide a reflection of the student’s abilities; rather, it reflects the bureaucratic system’s requirement that students be defined and processed within a power network of procedures and interpretations. Danforth and Rhodes argued that a disability in a specific academic area will not be diagnosed if the very definition of that academic area remains open to diverse interpretations. The labels from medical professionals’ diagnosis and the primary language mode people with power use may work to hinder people with hearing loss’ language development and lessen their opportunities to succeed.

**Language development for people with hearing loss.** According to Bourdieu (1986), the educational system ensures “the reproduction of the social structure by sanctioning the hereditary transmission of cultural capital” (p. 243). According to him, people who hold the higher cultural capital are those with more cultural resources and they are more likely to earn more economic capital, which secure their socioeconomic status. And these people with more cultural and economic capital, are also more likely to be educationally and occupationally successful, and the school system is the agent that reproduce this whole system in society.

Language is a critical element and tool to gain and exchange knowledge and ideas as well as to ensure identity; providing multilingual learning to satisfy all students’ needs should be one key for effectiveness, meaningfulness and equality in education. Bourdieu (1991) claimed that linguistic exchanges are the relations of symbolic power in which the
power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized. According to Bourdieu, the distribution of linguistic capital relates to economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital, all of which “define the location of an individual within the social space” (p. 18). As Bourdieu stressed, an individual who possesses more linguistic (and other capital, such as cultural capital), is more able to “exploit the system of differences to their advantage and thereby secure a profit of distinction” (p.18).

Unfortunately, students with hearing loss, in many societies, do not hold enough cultural or linguistic capital to experience equivalent economic and educational success as their hearing counterparts.

In Ewoldt’s (1990) study, children with hearing loss and children with normal hearing demonstrate similar behavior and take similar paths toward literacy. He maintained that if children with hearing loss are exposed in the environment where written language and sign language are available and valued, their language development can be as normal as others in the hearing world. Ann (2001) reviewed some previous literature of some places where the population of hearing loss was more populated than people with hearing loss, such as Martha’s Vineyard, an island off the coast of Massachusetts, the state of Yucatan, Mexico, and Bali Island, Indonesia. People with hearing loss in these locations were not seen as disabled, and sign language was one of primary languages used by the local people, both with and without hearing loss.

However, not all people with hearing loss have the opportunity to be linguistically abled. The term “audism” was defined by a scholar and professor, Tom Humphries, in 1975. According to Cripps and Supalla (2012), Humphries viewed audism as an individual having a superior status based on his or her hearing ability or ability to behave
as a hearing person. In addition to individual biases against those who are hard of hearing or Deaf, these authors also describe institutional audism as “a system responsible for prejudicial actions towards people who cannot hear” (p. 97) and metaphysical audism as “spoken language-biased ideology” (p. 97). In many societies, unlike those in the previous paragraph, people with hearing loss are experience audism because their linguistic needs and differences, such as using a signed language or using amplification devices, are judged negatively in comparison to hearing individuals. People with hearing loss living within the audist environment tend to lack access to communication modes that would provide them equal access within the dominant culture—the hearing world. As a result, barriers and challenges in the educational, occupational, economic, and social levels are constructed.

In Branson and Miller’s (2004) study of the students with hearing loss in a north Bali school, these students’ language development was incomplete and insufficient, mainly due to the limited language modes and choices the school chose and used. Also, in Taiwan, as Huteson (2003) stated, hearing loss is regarded as a physical disability, not a cultural trait. For people with hearing loss in Taiwan whose primary and preferred language mode is other than the spoken language—the one majority of people use—this linguistic difference can contribute to the socially construction of disability. De Valenzuela (2007) pointed out that equal treatment is not the same as equal opportunity to learn and it does not ensure educational equity. Using the same language and language modes with students with hearing loss, in fact, causes unequal learning opportunity and access.
Communication barriers are a great challenge for people with sensory loss (Harlan & Robert, 1998). As previously stated, people with hearing loss can be socially constructed as disabled when the hearing world does not use and have access to their language modes (Reagan, 1990). Benard (1993) asserted that people with hearing loss need to feel socially and academically competent to be productive members in a society. Education leads to social and cultural development (Gindis, 1999); educators need to acknowledge and understand the importance of providing a barrier-free learning process and environment to include students with hearing loss in their learning process and product.

Akamatsu and Cole (2004) stressed that with the right environment and sufficient language modes, first language development can be effective for individuals with hearing loss, as well as their second or foreign language development, since there is a strong correlation between first and second language development. As I previously described, students with hearing loss are able to develop language as effectively as those without hearing loss when the appropriate and their preferred language mode is practiced and respected. Since English is a requirement in school education in Taiwan and is a determining factor of one’s success in different aspects and phases, I believe that learning English as a foreign language can be effective, meaningful, and successful, if the educators and policy makers put students with hearing loss’ linguistic needs and concerns into curriculum design and decision making.

**Researcher Stance**

I taught English as a foreign language at IHEs in Taiwan for eight years before starting my Ph.D. studies. Improving the teaching method to facilitate students with
different learning needs and styles learning English was a main goal in my teaching.

During those years of teaching English, I had several IHE students with hearing loss in my English class with approximately 50 other students. They used different language modes to communicate with people in daily life, such as lip-reading, writing, and speaking. The resource center at the college offered these students an alternative—private tutoring sessions instead of the general English class, for the English course requirements at the IEP meetings in the beginning of the semester. All of them chose to have the one-on-one tutoring to complete the English course requirements.

In the one-on-one tutoring with these students, I learned from the students that they had learned English in big classes in their secondary schools, where the teachers used lecturing as the main teaching method in the classroom, and that there was lots of testing for English proficiency throughout the secondary school years. Interactions and activities were rare in their secondary school English classes. The only way they could pass English requirements there was to memorize all the “symbols”—the alphabetical letters, although those “symbols” had no meanings to them. Since the phonological and writing systems in Mandarin and English are different, memorizing “symbols” hindered these two students from English language learning. I will discuss the orthographies of Mandarin and English and their related issues in Chapter Two.

When I was teaching at IHEs, all students had to take at least six credit hours of English as the English requirements. I have since learned from my former colleagues that all students at the college I used to teach now have to pass the English proficiency test or take an additional English course, in addition to the pre-existing English requirements to earn the IHE degrees. Although this English proficiency requirement exists in many other
IHEs in Taiwan, it made me question whether we provide opportunities or barriers to students in higher education and for future employment opportunities, especially the students with hearing loss. I questioned the appropriateness and effectiveness of English learning in the educational setting and policies of Taiwan for students with hearing loss at IHEs. I questioned whether students with hearing loss needs and concerns have been included in teaching method, curriculum design, learning environment setting, and English graduation requirements at IHEs. I questioned whether IHE English teachers offer accommodations to these students in learning materials, examination, assignments, or class activities to help them develop English skills. In order to find the answers for these questions I had, I believe it is important to understand the perceptions and experiences of IHE students with hearing loss undergoing these experiences.

**Underlying Assumptions**

English learning plays a crucial role in each citizen’s life in Taiwan, educationally, academically, occupationally, and politically. In order to pursue a higher education, a better job, or higher quality life in Taiwan, English is one major element. English is a school subject in Taiwan; it is also now a commonly used gatekeeper for higher education and job markets. Since English is a requirement in school education, I believe it is necessary to make sure its education is accessible, applicable, and usable.

I also believed that without a proper educational setting and environment, learning tools and methods, assessment, and curriculum design to accommodate and include all students, English learning can be a failure and contribute to the social construction of disability. For current IHE students with hearing loss, it is more likely that they have to meet the English requirements before graduation, since the number of IHEs that have the
English proficiency requirement is increasing. Therefore, I argue that educators and policy makers do not incorporate these students’ language differences and needs in curriculum and assessment designs, students with hearing loss at all age levels, without accommodations, can be victimized under this educational policy. In this study, I invited two current IHE students with hearing loss to share their perceptions of learning English and the English proficiency requirement and hope that their voices can be heard, valued, and considered.

**Importance of the Study**

The development of a language requires the practice in all domains and given opportunity to do so (Freire, 1985). As stated in previous sections, English plays an important role in international business, communication, technology, education, and travel, and the government in Taiwan published a series of language policies and school curricula regarding English learning (Su, 2006). As de Valenzuela (2007) remarked, a lack of learning opportunity can have a debilitating impact on development; learning opportunity, access, and process should be equal and fair to students with diverse learning needs. I argue that it is policy makers, educators, and society’s responsibility to ensure the quality of the learning environment and setting for all students, as well as to deconstruct disability, as Danforth and Rhodes (1997) asserted, by ensuring English learning “barrier-free”.

Since not many research studies have focused on the issues of students with hearing loss learning English as a foreign language, I sought to represent the current IHE students with hearing loss’ emic perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In this study, I hoped to provide them a platform to transmit their voices to educators, educational
institutes, medical professionals, government, both locally and internationally, by conducting a case study of two current IHE students’ experiences learning English in Taiwan. I will discuss the details of this case study in Chapter Three.

**Scope and Delimitations of the Study**

I conducted a case study in Taiwan to investigate the perceptions of the lived experiences of students with hearing loss in a Taiwanese IHE within the policy environment of English as a gatekeeper. I addressed the issues related to the perceptions of learning English as a foreign language among students with hearing loss in an IHE in Taiwan, and examined how English as a foreign language policies and educational practices contributed to barriers and opportunities for these students. This case study focused on two IHE students with hearing loss—the primary participants of the study. I conducted two interviews with each primary participant and one interview with people who were associated with their English learning—the secondary participants. I also performed three class observations of each case and collected documents that were relevant to each case’s English learning.

In this case study, I only chose the primary participants that were enrolled in an English class at an IHE in Taiwan. I only chose the secondary participants who were associated with the primary participants’ English learning. All the data I collected in this study was relevant only to the primary participants’ English learning. I excluded students with other disabilities or students without disabilities to be the primary participants. I excluded people who were not related to the primary participants’ English learning to be the secondary participants. I only performed the class observations of the primary participants, and collected documents that were relevant to the primary participants’
English learning with their permission. I used pseudonyms for all participants in collecting, recording, and analyzing data. I used cross-case analysis in the data analysis. As such, these case studies may not be generalizable to the experiences of students with hearing loss in other countries, or even to other students with hearing loss in Taiwan. I will explain the procedures of conducting this case study in Chapter Three.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

All language users have more than one way to express the same thing (Fasold, 1984); however, some languages and language modes have more prominent global, social, economic, educational, and political status. English has been the international language of the world for decades, although it has far fewer native English speakers than Mandarin Chinese (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). Lucas (2001) asserted that most people use language to make statements about their identity, culture, and social status and relationship with others. Learning English affects its learners’ value, power, rights, and opportunity in several aspects.

As stated in Chapter One, English education in Taiwan is a requirement for all students, starting in the third grade in 2002 (Su, 2006) in the country’s efforts to develop oral English proficiency for effective inter- and intra-national communication (Chen, 2006). This policy and phenomenon raises the competition and pressure for both students and parents financially, academically, and socially, since it is a factor in determining students’ academic achievement, as well as their future career and success (Tzeng, 2007). According to Lin (1998), to meet the requirements established by the Special Education Act of 1997 and Protection Act for Individuals with Disabilities of 1997, students with hearing loss need to meet the English language requirements to ensure their rights under these laws.

Lukomski (2007) claimed that communication barriers cause difficulty in social adjustments for IHE students with hearing loss, and many of them often experience loneliness, isolation, or unfamiliarity with the educational environment due to language
barriers. Learning English as a foreign language is one guarantee for equal education for students with hearing loss in Taiwan. However, it is possible if the learning environment, curriculum planning, policy, teaching methods, and learning assessments do not meet their linguistic traits and needs, learning English may limit their academic achievement and opportunity, as well as socioeconomic status. The research question of this study was “what are the perceptions of the lived experiences of students with hearing loss in a Taiwanese IHE within the policy environment of English as a gatekeeper?” The sub questions of this study were: a) how do Taiwanese IHE students with hearing loss perceive their experiences learning English as a foreign language in IHEs; and b) how do the current policies and educational practices related to learning English as a foreign language serve to construct barriers and opportunities for IHE students with hearing loss?

In this chapter, I will provide an in-depth discussion on global English, policies of English as a foreign language and special education, and different issues encountered by individuals with hearing loss in Taiwan.

Global English

English, a global language, has become one of the dominant mediums in politics, economy, and education globally (Wang, 2010). As stated in the previous section, English is considered the international language because of the number of people learning English as their second or third language users due to economic factors related to the global economy (McKay, 2003). Phillipson (1992) pointed out three functions English serves in education: a) economic-reproductive, a process of qualification for work in the economy; b) ideological, a channel that brings modern ideas for interpersonal, social, and cultural values; and c) repressive, a medium of education. The global spread of English
assures its superiority in the status of education, power, and economy in many countries in the world, including native and non-native English speaking countries and cultures (Shin, 2007). The increasing movement of people across nations, combined with the predominant use of English for international communication, has had important implications not only for English-dominant countries that receive a substantial number of immigrant and international students from around the world, but also in particular for Asian countries like China, Japan, and South Korea, which have heightened their focus on the learning of English (Cheng, 2012; Cheng, Klinger, Fox, Doe, Jin, & Wu, 2014). In the following sections, I will include the major perspectives of English language education in Taiwan and other countries, along with its influence on local and international dynamics.

**International perspectives.** According to McKay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008), it is estimated that today there are around 5,000 to 6,700 languages in the world, and approximately 15 percent of the world’s population speak Mandarin and 5.4 percent speak English. English is the dominant or official language in over 60 of the 185 nation-states recognized by the United Nations (Crystal, 1987; McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). McKay and Bokhorst-Heng also pointed out that the significance of English today is due to the increase in the number of second language speakers of English and its geographical spread, and that there are more second language speakers of English than native speakers.

More researchers have investigated and discussed the facts and issues of the global spread of English. Crystal (1987) provided some major statistical facts about English language use in the world: a) it is either dominant or well established in all six
continents; b) it is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music, and advertising worldwide; c) over two-thirds of the world’s scientists write in English; d) it is the language of three quarters of the world’s mail; e) 80 percent of all the information in the world’s electronic retrieval systems is stored in English; and f) over 150 million people in 120 countries receive English language radio programs.

Coulmas (2005) also concluded that English a) is the dominant language of the world’s greatest military power, b) has allocated official status in a third of the world’s countries, c) is spoken by the very rich and the very poor and used across a wide range of ethnicities and nationalities, d) is the most valuable linguistic component of human capital, e) is the foremost language of international scholarship, and f) is the language most connected with others by means of bilingual dictionaries. As Kennedy (1983) noted, the relationship between use of a language and political power, socioeconomic development, national and local identity, and cultural values has increased the realization of the importance of language policies and planning in the life of a nation. English language policy and education have a significant impact on local and international relationships.

Warschauer (2000) stated that there is an increasing number of English users and learners, even if they never set foot in an English-speaking country, for varied political and economic reasons. For example, in China, the current Mandarin-in-education policies reinforce the learning and teaching of English by the government; the requirements of studying English have been promoted and emphasized as well (McKay & Bokhorst-
Heng, 2008). In Shin’s (2007) study, education in South Korea is treated as a tool to keep up with the rapid globalization of the world economy and language, and its policy is the critical element of a nation’s economy. The importance of English, for South Korea, is to survive severe competition in the international markets. Also in Hong Kong, as McKay and Bokhorst-Heng identified, the majority of students choose to be taught in the language of power and wealth, English, over their own language to gain economic and other future benefits.

English plays a key role in some countries’ politics, people’s socioeconomic status, and education. McLean and McCormick (1996) pointed out that in South Africa, 11 major languages are recognized but English has the privileged position; it has been a co-official language along with Afrikaans since the early 19th century. English in South Africa is the lingua franca for both pragmatic and symbolic purposes, and it plays an important role in education, government, and media. In addition, Sibayan and Gonzalez (1996) argued that English language has a major influence on socioeconomic status and education in the Philippines. Educated Filipinos use English to discuss technical and academic matters, and 95 percent of thesis and dissertations are written in English. The middle class and the middle lower class also use English in daily conversation to improve their status. Learning English also increases Filipinos’ overseas job opportunities for better financial and social status. The power of the English language, in many countries, is still growing in value.

Taiwan. The global spread of English is evident in many educational institutes, households, and people’s daily lives in Taiwan. Kennedy (1983) claimed that language planning is crucial for education, and universally it is recognized as a powerful
instrument of change. Review and reform of English education have frequently been the
target in educational system and policy change in Taiwan. As McKay and Bokhorst-Heng
(2008) stated, current educational incentives for learning English tended to occur through
two mechanisms; a) policies within educational institutions, and b) government policies.
These incentives can make English language act as a gatekeeper for higher education in
some countries, including Taiwan.

To prepare students in secondary education in Taiwan for higher education
admission, teachers put much effort to help the youth have access to pursue a better
education. Lo (1996) pointed out that English teachers in Taiwan need to cover specific
items within a specific period of time to follow the Board of Education’s policy. This
author argued that teachers’ main job in the English classroom is to follow the prescribed
curriculum and content included in the course textbook. Lo also documented that in many
secondary school English classes in Taiwan, the teaching method English teachers use
favors reading and some writing, because it is the most effective way to fulfill the
requirements of the entrance examinations and, as McKay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008)
stated, most of the English examinations focus on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation,
and translation skills.

Parents’ socioeconomic status and involvement are factors influencing students’
English language proficiency in Taiwan; these factors determine the additional
opportunities and access to learn English other than traditional English classes, to
increase the students’ university acceptance rate. As Park and Abelmann’s (2004) study
showed, parents’ socioeconomic status can affect the effectiveness of English education,
which made more parents desperate for better English education for their children in
order for them to be as competitive as other children. English education in Taiwan, in this sense, has a dramatic influence on parents’ and students’ lives.

All universities in Taiwan offer Freshman English courses, mainly focusing on general language skills, literature, and English for Specific Purposes (Huang, 1997). Another focus in college English courses is, as discussed previously, the adoption of the standardized English language proficiency tests as a tool for assessing students’ English competence for graduation (Tsai & Tsou, 2009). Tsai and Tsou pointed out that in order to meet the requirements the Ministry of Education assigns in English language education, more than 30 of the 165 universities in Taiwan now have adopted various standardized English Language proficiency tests as the tool of assessment for graduation.

Shih’s (2010) study showed that using the General English Proficiency Test—the most popular English proficiency test in Taiwan, as a benchmark for graduation in the university level can benefit students in English proficiency and provide for better and more future job opportunities. Shin also pointed out that the General English Proficiency Test causes more financial burdens to students and parents to pay for additional English classes and overpowers other professional certifications that are recommended to IHE graduates. As Tsai and Tsou (2009) argued, the standardized English language proficiency tests are viewed as insufficient as tools to assess what was learned and taught in a foreign language classroom and likely make English instruction test-driven; a growing number of universities uses this gatekeeping requirement for their IHE graduates in Taiwan.

**English as a Foreign Language Policy**
Adegbija (1994) argued that economic, political, cultural, and social factors are important to language planning and policy. As stated previously, English has its superior and unique status in educational system and policy in many non-English speaking countries. In the following sections, I will look into major English as a foreign language policies in different countries in the world, including the Republic of China, Taiwan.

**International perspectives.** English language has a solid foundation and firm stance in educational policy in many non-English speaking countries; it also serves linguistic purposes among different groups. In Mexico, for instance, the greatest priority is to increase the level of education of its people and English language education plays a crucial part (Flores, 2006). Also, Ann (2001) pointed out that in Singapore, English serves as the lingua franca for people from different groups who speak Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, and English. English, in many non-English speaking countries, has a tremendous influence on people’s lives in different aspects and dimensions.

Nunan’s (2003) study showed that English has been viewed as a global language worldwide, and it has had a significant impact on policies in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Most of these countries introduce English as a compulsory subject in lower grade levels, to serve the purpose of compatibility with international business. Shin (2007) also pointed out that in Korea the government attempts to make Korea the business center of Northeast Asia by promoting English education. English education in some non-English speaking countries, in this sense, serves as an admission ticket to enhance and ensure their own world power and economy.
**Taiwan.** English education policy in Taiwan has always been the highlight of educational reform and revision. Oladejo (2006) acknowledged that the Taiwanese government has embarked upon a number of English education policies recently to promote the learning and use of English, which include the creation of a Chinese-English bilingual environment in public institutions and in the community. As I stated in Chapter One, in 1998 the Ministry of Education announced one of the most important education—English instruction would move from senior high schools to elementary schools starting in 2001 (Hu & Zhou, 2005; Su, 2006). According to these researchers, most elementary schools introduce English language in the third grade starting in 2002, and in some metropolitan cities and well-known schools, this is started in the first grade. This policy shifted the focus of elementary education and language education in Taiwan to a different level and phase; schools offer more hours of English education and activities, teachers focus on helping students attain a certain level on the English language proficiency test, and parents arrange extra English instruction outside the school. In the following sections, I will address the major issues of English education policy, curriculum, as well as students’ perception of learning EFL in Taiwan.

**Gatekeeper.** English has acted as a gatekeeper in career opportunity, promotion, and education in Taiwan for years (Lin & Chiou, 2010). Shih (2010) pointed out that with the growing numbers of universities, universities seek teaching excellence and better English learning outcomes to recruit and graduate students. English; therefore, is so far the only gatekeeper for prospective higher education undergraduates in Taiwan (He, Chou, Su, Chiang, & Chen, 2013), successfully completing an approved program of study with a passing grade in all courses. According to these researchers, the Ministry of
Education provided one billion New Taiwan dollars to promote English IHE graduation requirements. As I discussed in Chapter One, according to these researchers, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan imposed the English proficiency requirement for IHE graduates in 2004, and so far 90 percent of the higher education institutes have used this policy as a graduation requirement for their students.

In order to improve and standardize the English performance of Taiwanese citizens across different levels of learning, as Oladejo (2006) stated, one of the most used English language proficiency tests, the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), was introduced in 2000 and has played the most important role in English as a gatekeeper for IHE graduates. That is, passing the GEPT or an equivalent test is now one requirement students need to meet in many IHEs in order to graduate (Tsai & Tsou, 2009). In the following section, I will discuss the features of the GEPT and how it impacts on people in Taiwan in different aspects, mainly on current IHE students.

**GEPT.** For decades, testing has been purposely adopted by politicians, policy-makers and educators to bring about an improvement on teaching, learning and other aspects of educational reform (Shih, 2009). Language tests have become a pervasive phenomenon in high-stakes decision making, and their scores influence university admission, program placement, graduation, and immigration (Cheng, Klinger, Fox, Doe, Jin, & Wu, 2014; Shohamy & McNamara, 2009). Passing the GEPT is now required for most IHE students in Taiwan (Lin & Chiou, 2010).

According to LTTC (2014), the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) invited scholars and experts in English language teaching and testing from different institutions around Taiwan to form a Testing Research Committee and a Testing
Advisory Committee in 1997. In 1999, this project received support from the Ministry of Education, prior to the arrival of the GEPT, which was completed in July 2002. Since then, the test takers of GEPT exceeded 5.1 million. More than 300 junior high schools or high schools, and hundreds of universities, private enterprises, and government agencies in Taiwan recognize GEPT scores. Even some institutions in Hong Kong, Japan, France, Germany, the U.K., and the U.S. have adopted the GEPT as a means of measuring the English language ability of Taiwanese applicants.

According to Shih (2009), GEPT is a national English proficiency test which is used as a) the matriculation English test (Cheng, 2005; Qi, 2007; Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, & Ferman, 1996; Wall, 2005; Watanabe, 2004); b) academic English test (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Green, 2007; Hawkey, 2006; Hayes & Read, 2004); c) classroom-based assessment (Burrows, 2004); and d) second-language tests in high schools (Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, & Ferman, 1996). It is a proficiency test of general English with five levels in Taiwan—elementary, intermediate, high intermediate, advanced, and superior (Cheng, Klinger, Fox, Doe, Jin, & Wu, 2014; Lin & Chiou, 2010; Shih, 2009).

The GEPT test aims to assess four language skills—listening, reading, writing, and speaking, and it can be taken by learners of English from age 12 and up (Cheng, Klinger, Fox, Doe, Jin, & Wu, 2014). Except for the superior level, the rest of the test levels have two stages (Lin & Chiou, 2010; Shih, 2009). According to these researchers, listening and reading abilities are examined in the first stage, and speaking and writing skills in the second stage. Passing the first stage of a specific level is the prerequisite for registering for its second stage. Test takers who pass both stages of a certain level can
receive a certificate of achievement from the Language Training and Testing Center. The certificate is the door to further education, graduation, career opportunities, or job promotion. Yet, it also creates some issues and concerns for people in Taiwan.

**Issues and concerns of English as a gatekeeper.** One issue of English as a gatekeeper relates to the inequality of education and socioeconomic status. Since the early 1990s, a growing number of parents and educators have insisted on the need to promote English learning at the elementary level in response to economic globalization (Hu & Zhou, 2005; Su, 2006). Su brought up a critical fact that some local educational bureaus and schools designate a lower starting grade-level of English education to promote and increase the compatibility and popularity of the school. As a result, many bilingual programs at schools and cram schools have been providing people from different age levels including preschoolers to increase the passing rate (He, Chou, Su, Chiang, & Chen, 2013; Oladejo, 2006). This phenomenon can cause gaps between students from varied backgrounds, such as the rich and the poor or the “abled” and “disabled”. As Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls (1986) argued, educational tests play a significant role in decision-making that can often lead to students’ success or failure in school. These researchers also pointed out that most tests are designed for the middle class and students without disabilities; these standardized tests are inadequate for students with diverse learning needs and learning styles, which can create barriers to test the authenticity of students’ competency in that subject matter.

The overemphasis of the English language is another concern that many people in Taiwan are facing these days. The spread of English may marginalize other languages since English can be a gatekeeper to education, employment, business opportunities and
popular culture (Ljungdahl, 2003). Wu (2008) argued that whether using English as an
element of major entrance examinations and professional licenses is appropriate or not,
and whether the policy has made people in Taiwan over emphasize the needs and
importance of the English language. According to He, Chou, Su, Chiang, and Chen
(2013), an English as a gatekeeper policy, not only affect students’ graduation and
employment, but also determines higher education institute’s funding, annual evaluation,
student enrollment allowance from the Ministry of Education. These researchers question
whether the policy creates and reinforces the English language’s prestigious status over
other languages and professions, since most departments in higher education institutes do
not use any other gatekeeping mechanism on their students.

The major concern of English as a gatekeeper in this study is its educational
implications. Very few IHE students have passed the GEPT test at the elementary level.
Su (2005) studied a group of 598 students and found that only 5.9 percent passed the
elementary level GEPT. Since the GEPT is used by hundreds of public and private
schools and higher education institutes as an admission, placement, or graduation
criterion in Taiwan, the findings of Su (2005) mean that most IHE students would not
graduate or qualify for a job after graduation (Lin & Chiou, 2010). Besides the low
passing rate and concerns of graduation, some researchers question whether English as
gatekeeper policies create problems. Su (2004) posited that using testing as the only
element to assess students’ learning not only limits students’ creativity but also their
language comprehension and critical thinking. He, Chou, Su, Chiang, and Chen (2013)
also pointed out that using testing to determine curriculum and instruction and even
students’ performance may not be adequate to present students’ learning and progress, and may lower students’ English learning motivation and interest.

**Students’ perceptions of EFL.** Taiwanese students’ perceptions of English learning ties with different influential factors. Instructional methods and strategies are some of the primary factors that affect students’ perceptions of English learning in Taiwan. Young’s (2003) study investigated the potential impacts of integrating the Internet into an English as a second language class in a vocational senior high school in Taiwan. Twenty-nine students and a young male English teacher participated in this study. This study showed that the participated vocational high school students had a positive perception of English learning when the teachers integrate the curriculum with technology. Young claimed that using the Internet as one instructional tool and medium facilitated the creation of a virtual environment that transformed learning from a traditional passive experience to one of discovery, exploration, and excitement in a less stressful English learning setting. Tsai (2004) conducted an experimental study of two English classes of senior students in a high school, investigating their English learning attitudes in a collaborative learning group and a traditional learning group. This study showed that high school students who participated in the experimental group appeared to have more positive perceptions toward English reading due to the collaborative learning method. Also, Ho (1998) investigated the potential that Culture Studies has to motivate Taiwanese junior-high-school pupils to learn English, and tried to establish the relationship between pupil interests in Culture Studies and their orientations, attitudes, and motivation toward learning English. A total of 480 Grade 1 and 2 students from the region of Taipei City and Taipei County (now New Taipei City) answered a
questionnaire assessing their desire to learn Culture Studies in the English class, as well as their orientations, attitudes, and motivation towards learning English. The results showed that junior high school students’ perception of English learning was improved when the cultural contexts and aspects were integrated with the curriculum, and it directly affected students’ learning motivation.

Another factor that affects students’ perceptions and learning motivation of English learning in Taiwan is the use of the English language within the country. In Peng’s (2007) study, fifth graders’ perceptions of English learning were positive when the first English village was opened to motivate students to learn and practice authentic English in different contexts and settings. Peng stated that the materials, environment, and native English teachers in the English village allowed students to learn and use English in varied situations. Also, Chao and Lin (2005) used the combination of survey and interview to investigate junior high school students’ English learning anxiety. The participants were 132 eighth graders from four different English classes. The result of their study showed that the length of English learning, the primary language English teacher used in the class, personal experiences of interacting with English native speakers, and the level of English textbooks directly affect junior high school students’ perceptions of English learning and learning anxiety. That is, according to these studies, the longer the students learned English, the more opportunities they had to use English, and they experienced less anxiety and became more motivated to learn English.

As stated in Chapter One, English is one determining factor of academic achievement, and students’ perceptions of English learning ties in with EFL instruction and English language development. In Yang’s (2007) study, junior high school students’
perceptions of English learning relate to learning motivation and achievement. Students with higher achievement in English class tended to have higher and more positive perceptions toward English learning. Besides academic achievement, having more and better employment opportunities also affected students’ perceptions of English learning in Taiwan. Shih (2008) found that 60 percent of the participants and their families in her study endorsed the English proficiency requirement in Taiwan, since passing a certain level of English proficiency test is often one requirement for many jobs. Chia, Johnson, Chia, and Olive (1999) conducted a survey of the perception 349 medical students and 20 faculty at Chung Shan Medical College in Taichung regarding the English proficiency requirement. Their study also revealed that medical college students and faculty perceived English learning as an important task for their academic achievement and occupational benefits.

In the previous paragraphs, students’ positive perceptions of English learning are due to their positive perceptions due to instruction and experiences in an authentic setting. Not all students in Taiwan have the same opinions and experiences of learning English. In Hu and Zhou’s (2005) study, students who studied English for six years in junior and senior high school were perceived as fearful of and/or as inept at speaking English and as having poor listening skills due to the focus of English education on examination preparation only. The studies I previously described demonstrated the importance of educational setting, support, teaching and evaluation, and learning experiences factor into students’ perceptions of learning English as a foreign language.

Special Education Policy
Li (1997) stated that an equal opportunity for people with disabilities is a contemporary international trend. Special education policy is one influential element to ensure all people with disabilities are given equal educational opportunities. In the following sections, I will include global perspectives on special education policy.

**World Health Organization.** The World Health Organization (2015) stated:

Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering loss, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers. (p. 1)

Policies that are crucial to students with special needs can either “able” or “disable” them in school education, depending on the level of the maturity in these policies to satisfy their needs.

**United States.** Several major policies were announced by the U.S. government to ensure the rights of students with disabilities, such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 to protect educational rights and provide opportunity and services for these students (Burke, 2006). According to Burke, certain course-related testing procedures in higher
education must provide accommodations for students that report a disability. The United States’ policy for people with disabilities is crucial for its own people, and also has a major influence on other countries’ special education policy.

Chang, Reetz, Chien, and Ring (2001) compared and contrasted policies for people with disabilities in the U.S. and Taiwan, and reported many similarities between the policies of both countries. The Special Education Act of 1984 in Taiwan had similar elements to the All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 in the U.S. Both of these laws described the goals of special education, requirements for education for students, requirements for teachers, contained information about materials, equipment, aides, and budget. These researchers also concluded that other policies were needed for people with disabilities that exist in both the United States and Taiwan. The policies include: a) the legal rights and opportunities for social involvement of individuals with disabilities; b) the emphasis on improving the welfare and human rights of persons with disabilities; c) the emphasis on ensuring qualifications of special education teachers, d) the adaptation of IEP to meet students’ academic needs; e) the emphasis on providing multiple learning environment to increase students’ self-care, social skills, and vocational-adaptive skills; and f) the emphasis on providing special education networking to provide information and consultative services.

Taiwan. As I described in the previous section, the Special Education Law of Taiwan was originally enacted in 1984 (Li, 1997). A recent report described in Liu and Hong’s (2007) study indicated that the General Notification of the Ministry of the Interior in Taiwan estimated that around 912,000 people in Taiwan have identified physical or intellectual disabilities; 97,000 individuals have hearing loss and 3,898 are K-12 students.
Since the number of students with disabilities is growing every year, special education is provided to students with disabilities as early as the preschool years. Kang, Lovett, and Haring (2002) stated that currently in Taiwan most children who receive childhood special education are three to six years of age.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is designed to ensure the quality of educational goals and instructional methods for students with disabilities (Brackett, 1990; Wilcox & Bellamy, 1982), and it is commonly used in schools in Taiwan for students with disabilities in different school levels including university students (Ho, 2004). Besides providing an IEP to meet the academic needs for students with disabilities, as Ho remarked, having multiple college admission tracks to open more doors for higher education to students with disabilities is also one major policy in Taiwan; financial assistance is also granted to meet these students’ needs.

Special education law in Taiwan also offers different paths to meet the career needs and goals for the students with disabilities. Li (1997) discussed that special education in Taiwan focuses on rehabilitation and vocational education for students with disabilities along with a relevant and appropriate curriculum. Lin (1998) reported that the Special Education Act of 1997 and Protection Act for Individuals with Disabilities of 1997 in Taiwan emphasized the promise for a better transition from school to work for students with disabilities. These public laws, according to Lin, are designed to ensure the right of education, vocational rehabilitation, appropriate medical services and work for people with disabilities. However, educational policies for people with disabilities also serve to determine individuals’ social, economic, and educational status and identity, and have the power to define their academic and career opportunities and rights.
Individuals with Hearing Loss in Taiwan

Wamae and Kang’ethe-Kamau (2004) stated that language is the vehicle through which needs and wants are conveyed, and it enables a child to comment on his experiences, to predict, and to reflect on many issues. These two researchers also pointed out that people need language to direct and organize themselves, as well as to experiment, generalize, and connect ideas to others; without it, social contact and relationships are difficult to make and sustain. For people with hearing loss, their first language development is especially critical to their literacy skills.

Currently hearing loss that is bilateral and permanent exits in 1.2 to 5.7 per 1000 births worldwide (Yoshinaga-Itano, Sedey, Coulter, & Mehl, 1998). Hearing loss can be divided into two types: prelingual and postlingual. Prelingual hearing loss occurs when hearing loss happens prior to the birth of a child or before the child has had the opportunity to acquire language (Nodoushan, 2008); postlingual hearing loss is when hearing loss happens after a person has developed language. Moeller’s (2000) study stated that the degree of hearing loss is not a major predictor of language outcome; people with hearing loss only need different ways to develop a language (Briggle, 2005). Ramsey (2004) brought up one major issue that affects people with hearing loss in their language development. He claimed that most infants with hearing loss are raised in families without access to people with hearing loss, their culture, and their language, which can cause delayed language development during early life, when the adequate language exposure is not available. In the following sections, I will explore the factors that are important for language and literacy development of individuals with hearing loss.
Identification and intervention. Early identification is crucial for individuals with hearing loss. Unfortunately, children with moderate hearing loss are often not identified in their first two years of life without a hearing screening system (Yoshinaga-Itano & Apuzzo, 1998). More than 90 percent of the parents of children with hearing loss have normal hearing (Briggle, 2005; Kuntze, 1998; Kelly, 1990; Meadow, 1968a; Meier & Newport, 1990; Rawlings & Jensema, 1977; Schein & Delk, 1974), and some of them may not be identified as hearing impaired in the critical age for language development. Yoshinaga-Itano, Sedey, Coulter, and Mehl (1998) stated that the first year of life, especially the first six months, is critical for children with hearing loss. In their study, Yoshinaga-Itano et al. concluded that across age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, cognitive status, degree of hearing loss, mode of communication, and presence or absence of other disabilities, children of early identification scored significantly better in language development than the children with later identification.

Yoshinaga-Itano, Sedey, Coulter, and Mehl (1998) also stated that early identification alone is unlikely to result in improved outcomes if it is not followed by early intervention. Children with hearing loss whose parents also have hearing loss tend to have more advantages in different aspects, such as a significant advantage in their literacy development (Allen, Clark, del Giudice, Koo, Lieberman, Mayberry, & Miller, 2009). Besides, these children tend to have higher educational achievement and linguistic development than those with parents with normal hearing (Brasel & Quigley, 1977; Briggle, 2005; Meadow, 1968a; Meadow-Orlans, Greenberg, & Erting, 1990; Rinaldi & Caselli, 2008; Stuckless & Birch, 1966; Vernon & Koh, 1970). They also tend to have more positive social skills and fit into the hearing world more easily (Harris, 1978;

On the other hand, children with hearing loss whose parents have normal hearing may have some disadvantages in their first language development. Moores and Sweet (1990) claimed that the children with hearing loss born into a hearing family tend to have the challenge of establishing effective communication and it causes difficulties with further language and literacy development. Engen and Engen (2004) also confirmed that delayed development of a first language causes serious consequences in quantity and quality of early linguistic experiences that are vital to language development. Branson and Miller’s (2004) study of students with hearing loss in Bali, Indonesia, also showed that without early intervention, such as linguistic, environmental, familial, and educational support, first language development for students with hearing loss is problematic.

**Special education.** School education, in addition to early identification and intervention, also plays an important role in language and literacy development for students with hearing loss. Because hearing loss is a low-incidence disability, many teachers do not have a strong knowledge base about students with hearing loss (Briggle, 2005). In general, education begins earlier for children with hearing loss than for their hearing counterparts (Meadow-Orlans, 1990), due to its needs for early intervention. According to Meadow-Orlans, children with special needs may receive special education as early as the age of three, while the mandatory educational provisions begin at either five or six years of age for others. In special education, three common service models are provided to students with special needs: inclusion, pull-out, and combined-method
In the following section, I will include the major aspects from one of these service models, inclusion, since it is a common service for students with hearing loss in Taiwan.

Inclusion. Inclusive education is appropriate to integrate students with different needs in education; it is a service for students with disabilities when the separation or segregation is proper or permissible (Will, 1985). Biklen (1988) examined the status of clinical judgment in two areas of policy and practice, namely, placement of students in special education settings, and residential placements and programs for people with developmental disabilities. He concluded that students with disabilities do not necessarily benefit more from segregated schools compared to integrated schools. Yet, inclusion is to move forward to a status of general acceptance; it cannot be done fully with the removal and deconstruction of disability that is socially constructed (Danforth & Rhodes, 1997). Inclusion means that general education classes are structured to meet the needs of all the students in the class (Wu, 2007). In the following paragraphs, I will explain the advantages and benefits of inclusion, if it is implemented appropriately.

Researchers have been investigating the advantages of inclusion in education. Bunch and Valeo (2004) commented that inclusive education benefits both students with and without disabilities for different reasons and in different aspects. Bunch and Valeo stated that students without disabilities provide positive role models to the ones with disabilities, and students with disabilities broaden the acceptance of differences for those without disabilities. Brinker and Thorpe (1984) also reported in their study that the more interaction there is between disabled and nondisabled students, the greater possibility the IEP goals can be reached. In addition, early inclusive schooling for students with
disabilities can benefit them in employment experiences as they become adults (Wehman, Hill, Goodall, Cleveland, Brooke, & Pentecost, 1982; Wilcox & Bellamy, 1982). Inclusion, as Northcott (1990) concluded, prepares students for life in society, creates more opportunity to learn from others, changes attitudes, overcomes prejudices, increases frequency of contact, and teaches and practices democracy. Inclusion can benefit many individuals with different needs in their school years; it requires full acceptance among all members in the educational environment, policy, assessment, and system for inclusion to work effectively.

In Taiwan, most students with special needs were enrolled in inclusive educational settings in 1976 (Huteson, 2003). Most parents and teachers advocate for their students with hearing loss to attend inclusive educational settings (Lee, 2002; Huteson, 2003). As a result, as Wu (2007) stated, the majority of current K-12 students with special needs receive special education services in regular school settings among students without special needs rather than special schools. Also, educating students with disabilities in an inclusive educational setting in higher education institutions has a 40-year history in Taiwan (Ho, 2004). According to Ho, since 1963, the government in Taiwan has made great efforts to include students with disabilities in higher education. Ho also pointed out that the number of students with hearing loss who were admitted to IHEs increased after the policy in 2002 that was granted by Ministry of Education—the Further Education Guidance Measures—after compulsory education. The need for inclusion service practice and training in higher education for students with hearing loss in Taiwan is increasing. It is important that all educators and staff members in Taiwan be
aware of their students with hearing loss needs and traits, to affirm and ensure the quality and rights of their education.

**First language development.** As discussed earlier, individuals with hearing loss typically have linguistic disadvantages. The lack of meaningful interactions between caretakers and children with hearing loss in the early years of their lives is the major cause of their language development problems (Harris, 1978). Without early identification and intervention, many children with hearing loss arrive at school with little to no proficiency in a language, and learning a first language is their first task at school (Reilly & Khanh, 2004). However, these children can fully and successfully develop their first language and literacy skills, if people use adequate and effective language modes and methods to communicate with them, such as sign language.

People with hearing loss around the world often use sign language as their primary language (Woll, Sutton-Spence, & Elton, 2001). Woll et al. stated that sign languages use conventionalized signs and that these conventionalized signs vary from language to language. That is, no universal sign language exists and often there is more than one sign language used in one country. Sign language is important for individuals with hearing loss for several reasons. It makes communication easier for these individuals to communicate with other people with hearing loss, and helps them to meet their linguistic and academic needs. Also, using both sign language and English in early intervention training and school curriculum, with emphasis on attempting high proficiency in both languages, may strengthen the neural network system for higher order cognitive functions (Kushalnagar, Hannay, & Hernandez, 2010). Unfortunately, not all educators with normal hearing consider the benefits sign language (Humphries, 2004).
Sign language is also one language that is used among some people with hearing loss in Taiwan. According to Smith (2005), Taiwan Sign Language (TSL) is used by approximately 30,000 people with hearing loss in Taiwan. Smith identified two TSL varieties: a) one that is used in Southern Taiwan—Tainan—where the first school for the students with hearing loss in Taiwan was established in 1915; and b) one that is used in northern Taiwan—the Taipei area—where Taiwan’s second school was established in 1917. Smith also pointed out that both of these schools were founded during the Japanese occupation of the island (1895-1945) and there was little communication between them until after World War II. According to Smith, teachers at the Taipei school came from the Tokyo area and the teachers at the Tainan school came from Osaka, so they carried the dialectical differences of Japanese Sign Language to Taiwan, and it resulted in two TSL varieties. Also, as I explained previously, most faculty and school staff in Taiwan use Mandarin or Signed Mandarin with students with hearing loss in school for the deaf (Huteson, 2003). These varieties, for some people with hearing loss in Taiwan, are inconvenient to use with those who use a different sign language in Taiwan. As a result, some people with hearing loss in Taiwan choose not to learn or use TSL, although sign language can be beneficial for their language and literacy development.

As described previously, early identification, intervention, and sign language are the keys to effective first language development for individuals with hearing loss. Those individuals with hearing loss whose families use a primary language other than sign language or the official language, they face additional obstacles in language and literacy development. As stated in Chapter One, households in Taiwan may use different spoken languages—Mandarin, Taiwanese, Hakka, or Aboriginal languages. Learning Chinese
orthography and literacy can be challenging for students with hearing loss; it may be more difficult for those ones whose first languages are other than Mandarin. Lin and Huang’s (1997) study pointed out that students with hearing loss in Taiwan tend to have difficulties recognizing and using abstract words, semantics, and syntax in Chinese. With the variety of spoken language backgrounds and issues with first language development, individuals with hearing loss in Taiwan encounter challenges not only in their first language development, but also in their second, foreign, or further language development. Before I discuss the aspects of learning English as a second or foreign language, it is important to explain the issues of English and Chinese orthographies, since the written form of a language is a key language skill for all language learners, especially for students with hearing loss.

**Issues of orthography between English and Chinese.** Seymour (2006) claimed that learning to read is, in essence, a matter of establishing mappings between visual symbols and the spoken form and semantics of a language. Koda (1990) stated that the more similar the orthographic system is between the first and second or foreign language, the easier it is to learn the second or foreign language literacy. In English as a second or foreign language education, understanding the relationship between the learners’ first and second or foreign language orthographies is key, since they affect the learners’ literacy skills in their second or foreign language (Akamatsu, 2006; Koda, 1996). Akamatsu pointed out that an orthography that represents its phonology in a straightforward manner is called shallow orthography, such as Spanish or Turkish. In a deep orthography, such as English and French, the spelling and sound systems are inconsistent, irregular, and/or opaque (Caravolas, 2006). According to DeFrancis (1989), English and Mandarin are
very different orthographic systems; the difference in orthography between these two languages may be an issue in the literacy development of English language learners, especially for students with hearing loss. In the following sections, I will include the orthographic features of both English and Mandarin, and discuss how these features may affect English as foreign language learners and specifically, those with hearing loss.

**English.** As discussed in the previous section, the orthography among all languages in the world can be divided into two different ways: shallow and deep orthography. In a shallow alphabetic orthography, there is a strong and reliable correspondence between letters and sounds; in deep alphabetic orthographies, learners need to use a combined method to learn basic alphabetic decoding and sight vocabulary of familiar words (Seymour, 2006). The English spelling system is only 50 percent regular and consistent (Caravolas, 2006; Hanna, Hanna, Hodges, & Rudorf, 1966); it is challenging for English learners to predict and master the complexity of English spelling. Akamatsu (2006) claimed that the relationship between spelling and phonology in English is not straightforward, and the accurate phonological representation of a word is not always guaranteed from its spelling.

Caravolas (2006) pointed out another major factor that makes deep orthography hard to achieve: deep orthographies have fewer letters than speech sounds, meaning that they require letter combinations for representing at least some phonemes. Therefore, the orthographic information of the deep orthography, such as English, plays an important role in processing printed words (Akamatsu, 2006; Frost & Bentin, 1992). Flaherty (2000) conducted an interesting study on a comparison of the linguistic and visual memory capacities and strategies Irish and Japanese students with hearing loss use in
learning written words. Eight Japanese hearing students, eight Japanese students with hearing loss, eight Irish hearing students, and eight Irish students with hearing loss participated in the study. The result showed that Japanese students with hearing loss outperformed other groups of students, whose first language development heavily relied on visual recognition and memorization. For students with hearing loss whose first language is English, developing English language and literacy skills can be more difficult, since it is an alphabetic orthography that heavily relies on its phonology.

**Chinese.** Chinese is a logographic, pictographic, or ideographic system; it combines signs that representing words or concepts (Aro, 2006; Seymour, 2006). The basic unit of the Chinese writing system is a character, a visual-unit occupying a fixed amount of space in print. Each character functions as a lexical morpheme carrying a meaning (Cheung, McBride-Chang, & Chow, 2006). According to Cheung et al., the character constitutes the smallest pronounceable unit in written Chinese, and each character is pronounced as a syllable. They stated that Chinese reading does not require phonemic awareness, as it does in alphabetic orthographies. Chinese characters, as Cheung et al. claimed, play a special role in Chinese reading, because it is at the same time a salient visual, phonologic, and morphemic unit.

Wilcox (2004) believed that it is crucial to understand the effect that a writing system can have on a language. As discussed above, orthography plays a more dominant role than phonology in learning Chinese literacy skills (Cheung, McBride-Chang, & Chow, 2006; Wong & Chen, 1999); orthographic sensitivity is important in Chinese readers’ character recognition. Cheung et al. pointed out that Chinese children are aware of print in the very early stages of literacy development. Chinese character recognition as
a result, mainly relies on children’s visual processing skills. This may give students with hearing loss whose first language is Chinese an advantage in developing their first language literacy skills, compared to those who develop their first language literacy in an alphabetic orthography system, such as English.

One disadvantage for Chinese speakers and users in learning English literacy is that, as Akamatsu (2003) suggested, Chinese does not share the same orthographic characteristics as English. Akamatsu argued that learning English for Chinese speakers and users, compared with those whose first language characteristics are similar to English, are less efficient in processing constituent letters of words in text in English. Holm and Dodd (1996) also showed the importance of the similarity in first and foreign language orthographies in his study of two Chinese speaking groups that use different systems in writing: EFL learners from Mainland China where pinyin, an English alphabetic symbol in Chinese phonology, is used in their writing system, and EFL learners from Hong Kong where the English alphabetic symbols are not used in their writing system. The result of the study showed that those learners who are familiar with the alphabetic system could manipulate speech sounds at a phonemic level better than those who are not. Therefore, based on the difference between English and Chinese orthographies, students with hearing loss whose first language writing system is Chinese may have additional difficulty learning English as a foreign language.

**English as a second language.** Children with hearing loss are among the most neglected of children with disabilities due to its non-visible feature (Reilly & Khanh, 2004). As described previously, children with hearing loss, in general, have difficulties with literacy development without needed identification and intervention (Mittelman &
Quinsland, 1991). Wamae and Kang’ethe-Kamau’s (2004) study suggested that children with hearing loss make a greater number of grammatical errors in writing English, such as the omission of articles, prepositions, and verb auxiliaries, or the use of shorter and simpler sentences with little variety. The average English literacy level for adults with hearing loss in the U.S. is at the fourth to fifth grade level (Kelly & Barac-Cikoja’s, 2007; Meadow, 1968a; Wang, Trezek, Luckner, & Paul, 2008). An increasingly large number of students with hearing loss in the United States cannot receive a high school diploma because they cannot pass the reading portion of their state’s competency test (Kelly & Barac-Cikoja’s, 2007). After 30 years of educational innovations, most students with hearing loss in the U.S. still do not have the reading skills on the grade level (Ju, 2009; Luetke-Stahlman & Nielson, 2003).

Some researchers argue that hearing loss is not the reason that such students face educational and linguistic obstacles. Miller’s (2005) study pointed out that severe prelingual hearing loss does not prevent the development of word processing strategies adequate for efficient processing of written words at the lexical level. Evans (2004) focused on narrowing the gap between theory and practice and describing the teaching and learning strategies used by the teachers and parents of three elementary school children within a bilingual/bicultural learning environment for deaf students. The results of this study indicated that students with hearing loss who learn ASL as their first language from their parents with hearing loss have an advantage with English literacy development. Rinaldi and Caselli (2008) evaluated language development in deaf Italian preschoolers with hearing parents, taking into account the duration of formal language experience and different methods of language education. Twenty deaf children were
matched with 20 hearing children for age and with another 20 hearing children for
duration of experience. According to the results of this study, children with hearing loss
exposed to spoken language accompanied by signs tended to understand and produce
more words than children exposed only to spoken language. Since out of 40 phonemes of
English, only nine to 14 are visemes (Jeffers & Barley, 1971), and the accuracy for
speech-reading sentences is less than 50 percent words correct for students with hearing
loss (Ronnberg, Samuelsson, & Lyxell, 1998), it is the educators and policy makers’ job
to provide multiple language modes to satisfy their linguistic and educational needs.

**English as a foreign language.** Akamatsu (2006) stated that the learners’ first
language is also a critical factor in foreign language development. According to Moore
(1995), the purpose of most foreign language requirements is to expose students to other
cultures not as outsiders but from within, frequently satisfying a general educational goal.
Moore claimed that foreign language familiarizes students with the mechanics of
language and is a strategy many IHEs use to create the concept and practice for
globalization. As discussed in the previous section and in Chapter One, English language
education exists in many country’s foreign language education and requirement, since
English is considered to be an asset that can lead to success in the twenty-first century job
market (Tsai & Tsou, 2009). As more students with hearing loss enter IHEs in Taiwan
(Ho, 2004), it is important to understand their learning processes and traits.

As discussed previously, although students with hearing loss in Taiwan do not
necessarily rely on phonology to develop their first language literacy skills, the difference
between the orthographies in English and Chinese can be confusing and difficult during
their English language and literacy development. For students with hearing loss in
Taiwan, learning English as a foreign language can be more challenging for this reason, especially when no additional support and appropriate methods and environment are available or provided. The university English proficiency requirements in Taiwan may decrease students with hearing loss IHE graduation rates, lower their access for further education, and reduce their job opportunities.

Conclusion

Language is an essential instrument of perceptions; it helps us to have access to the world and to demonstrate what we understand about the world (Wamae and Kang’ethe-Kamau, 2004). After achieving Taiwan’s economic miracle, the government put much effort to promote diplomatic relations with other countries to create a better future for itself (Tsai & Tsou, 2009). Since the 2002 English education policy, as Tsai and Tsou stated, much attention has been paid to foreign language education to cultivate more professionals with competence in communicating in English, so as to enhance international interactions at all levels. Reagan (2001) pointed out that people tend to accept and value the languages and language policies that are decided by the government; people also assume these languages and policies are not only appropriate but also necessary. Ensuring language policy will not construct barriers to students is a key to all educators.

Lin (1998) claimed that the type of job field and the salary earned often determines a person’s status in Taiwanese society. Since English education increases job opportunities and socioeconomic status, people with disabilities ought to be fully integrated in society, as Lin remarked, socially, environmentally, politically, culturally, and educationally. Wilcox (2004) also argued that the needs for examining and
restructuring teacher training programs and accreditation requirements, and the critical awareness of hearing loss for hearing teachers and students, are essential to make language education more effective for students with hearing loss. As a result, it is important to question and confirm whether we, the educators, increase not decrease the language and literacy skills, ensure not remove educational access and rights, and enhance abilities not construct disabilities for students with hearing loss. There is a great shortage of research investigating in this area; therefore, with this case study, I committed to provide a platform to draw attention to this topic.
Chapter 3

Methods

Learning English is a requirement for all students in Taiwan starting at the third grade (Hu & Zhou, 2005; Su, 2006), including students with hearing loss. As stated in Chapter One, it is important to gain the perceptions of English learning among IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan. In this study, my goals were to: a) provide the opportunity for IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan to share their opinions, thoughts, and experiences of learning English as a foreign language in higher education institutes; and b) understand how English as a foreign language policies and educational practices contribute to create opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing loss. The research question I examined was “what are the perceptions of the lived experiences of students with hearing loss in a Taiwanese IHE within the policy environment of English as a gatekeeper?” The focuses of the study were a) how do Taiwanese IHE students with hearing loss perceive their experiences learning English as a foreign language in IHEs; and b) how do the current policies and educational practices related to learning English as a foreign language serve to construct barriers and opportunities for IHE students with hearing loss?

Research Design

In this study, I conducted a case study of current IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan learning English as a foreign language. I interviewed two current Taiwanese students with hearing loss at one IHE, the English teacher of the alternative English class, the English teacher of the general English class, one Chinese teacher, one tutor, two resource center staff members, and two study peers. I also performed three classroom
observations in the alternative English class and collected documents that were related to these students’ English learning, such as their assignments, learning environment and settings, English graduation requirements, and the services and support they received from the government and the IHE. In the following paragraphs, I will provide the description of case study and explain the reason why I used a case study design and how I conducted this case study in detail.

**Description of methodology.** A paradigm is a world view, a set of beliefs that guides actions (Creswell, 2007; Guba, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized that “paradigms represent a distillation of what we think about the world (but cannot prove)” (p. 15). All research is interpretive, and it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The characteristics of naturalist inquiry are: a) the nature of realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic; b) the relationship of knower and the known are interactive and inseparable; c) only time- and context-bound working hypothesis (idiographic statements) are possible; d) it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects; and e) inquiry is value-bound (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, as these researchers clarified, people seek to understand the world in which they live and work, and develop subjective meanings of their experiences toward objects or things. Qualitative researchers engage in naturalistic inquiry, studying in the real-world settings inductively to provide rich narrative descriptions. (Patton, 2005). Qualitative research, as Ferguson and Ferguson (2000) further clarified, expands people’s understanding and challenges people “to think
differently about what we already know, to factor in different ways of knowing, different
takes on the situation, and different meanings” (pp. 181-182).

Qualitative researchers rely mainly on the participants’ view of the situation,
address the process of interactions among individuals, and focus on the specific contexts
in which people live and work, in order to understand the historical and cultural settings
of the participants (Creswell, 2007). According to Ferguson and Ferguson (2000),
qualitative research:

allows readers to find themselves in account, to recognize the characterization
being offered, the reality being portrayed. It is a kind of relevance and utility that
other research traditions minimize or accept only as eventual consequence of
more basic pursuit of objective truth. (p. 184)

The questions in qualitative research are broad and general—the foreshadowed questions,
so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation that is typically forged in
discussions or interactions with other persons (Creswell, 2007; Ferguson & Ferguson,
2000; McMillan & Wergin, 2010). In this study, I intended to use a list of foreshadowed
questions to understand the opinions, thoughts, and experiences of learning English as a
foreign language among two students with hearing loss in a Taiwanese IHE, and how
English as a foreign language policies and educational practices contributed to create
opportunities and barriers for these students. In the following sections, I will discuss in
detail the methodology of this study—case study.

**Case study.** Researchers choose a case study because they want to understand a
real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important
contextual conditions that are relevant to the case (Yin & Davis, 2007; Yin, 2014). There
are three different types of case study—instrumental, intrinsic, and collective case study (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In the instrumental case study, as Creswell explained, the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue. McMillan and Schumacher identified the instrumental case study as a theme-based study, since “the focus is on in-depth understanding of the entity, issue, or theme” (p. 345). The intrinsic study investigates unusual or unique individuals, groups, or events, and focus on the case itself (Creswell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to these researchers, in the collective case study the researcher selects one issue or concern and chooses multiple case studies to illustrate the issue and its setting can be multisite. In this study, I conducted a case study of two students with hearing loss learning English as a foreign language at one IHE in Taiwan.

Selecting the case requires that the researcher establishes a rationale for his or her purposeful sampling strategy for selecting the case and for gathering information about the case (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2005, Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014). According to them, the case study researcher selects participants and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. As described previously, this study contained two cases of IHE students with hearing loss—the primary participants of the study. I also selected people who were associated with these students’ English learning and were knowledgeable of the English proficiency requirements to be the secondary participants of the study.
Researchers in case study research intend to explore a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information—observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents and reports, and reports of the case descriptions and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Yin, 2014). Once the researcher chooses the purposeful sampling and identifies the case, he or she needs to examine the bounded system of the case study. The cases in case studies have boundaries, often bounded by time and place, such as a process, an activity, an event, a program, or multiple individuals, as Creswell described. The bounded system in the case study refers to being unique according to place, time, and participant characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Bounding the case is crucial in a case study because it will help researchers to determine the scope of data collection (Yin, 2014). In this study, the bounded system was each individual case, since each case had different experiences and had different perceptions of learning English as a foreign language.

Case study researchers have a responsibility to promote scholarship, avoid deception, accept responsibility for their own work, and maintain a strong professional competence that includes keeping up with related research, ensuring trustworthiness, and understanding the needed methodological qualifiers and limitations to their own work (Yin, 2014). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness includes in four criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba defined the credibility of a study as the confidence in the 'truth' of the findings; transferability as the applicability from the findings in other contexts; dependability as the consistency and repeatability of the findings; and the confirmability as a degree of
neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Case study researchers use triangulation to avoid bias and enhance the trustworthiness of a case.

Researchers emphasized the importance of the triangulation of data as crucial in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). McMillan and Schumacher identified the triangulation as “the cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods, and theoretical schemes” (p. 379). Lincoln and Guba contended that as the study unfolds and particular pieces of information come to light, steps need to be taken to validate each against at least one other source such as a final interview, and/or a second method such as an observation in addition to an interview. They explained that the researcher compares different sources, situations, and methods to ensure the same pattern keeps recurring during the process of performing the triangulation. The materials of ensuring triangulation include artifact collections, informant interviews, and field observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013; Yin, 2014). In this study, I conducted two interviews with each primary participant and one interview with each secondary participant, performed three classroom observations of the primary participants’ English class, collected supporting documents, and kept journal entries to establish the triangulation of data in this study.

Qualitative research’s truths are not about getting it right but not getting it all wrong (Wolcott, 1990; Ferguson & Ferguson, 2000). Member checking is one of the methods to confirm observations and participants’ meaning with individual’s casual conversations in informal situations, and it can also be done within an interview as topics
are rephrased and probed to obtain more complete and subtle meanings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this study, I invited two critical friends from the group of doctoral student peers who were approved as project team members by the university’s institutional review board (IRB) to review the interpretations of the study to avoid bias. In the following sections, I will describe in detail the procedures of participant selection.

**Participants.** For this study, I recruited two primary participants and eight secondary participants from an IHE that has established policies and educational practices that potentially lessen the negative impact of English graduation policies on students with disabilities, and in particular, students with hearing loss. I chose this university as I thought such a setting would provide the best chance to observe instructional practices that provide modifications and supports for students with hearing loss, and therefore, potentially provide a more in-depth examination of barriers and supports.

Ten individuals participated in this study: five men and five women. Cathy and Kevin were the primary participants and foci of the case study. The secondary participants were Gary, Susan, Shawn, Henry, Tim, Yvonne, June, and Ann. These individuals participated in this study because they either knew the primary participants, were relevant to the primary participants’ English learning or learning in general, have taught a student with hearing loss, and/or were knowledgeable of English graduation requirements at this university. I interviewed each of the primary participants twice and the secondary participants once. The interview site for the students was the tutoring classroom next to the resource center. I interviewed the teachers and the tutor in their offices or at the teachers’ lounge.
Primary participants. Two primary participants, Cathy and Kevin, volunteered to participate in this study. They both were in their sophomore year at the time I conducted this study. They were the primary participants because they were the foci of this case study. I interviewed both Cathy and Kevin individually twice; the first interviews were done before performing the alternative English classroom observations and the final interviews were done after the observations. I will briefly introduce these two primary participants in the following sections and provide more details about them in Chapter Four.

Cathy. Cathy, who has mild hearing loss, was the first primary participant I interviewed. She is a pleasant, bright, polite, and shy young lady who is from a rural area in northern Taiwan. She was in her sophomore year when I interviewed her. I do not reveal Cathy’s major, due to the small number of students with hearing loss in her department, which could lead to a breach of confidentiality. Given that Cathy has a mild hearing loss, she was not exposed to sign language. She communicates with others through oral and written language, much as others without hearing loss. However, she does use hearing aids to augment her ability to hear. Mandarin is her first language and also the primary language she uses in daily life.

Kevin. Kevin was also a primary participant of this study. Kevin has moderate hearing loss and is also from a rural area in southern Taiwan. He is an optimistic, ambitious, and open-minded sophomore. He is studying architecture and was also in his sophomore year when I interviewed him. I revealed Kevin’s major, because, in contrast to Cathy, his department has the highest number of students with hearing loss at this university. In addition, some of the findings are related to his studies and the support he
receives from his home department. Same as Cathy, Kevin uses Mandarin as the primary language in his daily life and was never exposed to sign language. He also uses hearing aids and uses oral language when communicating with others.

**Secondary participants.** Of the secondary participants, four - Gary, Tim, Yvonne, and June - know both primary participants and provided information relevant to both of the primary participants. Gary teaches the alternative English class. Tim and Yvonne are resource center staff members. June is another student with hearing loss who participated in this study as Kevin’s study peer because they study in the same department, although she knows Cathy in the alternative English class as well. Susan did not know either of the primary participants, however, as a veteran teacher of the general English class, she has a wealth of information to share regarding the university’s policies and procedures for the English graduation requirement. Three of the secondary participants – Shawn, Henry, and Ann - know only one of the primary participants. In the following paragraphs, I will describe these secondary participants briefly, as well as their contributions to this study.

**Gary.** Gary has been working at the IHE as a faculty of the English department for nearly 30 years and has taught the alternative English class for students with hearing loss for 10 years. By the time I conducted the study, Gary had been retired from this university for two years, although he continued working as a part time professor. Gary knows Cathy and Kevin from the resource center and has taught them both in the alternative English class for two years. When I interviewed Gary, it was not hard to notice his passion for teaching, especially for teaching students with hearing loss. Gary shared many strong opinions and insights towards the English graduation requirements, which I will include in the discussion of themes in Chapter Four.
Tim. Tim is a resource center staff and the first person I contacted at this university. Tim had worked at this university for two and a half years at the time of data collection. Tim worked at the resource center at a private college before working at this university. According to Tim, one supervisor is assigned to each of the approximately 20-30 students with a special need. While Tim did not supervise either Cathy or Kevin, he knows them well because of their participation in the alternative English class. During the interview, Tim provided detailed information of alternative English class, the services and supports the resource center has for students with special needs, and the current educational policy for English graduation requirements.

Yvonne. Yvonne is another resource center staff and has worked at this university for over a year. She knows Cathy and Kevin because she sees them often at the resource center. Yvonne provided a lot of information of the IHE admission for students with special needs. She also shared her opinions about the possibilities for and problems experienced by students with hearing loss studying at this university.

Susan. Susan is another English teacher I interviewed. She has worked at this university for 26 years. Susan does not know Cathy or Kevin personally, but she has been in charge of an English activity called English Corner for 10 years, where students practice and use English with others outside the classroom on campus. Susan is also an advocate of inclusion and shared many thoughts of how to make it work for students with hearing loss learning English in the general classroom. She contributed numerous details of her past teaching experience.

Shawn. Shawn teaches Chinese and Cathy was taking his class at the time I conducted the interview. Shawn has worked at this IHE since 1988 and has taught several
students with hearing loss previously. Shawn relayed that he was not aware that Cathy had a hearing loss until she revealed it during a small group discussion for a class project. Shawn recalled that one of the prior students with hearing loss he taught had difficulties in oral language skills but did well in his class because she worked hard and sat in front of the class so she could do lip-reading. Yet Shawn also related that another prior student with hearing loss did not do well academically, perhaps due to other related disabilities. He offered meaningful perspectives on educational policy and IHE resources during his interview.

*Henry.* Henry has worked at this university for six years. He is the teaching assistant to the director of architecture department and a Ph.D. student in that department. Henry has worked with students with hearing loss as a tutor in the architecture department for over a year and Kevin is one of his tutees. At the time I conducted the interview, Henry was supervising four students with hearing loss and met with each individually at least once a week. Students can either volunteer for this extra support or be referred by faculty due to their performance in their coursework. Henry also teaches one fundamental course in architecture department and stated he enjoys teaching students with hearing loss.

*June.* June is also a student with hearing loss and a study peer of Kevin. I met June at the alternative English class during my observations. Although she worked hard in the class, she did not talk much. When Kevin told me that June was willing to participate in this study, I was pleasantly surprised because she was one of the few students who did not interact with me during the breaks when I did the class observations. Therefore, her interview was a useful supplement to the classroom observations. June
told me that she and Kevin frequently help each other because they are the only two students with hearing loss in their classes. June also contributed personal insights as a student with hearing loss studying at this university, which I describe in the thematic analysis.

Ann. Ann is a study peer of Cathy. According to Cathy, Ann has been a big help for her in several classes. According to Ann, she mainly helps Cathy in understanding assignments and lectures, when the teachers talk too fast or there are not any written notes. Ann has a mild speech impairment and she thinks she can relate to how students with hearing loss struggle in class and social life. During her high school years, Ann also helped one student with hearing loss in her class. During the interview, Ann shared a lot of information about her perceptions of English graduation requirements. She also contributed her thoughts of students with hearing loss learning English in general and learning other subjects in the general classroom.

Background to the cases. In this case study, I collected data from two interviews with each of the primary participants and one interview with each secondary participant. I also observed the alternative English class three times, collected a copy of the English graduation requirement policy, and took field notes of the learning environment at this university. I took field notes during three observations in the alternative English class. I also took interview notes right after each interview and made entries in my research journal during the data collection process. In the following section, I will describe the case study site in detail.

Community. The site of this case study is in the center of one of the major cities in Taiwan. The size of the campus is relatively small and most buildings have Chinese-
English bilingual signs. Due to its elite status among IHEs and convenient location, it is also a popular university for students with special needs and foreign students. According to the resource center staff, there were 60-70 students with special needs studying at this university during the time these data were collected. There are between 20-30 students with hearing loss at this university; students with hearing loss comprise the largest group of students with special needs. Students with special needs receive individualized support plans (ISP) to evaluate their needs in classes and the necessary supports for those needs each semester. All students with hearing loss at this university have the option of taking the general English class or an alternative English class for the English graduation requirements, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Four.

According to Gary, the teacher of the alternative English class, the MOE advocates and encourages IHEs to recruit foreign students, and this is one criterion of the IHE annual evaluation. In order to maintain its superior status and continue receiving funding and resources from the MOE, this university recruits approximately 200-300 international students from different countries in the world yearly, many from countries in Africa and South America. Numerous international students receive financial aid from the government of Taiwan for pursuing their degrees. During the period of data collection, I noticed international students’ interactions with local students every time I visited, and they all communicated with each other in English. Gary, the instructor of the alternative English class, also commented that English is the language the instructors use in courses these international students take. I will introduce the English graduation requirements for the students with and without hearing loss at this university in Chapter Four.
Recruitment procedures. Obtaining access to at least one individual who can assist in the recruitment of and help gain the confidence of potential participants is important in case study participant recruitment (Creswell, 2007). In order to recruit the primary participants, I contacted IHE faculty and resource center staff by phone to find out whether their IHEs had students with hearing loss and English graduation requirements. After several phone calls, I verified that two IHEs qualified for the criteria of the recruitment of the study. Those I contacted at the universities agreed to pass along the flyers for recruitment to their students with hearing loss. The information on the flyer included the purpose of the study, the criteria for participating in the study, the location where this case study took place, the time of participating in the study.

After a week of waiting, one resource center staff member at the IHE told me that two students with hearing loss were interested in participating in the study and that their English teacher would allow me to conduct the classroom observations. The resource center staff member, Tim, made the arrangements for the first interviews with both primary participants, and additionally agreed to participate in the study. Tim was also helpful passing along the recruitment flyer to other potential secondary participants, such as other resource center staff members, the tutor of the primary participants, and the head of the resource center.

Once I met with primary participants, gained their written consent, and conducted the initial interview with each of them, I started recruiting the secondary participants. I asked each primary participant to pass along the flyer to potential secondary participants in person. Two types of the secondary participants participated in this study: a) the people who knew the primary participant personally, such as the English teacher of the
alternative English class, the Chinese teacher, the informal study peers, and the resource center staff members; and b) the teacher of the general English class, who did not know the primary participants personally, but was knowledgeable of the English graduation requirements and able to provide in-depth information about the requirements and the process of English education at this university. I used the snow ball strategy to recruit the secondary participants and finished all participant recruitments within a month.

Selection of participants. I included the primary participants who met the following criteria: a) they were the current students with hearing loss who were enrolled in an English class at one IHE of Taiwan; and b) the IHE these students attended has the English as a gatekeeper policy with potentially accommodations that may lessen the negative impact on their English learning. I excluded the primary participants who were: a) the students without hearing loss; b) students with hearing loss that were not currently attending the university that has an English as a gatekeeper policy; c) students with hearing loss from a two-year college; and d) students with hearing loss who were not enrolled in the English class. I determined whether the IHE of the primary participants has an English as a gatekeeper policy by contacting the resource center to verify whether there is a graduation requirement related to English proficiency. The resource center of this university confirmed that there are English graduation requirements and alternatives for the students with hearing loss.

Eight secondary participants were involved in this study; four of them knew both primary participants. I excluded the secondary participants who were: a) the teachers and tutor who had not taught the primary participant or were not knowledgeable of the
English graduation requirements; b) the study peers who were not in the same IHE the primary students attended; and c) the resource center staff members who were not working at the IHE the primary students attended.

**Consent procedures.** In the case study, alerting all the participants to the nature of the case study and formally soliciting their voluntary participation in the study are important to gain the informed consent (Yin, 2014). All the consent forms I gave to all the participants were written in both English and Chinese, since the preferred language each participant in this study was different. I explained the purpose of the study, all the rights the participants had in this study, and answered their questions orally, in the language mode all participants preferred, before having them sign the consent form.

**Primary participants.** I gave the primary participants the consent form on the day I met them for the first time. I explained the rights of participating in this study, answered the questions, and asked them to sign the consent form in person and before starting the interview. The setting for the interview with the primary participants was based on their preference. Both primary participants chose a private room at the resource center to be the interview site. Both of them chose to have the oral interviews and agreed to allow me to record the interviews.

**Secondary participants.** Once I finished the initial interview with both primary participants, I scheduled the interviews with the secondary participants and gave the consent form to the secondary participants on the day of the interview. The setting for the interview with the secondary participants were also based on their preference, such as the private room at the resource center, the teacher’s lounge, and their offices. I went over the
consent form with the secondary participant face-to-face and answered their questions. I then asked them to sign the consent form before starting the interview.

**Data collection and recording.** Establishing an atmosphere of trust, cooperation, and mutual respect is crucial for the researcher to obtain accurate information (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). During the data collection and recording, it was important for me to develop a positive relationship with all the participants by respecting their needs, concerns, and contribution in the study. The field notes, interview and observational protocols are the typical types of data in the case study (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Yin, 2014). The types of data I collected in this study were the interviews, classroom observations, documentations that were related to the primary participants’ English learning and English policy for the primary participants, and the researcher’s journal. I will describe each type of data in detail in the following sections and in Table 1.

Table 1

**Data Collection and Recording Procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of data collection</th>
<th>Who did I collect this type of data from?</th>
<th>When did I collect this type of data?</th>
<th>How long did it take to collect the data?</th>
<th>Where did I collect this type of data?</th>
<th>What materials/equipment did I need?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Primary participants (initial interview).</td>
<td>The first data of each case I collected.</td>
<td>60 minutes.</td>
<td>A private room at the resource center.</td>
<td>The researcher’s laptop. Two digital recorders. A notebook. The initial interview questions. The consent form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary participants.</td>
<td>The second data of each case I collected.</td>
<td>60 minutes.</td>
<td>A private room at the resource center, a</td>
<td></td>
<td>The researcher’s laptop. Two digital recorders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Participants Involved</td>
<td>Data Collection Time</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
<td>Primary participant</td>
<td>2.5 hours each time. 3 times in total.</td>
<td>The primary participants’ English class.</td>
<td>The researcher’s laptop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Primary participants and secondary participants.</td>
<td>4 months.</td>
<td>Campus and IHE websites during the interviews.</td>
<td>The researcher’s laptop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s journal</td>
<td>The field notes, the transcriptions of the interviews, the documents, and materials (codes and themes) from data analysis.</td>
<td>From the initial interview until the end of data analysis.</td>
<td>At least once a week at the home office of the researcher’s parents’ house and the researcher’s home office in the U.S.</td>
<td>The researcher’s laptop.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Interview. The purpose of interviewing people is to find out what is on their minds—what they think or how they feel about something (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). According to Yin (2014), one of the most important pieces of evidence in a case study’s data collection is the interview, and the most commonly used type of questions during the interview in the case study is the open-ended question. Fraenkel and Wallen also noted that an open-ended question indicates an area to be explored without suggesting to the participant how it should be explored, and these questions do not presume an answer. During the interview, as Yin emphasized, the case study researcher needs to satisfy the needs of the research questions while simultaneously put forth “friendly” and “nonthreatening” questions in the open-ended interviews. In this study, I used open-ended questions with all participants and maintain an unbiased manner, as Yin stressed, during the interviews. In the following paragraphs, I will describe in detail the procedures of the interviews with the primary participants and secondary participants.

The primary participants, IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan, were the core of individual case study. The secondary participants of this study were the people who were associated with the primary participants in learning English, and their contribution was crucial for this study. I conducted two interviews with each primary participant and one interview with each secondary participant in this study. The materials and equipment I used for the interviews were my personal laptop, the interview questions, two digital recorders, a notebook, and the consent forms.

For all interviews with all participants, based on their preference, we met in a private room such as those at the resource center, a teacher’s lounge, or the offices. Since all participants chose to have the face-to-face oral interviews, I did not use other methods
to conduct the interviews such as the written or online interview. Before starting an
interview with each participant, as described in the consent for procedure, I explained to
each participant the purpose of the study, his or her rights in the study, and answered any
questions before each one signed the consent form.

The primary participants signed their consent forms on the day of the initial
interview, and the consent form was for both interviews. One of the initial interviews
lasted half an hour and the other one lasted about an hour. The final interviews with both
primary participants occurred sometime after I finished the classroom observations. I had
the interviews with the secondary participants sometime after the initial interviews with
both primary participants.

During the interviews, I brought a copy of the initial interview questions (see
Appendix A) to the initial interviews with the primary participants, a copy of the final
interview questions (see Appendix B) to the final interviews with the primary
participants, and a copy of the secondary participant interview questions (see Appendix
C) to the secondary participant interviews. I also confirmed information gathered in the
interviews with all participants in person, as a form of informal member checking. I
confirmed the information collected from the primary participants at the beginning of the
second interview, based on the information I collected from their first interviews and the
classroom observations. For the secondary participants, I went over and confirmed the
key information they shared at the end of their interviews. For the English teacher in the
alternative English class, Gary, I confirmed the key information of the interview and the
notes of the classroom observations at the end of his interview.
As described previously, all interviews with the participants were the oral interviews in person. I kept a notebook with me to record the notes from the interviews and communicate with the primary participants in the written form when needed. I recorded all interviews on two digital recorders and transferred the audio data to my personal laptop after the interviews. To respect all participants’ privacy and concerns, I stopped recording the interviews when they asked me to and did not take notes from the information they shared but did not want to be in the record. At the end of each interview, I reviewed the contents of the interview with the participant to clarify the information I collected. I also asked questions from the initial interviews with both primary participants in the beginning of the final interviews with them.

Classroom observation. Yin (2014) noted that a case study should take place in the real-world setting of the case, and the researcher can have an opportunity for direct observations. In order to understand the real college-level English class settings in Taiwan, I performed three classroom observations of the primary participants’ English class. I performed the classroom observations after finishing their initial interviews and in the process of secondary participants’ interviews. The length of each classroom observation were two and a half hours each time, and I observed the class once a week for three weeks. During each classroom observation, I was a passive observer and did not interrupt or participate in the class. By performing the classroom observations in each case study, I knew the context in the real English classroom and understood the type of teaching and learning environment the primary participants had.

The material I used for each classroom observation was my personal laptop and typed field notes during the observation on my laptop. The contents I recorded in the field
notes was in English during each observation—the classroom settings, the size of the class, the teaching and learning materials and equipment, the type of teaching method, the interactions among teacher and the students, the interactions among students, and the accommodations for different learning styles and needs.

**Documentation.** The documents I collected in this study were the materials that helped me to: a) understand the perceptions of IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan towards learning English, and b) to examine whether the current policies and educational practices related to learning English as a foreign language serve to construct opportunities and barriers for these students. The equipment I used to collect these documents are my personal laptop, a notebook, and the researcher’s journal. These materials I collected were assignments, examinations, textbooks, learning environment and settings, grading criteria, and a copy of the English graduation requirement policy. The primary and secondary participants and the IHE websites provided many of these documents. I also asked the primary participants at the end of the initial interviews and the secondary participants at the end of their interviews for the permission to collect these documents. I started collecting these documents after the initial interview of each case by photocopying and taking notes of them on my laptop with the permission from the primary and secondary participants. The entire process of the document collection lasted for four months approximately.

**Researcher’s journal.** The process of maintaining the researcher’s journal lasted the entire data collection and data analysis. I kept a journal entry in English after each interview and classroom observation on my laptop, and maintained journal entries at least one time a week during those non-active data collecting days in the study. The materials I
recorded in the journal were the reflections, thoughts, and insights from the field notes of the classroom observation and the document collection, the transcriptions of the interviews, meetings with fellow doctoral students, and during the process of data processing and analysis. Keeping the journal entries allowed me to review data, rethink the research question, reorganize my thoughts, and rephrase the emerging codes and themes of data.

Data processing and analysis. Creswell (2007) affirmed the importance of storing data such as field notes, transcriptions, and computer files in the qualitative studies. The collected information in the form of handwritten or typed field notes, audio recordings of interviews, and documents or other print and digital artifacts that are the elements in the data processing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). In the following sections, I will include the details of how I handled the data in the study.

Data processing. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013) noted the importance of processing the raw data before they are available for analysis. There were different types of data I collected in this study, such as the written and audio data from the interviews, the field notes from the classroom observations and document collections, and researcher’s journal entries. I had a link to the real names of all participants with pseudonyms that I created on a word document and I will keep the hard copy of this link in a locked drawer in a locked home office. I only used the pseudonyms in transcriptions and for the file names of different types of data. I also kept a copy of all data on my external hard drive. I will describe the procedures of how I will process different types of data in the following sections.
Transcription. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013) stated that researchers should transcribe the raw data directly at different levels of detail, and I included the details of the transcription rules modified from Dresing, Pehl, and Schmieder’s (2012) manual on transcription and de Valenzuela’s (2015b) transcription protocol in Appendix D. The audio recording was the key element in data collection and data analysis in this case study. All the recorded audio data was in Chinese. At first, I transferred the digital file from the digital recorders to my laptop. Next I translated all the audio data into English in my mind and then transcribed the recordings in English. The equipment I used for transcribing audio data were the Express Scribe Transcription software and a foot pedal to pause. I replayed recordings repeatedly when needed and typed the transcriptions in English into Word documents. I used the participants’ pseudonyms and the date of the interview as the file name, and saved all the files of transcriptions in the transcription folder on my laptop and an external hard drive.

Notes. The typed notes in this study were from the classroom observations, documentation collecting, and researcher’s journal entries. As described before, I typed the field notes of the classroom observation in English on my laptop during the observations, and I saved these field notes in the dissertation classroom observation field notes folder with the pseudonym of the primary participant and the date of the observation. I also typed the important information I observed from the interviews, classroom observations, documentation in the researcher’s journal entries, such as the types of assignments, exams, and textbooks or the evidence of having or lacking supports and accommodations for students with hearing loss. I typed the researcher’s journal entries on Word documents on my laptop and kept journal entries at once a week. I saved
the entries according to the topic and the date of typing in the dissertation researcher’s journal folder.

**Data analysis.** The objective of data analysis is a “description of what you want to achieve through the lens of the data” (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p. 27). The best preparation for data analysis in case study is to have a general analytic strategy. The purpose of this analytic strategy is to link the data of the case study to some concepts of interest, and then to let the concepts give the researcher a sense of direction in analyzing the data (Yin, 2014). Yin further explained that data analysis is the process of developing a rich and full explanation or a good description of the case, responding to the initial “how” or “why” questions by searching for patterns, insights, or concepts that seem promising. I identified codes and themes and performed the cross-case analysis to provide the *thick description*, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) noted, of this case study.

Writing memos (hints, clues, or suggestions) or notes on the researcher’s journal for what you have observed in your data will be a good resource for codes and themes—conceptualizing your data (Lempert, 2011; Yin, 2014). I recorded the possible codes and themes during the data collection on my researcher’s journal by reviewing the key words, phrases, or concepts from the interviews, classroom observation field notes, and collected documents. Once I finished collecting data, I uploaded the translated transcriptions, field notes, documents, and researcher’s journal entries to Dedoose, an online software program that I used for data analysis. At that point, I continued to write memos in Dedoose. I will explain the procedure of data analysis in the following paragraphs.

**Coding.** Denzin and Lincoln (2000) defined coding as the heart and soul of whole-text analysis, and it forces the researcher to make judgments about the meanings of
contiguous blocks of text. Other researchers also established two major stages in coding—first cycle and second cycle coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). According to these researchers, the first cycle coding method is to code from the data chunks, and the second cycle coding method is to work with the previously labeled codes. Other researchers called this process *data reduction* (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In the initial stage of the data analysis, I first started coding the interviews and the notes from the classroom observation, the documentation collecting, and the researcher’s journal of each case separately on the Dedoose system. I looked at a single instance and drew meaning from it without looking for multiple instance, as Stake (1995) recommended. As Rossman and Rallis (2003) clarified, a code can be a word or phrase describing some segment of the data that is explicit. I ended up having a large chunk of codes from each type of data in one case in this stage. In the second cycle coding, I put the codes of all data in one case together on the Dedoose system, and then reviewed and redefined the codes on the system. I repeated same process of coding for each case.

*Themes.* “A theme is an *outcome* of coding, categorization, or analytic reflection” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 14). As Rossman and Rallis (2003) asserted, a theme can be a phrase or sentence describing more subtle and tacit processes (p. 282). As Saldaña affirmed, a theme such as a pattern, trend, or concept, can emerge in the process of reading, reviewing, and coding the data. After the second cycle coding, I performed the *within-case analysis*, as Creswell (2007) concluded, by reviewing the data and codes in each case, and writing down themes I observed in each case on the Dedoose system. I repeatedly worked on the codes and themes throughout the process of data analysis.
Cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis is an analytic technique when the researcher studies two or more cases (Yin, 2003). In the cross-case analysis, the researcher looks for the similarities and differences among the cases to establish significant patterns, then further questioning and refining these patterns as part of an ongoing analytic process (Creswell, 2007; Frechtling & Sharp, 1997). Once I finished the codes and themes of each case, I compared and contrasted them to examine the patterns across cases and developed the themes for both cases. I reported results of the cross-case analysis in the result chapter. As Creswell stressed, during the process of cross-case analysis, the researcher develops naturalistic generalizations from analyzing the data, generalizations that people can learn from the case either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases.

Critical friends. Qualitative researchers use a variety of techniques to assure themselves and their readers that they have not gotten it all wrong (Ferguson & Ferguson, 2000). As stated in the description of methodology, triangulation is one key method to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. In this study, I included different types of data for each case to strengthen the trustworthiness of the result of the study. As a result, besides performing informal member checking with all participants by confirming the information they shared, I discussed the codes and themes with my advisor and the group of doctoral student peers who were approved as project team members by the university’s institutional review board (IRB) during the data analysis. I also had two critical friends from that group to review my data and examine the interpretations I drew from the data, to avoid bias in the result of the study. At first, I went over the raw data numerous times and performed initial data coding. During this process, my advisor and critical friends
read some of the excerpts of the codes and helped me narrow down to concrete codes. Meanwhile, I also presented some examples of the excerpts from the data in the doctoral group meetings several times, and my advisor and the group members, including the critical friends, helped me finalize the themes.

**Ethical Considerations**

Protecting those who participate in your study from any harm, including avoiding the issue of any deception in the study is key to all research studies (Yin, 2014). Creswell (2007) identified the needs for seeking consent, avoiding the problem of deception, maintaining confidentiality, respecting the privacy and right of participants to withdraw from the study and no placing them at risk, and protecting the anonymity of the participants in the qualitative studies. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) also asserted that the access to participants’ characteristics, response, behavior, and other information needs to be restricted to the researcher only. I will explain the details of how I protected and ensured the privacy and confidentiality in this study, as well as the expected risks and benefits, in the following sections.

**Privacy.** In order to protect all participants’ privacy, I only used the pseudonyms for the participants’ names and sites to record all data. I had a list that links the real names of participants and sites to the pseudonyms for participants and sites on a hard copy in a locked drawer in a locked home office, and no one was able to have access to these files nor was able to identify the participants by reading the final report. On the day of the interview, all the questions I asked the participants were relevant to the research question. I did not request any private information from the participants beyond the relevance to the research question. I collected some demographic information containing
very limited personal information from the participants, such as their first language learning experience, the language they used in daily life at home or with people other than family, the English learning experience prior to the IHE, or the type of school they attended prior to the IHE. All the participants had the right to decide the pieces of information they contributed to the interviews and pieces of information they wanted to keep private or only share with me. I did not share any information the participants provide or the identification of the participants with anyone. I only used the devices the participants agree to for recording the interviews. I only recorded the contents that were relevant to the interview on my devices. For the documents I collected in this study, I only collected them with the participants’ permission and only used the device they agreed for document collection. I did not share any information or copies of the documents with anyone.

Confidentiality. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) highlighted the importance of securing and concealing the personal data in a qualitative study. Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) affirmed that once the data in a study have been collected, researchers need to make sure that no one else has access to the data. I will describe the methods I used to ensure the data confidentiality in the following sections.

Interview site security. All interview sites were based on the participants’ preference. These sites were the private room at the resource center, a teacher’s lounge, and the secondary participants’ offices. All these sites were quiet with the least people around in the place to minimize the interference of interview recording and the risk of other people accessing the contents of the interviews.
Software security. As described in data analysis, Dedoose was the software that I used to assist with data analysis. According to Dedoose (2015), it incorporates different levels of industry-standard physical and electronic security systems to protect the data. On the Dedoose system, only one administrator (the researcher) is responsible for project administration. This administrator determines who has access to the password-protected and encrypted project and what level of access each individual will have. I only allowed the group of doctoral student peers who were approved as project team members by the university’s institutional review board (IRB) to view the data on the Dedoose system. Other individuals who had access to the data included dissertation committee members and my doctoral advisors. Dedoose also emphasized that all data transmission between the user’s (the researcher) local computers and the server database was fully encrypted, and all project data were backed up nightly, encrypted, and stored in a secure data backup service.

Data storage. In this study, in order to ensure no one else had the access to the data, I saved it all in my laptop with a locked code and external hard drive. I put my laptop and external hard drive in a locked drawer of the office of my parents’ home in Taiwan, and I kept the office locked the whole time I was not working there. When I traveled back to the United States from Taiwan after finishing data collection, I kept my laptop and external hard drive in my personal backpack and carried them with me throughout the entire trip in my carry on rather than checked luggage. I secured them in a locked drawer in my home office when I arrived and kept my home office locked when I was not using it.
**Data deletion.** Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) advocated for the names of the participants to be removed from all data collection forms after the completion of data collection. I deleted the list of the participant’s name and site identifications right after I finished all interview transcriptions. I deleted each piece of the audio recorded data from the digital recorders, my laptop, and the external hard drive right after I completed data analysis. I kept the field notes, documents, and the researcher’s journal until I finished publication of my dissertation. I then deleted all the data from the digital recorders, the camera, the external hard drive. I also moved all the data from my laptop to the trash folder and emptied the trash, and destroyed all the hard copies of data with a shedding machine after publication of my dissertation.
Chapter 4

Results

In this case study, I intended to: (a) provide the opportunity for students with hearing loss in Taiwan to share their opinions, thoughts, and experiences of learning English as a foreign language in higher education institutes; and (b) understand how English as a foreign language policies and educational practices contribute to create opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing loss. The research questions I focused on were; (a) how do Taiwanese IHE students with hearing loss perceive their experiences learning English as a foreign language in IHEs, and (b) how do the current policies and educational practices related to learning English as a foreign language serve to construct opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing loss. In this chapter, I present the themes resulting from analysis of the interviews and observations I conducted at a competitive university in Taiwan relating to the two intertwined cases.

As stated in Chapter Three, the primary participants, Cathy and Kevin, were the primary participants of this case study because they were the foci of the case study. Their experiences of learning English were similar in some ways. However, they also differed in some ways with respect to how they perceived themselves as people with hearing loss and the accommodations they receive from this university. One key purpose of this chapter is to present Cathy and Kevin’s perceptions and experiences of learning EFL. These findings show that their perceptions were different from, and indeed, sometimes the opposite of, the perceptions of the secondary participants, especially those who do not have hearing loss. In many aspects, June’s information, perhaps because she is one of Cathy and Kevin’s peers in the alternative English class and also has a hearing loss,
dovetailed with Cathy and Kevin’s perceptions and experiences. Prior to presenting the thematic analysis, I will describe the case in detail in following sections, beginning with Cathy and Kevin, and then describing the observations of Gary and the alternative English class.

As explained in Chapter Three, I conducted three classroom observations of the alternative English class and collected relevant documentation in addition to the interviews with the participants, to strengthen the triangulation of the data analysis. The classroom observations allowed me to understand the real class setting that provides the needed accommodations for students with hearing loss in their EFL learning at IHEs in Taiwan. This university is unique because it provides many services and supports to students with hearing loss in Taiwan that other IHEs do not have. As stated in Chapter Two, the class size in the general English class tends to be large—more than 40 students in one class in many cases. Accommodations are not commonly provided to students with hearing loss in many learning settings in Taiwan. In many general English learning settings, students with hearing loss’ linguistic needs are ignored and sacrificed, such as using the oral language mode or not providing written notes. However, this was not the case in the classroom observations I conducted.

The data I collected from the alternative English classroom observations showed me that students with hearing loss CAN learn effectively and meaningfully with accommodations, supports from peers and the teacher, and the services that they need in the educational setting to fulfill their linguistic differences and needs, which I will present more in detail in the theme *accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university*. In contrast to other themes, such as *audism, hegemony of English*, and *inequity*
of educational policy, students in this alternative class were emerged in a warm, accepting, respectful learning environment where students felt comfortable disclosing with their hearing loss identity and learning EFL in their own pace. In this class, students with hearing loss did not worry how others would perceive nor treat them differently due to their linguistic traits. Especially Cathy and Kevin, they seemed to be more talkative and participated much in class discussions compared to what they shared with me in the interviews about learning in other classes with students without hearing loss. From the observations, I learned who Cathy and Kevin were as students, not as students with hearing loss. Although they used oral language communicating with other students and sometimes misunderstood each other’s speech, their relationships with other peers and the teacher were close.

**Description of the Case**

As described in Chapter Three, I contacted the key informant of this case study, Tim—the resource center staff, before getting to know the two primary participants—Cathy and Kevin. According to Tim, both Cathy and Kevin volunteered right away to participate in this study when he described my study in the beginning of their English class that day. Tim also emphasized that both Cathy and Kevin preferred using oral language to communicate with others, so the interviews were done orally (instead of by writing). The interviews with Cathy and Kevin were in the private room next to the resource center, where the background noise was limited. I also ascertained that Gary, the English teacher of the alternative English class, would be willing to allow me to perform classroom observations before proceeding the interviews. Once I confirmed that two students with hearing loss had agreed to be involved in the study and I had permission to
perform classroom observations, the first interview was scheduled and I met with Cathy for the first time.

Cathy. As briefly introduced in Chapter Three, Cathy is a reserved and polite young woman. Cathy did not talk much in either interviews and provided less well-expanded comments than any of the other participants, even with prompting. I attributed her hesitancy to both her reserved nature and her reticence to talk about her hearing loss and how that has impacted her life.

During the first interview, Cathy appeared to be a little hesitant to share her first language development history. When I asked her how she learned her first language, she looked unsure and a little offended, and answered, “Just like others, I was taught gradually and repeatedly. . . I am not sure. Because I was just like others; I learned it with others”. When I asked her if she had learned sign language, Cathy immediately replied, “No”, as if she felt there was no need for her to learn it. Cathy wears hearing aids to help her hear and has taught herself to lip-read people’s speech when she has trouble hearing them clearly. She commented:

I remembered one time I didn’t want to wear the hearing aids and I couldn’t understand people’s talking, so I read their lips and started using that method to understand people’s talking. So I can understand people’s talking by reading their lips.

With these comments, I noticed that for Cathy, disclosing her hearing loss seemed to bother her and that her desire to be a part of hearing world seemed to be important. I will address this further in the thematic analysis below.
In Cathy’s second interview, she talked about how she was identified as having mild hearing loss. Her hearing loss was not diagnosed until she was five, so it was not clear whether her hearing loss was prelingual or postlingual. Her kindergarten teacher noticed that Cathy would not respond when she was calling her name, even while standing directly behind her. Cathy’s family was not aware of her hearing loss until the kindergarten teacher brought it to their attention. Cathy recalled that she tended to turn up the television volume when she was young. Since she could still hear the sound most of the time, her family did not suspect her hearing issues.

Cathy’s first formal English learning experience was in kindergarten as well. She went to a bilingual (Mandarin-English) kindergarten and had a positive learning experience there. She recalled that the English teacher used storybooks with many pictures to teach vocabulary and she could still remember some of the pictures, such as for the word *park*. She opined that having visual aids helped her learn English words and she remembered enjoying learning them during her kindergarten year.

Cathy stressed the voiceless sounds are the most challenging for her. As she noted, “Voiceless consonants... Or the sounds I don’t know how to pronounce. Like *h* is voiceless. Sounds like this, I really can’t hear them. I can only hear the voiced sounds. And I can only guess.” For example, Cathy stated that:

Like *zh, ch, sh, r*, I can’t pronounce them. But when people are talking to me, I will pay attention to the words they use before these words. For example, the sound *zh* [eat] in *zh fan* [eat rice]. If people only say *zh*, I probably can’t understand them. But when they say *zh fan*, I can understand them.
Besides this difficulty with voiceless sounds, she stated she learned Mandarin the same way as those without hearing loss, which, as described above, seemed important to her.

Cathy went to a girls-only vocational high school where she studied business, which is not what she is majoring in at the university. This is one major reason she cited that she struggles in her current studies. As Cathy emphasized:

I used to study Business [in the vocational high school]. The classes of the department of XXX [Cathy’s current major] seem more XXX-oriented to me; they are the classes for the BBB majored students. For the basic knowledge of some classes, such as XXX, I had never learned anything like this and found it very difficult. And I need to do the analysis of those XXX. I really don’t know how to do it.

For Cathy, the gap between her previous studies and her current studies appeared to be a major source for her learning challenges at the university. I will address this issue further in the theme *inequity of educational policy* below.

Cathy recalled that in her secondary school English learning, the English textbooks were text-only, without images, and that she had hard time memorizing and understanding the context of vocabulary in her English classes during those years. Since that time, she has lost her interest in and motivation for learning English. Yet, she reported that she has regained her confidence in English learning in the alternative English class due the accommodations and supports she receives from the teacher and resource center. I will discuss this in more detail in the theme *accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university*. 
**Kevin.** In contrast to Cathy, Kevin was much more open in terms of sharing his experiences as a person with hearing loss and opinions of learning EFL. Kevin revealed that while oral language is the primary communication mode he uses with most people in daily life, it creates some challenges for him and shapes his personality. He stated:

Most of time, I use oral language with people when I see them face-to-face. And in the dorm or on Facebook, I type. When I type, I can think about what I want to say, how I should say things, and answer people’s questions. But in the face-to-face situations, I don’t talk much. I only answer people’s questions if they initiate the conversation. . . I tend to be shy during the face-to-face situations, but in fact I am a very interpersonal person.

Kevin explained that he avoids initiating conversations because of “I personally think it is because of my hearing impairment.” He stressed that he feels more comfortable and equal in texting and typing with people who do not know him well, so he does not need to disclose his hearing loss to them. This shows that students with hearing loss like Kevin struggle disclosing their hearing loss because of concerns about the stigma attached to hearing loss and the value placed on participation in the hearing world. I will discuss these notions further in the theme “audism”.

The thing that struck me the most from Kevin’s first interview was that he spent approximately 10 minutes explaining how he was identified as having a moderate hearing loss, before I even asked. This is in contrast to Cathy, who did not share that information until her second interview and was reserved when talking about how her hearing loss was identified. Although Kevin described his reticence in disclosing his hearing loss to others, he was not shy, not embarrassed to discuss it with me.
As with Cathy, Kevin was not identified as having hearing loss until he was in kindergarten—5 years old in most cases in Taiwan. Both Cathy and Kevin were identified as having hearing loss because of their kindergarten teachers. According to Kevin, he may have prelingual hearing loss based on the story he heard from his family. Kevin shared that “I was premature, a month or two earlier. I was tiny. My parents ask the doctor to see if there’s anything wrong with me”. The doctor did not find out his hearing loss (perhaps did not perform a hearing screening test) when he was a baby. Kevin was diagnosed with hearing loss in 1999. That year, Taiwan had a major earthquake on September 21st and more than 2000 people lost their lives that night. During the earthquake in central Taiwan while Kevin’s family was screaming loudly and trying to escape from their house, they found Kevin sleeping soundly in his bed. Kevin’s parents were shocked because their screams did not bother Kevin at all. Kevin’s dad then grabbed pot lids and made a loud noise. Kevin was still asleep. That was the first time Kevin’s parents realized a problem with Kevin’s hearing, and subsequently took him to the doctor. Before then, Kevin’s parents only noticed that Kevin tended to be quiet and seldom reacted to surrounding noise. Kevin lives in a rural area and had to travel for more than an hour to see the doctor. At that point, the doctor finally identified Kevin’s hearing loss. Kevin claimed that the doctor told him and his family that

If I was identified as hearing impaired earlier, my hearing impairment would not have been this bad. I might only have had a mild hearing impairment. But just because they found out about my hearing impairment this late, and everything in my ears have already developed, I have a moderate hearing impairment now.
Kevin did not learn sign language once his hearing loss was identified. Instead, his parents took him to an organization, *Shenghui*, which specializes in teaching Mandarin to children with hearing loss. His teacher emphasized oral language skills only, and Kevin’s oral language reportedly improved tremendously. Kevin remembered that the teacher would stand at a distance talking to Kevin to see how much he could hear. Gradually the teacher would stand farther away and cover her mouth while talking to Kevin. According to Kevin, this training helped him hear and speak Mandarin fluently, and many people do not know that he has a moderate hearing loss until noticing his hearing aids. Instead of relying on lip-reading as Cathy does, Kevin’s teacher wanted him to *hear* things. The teacher would cover her mouth while training Kevin’s hearing ability. As Kevin stated, “She wanted me to hear it, not lip-reading it”. This emphasis on oral language only, rather than also providing sign language instruction, is another example of audism, which I will discuss more in the thematic analysis.

Kevin started learning English since primary school, but he could not recall much about that experience. In terms of his experience learning English in secondary school, he only remembered having a hard time following the lecture in English class. As for his secondary school studies, Kevin also studied Architecture in his vocational high school. Unlike Cathy, who struggles in her current studies due to studying something for which she was not prepared her vocational high school major, Kevin did not reveal many struggles as a student in his current studies. However, unlike in Cathy’s department, the Architecture department provides additional accommodations for students with hearing loss. Kevin’s department provided tutor, Henry, agreed to participate in this research and voiced interest in supporting Kevin and other undergraduates with hearing loss to succeed
academically in their field. In addition, both Kevin and Cathy found that the supports that the university provided, in terms of the alternative English class, helped them meet the English proficiency requirement, which is critical to their ability to graduate.

**English graduation requirements.** While all IHEs in Taiwan have English graduation requirements, many have an alternative option for students with hearing loss. At this university, the two types of English graduation requirements available to students with hearing loss are: (a) passing all the general English courses and demonstrating the required level of English proficiency on one of the English proficiency tests, such as the TOEIC, TOEFL, GEPT, or IELTS; and (b) passing all of the alternative English courses and the practical English course for students with hearing loss.

According to Tim, the English graduation requirements for students without hearing loss are passing the required general English classes in their first two years of studies, and taking an English proficiency test after completing these classes. Students who obtain a superior score on one English proficiency test, such as 550 from the TOEIC, 47 from the internet-based TOEFL, the intermediate level from the GEPT, or level 4 from the IELTS, do not need to take additional coursework. Students without hearing loss who receive a passing, but not superior score, such as between 549-400 from TEOIC, 46-31 from the internet-based TOEFL, 120 from the intermediate level of the GEPT, or level 3 from the IELTS, must take and pass a practical English course in their junior year. Those students without hearing loss who do not meet the minimum requirement to take the practical English course must continue taking an English proficiency test until they meet that minimum requirement to be eligible to pass the practical English course.
Students with hearing loss at this university have the option of taking the regular path to the English graduation requirements, as described above, or the alternative path for students with hearing loss. The alternative requirements include passing (a) the alternative English course in their first two years of studies and (b) the practical English course for students with hearing loss. If these students pass all the required courses, they meet the English graduation requirements. Applicants requiring the alternative English courses must provide documentation to verify their hearing loss and fill out the necessary application. Once the resource center staff members receive the application and the required documents, they evaluate the applicants’ needs and eligibilities for the alternative English course. If students with hearing loss choose to meet all the English graduation requirements as students without hearing loss, they must meet all the requirements described in the previous paragraph. According to the participants knowledgeable with these requirements, only one student with hearing loss has chosen to take the regular path to meeting the requirements.

Both Cathy and Kevin chose to take the alternative English courses, instead of the general English courses to meet the English graduation requirements. They were in their fourth semester of the alternative English courses when I conducted the study, and they both would need to pass the practical English course for students with hearing loss in the first semester of their junior year to meet all the English graduation requirements. In the following sections, I will include the information of the general English class and the alternative English class.

**General English classes.** Prior to enrolling in the English classes, students take a placement test. Students’ scores on this test are then used to place them into one of three
levels of English proficiency: basic, intermediate and advanced. This test is required for all non-English majored students without hearing loss. Each general English class for the non-English majored students is comprised of students from different departments who have a similar English proficiency level. According to Susan, an English teacher, there are typically 45-50 students in the general English courses for students who are not English majors. In addition, there are also some specialized English classes available for non-English majors, such as an English news class, an English conversation class, and an English writing class. Each of these classes has no more than 20 students, due to the intensive training of specific English skills. None of these classes are offered specifically for students with hearing loss.

**Gary and the alternative English class.** Gary has been the only instructor of this course since it was established 10 years ago. During the interview and classroom observations, Gary presented as a warm, enthusiastic, caring, and straightforward person who cares about and fights for his students with hearing loss with the English proficiency requirement that causes them difficulties. He was not shy to share his strong opinions about the importance of English and its perhaps undue influence on IHE students. His comments support the notion of the hegemony of English in Taiwanese universities and society. Of interest is that although Gary provides many accommodations and supports to his students with hearing loss, he still showed audist views on students with hearing loss as he described their academic skills and learning capabilities, which he appeared to attribute to their hearing loss, rather than to societal barriers. I will discuss this in more detail in the thematic analysis below.
During the observed sessions, Gary sat in front, toward the right side of the classroom, facing the students. As he spoke, he also typed on his laptop. This projected onto a screen in front of the class. He spoke Mandarin and typed in both Chinese and English. The students spoke to each other in Mandarin as well. Although none of the students used sign language, I noted they sometimes appeared to have difficulty understanding each other’s spoken language. For example, I noted that students would need to repeat themselves multiple times to each other, and, at times, with increasing loudness. Their tenacity and enthusiasm for communicating with each other in class was in contrast to Kevin’s report of hesitancy in initiating conversations with others. This may have been due to the safe environment that was established with this class or to the lack of stigma associated with communicating with others who also have a hearing loss.

The alternative English class has been offered to all eligible students with hearing loss at this university for 10 years. The director of the student counseling office is the founder of the alternative English class. Knowing that passing the English graduation requirements can be quite challenging to students with hearing loss, the director wanted to provide alternatives for them to learn English in the most efficient way and to allow them to fulfill the English requirement for graduation from this university. The textbook for this alternative English class was a popular English textbook used in Mainland China titled *New Concept English*. It included MP3 files to aid students in practicing listening skills. I will analyze the alternative English class more in detail in the section of accommodations for students with hearing loss.

The alternative English classroom is located on the 6th floor. There are classrooms on both sides, and the background noise from adjacent rooms was moderate.
during the sessions I observed. A blackboard, a screen, and a projector were present in
the front of the classroom. There were two doors and two big windows on the left side of
the classroom facing the open hallway, and six windows on the right side facing a busy
street. This alternative English class started at 6:30 PM on Tuesdays, because that was the
only time all of the students were available outside of their other classes. The class lasted
two and a half hours, with a 10-minute break half way through the class.

There were seven students with hearing loss taking the alternative English class
when I conducted the study. One did not have a hearing loss but was eligible to attend the
class due to his learning needs after an injury. The majority of the students wore hearing
aids. I noted that the seats were arranged in pairs facing the blackboard. Students sat in
the same seats during my three classroom observations—two students sitting in pairs in
the middle first three rows and one student in the first row of the left side of the
classroom. Most of the time during the class, students were able to follow along the
teacher because they could see what the teacher was saying by reading the simultaneous
typing on the projected screen. The communication barriers were limited during my
observations. Students worked individually and in pairs in some classroom activities, and
the whole class discussions were frequent during the observations. Students did not need
to follow any set class agenda nor had the assignments. Instead of competing with others,
which is the case in most educational settings in Taiwan, students with hearing loss at this
alternative English class competed with themselves. I will describe this more in the theme
“accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university.”

**Thematic Analysis**
As stated previously, I used thematic analysis to analyze my data. In Table 2, I included the outline of the themes and subthemes of the findings. In the following sections, I will discuss the four major themes I found from this case study: (a) the hegemony of English, (b) audism, (c) inequity of educational policies, and (d) accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university. The majority of these themes were derived from comments by the secondary participants. The primary participants had strong feelings and opinions that were reflected in some themes; at times their positions were opposed to those of the majority of the secondary participants and at other times, they were mainly silent about issues that most of the secondary participants raised. I will describe the counter narratives of the participants with hearing loss, both the primary participants and their peer, June, in those themes where opposing opinions were revealed.

Table 2:

*The outline of themes and sub-themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. The hegemony of English.</td>
<td>1a. English privileged over...</td>
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<td>• English privileged over other languages.</td>
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<td>• English privileged over other professional requirements.</td>
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<td>1b. English as a gatekeeper.</td>
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<td>• English proficiency as cultural capital.</td>
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<td>• English as the language of instruction.</td>
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<td>1c. Students’ challenges.</td>
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<td>• Students with hearing loss’ problems specific to learning English.</td>
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<td>• Students with hearing loss feel they are on their own.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Students’ resistance to learning English.</td>
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<td>• Students’ struggle learning and using L1.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Emphasis on oral language.</td>
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<td>• Problems communicating with hearing people.</td>
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<td>2b. Limited opportunities in education and employment.</td>
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</table>
2c. Instructional challenges.
- Lack of accommodations in instruction.
- Lack of resources and supports.

2d. Negative expectations.
- Undeserved success.
- Personality problem.
- Future failure.
- Self-blame and concerns about disclosure.

3. Inequity of Educational Policy.

3a. Secondary schools.
3b. IHE Admissions process.
3c. IHE policies.
- Mismatches with the current studies.
- Testing is the key.
- Same standards for all.
- Concerns about the alternative English graduation requirements.
- Teacher’s lack of power in educational policy.

4. Accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university.

4a. Alternative English graduation requirements.
4b. Differentiated English instruction.
- Teaching strategies.
- Learning goals and evaluations.
4c. Building positive relationships.
4d. Advocacy, services, and supports.
4e. Inclusion can work.

**Theme 1: The hegemony of English.** One focus of this study was the perceptions and experiences of IHE students with hearing loss about learning English. All participants validated the importance and necessity of learning English, since it is the lingua franca many people in the world use for different purposes and reasons. However, the majority of the participants in this study also contended that there is an overemphasis on English learning in Taiwan, which leads to the hegemony of English. As Gary argued, it is important to question the reasons why students in Taiwan need to learn English and what English skills they need to acquire. He asserted that:
It’s hard to say that English is not important. English is important. I believe that English is important, so does everyone else. But how important is it? This is one thing the policy makers in a country need to evaluate and think through.

One of the major findings that emerged from the data was that English has a powerful and crucial educational, linguistic, occupational status in Taiwan. Three subthemes emerged that support the evidence of the hegemony of English: (a) *English privileged over...*, (b) *English as a gatekeeper*, and (c) *student challenges*. Because of the privileged and gatekeeping status English language holds in educational, occupational, and social settings in Taiwan, participants suggested that students with hearing loss in Taiwan experience learning challenges. In the following sections, I will discuss these three subthemes in detail.

**Subtheme 1a: English privileged over...** One major finding from this case study was that English has the privileged status over other languages and professional requirements in Taiwan. Some of the participants affirmed that English is more important than Chinese, other foreign languages, and other professional requirements in school curriculums. Gary remarked that “the whole English education has been overly done and emphasized in Taiwan. English should not have the superior status over so many professions and other languages.” In the following paragraphs, I will describe several different aspects of this subtheme that emerged from the participants’ comments.

*English privileged over other languages.* English has a superior linguistic status over other languages in Taiwan, including over one of its local languages—Mandarin. According to Shawn, the Chinese teacher at this university, "I always tell my students that learning English is very important. I tell them that it is more important than
Based on Shawn’s own experience, having good English skills can increase the chance of getting a higher paying job in Taiwan more than having good Chinese skills. As he commented, “I often tell my students is that the level of English skills makes the difference in their salary; the difference can be double.” However, the English teacher of the alternative English class, Gary, argued that if it is important to learn a foreign language, English should not be the only choice. He pointed out that other foreign languages do not have the same privilege as English, which is not fair. As Gary emphasized:

If the student is interested in learning Japanese, can he or she substitute it with English for the requirement of foreign language? Or Spanish or Vietnamese? These are all foreign languages. English policy in Taiwan, in my own opinion, I think we take it too seriously.

Interestingly, neither Cathy nor Kevin noted that English has a privileged status over other languages. They did not really question the language requirements. Rather, they focused on their struggles in language learning, especially in English learning. In this sense, they appeared to have internalized the locus of the problem, rather than questioning the fairness of meeting of these requirements.

*English privileged over other professional requirements.* Many participants of this study noticed that English also has a privileged status over other professional requirements, primarily because of the gatekeeping requirement for graduation. As Gary described:

Almost all IHEs in Taiwan have this gatekeeping policy. If I look at this phenomenon in the negative way, it’s useless if the students have high skills in
other subjects and professions. If they can’t pass the English graduation requirements, nothing else matters. I don’t think this is the foundation of education.

Tim, one of the resource center staff members, also commented that some students with hearing loss are outstanding in their own professional skills and can find good jobs after they graduate from this university. According to Tim and Gary, it is not necessary to put as much emphasis on English graduate requirements for students with hearing loss to earn the college degrees. As Gary observed, “I have met too many individuals throughout my teaching career who performed well in all other academic subjects but English.” Yet, no other professional requirement functions as this kind of gatekeeper at this university and many other IHEs in Taiwan, and students with hearing loss need to spend extra time achieving the English skills necessary to graduate from IHEs in Taiwan.

Henry and the other participants from the architecture department all stated that the class load for students in architecture department at this university is extremely heavy and that it is too much to ask students to spend time outside the class to study English. As Henry remarked, “of course, they want to have good English skills and spend more time on learning English. But they have too many classes to take and have too heavy of a load in these classes. They can’t handle all of it well.” Kevin also confirmed that “I am busy with the architecture classes and don’t have time for English.” The participants with hearing loss indicated they had a hard time finding a way to focus on developing their professional skills while trying to meet the English graduation requirements. Yet, in the interviews with Cathy, she did not talk about English requirements having the privileged status over the professional requirements in her studies.
**Subtheme 1b: English as a gatekeeper.** According to the participants, English serves as a gatekeeper for different reasons and purposes. The participants expressed very strong feelings about how English serves as gatekeeper for a variety of reasons and purposes. They felt that English proficiency as cultural capital was discriminatory and that English requirements often create barriers. They argued that without good English skills, their cultural, educational, and socioeconomic status can be limited. Gary was the participant who voiced the strongest opinions about English as a gatekeeper. According to Gary, “I have met too many individuals throughout my teaching career who performed well in all academic subjects except English.” Yet, English is one major gatekeeper at the many IHEs and it is the only graduation requirement, other than passing all the courses in each department. For students with hearing loss, according to the participants, English requirements are a major barrier they face in their education. As components of the subtheme English as a gatekeeper, English proficiency as cultural capital, English as the language of instruction, and English requirements as a barrier emerged as important aspects of how English serves a gatekeeping function, beyond that of a university graduation requirement.

*English proficiency as cultural capital.* Participants’ comments suggested that English proficiency serves as a factor in cultural capital in Taiwan. They noted that English proficiency is one of the essential elements needed to gain the access to the world, a better life, and increased opportunities. It is the determining factor for IHE students’ eligibility to earn the bachelor degrees. It is also a requirement to find jobs in many occupations in Taiwan. The data indicated that without English proficiency, the chances of having a good quality of life, education, and employment can be limited in
Taiwan. For example, Susan, stated “I think English is very important. Because it widens your views, life choices, and creates the accesses to the world.” Yvonne also stressed, “this is an international and diverse society and culture… if they have the basic English conversation and reading skills, it would helpful for them to have access to the world.”

Some participants also commented that having English skills opens the door to make friends with non-Mandarin speakers. Cathy stated that

When I see foreigners, I would use English to say hi to them. One student from my dorm would say thank you in English to me, and I would respond you are welcome back to that student. Or sometimes I would say bye or something like that.

Kevin also claimed that to explore the world and make friends with people from other countries, he needs to have good English skills. Ann shared that her negative perceptions towards learning English shifted after having the opportunity to be the tour guide for some Japanese visitors at this university. She reported that since then, she has wanted to improve her English skills and has realized the benefits and importance of proficiency in English.

While English serves as a gatekeeper for IHE students in Taiwan and has a major impact on students, including students with hearing loss, participants commented this can be unfair to students with hearing loss. Some participants remarked that having a hearing loss makes it hard to pass an English proficiency test, since listening skills is one major section of the test. For example, Cathy said she hoped that “the listening skills would not be a part of it… Because there are some sounds we can’t hear, and we would never be able to spell those words… And we won’t know the meaning of the word.” June noted
that “our English skills in the listening and speaking parts would be weak. And we may lose a big portion of our total score because of that.” Gary also asserted, “Students with hearing loss, general speaking, can’t pass these tests or pass the minimum scores. You can’t do much about it. Even for those students with mild hearing loss, they have a hard time taking the listening skills test with the headphones on.”

Some participants also related strong feelings towards the English graduation requirements and how it acts as a gatekeeper in IHEs. Tim maintained that it is questionable to use English as a gatekeeper for students with hearing loss to earn the IHE degrees. According to Gary, the passing rate of the English proficiency test is 60-70%. Gary asserted that being an English teacher, he is against having English graduation requirements for IHE students because “it causes huge damage to English learning. Especially for those students whose English skills are low, the damage can be very big.” He argued that making the exit at this university so narrow is not necessary and further contended that:

If these students with hearing loss have good enough professional skills and they can take care of themselves in daily life, is it necessary to keep them from graduating just because of the English graduation requirements? Is English really that important?... This gatekeeping policy can cause a huge impact on those individuals’ lives and careers.

The primary participants had different opinions about the English graduation requirements. Cathy discussed the difficulties she would have if she had to pass the English graduation requirements as students without hearing loss at this university. Yet, she did not question about the requirements themselves. She noted:
Because even when we [the students with hearing impairments] spend lots of time learning English, the contents of the test are the things that we hardly read or heard before. The vocabulary words on the test are the ones we have never seen before. Or I can’t understand the compound words on the test. So I feel that no matter how much effort we put in preparing for the test, we would never pass the test.

Kevin also felt strongly about the English graduation requirements. He described:

Before coming to XXX [the city where this university is located], I already knew about the English graduation requirements. I was anxious about it. Until I came to the resource center, I realized there’s an alternative for us - the alternative English class. I thought to myself, “That’s great!” But I realize I can’t just rely on taking this alternative English class and not spending time studying English. I will need English for my future career.

As a result, Kevin viewed the English graduation requirements as necessary. He explained, “To me, it is necessary. I really want to work in the Architecture industry. And English is a must in this industry.” While both Kevin and Cathy voiced concerns about passing this requirement, unlike Gary, they did not question its inherent fairness.

Another finding from the data was that English serves as a gatekeeper for employment. Both the primary participants remarked that having English skills is important for their future careers. As Kevin pointed out, “I will need English for my future career. To me, it is necessary. I really want to work in the architecture industry. And English is a must in this industry.” Cathy also noted that she may need to use some professional English skills at work depending on her job. Cathy explained, “I think it
depends on the kind of the job you have. It depends on the type of the job you get after graduating from here. You may need to use some professional English words at work.” June, another student with hearing loss, stressed that:

Because of our identities [being the people with hearing loss], it would be harder for us to find jobs. So we need to learn some skills that are advantageous to us so our skills and capabilities can be increased. So I think it [English] is important.

As these participants suggested, finding a job or an ideal job can be challenging for students with hearing loss without good English proficiency. Yet, as with the English proficiency requirement, these students did not question the hegemony of English in the workplace.

*English as the language of instruction.* In Taiwan, some IHE courses are taught in English and many professors use English-only textbooks in those non-English related courses, such as calculus. This is a problem for the students to obtain the knowledge and content of those subjects when they have difficulty understanding English language. This is one of the major issues I observed and heard from a number of participants, and is reportedly a major challenge for students with hearing loss in non-English related courses. However, Cathy and Kevin did not reveal having difficulties of using English-only textbooks or having English as the language of instruction in their studies. Yet, other students with hearing loss in the alternative English class seemed to manifest this problem. There were numerous times Gary spent time explaining the math problems that were written in English to the class. It is not clear whether Cathy and Kevin did not experience similar problems or, whether they simply accepted them as natural aspects of
their struggles as students with hearing loss in an environment that provided insufficient accommodation for their learning needs.

Some of the students in that class were taking non-English related courses that were taught and tested in English and had trouble understanding the contents. According to Gary and Tim, many faculty prefer to use English-only textbooks, even when the content is not related to English instruction. They both related that using these textbooks adds more barriers to students with hearing loss. They further explained that, on tests, when, for example, a calculus teacher writes questions in English, students with hearing loss may not be able to solve the problems because they do not understand some of the English words, not that they do not understand the material. Gary pointed out that “students with hearing loss may not know what the question is asking since it is written in English on the test.” He further argued that “they may feel that math is hard already, learning it in English may be too much to handle for these students.” Gary and Tim also stressed that although using English in those non-English subject courses is a problem for many students, the problem is more evident among and severe for students with hearing loss and contributes to an academic achievement gap between students with hearing loss and students without hearing loss.

**Subtheme 1c: Students’ challenges.** All participants discussed challenges students with hearing loss face as a result of the privileged status of English in Taiwan and at their university. According to the participants, students with hearing loss have difficulties specific in learning English, feel that they are on their own, and have a resultant resistance to learning English. For the participants with hearing loss, specifically,
the English gatekeeping requirements contributed to these challenges. In the following sections, I will discuss these challenges in detail.

*Students with hearing loss’ problems specific to learning English.* Most participants appeared to hold a deficit perspective when discussing students’ difficulty learning English. According to Yvonne, some students with hearing loss she interacted with struggled with learning Mandarin and recognized that “English can be difficult too since they are not familiar with this language.” Gary also asserted that “a foreign language is another language to them. They may struggle with their native language, not to mention the foreign language.” Indeed, during the interviews with the students with hearing loss all shared their challenges in learning English.

Participants suggested that listening is the biggest impediment in developing oral language skills for students with hearing loss. Cathy stressed that “I can’t hear some of the sounds. . . A lot of vocabulary. Like those words I have not heard or learned before. And if people talk to me with those words, I can’t understand them at all.” Yvonne also contended, “their listening and conversational skills are weak in general already; a foreign language can be harder for them.” Many participants commented that listening skills are the major cause of students with hearing loss’ English learning problems. June maintained that “I can’t understand people’s English speech by listening to them. . . reading their lips can’t help me understand their speech in English either.” June further identified that people’s speech is not clear to her most of the time; native English speakers tend to speak fast and she has hard time following their speech. Cathy also emphasized that it is a big problem for students with hearing loss to take an English proficiency test, since listening skills is a major part of the test. In this sense, the
students’ difficulties learning English were discussed as caused by their hearing loss, rather than lack of sufficient alternative methodologies. This reflects an audist, or deficit, perspective, which I discuss below.

Pronunciation is another challenge for students with hearing loss when trying to learn English. Kevin affirmed that “because of our hard-of-hearing, we need to have more practice or focused training, such as the voiceless sound at the end of the word. We need to be reminded for the voiceless sounds.” Ann also commented that students with hearing loss’ pronunciation may sound incorrect to hearing people and that it is hard to correct their pronunciation due to their hearing issues. Yvonne, too, remarked that “they may have difficulties pronouncing the English words correctly because they hear words differently than we do. People may not understand students with hearing loss.”

Vocabulary is also difficult for students with hearing loss to learn, according to the participants. All the students with hearing loss I interviewed shared the difficulty they experienced memorizing English words. Kevin commented that “our English vocabulary is very bad. The words typed might be missing a letter or we didn’t know how to type the word.” Gary clarified that “it’s not that if you ask them [students with hearing loss] to memorize more vocabulary, they will make more connections with those words on their own. It might be the opposite.”

Due to their challenge of learning English vocabulary, English reading comprehension is another problem reportedly encountered by students with hearing loss. According to Susan, students with hearing loss’ English language comprehension levels are lower than students without hearing loss. June expressed her concern that “no matter who the teacher is, no matter if he speaks English or types English on the screen, we still
can’t understand the words by just reading them.” The grammatical rules pose a huge problem for students with hearing loss while learning English. June pointed out that it is difficult to learn English as a second language for people with a hearing loss because the grammar is different than Chinese. Kevin too stated, “I think it’s the rules that are hard for me.” Susan also commented that when she had a student with hearing loss in the general English class, the grammatical rules and sentence structures of English were very challenging for that student to learn. Without accommodations and supports, learning English adds another academic impediment for students with hearing loss. I will present the accommodation these students have in the alternative English class, where their learning challenges were less noticeable. That the alternative class was consistently reported to be helpful provides a counter narrative to the consistent framing of the students’ difficulties in learning English as located within them.

*Students with hearing loss feel they are on their own.* All of the students with hearing loss in this study commented that they feel they are on their own in learning English. They all divulged that they felt that no one can help them pass the English requirement but themselves. They must rely on memorization to fulfill this requirement.

Relying on memorization is one way to survive in English classes, according to the participants with hearing loss. Cathy noted that memorizing vocabulary and grammatical rules are two strategies she uses to pass English requirements. She stated, “I memorize vocabulary first and then memorize grammar rules. . . I just memorize them hard. One word by another.” She further pointed out that the way she memorizes English words is by memorizing the spelling of the words. Kevin similarly commented that: “I think memorizing those words hard is the only way [to pass the test].” He described his
study process in the following: “I could only memorize things as much as I could and it is extremely painful. . . I try hard to memorize the words and forget them all a couple weeks later.” Tim also shared his observations that “it is very difficult for them [students with hearing loss] to memorize English words without the ability to hearing them clearly.” Regardless, memorization is one important strategy and survival skill these students with hearing loss reported using in their English learning.

Students’ resistance to learning English. According to Gary, “English to them [students with hearing loss] equals anxiety, barrier, and resistance.” The students with hearing loss I interviewed all revealed their resistance to learning English when the accommodations and supports were absent or limited. Kevin noted that during his middle school years, he did not enjoy learning English because he had hard time following along with the teacher and the rest of the class. He commented that:

I didn’t want to learn English before because I struggled in learning Mandarin already and I had to learn a new language on top of that. So in the English class, I always put my head down. I copied the notes from the blackboard. Students from the middle school need to read out loud the chapter with the teachers in the class a lot, right? I couldn’t follow along and tried to lip-read with the rest of the class. I realized that I really didn’t like English.

Kevin also shared his frustration with the English learning experience in his secondary school years when he had to give up doing things he enjoyed in order to study English. As Kevin recalled, “I was forced to study it and didn’t want to learn it. I blamed English for me not having time to play video games or doing something I like. So I felt that learning English was a hassle.” June, too, noted that “English grammar is the
opposite of Chinese, so I can’t fully understand the rules and it takes us longer to comprehend them. So I don’t like learning English that much.” Cathy remarked that she does not want to participate in English activity at this university, which is one opportunity for students to practice English outside the classroom, because of her difficulty in communicating with others in English. These three students all experienced significant challenges in learning English and reported some resistance to the requirement to do so.

Because of the hegemony of English has such a powerful impact on students with hearing loss in Taiwan, the barriers and challenges in educational, occupational, and social settings these students experienced put them at a disadvantageous position and decrease their opportunities for success. This university is one of the few IHEs where the barriers in the educational settings were consciously addressed. Yet, the participants with hearing loss in this study still faced other challenges, even in this “more hearing-loss friendly” learning environment. In the following theme, I will describe another type of barrier students with hearing loss experienced in this study—audism.

**Theme 2: Audism.** One of the crucial findings of this case study is that many problems and concerns the participants reported are primarily due to students’ hearing loss – a deficit perspective. According to them, this physical difference, rather than lack of appropriate accommodations, biases, or discrimination, is what causes students with hearing loss to face difficulties in the hearing world, such as having fewer opportunities in education and employment, experiencing academic challenges in the classroom, and receiving negative expectations from hearing people and themselves. The term *audism*, which has arisen within the Deaf academic community, is the belief that life without
hearing is futile and miserable and hearing loss is a tragedy. Deaf people should struggle to be as much like hearing people as possible (Pelka, 1997). The students with hearing loss in this study were introduced to oral language during their first language development and emerged in English learning environment where the instruction was provided orally in their pre-university learning experiences, without assistance of other supports, such as auditory trainers. These students received unequal educational opportunities because the only language mode that is valued in educational, occupational, and social settings is oral, which causes unneeded struggles. The subthemes “lack of linguistic capital”, “limited opportunities in education and employment”, “instructional challenges”, and “negative expectations” are all aspects of audism in the dominant culture. The examples I provided in this theme were mainly from the secondary participants because while some participants revealed strong audist views on students with hearing loss, neither Cathy, Kevin, and June made the similar comments. I will describe these views in more detail below.

Gary exemplified the deficit perspective when he stated that “the degree of the hearing loss for students with hearing loss causes their learning difficulties in general.” Yvonne also revealed an audist view when she observed that “students with hearing loss have low learning skills and professional skills.” According to these participants, hearing loss is the key reason these students with hearing loss struggle in educational settings and career finding. In the following sections, I will discuss the subthemes that encapsulate this theme: (a) lack of linguistic capital, (b) limited opportunities in education and employment, (c) instructional challenges, and (d) negative expectations.
**Subtheme 2a: Lack of linguistic capital.** Many participants stressed students with hearing loss’ linguistic challenges in their language development, education, and communication with others during the interviews. During the class observations, I also noticed some communication difficulties among students with hearing loss, for example, significant difficulties understanding each other and the need to repeat, multiple times, what they were trying to say to each other. Based on the history of language development shared during the interviews, both Cathy and Kevin experienced a delay in their first language development (Mandarin) and both were exposed to oral language as their primary language modality in daily life. Neither were formally introduced to nor taught in a sign language, and their speech sometimes caused communication challenges because they did not speak the same way as people without hearing loss. Several aspects of this theme emerged from the analysis and help illustrate the complexity of the notion of students with hearing loss lacking linguistic capital: (a) students’ struggle learning and using L1, (b) emphasis on oral language, and (c) problems communicating with people without hearing loss.

**Students’ struggle learning and using L1.** All the students with hearing loss I interviewed were not identified with hearing loss until kindergarten years. As I described previously in the description of the case, Cathy and Kevin did not talk and interact with others very much before they started going to kindergarten. June, another student with hearing loss I interviewed, related she also shared a similar experience, stating, “before I went to the kindergarten, I couldn’t speak at all.” Like Cathy and Kevin, June was exposed to oral language since birth.
Other participants also discussed their observations and experiences of witnessing students with hearing loss struggling in their first language—Mandarin, the oral form, and Chinese, the written form. As Yvonne noted, many students with hearing loss have trouble learning their first language—Mandarin. June pointed out that speaking is challenging for her, especially retroflex consonants (e.g., /l/ and /r/). As stated in the description of the case, Cathy also stated that she has trouble pronouncing sounds such as /zh/, /ch/, /sh/, and /r/. Shawn, too, noted that students with hearing loss struggle with listening and speaking skills in his Chinese class.

Based on my classroom observations, some students with hearing loss also struggle in reading and writing skills in Chinese. In my observation notes, I documented that “I see a lot of sentence structure problems, especially verbs. The context is incomplete.” Clearly, the oral approach to language development has not been sufficient for all of these students. Some secondary participants also shared their experiences of witnessing students with hearing loss’ struggles in learning their L1. Ann shared a story of helping one student with hearing loss taking notes in a Chinese class, and was shocked that this student did not understand one well known Chinese idiom. As Ann commented, “isn’t it common knowledge? Why doesn’t he know this?... I assume that they should already know these words and phrases.” Gary also noticed the struggle his students with hearing loss have in Chinese writing. As he stressed, “if I ask them to write an essay in Chinese, the way they express thoughts may be different from students without hearing loss. The logic and flow of the essay may not be as deep as others.” Having delayed identification of hearing loss may make it harder for students with hearing loss to learn their first language. However, having only one option of language mode may also
contribute to students with hearing loss’ challenge as well, which I explain in detail in the following section.

*Emphasis on oral language.* As described before, all participants with hearing loss were exposed to their first language through oral speech. As Cathy remarked, “I remembered I constantly spoke it until I was used to the sounds or until I knew that I could pronounce the words.” June emphasized that her dad put a lot of effort into teaching her Mandarin every day during her childhood. Kevin, too, was taught to use oral language by his teacher when he learned Mandarin, as explained in the description of the case above.

According to some participants, a sign language was not a component of these students with hearing loss’ first language development, mainly because their family members and teachers preferred for them to develop oral language skills. As Yvonne noted, “very few of them know sign language.” She further pointed out that “only those people who need to use the sign language will learn it.” Both primary participants shared the same thoughts about the reason why they did not learn a sign language as their first language—they did not want to be viewed as different or they did not need it because “I could hear just fine”, according to Cathy and Kevin. Yet, especially in the case of Kevin, who has a more significant hearing loss than Cathy, it is debatable whether a reliance on aided hearing is indeed sufficient for his full participant in all educational and social settings.

During the class observations, I witnessed that the teacher and students all used oral language to communicate with each other. I noted that sometimes they had trouble understanding each other, but they would still try to speak to each other, using written
language as a backup. For example, I observed two students with hearing loss discussing a finance math question during the break. One asked a question and another had difficulties understanding the question, so they wrote the words on the board (in Chinese) to clarify. All of the students with hearing loss in the alternative English class, appeared to be comfortable using oral language as their primary language modality in the class, regardless of the difficulties the experienced communicating with one another.

However, using oral language as the main language mode to communicate with others did create some communication problems. Some students with hearing loss I interviewed revealed that they do not initiate conversations with people in general because they worry their speech may sound different. As Kevin stressed, “I normally don’t initiate a conversation.” In addition, when oral language is the only option for communicating with others, they recognized they may miss some pieces of important information. In the following section, I will address some communication issues that can occur between students with hearing loss and others.

*Problems communicating with people without hearing loss.* Communication barriers can be a major challenge for students with hearing loss, according to many participants. Some secondary participants developed a deficit view of students with hearing loss, based on their observations and experiences. Yvonne stressed that “because they can’t hear clearly, they can’t speak clearly. The meaning of the words and pronunciation are the most common barriers for students with hearing loss due to their physical limitation.” Tim also commented that “I have the impression of students with hearing loss lacking contacts or not having close relationships with other people… I think lacking the information from others in daily life due to their hearing loss causes the
differences between these students with hearing loss and students without hearing loss.”

In fact, all the students in this study reported having experienced or witnessed communications barriers students with hearing loss and people without hearing loss. For example, Kevin stressed that:

I pay much attention to people’s talking. But if someone calls my name while I am listening to those people’s talking, I may not hear him/her. He or she might question me why I didn’t respond. I will tell him or her that I was paying attention to other things or people so I didn’t hear you. But in fact, it’s because I can’t respond right away and may seem slow sometimes to them.

June made the similar comments about having trouble communicating with people without hearing loss. As she stated:

When we are in the group meeting, I can hear some part of the discussion but I’m not able to hear the complete discussion. They [group members without hearing loss] wouldn’t check on us to see if there’s anything we don’t understand. I have to ask them when I have trouble hearing them instead. But when I ask them and they look annoyed, what should I do? So I prefer to keep a distance from them.

As can be seen in June’s statement, another concern related to communication difficulties with people without hearing loss is being excluded and isolated from the hearing world. Ann contended that some of her classmates told Cathy her speech is not clear enough; therefore Cathy keeps a distance from those classmates. Susan perceived that students with hearing loss “may have difficulties making friends and communicating with students without hearing loss in their class.” June also emphasized that “we just can’t fit in. It feels like we are excluded and isolated. That’s not a pleasant feeling. We are not included.” To
these students with hearing loss, not having the linguistic capital of strong oral language abilities creates barriers between them and people without hearing loss in many aspects. Yet, none of the participants appeared to question whether a lack of accommodations or lack of exposure to sign language might have made communication easier for some students with hearing loss. In the following, I will discuss another subtheme related to “Audism”: limited opportunities in education and employment.

Subtheme 2b: Limited opportunities in education and employment. According to many secondary participants, the educational and occupational opportunities are limited for students with special needs, including students with hearing loss, compared to students without special needs. According to Tim, departments at this university choose whether they want to recruit students with special needs, and if so, they can choose the types of special needs and the number of students with special needs for the recruitments. Yet, not all departments offer equal opportunities to students with special needs. As Tim observed, “the English department probably would not recruit students with hearing loss and would offer students with other special needs to be their students.” He also remarked that not all departments advocate for students with special needs, and there are a few departments at this university that do not admit students with hearing loss at all.

Practical training is a requirement for most students at this university, and each department normally handles the arrangements of finding the sites where their students can fulfill their practical training requirements. However, this is not the case for students with hearing loss. According to Tim, some departments have difficulty finding factories or companies willing to accept students with hearing loss for these internships. Therefore, those departments ask the resource center to handle the placement of students with
hearing loss for internships, and sometimes even ask the students themselves to locate such training sites. This is one example of how their opportunities to learn the skills they may need for their future career may be limited.

Additionally, both primary participants asserted that without accommodations they would not be able to finish their studies and would consider dropping out from the university. For example, Cathy stressed that “if we need to pass those requirements like others, I don’t want to continue studying at this university.” She stated that if she were to take the English proficiency test, no matter how many times she took it, she would not be able to pass at the level this university requires; as a result, she would drop out from this university. Kevin concurred, stating: “to be honest, if there was no alternative English class, I could have been dropped out from the university.” During the interviews with Kevin, he revealed that he failed in over half of his classes last semester, and if he had taken the general English class instead of the alternative English class, he would not have been able to continue his studies because he assumed that he would also have failed in the general English class. The participants clearly suggested that without accommodations, students with hearing loss’ educational opportunities are not equal to those of the students without hearing loss.

Limited occupational opportunities was another vital issue pointed out by the participants. In addition, finding and being hired for a “good job” was even more restricted. June, one of participants with hearing loss, emphasized that “because of our identities [having hearing loss], it would be harder for us to find jobs.” Tim, the resource center staff, also maintained that:
In reality, not that many students with hearing loss will compete with others to get into some of the biggest companies for their future career. Many of these students have jobs at a factory or are in charge of operational jobs. Some may work in the service or labor industries, some may be unemployed after they graduate, and some may work for the government.

On the other hand, Yvonne pointed out another problem these students with hearing loss may have in finding jobs after graduating from this elite university, even with all the accommodations they receive. She argued that:

In the long term, once they graduate from this university, their personal status may seem higher with their degrees, but they don’t have the skills they need. So they may not get the job they hope for. For the general students who graduate from this university, they may be able to find jobs at those well-respected companies… so they might end up being those technicians who can only put parts together. These jobs can be the same jobs for people with middle or high school degrees only.

According to these participants, not only are students with hearing loss’ educational opportunities limited, but also their occupational opportunities. In the following section, I will discuss another challenge some students with hearing loss may face.

**Subtheme 2c: Instructional challenges.** Instructional challenges rising from institutional responses to students’ hearing loss may reveal another aspect of audism. Even with the attention this university pays to providing supports to students with hearing loss, the lack of accommodations in instruction, and a lack of resources for teachers and
supports for students are clearly evident and problematic for students with hearing loss.

In the following paragraphs, I will explain both of these in detail.

*Lack of accommodations in instruction.* At this university, the alternative English class is the only class that is designed for students with hearing loss and the accommodations provided through this course are the keys to students’ ability to successfully fulfilling the English requirement. However, many other classes these students take in their own departments do not have enough - or any accommodations - to meet their learning needs. According to one student with hearing loss, June, it is very difficult to understand the assignments most of the time because the teachers do not use a microphone nor speak clearly. She also related her concern that:

usually the assignment needs to be done in a short period of time, so usually we [the students with hearing loss] would delay turning in the assignment or have to make up for a delayed assignment. And that would cause us to lose some points on the assignment.

Kevin, too, noted a similar struggle he faces in his class. He contended that in one of his classes, the teacher does not give handouts or use PowerPoint; instead he primarily lectures. It is extremely difficult for Kevin to follow the lectures without any written notes. As he asserted:

He talks fast, so it’s hard [for me] to receive the information. So far the way I deal with this problem is sitting in the front of the class, the first row of the class, because I may not hear him clearly. By sitting in the first row of the class, I can also read the teacher’s lips and receive more information. If I sit in the back of the
class, I might only receive 10% of the information the teacher gives us. If I sit in
the front of the class, I can receive 50-60% or 60-70% of the information.

Cathy, on the other hand, did not reveal her challenge due to the lack of accommodations
in non-English class other than the courses being different from her previous major in the
vocational high school.

Some secondary participants also their concerns about students with hearing loss’
lack of accommodations in instruction. Shawn noted that “having a hearing loss may
affect their comprehension of the lectures. They may have problems answering the
questions correctly if they mishear the questions.” Without accommodations, students
with hearing loss clearly have difficulties understanding the assignments, and absorbing
the knowledge and skills they need to learn. Ultimately, this often results in performing
poorly.

Some participants also related other difficulties students with hearing loss face
due to lack of accommodations. Susan revealed that “some teachers may just let students
with hearing loss sit in the class for the whole semester without participating in any
activity. So these students, they felt that they were different from the rest of the class.”
Henry contended that some architecture design teachers ignore students with hearing
loss’ learning needs because “they don’t think it’s their problem.” Susan suggested that
“not many teachers would design these teaching materials, since the population of
students with hearing loss is not big.” Gary also maintained that “students with hearing
loss at this university can only rely on their peers’ help or the remedial sessions the
resource center offers for other subjects. This is not easy.” Sadly, accommodations to
meet the needs of students with hearing loss appear to be either insufficient or nonexistent.

*Lack of resources and supports.* Another instructional challenge for students with hearing loss results from a lack of resources for teachers and minimal supports for students, according to many secondary participants. Some teachers I interviewed revealed that they struggled in teaching students with hearing loss because they did not have enough resources or professional development regarding how to teach them in order to help them learn effectively. Susan emphasized that:

> It was a big challenge for me back then. I constantly changed and looked for the materials to meet the students’ needs, but at the end I think it was not good enough. I think the interactive materials worked well, such as the computerized learning software. But the software is only a part of assistive teaching materials. The interactions between the teacher and the students are more important and better for their learning. The teacher is the main source of teaching, but it can be very difficult to teach these students with hearing loss without the background of teaching these students.

Henry witnessed another example of how the lack of resources impacts students with hearing loss. He explained:

> There is a job expo at this university from time to time. We sometimes dream about having one site specifically for students with hearing loss to help them with their resume or filing job applications. We hope to have some companies that are willing to hire students with hearing loss. There’s normally a minimum ratio for companies to hire people with special needs. But this has not been in the case yet.
According to the participants with hearing loss, their need for repetition of the content is crucial in all classes, including English classes. Kevin clarified that when the English teacher repeats the grammatical rules, some students would stop paying attention. But he contended practicing the same sentence structures several times helps him understand grammatical rules and learn English words and phrases. Cathy similarly commented that “once we read those words more often, we can then understand them.” These students with hearing loss received supports from the English teacher in the alternative English class; however, they do not have any or enough supports from the teachers in the general classes. For these students with hearing loss, learning at their own pace and having opportunity for repetition are also important to their academic success.

In addition, a lack of supports from teachers and peers was also revealed through some secondary participants’ interviews. According to Tim, departments ask the resource center to provide supports to their students with hearing loss, such as finding tutors and offering remedial sessions for the courses in those departments, instead of providing such supports themselves. Henry also stated that some teachers in his department refused to offer supports to students with hearing loss by telling them that they “don’t have extra time to teach you outside the classroom.”

Kevin, also shared his experience of lacking supports from one of his teachers. He explained:

The teacher in the XXX class, he likes to chat with us in class and doesn’t have handouts or PowerPoint for us. He doesn’t have things to give us; he only lectures. . . He talks fast, so it’s hard [for me] to receive the information.
In contrast to Kevin, Cathy, again, was silent on the issue of the sufficiency of supports from teachers and peers.

Similarly, some secondary participants pointed out that peer supports are not enough for students with hearing loss, based on their own observations and experiences. For example, Susan commented that when she divided her English class into small groups “the students without hearing loss felt that the students with hearing loss were the burden to their groups.” June also described her experience of not having enough peer supports in her group discussion. June stated:

> When we are in the group meeting, I can hear some part of the discussion but I’m not able to hear the complete discussion. They [group members without hearing loss] wouldn’t check on us to see if there’s anything we don’t understand. I have to ask them when I have trouble hearing them instead. But when I ask them and they look annoyed.

Gary concluded, “the resources this university has for these students with hearing loss is not enough to provide all of them enough support in their studies.” Ironically, neither Cathy nor Kevin made any comments about difficulties related to peer supports in their interviews.

**Subtheme 2d: Negative expectations.** This subtheme primarily emerged from some of the secondary participants’ interviews. Their comments suggested that negative expectations of students with hearing loss do exist, which again supports that many hold a deficit perspective on students with hearing loss. Such negative attitudes, a component of audism that suggests hearing loss is pathological, is especially discouraging because students with hearing loss may be exposed to this negative attitude from others, as well as
themselves. For example, during the interviews, the observation of students with hearing loss’ low academic skills was offered repeatedly. As Susan, the English teacher of the general English class, bluntly stated about IHE students with hearing loss, “their academic levels are normally low.” Some of the negative expectations revealed in the data were: undeserved success, personality problems, future failure, and self-blame and concerns for disclosure.

**Undeserved success.** According many teachers and resource center staff members, students with hearing loss at this university tend to have lower passing grades than students without hearing loss. To some of these teachers and staff members, having the alternative benchmark is questionable. The English teacher of the general English class, Susan, discussed that she passed her former student with hearing loss in her class because she had to lower her standard for him, in this case study, by lowering the passing grade. She claimed, “I had to constantly lower my standard for him.” One staff member, Yvonne, also voiced strong opinions about this during the interview. According to her, some students with hearing loss receive good grades in their class because their teachers give them higher grades *because* of their hearing loss. She claimed that “these students with special needs may receive special treatment on their grades.” Yvonne further commented that “I think this [alternative benchmarks for students with hearing loss] can be considered as one strength these students have.” To people with such audist views, students with hearing loss’ success in their academic studies can be viewed as undeserved.

In contrast, Kevin, provided a counter narrative. As Kevin argued:
To us, I think it is fair because our hearing impairments are causing our difficulties. We study so hard to learn English skills, but to some of you, you think this is a joke because you think we can pass the class without making much effort to it.

Cathy, however, did not discuss having different benchmark in the classes as a problem nor as having concerns about how people perceived it during her interviews.

**Personality problem.** During the interviews with the resource center staff members, both shared the common perception of students with hearing loss having personality issues due to their hearing loss. For example, Tim remarked that “I feel that some of them tend to be more self-centered, maybe due to their hearing loss.” According to Tim, “students with hearing loss at this university tend to have their own rules at this center and we need to work with their rules.” Yvonne made the similar comment about students with hearing loss she works with at this university. She remarked that: “I do feel that some students with hearing loss tend to be more self-centered. They tend to have less sympathy and empathy… Students with hearing loss tend to focus on themselves more and are more stubborn.” According to Yvonne, students with hearing loss are more like “Mama’s boys”, who are well-protected by the family and school, and that this causes some students with hearing loss to develop personality issues. However, neither Cathy nor Kevin recognized any personality problems stemming from their hearing loss.

**Future failure.** Some participants shared their observations that students with hearing loss do not do well finding jobs after they graduate from this university. According to Tim, “they may not get as good of a job as others… They may have some limitations and limited jobs they can apply for.” Yvonne also made a similar comment by
saying that students with hearing loss do not have the same level of potential to obtain jobs after graduation as those without hearing loss with the degrees from the same university. June, too, commented her concerns about finding a job due to her hearing loss. She explained, “Because of our identities [being the people with hearing impairments], it would be harder for us to find jobs”. As these comments reveal, to some people I interviewed, students with hearing loss’ future failure is assumed and expected. Interestingly, unlike June, neither Cathy nor Kevin revealed concerns about finding a job because of their hearing loss. While, as stated earlier, Kevin did discuss how to enhance his compatibility of finding a job by increasing his English proficiency; he did not disclose any concern about not being able find a job.

*Self-blame and concerns about disclosure.* It was also apparent from the interviews, that some students with hearing loss in this study blame themselves for their difficulties. For example, June stated that “we will still be at the bottom compared to the other students after graduating from here.” According to Kevin, his qualifications for finding a good job may be questioned by the interviewers during the job interview because of his “difference.” As he explained:

I will graduate with a degree from this university. If a company has an interview with me, they would probably expect me to have a certain score from some of the English proficiency tests and assume my English skills are high and drawing and design skills are good, too. And they may realize that I am different from the rest of the students in my university. I may need to explain the reason why I am different but I feel embarrassed to do it. I don’t want them to feel like I am fooling
them with my degree from this university even though my English skills are so bad.

Both June and Kevin made similar comments regarding their deserving the accommodations this university offers. As Kevin emphasized, “I don’t think I am not that great to DESERVE it. I can’t say that I don’t make much effort and have to have this alternative. Maybe if I studied harder, I could stay in the general English class.” June, too, stressed that “I think it’s too easy on us and it’s OK for us not to pass it.” She further noted that “I feel it’s [having a hearing loss] a disadvantage to me. But there’s nothing I can change. So I can only accept it.” As Kevin claimed, “I think it’s my hearing loss that is causing the problem.” These students with hearing loss blame their hearing loss for not having an adequate academic foundation for future job placement. In contrast, Cathy did not reveal any concerns about disclosing her hearing loss to others nor did she overtly express a deficit perspective in her comments.

In addition, some secondary participants suggested that students with hearing loss at this university have concerns revealing their hearing loss to others. According to Henry, “students with hearing loss don’t want to be seen as different from others,” but because they do not reveal their hearing loss to the teachers they cannot receive accommodations. June also stated that “I don’t feel very comfortable about it” when talking about revealing her hearing loss to teachers. When classmates questioned Kevin why he was not in the general English class, he was concerned because “they then would see me as different.” Kevin related that after he revealed his hearing loss to his classmates, he felt they treated him differently. These various negative attitudes toward hearing loss make up different aspects of audism and may have an impact on students’
willingness to actively seek out accommodations and faculty and staff willingness to provide supports. Yet, the participants did not seem to explicitly recognize that these attitudes themselves created barriers for students with hearing loss. Rather, students’ difficulties were attributed to the hearing loss itself.

**Theme 3: Inequity of educational policy.** The majority of the secondary participants commented that there is an inequity and imbalance of educational policies for students with hearing loss in secondary schools, IHE admissions, and their current IHE studies. According to the teachers and resource center staff members, the training foci for students with hearing loss are different than the training for students without hearing loss. This disparity in policy creates an academic achievement gap between these two groups of students even before entering the IHE.

According to the primary participants, students with hearing loss tend to choose the alternative IHE admission process and take special tests to get into the university. According to the teachers and resource center staff members, these alternative routes to IHE admission result in students with hearing loss struggling in their classes. The primary participants also raised similar concerns. The pre-existing issues in the secondary and IHE admission process constructed students with hearing loss’ challenges in their current studies, according to the teachers and resource center staff members. With some questionable IHE policies, the teachers, students without hearing loss, and students with hearing loss also raised concerns in students’ hearing loss IHE studies. I will present these in detail in the following sections.

**Subtheme 3a: Secondary schools.** According to all the teachers and resource center staff members, the core courses required in secondary schools for students with
hearing loss is different than those for students without hearing loss. This difference reportedly creates problems and challenges for both teachers and students at the IHE. However, the primary participants only disclosed their majors in their vocational high schools; they did not make any comments on their secondary school training focus being a problem for their struggles in their current studies, as the majority of secondary participants claimed.

One secondary participant, Susan, voiced a strong opinion about this issue. She implied that the whole system of training students with hearing loss primarily on technical skills is wrong. She argued that:

Some of these students didn’t even take the regular courses at their secondary schools. Their secondary school teachers only asked them to get lots of training on their special achievement [advanced technical skills] and earn medals from the contests with other schools. These students’ academic reports would be “made up” by the school and they could use those reports to enroll the IHEs they want.

Yvonne concurred, stating that:

There’s a nation-wide special achievement [advanced technical skills] contest, and if the vocational high school student wins the first place, he or she will go to the University A [a top institute of technology in Taiwan]. If he or she wins the second place from the contest, he or she will be admitted in this university… But the disadvantage of being trained as the contestant is that they are constantly trained for those special achievements [advanced technical skills] every day in school, and they take very limited regular classes and their basic academic skills
are weak. The advantage of these contestants is their advanced hands-on [technical] skills.

Because of the differences and unbalanced training foci in the secondary schools, some participants argued that students with hearing loss struggle in their university coursework.

_Subtheme 3b: IHE Admissions process._ Once again, all teachers and resources center staff emphasized the fact that students with hearing loss at this university were admitted through a special route granted by the MOE for students with special needs. Although both primary participants talked about their IHE admissions during the interviews, neither of them discussed this alternative admission being the reason for the challenges they face in their IHE studies. In contrast, because of the different admission process, many secondary participants argued, students with hearing loss tend to have troubles in their current studies and have a hard time catching up with peers who came to the university through the general admission. This again reflects the deficit perspective on disability.

As Yvonne stated:

There are three ways to be admitted to this university—through (a) recommendation and screening-based admission, (b) special achievement and screening-based admission, or (c) the college entrance exam. The college entrance exam is the same test for the students without special needs, so they also need to take the Chinese, Math, English tests in that sense. For the students who were enrolled through the recommendation and screening-based admission, they are more operational-skill oriented so they don’t need to take the English test to be admitted. For the students who were admitted through the recommendation and
screening-based admission, their admission is mainly based on their academic achievements in their high school studies.

According to Tim,

There are about one third of the students enrolled in this IHE from the special route… This university has higher academic requirements and standards in general, and most students who enroll in this university need to have at least the score of 610 or 620 from their college entrance exam, meaning that they need to be the top ones from the score ranking.

A problem for students with hearing loss to study at this competitive university therefore emerges. As Yvonne pointed out:

One barrier these students have is that they are admitted through either the recommendation and screening-based admission or the special achievement and screening-based admission, so their academic performance in their high school, no matter in the general high school or vocational high school, was weak already, frankly speaking.

As the teachers and resource center members concluded, having different training foci in secondary school and being admitted through the special admissions process are major reasons why students with hearing loss at this university are not able to learn as effectively as others. In addition, there are some IHE policies that put students with hearing loss at risk and disadvantage, which creates additional barriers.

**Subtheme 3c: IHE policies.** As I described earlier, the questionable training foci in secondary schools and the special IHE admission process for the students with special needs are reported by participants to contribute students with hearing loss’ academic
struggles. Unfortunately, these challenges are compounded by inequities in IHE policies. Based on the data I collected from the interviews and the observations, I concluded there are five aspects of current IHE policies that may negatively affect the achievement parity for students with hearing loss. These include: (a) mismatches with the current studies, (b) testing is the key, (c) same standards for all, (d) concerns about the alternative English graduation requirements, and (e) teachers’ lack of power in educational policy. In the following sections, I will explain these aspect of IHE policies in depth.

*Mismatches with the current studies.* Some participants emphasized that there was a mismatch between some of the students with hearing loss’ training in their secondary education and their current studies. This mismatch caused bigger gaps between students with hearing loss and students without hearing loss at this university. Yvonne noted that “if a student with a special need was enrolled through the special achievement and screening-based admission for his or her advanced technical drawing skills, he or she might end up studying at the department that does not require drawing skills.” Students who are admitted to this university with their outstanding special achievement and screening-based admission, do not necessary have enough choices of the majors they want, due to the way that students are admitted into IHEs in Taiwan. Student not only apply to a university, but also to a particular department. Therefore, in order to assure admission, they may apply to a department that does not match well with their interests, but which is more likely to assure their admission into this elite university.

Cathy, suffers from the mismatch. She chose her current major because she thought it was one of the safest choices to ensure she would be admitted to the top
universities. While this was a successful strategy that allowed her to be able to study at a top university in Taiwan, she is struggling in many of her classes. Cathy explained:

I used to study Business [in the vocational high school]. The classes of the department of X [Cathy’s current major] seem more design-oriented to me; they are the classes for the design majored students. For the basic knowledge of some classes, such as artists of some famous paintings, I had never learned anything like this and found it very difficult. And I need to do the analysis of those XXX [the key knowledge in her major] I really don’t know how to do it.

Kevin revealed that he also studied Architecture in his vocational high school, so he did not have the similar difficulties as Cathy faces in her studies.

According to several secondary participants, such as Henry and Tim, the mismatches between students with hearing loss’ previous training or studies in their secondary schools and their current studies put them at risk compared to their peers who studied a similar major at secondary schools as in their university programs. This mismatch, fostered by the current admission process, may create unintended challenges for students with hearing loss in their university studies.

*Testing is the key.* Testing is the most used commonly used method of evaluating students’ academic achievement in Taiwan, and it is not an exception at the IHE level. As Kevin noted, “I only studied for the tests”. Cathy also commented that the grading criteria throughout her English learning was test-oriented. She stated, “I think it is test-based”.

Some secondary participants criticized that testing was not the only, or even the best, method to measure students’ learning. However, based on IHE policies, testing is the only method used to measure students’ learning for different purposes. This
reportedly causes tremendous challenges for students with hearing loss. For example, Shawn argued that “in Taiwan, people focus on testing a lot.” He questioned whether the results of these tests are authentic and can truly show how much, or how well, students have learned. Gary relayed his concern that:

For those students whose English skills are advanced, they would always receive high scores on any English proficiency test. But their high scores on those tests do not necessary mean that their English skills are high. They may just be the good test takers.

He further stated:

For those students whose English skills are low, the frustration from failing on those tests can be huge… They gradually will lose confidence in English learning and then eventually lose their interest. This outcome is very bad. I really think this is very bad.

According to some participants, testing should be use as only one type of evaluation to measure students’ academic achievement; it should not be the major or the only method.

Same standards for all. Another concern participants shared related to the fairness of using the same standards for all IHE students. One study peer, Ann, questioned the equity of the English graduation requirements in general, stating:

I feel that I am a student of an institute of technology, not the regular university. For the regular universities, students are from the general high schools and studied a lot in Chinese, Math, and English in their high school years. For the students who graduated from the vocational high schools like us, we focused on the professional skills more. We should distinguish the regular universities from
the institutes of technology. We should not use the same requirements the regular universities use in the institutes of technology.

Gary observed that “the level of English skills this university requires might be very high for students in general. A lot of students at the IHEs of technology can’t meet those requirements. They just can’t.” Having the same English graduation requirements for all IHEs was considered problematic and unfair to some IHE students and its utility questioned by some participants.

Another concern the teacher participants related was whether or not the same standards should be used for all students at this university, including students with hearing loss. As Susan noted, based on her previous teaching experience:

I struggle with whether we should also use the same benchmarks for students with hearing loss at this university or a different set of standards. If I use the same benchmarks for students with hearing loss, it is very challenging for them and they may not be able to graduate, so they would lose the opportunity to receive the degree and find a job with the degree. But if I use a different set of standards for students with hearing loss, does it mean they don’t get to experience real situations in society during their studies?... Did I really benefit them the most by giving them these alternatives and accommodations? Did I prepare them well and early enough for their lives and competitions after the university?

Many other teachers and resource center staff members shared the similar concerns during their interviews, but felt it was unfair to deal with this pre-existing problem, the unbalanced training focus in their secondary education, before these students with
hearing loss became their students. Once again, neither Cathy nor Kevin revealed concerns about this issue during the interviews.

*Concerns about the alternative English graduation requirements.* According to many participants, the fairness of having alternative English graduation requirements for students with hearing loss has been discussed for different reasons at different levels. According to Tim, the board of evaluation from the MOE questioned whether this alternative English class is an easy route for students with hearing loss, since they do not need to pass any tests, only need pass the alternative English classes to fulfill this graduation requirement. Tim further explained:

We feel pressured by being a gatekeeper for this alternative English class because there’s an annual institute of higher education evaluation from the Ministry of Education (MOE), and we can’t convince the evaluators that our criteria for this alternative English class is appropriate… Some of the evaluators from the MOE are also experts in special education, and they felt that the criteria we have right now are too broad and general and questioned our evaluations for the students.

Some participants hold similar reservation to these evaluators. For example, Yvonne remarked that the alternative English graduation requirements constitute special treatment for students with hearing loss at this university. A friend of Kevin addressed the same concern about this alternative route and questioned whether the standards and benchmarks for the alternative English class are lower than for the general English class. Kevin explained, “Some asked me if there’s a lower standard in my special English class. I can’t argue with them. Is it because of our hearing impairments so they lower the standard in our English class? Is it unfair?” Cathy, on the other hand, did not discuss the
concerns about fairness of studying in the alternative English class in her interviews. The issue is debatable, yet a number of participants clearly emphasized that students with hearing loss need this alternative English class to learn English more effectively and meaningfully and would not be able to successfully fulfill the regular English graduation requirements.

*Teacher’ lack of power in educational policy.* This subtheme emerged from the data of the teachers’ interviews. Neither of the primary participants commented on this issue during their interviews. The majority of teachers I interviewed commented that they do not have enough power when it comes to establishing the current educational policies. Gary shared concerns many times during the interviews about using English as a gatekeeper at the university. As he affirmed:

We always hope that students can improve and make progress in their learning. They may be indeed making progress and learning, but they may not meet the requirements and feel that their faces were slapped again because of failing on the tests… I suggested to the university not to have the English proficiency requirement before. Some English teachers are like me in opposing the idea of having the English graduation requirements, and some are the advocates of having the English proficiency requirement. I was one of the few teachers who objected to the policy… I couldn’t do much about it. Based on the competition, enrollment, and ranking, the university need to put all these into considerations for its own policy. The university needs to maintain its status to survive in higher education. But I am opposed to the policy, personally. I believe that by asking students to take the English proficiency test and set the minimum for the passing score for
them to meet the graduation requirements, it causes huge damage to English learning. Especially for those students whose English skills are low, the damage can be very big.

He stressed that “this is a problem in our educational policy. We can’t do much about it. I mean we can’t really change anything.” And, Gary is not the only one who feels this way. Shawn related his concerns about having unified Chinese tests for all students at the university to improve students’ Chinese reading skills. He contended that:

I am totally against it. You can ask any student to see if he or she reads more because of the test. I don’t think it’s needed. They should do well enough with their Chinese proficiency after graduating from middle or high school… It is a strange phenomenon in our education in Taiwan. The Ministry of Education (MOE) wants to promote the students’ reading skills and our university has this project by giving the students the unified test to test their reading skills. The effectiveness of this project has never been reviewed or questioned. None of the people who have been in charge of this project have ever asked the students to see if they read more because of the test… This is a problem in our education in Taiwan.

Teachers’ lack of power over educational policy is evident at the IHE level in Taiwan, which participants contended can cause complex problems when dealing with students whose learning styles and needs do not mesh well with educational policies. However, participants also noted a number of strengths at this university, in terms of providing students with hearing loss with a good education and learning environment.
These issues related to the inequity of educational policy that apply to and affect students with hearing loss in Taiwan cause additional barriers to these students. With the issues of hegemony of English and audism, these students’ challenges in the dominant culture become greater; their cultural capital and linguistic capital become even less. Yet, students with hearing loss at this university do receive accommodations that provide them more equal educational opportunity as students without hearing loss, which I will explain in detail as follow.

**Theme 4: Accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university.**

One of the reasons I chose to conduct research at this university was because it offers accommodations for students with hearing loss, in contrast to many other IHEs in Taiwan. A big portion of the evidence to support this theme came from the classroom observations, along with the collected information from the interviews. While recognizing the current reality of English functioning as a gatekeeper to graduation, all the participants advocated that accommodations are beneficial and necessary for students with hearing loss. Their comments related to accommodations are summarized in the following subthemes: (a) alternative English graduation requirements, (b) differentiated English instruction, (c) building positive relationships, (d) advocacy, services, and supports, and (e) inclusion can work. These subthemes are connected to support the uniqueness of the accommodations this particular university provides to their students with hearing loss. The subtheme about inclusion is one area the interviewed teachers hope to work on and offer to students with hearing loss in the general class settings. I will discuss each of them more in the following sections.
Subtheme 4a: Alternative English graduation requirements. As stated earlier in the section of the alternative English class, students with hearing loss have two options to earn their degrees. One way is to meet the alternative English graduation requirements; the other is to pass an English proficiency test which is required for students without hearing loss.” All the participants strongly argued that students with hearing loss would have difficulties meeting the regular English graduation requirements and might not be able to graduate if these accommodations were not available. For example, Kevin remarked that “the resource center offers us different alternatives. We don’t have to stick with one choice only. . . I think it’s good. It gives us options.” Cathy also affirmed that having the accommodations encompasses the principle that insures all students in an IHE setting may “use the alternative, the same, and equal requirements for all.” Instead of asking students with hearing loss at this university to meet the regular English graduation requirements, they can choose to take, and pass, the practical English class for students with hearing loss. The focus of that class is to prepare these students with the testing skills necessary for those English proficiency tests. Gary also clarified that the contents of the alternative English class and the practical English class for students with hearing loss are similar to the general English class and the general practical English class. He emphasized that the only differences in these special classes are the teaching strategies, learning goals, and evaluations. I will discuss these more in the following paragraphs.

Subtheme 4b: Differentiated English instruction. Based on the data I collected from the alternative English class observations and the interviews, one key necessity of the alternative English class is to have differentiated instruction to meet the learning needs of each student with hearing loss. I observed that the teacher for the alternative
English class did not use one benchmark for all students with hearing loss in this class. He used different teaching strategies to support students with hearing loss in learning English, based on their own learning pace. His evaluation of these students’ learning was supported by his own observations of the students’ strengths and weaknesses and the progress each student had made throughout the semester. In the following paragraphs, I will describe these accommodations in detail.

*Teaching strategies.* Based on the interviews and the class observations, the English teacher used technology to help students learn. He typed words on his laptop while speaking, and this was projected on a screen at the front of the class to help students see and hear the English words simultaneously. As Cathy explained, “The teacher sometimes uses visual images and videos to explain the vocabulary. And then when the teacher wants to communicate with us in English, he would type the words so we can read what he is saying”.

While reading the text to students, he also used an arrow to point at the words so the students could follow along. Using lots of visual images to help students comprehend vocabulary, phrases, and contents is also another teaching strategy I observed in this classroom. As Cathy described:

So he would only say a few English vocabulary words out loud in the class.

Because there are some words in the text we already know, and there are some that we don’t. So the teacher would focus on these unknown words and explain them to us.
Passing the keyboard to the students and improving access to the class discussion by asking students to type their words on the laptop was a unique and helpful way to promote language acquisition in this class. Kevin noted that:

The teacher would give out examples like this to use to compare and contrast between two languages. If we don’t understand some words, he would find the pictures related to those words online right away and show them to us on the screen. So we can understand the words with the help of the images.

Students’ involvement in their learning and constantly modifying the teaching materials and pace are the key characteristics of this alternative English class based on the primary participants’ interviews and classroom observations.

*Learning goals and evaluations.* Having individualized learning goals for students is another feature of this alternative English class. Both primary participants commented that there were no set goals for all students in this alternative English class, so they felt comfortable learning English at their own pace. I also observed a lot of repetition occurring in the class when the students needed to spend more time on comprehension. Gary did not have a set agenda for material he had to cover in one class; therefore he did not rush to progress at a rate the students could not follow. Since the learning goals were individualized in this class, the learning evaluations were also individualized. Cathy asserted that “At this university, they offer a special English class for us and it is based on our own learning pace. I think this is good”. She further explained:

If we are supposed to study one chapter in each class, but we may not finish that chapter in the class. We would check the dictionary first for the vocabulary of the chapter, and then each of us goes to the front to share what they have found from
the dictionary. If someone doesn’t quite understand the words, they would continuously ask questions “What does this mean, teacher?” The teacher also finds images on the Internet that are related to the vocabulary and show them on the projector, and he would explain the meanings of the words. So each of us can understand the vocabulary better. Once he is done explaining the vocabulary, we would continue reading the rest of the chapter. So I think this teaching method is balanced.

As Gary stated

I don’t have an objective benchmark for all students. I evaluate students’ learning individually, meaning that I focus on their individual learning progress. I compare each student before and after learning to see if he or she makes improvements… They are compared with themselves, not with others.

Gary also maintained that “basically I ignore the English graduation requirements. I use my own judgment to evaluate students’ learning… This university gives me enough authority to do this.”

**Subtheme 4c: Building positive relationships.** Some participants concluded that building the positive relationships with students helped them reach out to students with hearing loss and understand their learning needs and concerns. By building the positive relationships, the teachers and resource center staff members earned the students’ trust and were able to provide the support and resources to students with hearing loss. Yvonne maintained that “the most important thing for me is developing the relationship with these students. They come to this new environment and I need to figure out how to interact with them.” Henry, Kevin’s tutor, noted something similar in the following:
I spent about a month just communicating with them so they feel comfortable to share their personal issues with them and be willing to come to me when they have questions or problems. After that [building up the positive relationship with them], they will be willing to do what you want them to learn.

Kevin also asserted the importance of building positive relationships: “I feel relaxed learning it this way. We have good interactions and relationship with the teacher. We can joke with each other.” Kevin gave another example of when Gary and the class were teasing each other. He explained:

He would give us a list the key words and phrases of the chapter first, and assign us in small groups or pairs to find these words and phrases online. And sometimes we would ask the teacher, ‘this translation doesn’t make sense, teacher?’ We would ask the teacher, ‘Teacher, did they mistype the word?’ The teacher would tease us, ‘You guys think English is easy?’

Although Cathy did not have any comments relating to this subthemes, this warm, positive, and welcoming atmosphere among Gary and his students was evident during my observations. Building a positive relationship appears to be crucial for students with hearing loss and teachers in order to make both teaching and learning successful.

**Subtheme 4d: Advocacy, services, and supports.** Having advocacy, services, and supports for students with hearing loss from the study peers, teachers, resource center, and MOE were also evident in my findings, and this subtheme was concluded based on these secondary participants’ interviews. Henry shared his strategy of forming a support group among his tutees and confirmed that the support each student received from their peers was very helpful for them. According to Henry,
We [the teacher and his students with hearing loss] have our own group on Line [one popular social media in Asian countries]. We discuss whether anyone in this group needs help with anything in the group and each member needs to provide assistance as much as possible to those who need help. Each student may need help at a different time and our group serves that purpose. I hope with the help from the group, we can develop a habit of being active and observing of people surround them and providing the needed help to others before these students start having their career.

June also pointed out when Kevin has trouble understanding the content of the lectures, they would discuss it and help each other. Having the support of peers also appears to be important in making learning enjoyable and meaningful.

The importance of advocacy and supports from the teachers are also evident from the findings. When Susan explained her teaching experience with a student with hearing loss 10 years ago, it is noticeable that she tried her best to help this student learn English efficiently. As Susan recalled that “making him feel that reward when learning English is more important than asking him learn everything correctly in my class.” Henry is another advocate of students with hearing loss, in terms of making their learning meaningful and making them feel included. Henry shared one situation when he included his tutees with hearing loss on behalf of the teacher in the architecture design class. Henry claimed that:

Sometimes my students with hearing loss would complain to me about those teachers who are not willing to listen to them. Not willing to listen to them. Um. I feel sad when I hear that. So I would listen to these students on the behalf of those teachers.
Using other language modes to increase students with hearing loss’ understanding and comprehension is also helpful to these students. For example, Henry uses drawing to explain the concepts to his tutees and Yvonne writes on paper to describe things to these students. Gary types on the screen to help these students follow along the class. Having the supports from the teachers reportedly makes a big difference in students’ learning, especially for students with hearing loss whose learning needs tend to be ignored or avoided in many cases.

According to some secondary participants, the services and supports from the resource center and MOE are also available for students with hearing loss. Kevin stated that there are multiple services students with hearing loss at this university can apply for their learning needs in classes. As he concluded:

Students with hearing loss can apply for service of hiring the note taker to take notes from the lecture for them; these note takers are the regular students. They will write down the things the teacher says in the class on the notes and give students with hearing loss a copy of the note… And there’s another service students with hearing loss can apply for called simultaneous typing. There will be a person typing the notes from the teacher’s lecture simultaneously and the students with the hearing loss can read the lecture and notes.

According to Tim, the MOE provides services such as the ISP—Individualized Support Program - to all students with special needs at IHEs. As he explained, “the MOE requests all IHEs provide an individualized support plan (ISP) to all students with special needs in higher education this past two years… This is the least requirement from the MOE for all IHEs.” He further explained:
We are not handling teaching but providing support to the students with special needs. For example, if the student with special needs doesn’t do well in the math class, we don’t modify the contents of the math class for him or her. Instead, we provide support to the student in that case, such as the remedial sessions or negotiating with the teacher to see if the goals and tests in that class can be modified to meet the student’s needs. We provide this type of the support here.

Moreover, some teachers shared their thoughts of offering inclusion in their regular classrooms to students with hearing loss and reflected on how they could make these students’ learning effective and meaningful. I will describe this in the final theme of this analysis— inclusion can work.

**Subtheme 4e: Inclusion can work.** Several of the secondary participants contended that inclusion can work for students with hearing loss within the regular English classroom setting. Both Susan and Henry shared their ideas of how to include students with hearing loss in the regular classes by offering accommodations and supports. Susan suggested training a group of teaching assistants specifically to assist students with hearing loss in the general English classroom. She also discussed giving students with hearing loss electronic files of the notes she covers in the class in advance and using technology to meet students with hearing loss’ learning needs. Henry also recommended establishing different learning goals for students from different academic backgrounds from their secondary schools. As he commented, “This way everyone can make progress in their learning.” These suggestions offer a tantalizing vision of how support and accommodation for students with hearing loss in Taiwan can move from the current situation of providing supports to this unique group of students to an environment
where perhaps a larger group of students, both with and without disabilities might have increased access to learning within the general education setting.

Cathy and Kevin did not comment about anything related to this subtheme. Their silence, in conjunction with their comments on other topics suggests that Cathy and Kevin do not question much about what the equity of their experiences as students with hearing loss studying at this university. They appeared to appreciate the accommodations they receive from the university and the English teacher, but they did not voice much about their educational rights nor question why these accommodations are not available to them in the general class setting. In Chapter Five, I will discuss these themes and subthemes more thoroughly with my interpretations, and how they connect to the theoretical framework described in Chapter One.
Chapter 5

Discussion

I conducted a case study of two IHE students with hearing loss at an elite university in northern Taiwan—two primary participants and eight secondary participants who are associated with these two primary participants’ English learning and learning in general. This study focused on (a) providing the opportunity for IHE students with hearing loss in Taiwan to share their opinions, thoughts, and experiences of learning English as a foreign language in higher education institutes; and (b) understanding how English as a foreign language policies and educational practices contribute to create opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing loss. The data collection involved interviews, classroom observations (e.g., learning environment and setting), documentations (e.g., assignments, exams, textbook, grading criteria, and a copy of IHE’s English policy), researcher’s journals, and interview notes. In this chapter, I will provide the summary and discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, implications of the results, and conclusions.

Summary of the Findings

I identified four themes from the data: (a) the hegemony of English, (b) audism, (c) inequity of educational policy, and (d) accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university. Three subthemes evolved that support the evidence of the hegemony of English: (a) English privileged over..., (b) English as a gatekeeper, and (c) student challenges. In the subtheme English privileged over..., I concluded that English has a superior status over other languages and professional requirements. The other subtheme, English as a gatekeeper, was a major finding from this study. The participants expressed
very strong feelings about how English serves as gatekeeper for a variety of reasons and purposes. They felt that English proficiency as cultural capital was discriminatory and that English requirements often create barriers. As a result, they related a number of challenges they faced, with regard the privileged position of English at their university and in society. For the participants with hearing loss, specifically, the English gatekeeping requirements posed challenges, and in particular contributed to: (a) their resistance to learning English, (b) their problems specific to learning English, and (c) their perception that they are on their own in terms of learning.

The second theme I found was audism. I uncovered four major subthemes that were relevant to the theme: (a) lack of linguistic capital, (b) limited opportunities in education and employment, (c) instructional challenges, and (d) negative expectations. In the subtheme lack of linguistic capital, I found that students with hearing loss struggle with learning L1, the emphasis on oral language, and communicating with people without hearing loss. In the subtheme instructional challenges, I noticed that the lack of instructional accommodations and the lack of resources for teachers and services and supports for students with hearing loss were relevant to their instructional challenges. The last subtheme I found was negative expectations. This subtheme included perceptions of students with hearing loss’ undeserved success, personality problems, future failure, self-blame, and concerns about disclosure.

The third theme I found in this study was inequity of educational policies. Based on data, the problems of educational policies for current IHE students, especially students with hearing loss, were evident in their secondary school academic focus, IHE admissions processes, and other IHE policies. According to some participants, biased
educational policies created significant difficulties for students with hearing loss, especially those in secondary schools. However, participants also identified how some IHE policies can create challenges to students with hearing loss during their IHE studies, such as mismatches with students’ prior studies and current majors, the tenet that testing is the key, same standards for all students in coursework, concerns about the alternative English graduation requirements, and teachers’ lack of power in educational policy.

The last theme I found pertained to accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university. This theme highlights the potential for positive experiences, when appropriate support and accommodation are provided. The alternative English graduation requirements and differentiated English instruction for students with hearing loss at this university appear to create a unique English learning environment and positive outcomes in this case. Also, building positive relationships between students with hearing loss and others, having others’ advocacy, services, and supports, and teachers’ belief in inclusion for these students were also evident in the findings.

These four themes provided some answers to research questions posed in this dissertation: (a) how do Taiwanese IHE students with hearing loss perceive their experiences learning English as a foreign language in IHEs, and (b) how do the current policies and educational practices related to learning English as a foreign language serve to construct opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing loss. In the themes the hegemony of English and accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university, the findings answered the first research question closely when the participants shared their perceptions of students with hearing loss learning English. In the themes audism and inequity of educational policy, the findings also answered the second research
questions by addressing the issues of educational policies and practices that apply to current IHE students with hearing loss. In addition, the findings were useful in considering the theoretical frameworks I reviewed earlier in this dissertation.

The research questions of the study focused on two areas: a) how do Taiwanese IHE students with hearing loss perceive their experiences learning English as a foreign language in IHEs, and b) how do the current policies and educational practices related to learning English as a foreign language serve to construct opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing impairments? All four themes directly and indirectly answered both research questions. The subthemes that directly answered research question one were: a) differentiated English instruction, including the codes “teaching strategies” and “learning goals and evaluations”; b) building positive relationships; and c) advocacy, services, and supports. These subthemes were based on the primary participants’ interviews and the alternative English classroom observations, which focused on these students’ perceptions of EFL learning at this university.

The subthemes and codes that answered research question two were: a) English privileged over other languages and professional requirements; b) English as a gatekeeper, including the code “English proficiency as cultural capital”; c) the code “concerns about the alternative English graduation requirements” under the subtheme “IHE policies”; d) alternative English graduation requirements; e) differentiated English instruction, including the codes “teaching strategies” and “learning goals and evaluations”; and f) inclusion can work. These subthemes and codes were relevant to the current EFL policies and educational practices that construct opportunities and barriers for IHE students with hearing loss. Besides the above subthemes and codes that directly
answered both research questions, a number of subthemes and codes were relevant to the
students with hearing loss’ learning in general.

The subthemes and codes that emerged from the data that were relevant to the
students with hearing loss’ learning challenges in their IHE studies in general were: a) English as the language of instruction under the subtheme “English as a gatekeeper”; b) the code “students with hearing loss feel they are on their own” under the subtheme “students’ challenges”; c) limited opportunities in education; d) instructional challenges, including the codes “lack of accommodations in instruction” and “lack of resources and supports”; e) negative expectations, including the codes “undeserved success”, “personality problem”, “future failure”, and “self-blame and concerns about disclosure”; and f) IHE policies, including the codes “mismatches with the current studies”, “testing is the key”, “same standards for all”; and “teachers’ lack of power in educational policy”.

These findings were suggested mainly by comments from the secondary participants’ interviews—the teachers, tutor, and resource center staff members. The majority of these findings are related to the issue of audism, which I will discuss more in detail in the discussion of the findings.

The subthemes and codes that were the pre-existing conditions and issues prior to these students with hearing loss’ IHE studies which caused their learning challenges at their current studies, were: a) students’ challenges, including the code “students with hearing loss’ problems specific to learning English”, “students with hearing loss feel they are on their own”, and “ students’ resistance to learning English”; b) lack of linguistic capital, including the codes “students’ struggle learning and using L1”, “emphasis on oral language”, and “problems communicating with hearing people”; c) secondary schools;
and d) IHE admissions process. Many of these findings were from the interviews with the teachers and resource center staff members; some of them were also from both primary participants, in particular, their EFL learning problems that pre-existed in their previous learning experiences before their IHE studies. One subtheme that was different from the rest of the finding, limited opportunities in employment, focused on the students with hearing loss’ possible difficulty in finding jobs based on the primary and secondary participants’ assumptions and observations. In the following section, I will provide a detailed discussion of the findings, the theories that apply to the findings, and the relationships among the themes.

**Discussion of the Findings**

My intention in this case study was to investigate the perceptions of IHE students with hearing loss toward English learning and whether the current policies and educational practices of EFL serve to construct opportunities and barriers for these students. As stated previously, I found four major themes in this study—the hegemony of English, audism, the inequality of educational policy, and accommodations for student with hearing loss at this university. Social construction of disability was employed as the theoretical framework for this study. All four themes were also consistent with critical theory and, in particular, critical disability theory. In the following paragraph, I will discuss the relationships among these four themes.

Students with hearing loss in Taiwan were born or raised with the perspectives of audism; their lack of cultural capital and linguistic capital in the dominant culture resulted from their language difference, which is a form of linguicism. The comments of the secondary participants clearly demonstrated that many, even those who are responsible for
providing supports and accommodations for students with hearing loss, hold a deficit perspective. As a result, students face challenges in different stages of their lives that have been constructed by those who have the cultural capital and linguistic capital, simply due to their hearing ability. This is audism. Students with hearing loss experience a lack of accommodations and supports in the educational settings, which disallows them from accruing the social and linguistic capital necessary for access to many educational and economic opportunities. Language development in the oral language dominated society is difficult for these students (e.g., audism); learning EFL in the general classroom setting where most teachers have not received proper training to help these students learn successfully constructs further barriers to these students. Also, because of the problematic foci of educational training in secondary schools, IHE admission, and IHE policies that were designed by people with power (e.g., people with cultural capital and linguistic capital), these students, face additional barriers for them to succeed at IHEs. In addition, due to the lack of respect and acceptance of sign language usage and education, students with hearing loss need accommodations to “survive” in the learning environment the dominant culture produces. If their linguistic needs have been met and valued: a) the accommodations may not be needed; and b) they can learn effectively, in any subject, in the general classroom because they would be treated as one of the students, not the students with hearing loss. Audism, under this circumstance, would not affect their educational, occupational, and societal opportunities, and the barriers constructed by the dominant culture would be removed. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the connections of these findings with these perspectives theories in greater detail.
**English as cultural capital.** In Chapter One, I discussed the history and importance of EFL education in Taiwan. To enhance and secure its international status and compatibility, the government of Taiwan has put a great effort into promoting English, not only in people’s daily lives, but also in education. According to the participants, proficiency in English assists speakers in obtaining a superior professional and educational status, and also has a great impact on individual lives. In this case study, it is apparent that English affected students with hearing loss in different dimensions.

Employing the lens of critical theory, Bourdieu (1977) argued that the more cultural capital individuals have, the more likely they are to fit comfortably into the dominant culture. Their opportunities for achieving a higher socioeconomic status are greater than those with less cultural capital. As Bourdieu emphasized:

> By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what is does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture. (p. 494)

As described in Chapter One, English provides not only the cultural capital but also linguistic capital in Taiwan. To students with hearing loss in Taiwan, the educational and societal systems place high values on English and in particular, oral language, which is a standard that they will have difficulty meeting, given that they have hearing loss and the current methods of teaching English in the typical English classroom. This leads the whole notion of audism—the inequality of educational, occupational, and social
opportunities due to their linguistic needs and traits that are not valued in the dominant culture—the hearing world.

Philipson (1992) noted that “language is the primary means for communicating ideas” (p. 53). As mentioned in Chapter One, the most languages used in Taiwan include several varieties of Chinese (e.g., Mandarin, Taiwanese, and Hakka), and a number of indigenous languages (e.g., Amis, Nataoran, and Atayal). However, for most Taiwanese people, having any of these various language skills does not enhance their cultural or linguistic capital; it is English that provides such cultural capital and linguistic capital. English has such great power over its local languages and the governmental policies of Taiwan have ensured the prestigious status of English in the educational system.

According to Madigan (2002), “educational capital guarantees cultural capital” (p. 122). As stated in Chapter One, schools are the most important agents at the societal and individual levels (Akamatsu & Cole, 2004). In this case study, English, with its gatekeeper function in IHEs, serves as an agent of cultural capital in higher education. Having the English proficiency certification and earning higher education degrees are also ways for Taiwanese people to earn cultural capital. As Madigan stressed, with regards to institutionalized cultural capital:

High educational credentials are usually a good indicator that a person’s dispositions and knowledge match those of the dominant class. Certificates, educational qualifications, and recruitment exams have power in that they impose collective recognition of hierarchy. Institutional recognition also ensures that cultural capital can be converted into economic capital. (p. 121)
As described in Chapter Two, Lin and Chious’s study discussed that English has acted as a gatekeeper in career opportunities, promotion, and education in Taiwan for years. Chia, Johnson, Chia, and Olive’s study too revealed that English learning benefits students’ occupational opportunities and promotions. One of the major educational policies in higher education in Taiwan is promoting English as a gatekeeper for IHE students. As discussed in Chapter Two, Shih’s (2008) study also showed that people endorse the college English proficiency requirement as a gatekeeper for IHE graduates, since it is one qualification people may need for many jobs. The subthemes of the hegemony of English also confirmed that English has superior status over other languages and professional requirements in IHEs in Taiwan. Because of its gatekeeping status, English requirements in IHEs act as a barrier for students with hearing loss.

These results suggest that individuals with hearing loss in Taiwan have less cultural capital that their hearing counterparts, in part due to their language differences. The IHE English proficiency requirements further decreases their cultural capital. In this case study, all participants had concerns and questions about the need for English to serve as a gatekeeper in IHEs. Students with hearing loss in this case study also revealed the difficulties they face in learning English. The learning environment and educational policies of English education put these students in a disadvantageous position. Their linguistic differences and variable communication needs have been ignored and sacrificed, since in Taiwan English is not a foreign language; it is the language that guarantees an individuals’ cultural capital. That is, English constructs more barriers for students with hearing loss in Taiwan. Without proper educational practices and policies, English can disable students with hearing loss by limiting their opportunities and
diminishing their success in education, employment, and often even, in their personal lives.

**Social construction of audism.** According to Humphrey and Alcorn (2007), audism is an attitude based on pathological thinking which results in a negative stigma toward people with hearing loss. Audism judges, labels, and limits those people on the basis of whether an individual hears and speaks. Lane (1999) described audism as the hearing way of dominating, restricting, and exercising authority over the Deaf community. However, the Deaf community contests that their existential situation is primarily that of a language minority, rather than a disability group (Ladd, 2003). Yet, these findings suggested participants view hearing loss as a disability rather than a language difference, and the students with hearing loss in this study experienced constructed barriers from the audist society. Indeed, the participants with hearing loss did not manifest those behaviors or attitudes, such as using sign language or proclaiming an identity of linguistically different, rather than hearing impaired, that would suggest they identify as a member of the Deaf and hard of hearing community. While this community does exist, as can be seen by activities such as Taiwan hosting the 2009 Deaflympics, the participants in this study did not seem to espouse the importance or relevance of such an identity for IHE students with hearing loss.

In the literature I reviewed related to the social construction of disability, deafness was rarely mentioned. Yet certainly, the position of the Deaf community related to audism and the importance of the use of sign language by Deaf and hard of hearing individuals is certainly consistent with this perspective. Most societies construct disability based on physical differences and unique language modes. According to this
perspective, if a sign language were available and valued by the dominant culture, people with hearing loss would have more cultural capital and linguistic capital and therefore would not be labeled as having a disability or impairment. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Taiwan.

Due to the restricted use of Taiwanese Sign Language, the Deaf community in Taiwan remains outside of the dominant culture and the use of this language does convey much linguistic capital onto its users. Taiwanese Sign Language has two different variants and neither are commonly used nor taught to people with hearing loss. The students with hearing loss whom I interviewed did not formally learn a Taiwanese Sign Language because it was not an option for them. Because their parents, other family members, and teachers preferred oral language over sign language that was the language mode they chose. All of these students received late identification of hearing loss and therefore had delayed intervention. As I described in Chapter Two, Yoshinaga-Itano, Sedey, Coulter, and Mehl’s study showed that early identification and intervention are the keys for the language development of people with hearing loss. None of these students were identified as having a hearing loss until they were five years-old. For this reason, they missed a significant amount of information during their first five years of experience in the hearing world. As they grew up, they continued to miss or misunderstand information in the spoken and written language dominated culture. Use of oral and sign languages do not have to be an either-or decision. Early exposure to sign languages can support students’ eventual acquisition of oral language and literacy, as well as promote their academic achievement. Layering a second oral language, English, without a strong
foundation of language fostered by exposure in a modality that is highly accessibly, further compounded these students’ academic challenges.

In the lens of critical disability theory, a disability is seen as both a lived reality in which the experiences of individuals with disabilities are central to interpreting their place in the world, and as a social and political definition based on societal power relations (Reaume, 2014). According to Reaume, critical disability theory challenges approaches that pathologize physical, mental, and sensory differences as being in need of correction, and instead advocates for both accommodation and equality for disabled people in all areas of life. Barriers to education, employment, transportation and a host of services, both public and private, all come under the scrutiny of critical disability studies, a field that works toward universal accessibility. (p. 1248)

The theme *audism*, reveals a strong interaction and connection between social construction of disability and critical disability theory. The perspective of disability as a social construction posits that social and environmental factors, such as lack of accommodations and removal of barriers, are key to whether underlying conditions result (or not), and to what extent, in disabilities. Hosking (2008) maintained that a central theme of critical disability theory is that disability is a social construct, not the inevitable result of impairment. He argued that a disability is a complex inter-relationship between impairment, a person’s response to that impairment and the physical, institutional and attitudinal environment. The social disadvantage experienced by *disabled* people is the result of the failure of the social environment to respond adequately to the diversity presented by disability. These interpretations of social construction of disability and
critical disability theory match well with the findings in this study. The lack of linguistic capital, limited opportunities, struggles, and negative attitudes those students with hearing loss received and experienced confirmed that it is the social context that maximize their physical and linguistic differences. People who hold the most cultural capital—hearing people with English proficiency and good education, define these students’ *ableness* and *disableness*. People with power in the lives of students, including policy makers, teachers, medical professionals, and parents, can minimize students’ chances of having equal access to a good education and quality of life by devaluing alternative language modes and needs for accommodations and support or, maximize their chances by providing alternative learning options and processes.

As Reaume (2014) stressed, it is crucial to change public attitudes toward disabilities. I argue that the identity of people with hearing loss who receive the label *disability* should not be determined by their physical and linguistic differences. In social construction of disability, as Reaume analyzed, a disability is constructed by external powers such as medical, legal, and governmental systems. As in most societies, powerful stake holders in Taiwan created these systems. These people determine the opportunities and choices students with hearing loss are allowed to have in the dominant culture. These students do not have the cultural capital for success because educational policies in Taiwan have limited them. As a result, they need to work and fight harder than those people with cultural capital in order to achieve success in education and employment.

In this case study, students with hearing loss at this university received more accommodations than at other IHEs. Yet, participants still noted concerns and identified challenges students with hearing loss face and must resolve during their studies and after
graduation in order to obtain positive outcomes. According to the participants, IHEs in Taiwan need to provide services and support to students with special needs. Although this university is one of the few IHEs that does provide numerous accommodations to students with hearing loss, these students still learn in a segregated setting. Some participants raised their concerns and doubts about offering the alternative English class and the alternative English graduation requirements. The students with hearing loss were fearful that having these accommodations and support would not be efficacious and could actually minimize their ability to find jobs. Their capabilities would be regarded as less than those of students without hearing loss who had fulfilled the regular English graduation requirements. Their accomplishments, by means of accommodations, would not be equivalent to other students because of their linguistic differences and limited English skills. It can be assumed that students with hearing loss in those IHEs where the accommodations are not as plentiful as in this institution may encounter more difficulties in their studies. As the participants shared, the challenges these students face post-graduation, which might include the reduced chances for employment and better life, can be huge as well. These challenges, again, are constructed by the people with cultural capital, linguistic capital, with the audist view, in the dominant culture.

**Problematic educational policy.** As stated in Chapter One, Confucianism plays an essential role in the educational system in Taiwan, and testing is one key aspect in Confucianism. The findings closely confirmed these values, which create additional challenges and barriers for students with hearing loss. In Chapter One, I stressed that in Confucianism, the chances for people to pursue a successful life and a higher social status
are limited without good education. However, educational policies do not appear to provide proper education to students with hearing loss.

As illustrated in the theme inequality of educational policy, the goals and training foci in secondary education and IHE admission and policies appear to create additional barriers for students with hearing loss in Taiwan. The unbalanced and specialized training foci in their secondary education may put these students at risk for academic failure, even as they are well-meaning attempt to provide necessary accommodations. Because of their distinct learning needs, educators and policy makers have developed a unique route for them to survive in the dominant culture—via special training instead of the traditional education process. Yet, this alternative training may cause difficulties for students when they enter higher education. The special IHE admission process may also create unintended difficulties for students with hearing loss. The participants raised concerns and described potential issues caused by the alternative admissions process. A final barrier identified was IHE policies, where testing and credentials are key to eligibility to graduate.

As stated in Chapter One, meritocracy is an important aspect of Confucianism, in contrast to governmental systems that rely on nepotism or formal caste systems. Testing has a long history as a method attempting to assure that individuals can succeed on the merit of their own abilities, rather than on who they know or their family background. Ideally, people should be able to succeed based on their knowledge and abilities; yet, this was the case in the findings from this study.

Based on the findings, in practice meritocracy ignores that: (a) what is determined to be important to know and be able to do comes from the norms and standards of the
dominant culture (e.g., cultural capital, linguistic capital) and can result in linguicism and audism; (b) the way that these skills and knowledge are evaluated often do not take into account differing abilities and need for testing accommodations; and (c) students with differing abilities, such as hearing loss, may experience both inequity across their education careers and societal discrimination that leads to lack of appropriate treatment (e.g., access to sign language, auditory trainers – the microphone teachers can use) in all aspects of their life that may lead to difficulties in acquiring the socially privileged knowledge and skills. In addition, the compensatory or coping skills or alternative skills students have developed (e.g., learning to do things on their own) might not be socially valued or recognized.

As a result, students with different learning needs and styles may suffer in such an environment, unless those assessments accommodate for a wide range of human differences, such as the need to use sign language. For students with hearing loss, using the English proficiency test as the gatekeeper at IHEs serves to socially construct their inability, rather than ability. As the students with hearing loss in this study emphasized, it is nearly impossible for them to pass those English tests because they have limited hearing. Without the accommodations provided at this university, it is questionable whether students with hearing loss would be eligible to receive their bachelor degrees. Because data on graduation rates of students with hearing loss from IHEs, compared across institutions, are not readily available, no firm conclusion can be drawn here about the impact of these policies on graduation rate. Therefore, further research on this topic would be warranted. As I stated, the government of Taiwan is eager to increase its international status, yet these educational policies may have unintended outcomes for
students with hearing loss and result in causing additional barriers to students with hearing loss.

**Accommodations for students with hearing loss.** The last theme from the results was accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university, in particular, for their EFL learning. The participants with hearing loss noted their appreciation for the accommodations this university provides and shared their belief that without them they most likely would not be able to complete their studies -- the differentiated instruction these participants with hearing loss receive at this university purportedly make a significant difference in their English learning experience. However, some teachers, resource center staff members, and students without hearing loss may have questioned the equality of the alternative English graduation requirements compared to the general English proficiency requirements. This reveals the ableist attitudes (e.g., audism) and may not take into account more serious, underlying problems of lack of educational equity from the beginning of students’ careers. If students with hearing loss were not educated in the audist learning environment throughout their school education, these so-called “alternatives” and “accommodations” should not be necessary.

Another issue of the alternative English class was that whether or not students with hearing loss have to learn EFL in a segregated learning setting to receive differentiated instruction and accommodation. Students without hearing loss also have different learning needs and styles, and it is reasonable to consider that they too could benefit from these accommodations. That is, the research begs the questions as to whether students with hearing loss could learn efficiently in the least restricted environment if unnecessary barriers were to be removed. In the alternative English
classroom the teacher uses technology as a key tool to help his students with hearing loss learn and communicate efficiently. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Young’s study showed that students in general have positive perception of English learning when teachers incorporate the curriculum with technology. Using technology does not only benefit students with hearing loss but also students without hearing loss.

As described in Chapter Two, Bunch and Valeo’s study noted that inclusive education benefits students with and without special needs. Once again, these accommodations that are available to students with hearing loss in the alternative English class CAN benefit students as whole. As stated in Chapter Two, Danforth and Rhodes’s study stressed that inclusion cannot be fully practiced without the removal and deconstruction of disability that is socially constructed. That is, teachers CAN include all students with different learning and linguistic needs in the general classroom, if they are willing to remove their audist attitudes and values.

Another major finding in this theme was that having positive relationships among teachers, resource center staff, administrator, and students with hearing loss was helpful to designing and providing effective supports. De Valenzuela (2013) argued that sociocultural theory “emphasizes the active bidirectional interaction of individual with their environments and with other around them” (p. 299). The relationship between a learner and more knowledgeable others is crucial to make learning meaningful and successful. Having opportunities for advocacy, supports, and positive relationships from and with others appears to be critical for the effective learning of students with hearing loss. Yet, according to some participants, not many educators are willing to provide their advocacy and supports necessary to effectively include these students. These students’
linguistic needs are often ignored and devalued and, as a result, they reported feeling as if they were on their own. As one participant stressed, students with hearing loss at this university are in the minority and some teachers do not want to spend extra time to accommodate their learning needs. This university is one of the few IHEs that provide many accommodations to their students with hearing loss and, as such, as a best case scenario. For students with hearing loss studying at IHEs with more limited accommodations, their learning experience most likely will be more challenging, and their constructed barriers will be greater by the dominant culture and people with audist views who hold cultural capital and linguistic capital.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include the sample size, participant selection, the research site, and the number of classroom observations for the data collection. The sample size of this case study was relatively small, only 10 participants in total. In the beginning of the recruitment, I had hoped to recruit more secondary participants for both cases but not as many people associated with the education of the primary participants’ English studies volunteered to participate as would have been ideal. Additionally, several individuals with specialized knowledge about supports of students with hearing loss declined to participate. Their insights and opinions of these students’ English learning would have been useful and perhaps provided a different perspective from those who were involved in the study. Without knowing why individuals decided to participate or not, it is not known whether the pool of participants differed from those who declined in any significant way. Another type of the secondary participant I hoped to recruit were family members of the students with hearing loss. Both primary participants are not from
the city where I conducted the study. Although I suggested having an online interview with their family members or visiting them in person, none volunteered to participate. Their perceptions of these students’ English learning might have been informative as well.

Due to the time limitation, I did not have a chance to visit secondary schools where students with hearing loss attend, specifically the school for the Deaf. The focus of this study was on current IHE students with hearing loss learning English at the IHE. Since one major problem the participants revealed was the focus of secondary school education, it would have been helpful for the case if I could have visited some secondary schools, including schools for the Deaf, to understand their educational objectives and goals for these students. Determining the likelihood that students with hearing loss from the school for the Deaf to attend IHEs would have been helpful for the case as well. Notably, it would have been helpful to learn how many students pursue their studies and graduate from IHEs. Furthermore, it would have been helpful to connect this information to how the participants’ secondary education prepared them for IHE studies.

The sample selection is another limitation of this study as well. The degrees of hearing loss of both primary participants were either mild or moderate. The inclusion of students with different degrees of hearing loss could have provided a broader spectrum of the case.

Another limitation of this study is that it is a single site study. I contacted several IHEs in Taiwan where the accommodations for the students with hearing loss are available, and unfortunately only one IHE I contacted agreed to send out the flyers to potential
participants. The findings from multiple sites might have made this study more applicable to future studies.

The limited number of class observations is also a limitation of this case study. In the beginning of the recruitment, I hoped to conduct four to six class observations to deepen understanding of the English learning environment in the alternative English class. However, the English teacher of the alternative English class only agreed to three class observations. Additionally, it might have been meaningful to have conducted observations in the general English class, in order to contrast the two types of classrooms. While one of the instructors of the general English class did provide quite a bit of meaningful information, the lack of first hand observation could be construed as a limitation. Observing the learning environment of the regular English classroom might have provided a better understanding of the needs and reasons for students with hearing loss to fulfill their English graduation requirements in a segregated setting at this university.

Implications

In this case study, I identified four themes based on the findings—the hegemony of English, audism, the inequity of educational policy, and accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university. These themes have important implications for practice and policy and I am eager to see what changes in the future might provide an adequate and equal education for students with hearing loss. In the following sections, I include several suggestions for educational practices and policies for students with hearing loss in Taiwan that educators, stake holders, policy makers, and researchers might consider.
**Practical applications.** The findings suggest several issues in educational practice and policies that construct barriers and limit opportunities for students with hearing loss in Taiwan. These students’ physical and linguistic differences and underlying uniqueness should not restrict them from achieving a good quality of education, career, and life. I would like to make the following suggestions that can make some positive differences for the Deaf community in Taiwan.

**Review and revise the goals of secondary education.** One reported reason students with hearing loss struggle in IHEs in Taiwan is because of the training foci in their secondary education. As an attempt to accommodate for their learning needs, they do not receive the same education in secondary schools as their hearing counterparts. Instead, they focus on technical, rather than academic skills in their secondary education. Their chances of having academic achievements at IHEs are slim because of these different educational goals. Their opportunities of gaining more cultural capital are resultantly less and their chances of obtaining necessary academic skills in IHEs remain unlikely. Students without hearing loss are not limited to these options. Students with hearing loss should not be restricted to these options either. The educators and policy makers of secondary education could consider these students’ learning needs and preferences and provide them more options to develop and enhance their academic skills.

**Review and revise the English as a gatekeeper policy.** Most IHEs in Taiwan have English graduation requirements for current IHE students, including students with hearing loss. Not only do I have concerns about this gatekeeping requirement, I also have questions about the means and purposes of IHE education in Taiwan. The government of Taiwan desires to strengthen its status internationally by requiring current IHE students to
pass English proficiency tests before graduation, so that their skills in a global market may increase. However, in some countries, learning foreign language is an asset and studying a different language is an option. When learning a foreign language is an option, it does not function as a gatekeeper. In Taiwan, not only is it a gatekeeper in IHEs, it is also a gatekeeper for employment in many industries. As the English teacher of the alternative English class questioned, “is English that important?” Is it that important for all citizens in Taiwan? Is it that important that professional skills can be secondary in IHE education, since English graduation requirements are the primary gatekeeper? These are the questions that educators, stakeholders, and policy makers might want to consider. A revision of the current educational policies to offer multiple and varied options for the IHE students to might enhance their compatibility and social mobility both locally and internationally.

**Suggestion for special education training for all teachers.** As described in Chapter Two, Briggle’s study revealed that many teachers’ lack of knowledge of teaching students with hearing loss due to its low-incidence special need status. The participants without hearing loss revealed a number of negative assumptions about students with hearing loss, such as that they have low academic skills, an inability to learn, social and communication difficulties, and that they create instructional challenges for their teachers. These negative expectations might be ameliorated by training in how to teach students with special needs. Students with special needs are the minority in Taiwan, and their teachers in many educational settings may not know enough about their learning needs and concerns. As a result, it might be challenging for these teachers to provide suitable accommodations in inclusive settings for students with special needs, including
those with hearing loss. Yet, these accommodations could also be helpful for students without hearing loss. Because individuals have multiple learning styles and it is an educator’s responsibility to meet all students’ learning needs, incorporating additional teaching strategies into the university classroom could benefit all students. If all educators receive the information about how to teach students with special needs, they might be able to provide a better learning experience and ensure positive results for all students in the least restricted educational environment. The teachers I interviewed for this case study shared that they have limited knowledge of how to help students with hearing loss learn effectively in the general classroom setting. Having special education training might help them adjust their teaching strategies and improve the quality of instruction and learning for students with hearing loss. This could be one solution to remove barriers for students with hearing loss in the university environment.

**Suggestion for sign language education and interpreter training.** As stated in Chapter Two, Harris’ study confirmed the lack of meaningful interactions between family members and children with hearing loss is crucial for their language development. In both primary participant’ cases, none of them receive the proper language development and interactive communication with their families in their early stage of lives. None of their family members learned or used a sign language, and only introduced them to oral language since they were born. One primary participant suggested that it is crucial to provide sign language education and interpreters to students with hearing loss in their academic experiences. Indeed, sign language education in Taiwan is not pervasive.

Without sign language interpreters, many students with hearing loss have significant learning difficulties in educational settings that rely on oral communication of
information, such as in lecture style courses. It is understandable why many parents of children with hearing loss ensure their children have access to sign language, when it is not common outside of Deaf community and schools for the Deaf. Yet, even for those students who do use sign language, having this knowledge without sign language interpreters available means they cannot capitalize on the language which may be more effective for accessing necessary information in the university classroom. Providing sign language education and interpreters is the key for these students. By promoting sign language education and training more sign language interpreters, the government of Taiwan could facilitate the removal of the barriers these students face in daily basis, as well as make the use of sign language and interpreters a common place occurrence. This, in turn, might bring about a lessening of the stigma of hearing loss, if more people were aware of the potential of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people to activity and successfully participate in all aspects of their community.

**Future research.** This case study was designed to discover the perceptions of IHE students with hearing loss who are learning English as a foreign language and to examine whether the current EFL practices and policies construct opportunities and barriers for these students in Taiwan. Researchers have investigated how Taiwanese students without hearing loss perceive their English learning experiences and English graduation requirements. However, since English plays such an important and prestigious role in the educational system in Taiwan and all students need to fulfill English requirements to earn their degrees, not many studies have been focused on the perceptions of students with special needs toward learning EFL. Very little attention has drawn to these students’ EFL learning. The educational policies in Taiwan apply to all
students, yet the voice and insights of students with special needs have yet to be heard. Although this case study was conducted only at one IHE in Taiwan, there are many more students with hearing loss at other IHEs who need to meet all these English graduation requirements with or without needed accommodations. I suggest that researchers take a closer look at other students with hearing loss, as well as other special needs, at different sites, in terms of their EFL learning experiences.

In Taiwan, the majority of IHEs use English proficiency requirements as the gatekeeper for graduation. I suggest future researchers pay attention to the potential outcomes of this policy and examine how well testing results correlate with students’ actual English proficiency. The Taiwanese government aims to increase its population’s compatibility and socioeconomic mobility using English proficiency credentials as proof of its capability, proficiency, suitability, and preparedness. It is important to consider that these credentials may not show authentic English language skills but only those results of people proficient in testing. It is possible that using only one type of measurement may be inadequate to evaluate students’ English proficiency. This might therefore, be another important avenue for future research. Another question might be whether students benefit and improve their English skills while preparing for the university-required language proficiency tests. One could also ask whether alternative graduation requirements for students with hearing loss are helpful and meaningful for their English learning. These might be important issues researchers could investigate in the future, since all these concerns matter to current students in Taiwan.

Another suggestion for the future research is to focus on different age groups of students in Taiwan. In this study, I only focused on current IHE students but it would also
be important to understand how students in primary and secondary schools perceive their EFL learning. The resultant information from such research would be especially relevant for students from segregated school settings, such as schools for the Deaf or other special needs, in determining how they perceive learning EFL and how likely it is they will attend IHEs in Taiwan. These students tend to receive very limited attention in research, in terms of their EFL learning. It is therefore crucial to provide a platform where their voices can be heard, locally and internationally. Understanding these students’ perceptions about learning EFL and the learning strategies and methods they need are fundamental factors for achieving equity of education for all.

Conclusions

In Taiwan, English has a superior status in school education, employment, and society, and the MOE promoted its status in higher education by encouraging IHEs using English proficiency requirement as a gatekeeper for graduation. This study focused on the case of two IHE students with hearing loss learning EFL at an elite university in Taiwan. The perceptions of these two students and people who were relevant to their EFL learning were the means of collecting essential information for this case study. I conducted this study using interviews, classroom observations, a researcher’s journal entries, and documentation collection. I used Dedoose, an online data analysis program, to analyze the data.

The major themes resulting from the analysis were the hegemony of English, audism, the inequity of educational policy, and accommodations for students with hearing loss at this university. Based on these findings, it is obvious that English serves an important role in shaping cultural relationships and affects students in various ways. It
is undeniable that English is a common language used in many places around the world; it is also an agent in maintaining and increasing people’s cultural capital. Yet, it is also important to examine whether English should be used as a gatekeeper, and the only foreign language IHEs use to evaluate their students’ academic achievements and international compatibilities. Foreign language education is one of the requirements for many societies in the world. However, I contest that English should be one of the language requisites in school, not the only language, that leads to IHE graduation. It is essential that policy makers, stakeholders, and educators review this gatekeeping requirement and perhaps revise it to provide a broader, more inclusive learning experience for IHE students in Taiwan. In addition, while testing is one method of measuring students’ academic achievements, it is not the only way to evaluate all. For students with hearing loss, using only one type of measurement to evaluate their learning may not be adequate or fair. In many educational settings, these students’ language needs have been ignored and as such, it is time to provide them a proper education in the least restrictive environment. By doing so, we need more sign language education, sign language interpreters, and special needs awareness.

Deaf community and culture in Taiwan have not received much attention in the society. Taiwanese sign language has not been formally taught or fully accepted among most people with and without hearing loss. Students with hearing loss can miss some major information in oral communication due to some people’s lack of recognition that not all people can hear and understand oral language well. Without awareness, education, services, accommodations of sign language, interpreters, and special needs, it is more than likely that students with hearing loss will continue to have less power and cultural
capital in Taiwan, and their physical and linguistic differences will continue to be constructed as a disability by the dominant culture.

The research site of this case study provides many accommodations to their students with hearing loss. These results suggest the leadership demonstrated by this institution and the accommodations they provide should be held as model for other IHEs to follow. It is time to ensure students with hearing loss the right of equal educational opportunities. It is time to raise the respect, acceptance, and awareness for sign language education. It is time to include all students with special needs in all educational settings in Taiwan. It is time to remove the barriers that restrict life choices and enhance the ableness of people with special needs in education, employment, and daily life.
Appendices

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Appendix A

The initial interview questions for the primary participants

Introductory questions—demographic

1. Where are you from?
2. What languages do you use in daily life?
3. What language(s) do you use at home?
4. How did you learn your first language?
5. How do you communicate in Mandarin?
6. What kind of school did you go to before college/university?
7. When did you start college/university?
8. When did you first learn English?
9. Where did you first learn English?

Main questions

1. Tell me how you learned English.
2. Tell me how hearing loss affects your English learning.
3. Tell me how you use English. What role does it have in your daily life?
   (Probe: when do you use English? With whom? For what purposes?)
4. Tell me about your English learning experience before college/university.
   (Probe: what kind of classes were they? What kind of class setting was it?
   What kind of learning materials did you use? What were the grading criteria?)
5. Tell me about your English learning experience at this college/university.
   (Probe: what kind of classes are they? What is the class setting like? What
   materials do you use to learn in the class? What are the grading criteria? What
are the assignments? How do you complete the assignments? What are the accommodations? What kind of English activities that are available to you at the college/university?)

6. Tell me how you feel about your English learning at this college/university. (Probe: How do you feel about the English classes? How do you feel about the English activities? How do you feel about the options you have for the English requirements?)

7. Tell me about the English graduation requirements. (Probe: what are the choices to meet the requirements? What are the graduation requirement criteria?)

8. Tell me how you feel about the English graduation requirements.

Possible prompts

1. Why did you choose to take ________ for English requirements? How is it going?

2. Could you tell me more about ________?

3. I am not sure I understood ________. Could you tell me about that some more?

4. I am not sure what you mean by ________. Could you give me some examples?

5. What makes you feel that way?
Appendix B

The final interview questions for the primary participants

Main questions

1. I have noticed ________ from the classroom observations. Tell me how you feel about it. Tell me more about that situation.

2. Tell me how you feel about your other classes besides English. (Probe: What are the difficulties do you have in those classes?)

3. Tell me the things you like and dislike in your English learning experiences.

4. Tell me how you will use English after graduating from the college/university. (Probe: What will you use it for? How will you use it? With whom will you use it? What equipment will you need to have when you use it?)

5. Tell me the things you wish could have changed or would like to change in your English learning experiences. How would/will you change them?

Possible prompts

1. You mentioned ________ in the first interview, can you tell me more about it?

2. You mentioned that instead of taking English courses in the general English classroom, you had/have to take private tutoring sessions/a class for students with special needs for the general English requirements. How do you feel about it?
Appendix C

The interview questions for the secondary participants

Introductory questions—demographic

1. How do you know this student?
2. How long have you known this student?
3. How long have you worked/studied at this college/university?

Main questions

For all secondary participants

1. What are your beliefs about the importance of learning English?
2. What do you think about the opportunities that students have to learn English?
3. What you think about students with hearing loss, such as learning English as a foreign language?
4. Tell me what you think the students with hearing loss English learning experiences might be like.
5. Tell me how you feel about English graduation requirements at the college/university for students with hearing loss.

For the English teacher and tutor

1. Tell me your experience of teaching students with hearing loss.
2. Tell me your experience of teaching this student.
3. Tell me about the English requirements for students with hearing loss.
4. Tell me about your English class with this student. (Probe: What kind of class was/is it? What kind of class setting was/is it? What materials did/do you use? What were/are the grading criteria?)
5. How did/do you assist students with hearing loss to meet the English requirements?

6. Tell me the types of opportunities that students with hearing loss have to learn English. How do you that is going/went?

7. Tell me about the support and services that were/are available for students with hearing loss in English learning.

8. Tell me how you feel about teaching students with hearing loss.

**For the resource center staff member and tutor**

1. Tell me your experiences with students with hearing loss. (Probe: What are the similarities and differences have you noticed between students with and without hearing loss? What might be the strengths or barriers the students with hearing loss have in learning English and other subjects?)

2. Tell me the types of service and support students with hearing loss receive at this college/university in learning English and other subjects.

3. Tell me about the English graduation requirements at this college/university.

**For informal study peers**

1. Tell me about your experiences of helping students with hearing loss in English classes and/or other subjects. (Probe: How do you help them? What are the things you need to help them the most?)

2. What do you think the students with hearing loss English learning experiences are like?

3. Tell me how you feel about helping students with hearing loss in learning English and/or other subjects.
Possible prompts

1. Could you tell me more about ________?

2. I am not sure I understood ________. Could you tell me about that some more?

3. I am not sure what you mean by ________. Could you give me some examples?
Appendix D

Transcription Rules

1. Use pseudonyms for the interviewees and people they mention in the interview in transcription.

2. Transcribe the interviews literally. Do not summarize or clean up the grammar.

3. Put XX to indicate an unintelligible utterance.

4. “Merged” words are not transcribed as such, but approximated to standard written. The general construction of a proposition is retained, even if it contains syntactic “errors”.

5. Put a period at the end of a phrase that sounds like someone is ending a sentence or when their voice goes down at the end of a sentence.

6. Put a question mark at the end of a sentence which sounds like a question or when their voice goes up at the end of the sentence.

7. Use slash “/” to indicate the pause.

8. Use a dash “-” to indicate when a word is broken off. (ex. w-what).

9. Capitalize the words or utterances when someone uses an emphasis on a word or sentence.

10. Type each speaker’s message in one paragraph. Do not hit the paragraph return until a new person starts talking.

11. Use brackets “[ ]” for nonverbal utterances (ex. hand gestures, facial expression, laughter, giggling, or sighs).
12. Use parentheses “( )” to indicate an interruption during the interview (ex. Someone comes in and starts talking to the interviewee.

13. Use double parentheses “(( ))” to indicate someone else’s talking other than the interviewee.

14. Use double slashes “//” to indicate people talk on top of each other.

15. The interviewer is marked with an “I” and the interviewee with the pseudonym.
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