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**Developing an Intercultural English Curriculum  
of University Level in Taiwan**

By  
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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

English Language Department  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Glasgow

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In 1993, Samuel Huntington warned that: “the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural”.

Intercultural dialogue, according to UNESCO, therefore has taken on a new meaning in the context of globalization and is therefore “becoming a vital means of maintaining peace and world unity.”

“Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”  
(Rudyard Kipling)

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## **Abstract**

### **Developing an Intercultural English Curriculum of University Level in Taiwan**

The rationale of this thesis stems from the argument that intercultural skills and knowledge are indispensable to the process of internationalizing Higher Education in Taiwan, which is a primary goal set by the Taiwanese government. This thesis seeks to investigate how the integration of cultural studies with an English as Foreign Language syllabus can provide Taiwanese university students with opportunities to enter an ‘inter’ space where they cross linguistic and cultural boundaries, and where they are able to engage in cross cultural dialogue. It presents both theoretical and practical components of a potential culturally based university English course. The theoretical concept of the “third space”, as described by Bhabha and Kramsch and others, is a crucial dimension in the intercultural classroom in which students can reinterpret Otherness and their own culture. This thesis also explores how a cultural syllabus that includes essential elements of cultural studies, and that utilizes generally available materials and topics, with appropriate instructional approaches, can be interwoven into the English language classroom and provide students with opportunities to critically voice their own opinions.

Data were collected during a five-month study among first year university students in a medical university in Taiwan. Quantitative and qualitative data together provide evidence to determine a necessity for intercultural competence in the language classroom, and possible ways it can be developed or enhanced. The evidence indicates that given appropriate opportunities, students are willing to deepen their sociocultural knowledge of Self and Other and at the same time improve their language skills.

This thesis offers a perspective that differs from the traditional four skills English education that presently dominates education in Taiwan. It concludes by recommending including an intercultural syllabus in EFL classrooms at the tertiary level and with implications for university and national educational policies and practices, and includes recommendations for future research.

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# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1. Rationale

During the six years since the turn of the century there has been a marked increase in the Taiwan government's expectation that English education at the tertiary level will internationalize the institutions of higher education and so eventually lead to the internationalization of the country. In a number of significant national guidelines English competence is regarded as an indicator of global awareness. Also, just as internationalization is constantly addressed in national government policies, the level of English proficiency in Taiwan is generally considered equivalent to the level of internationalization. This correspondence of definitions is one of the determinants that is shaping governmental policy and practice, and influencing some major educational reforms. Therefore, there is a need to understand the precise role that English education plays, and can play, in the internationalization of higher education (HE). Moreover, because English is regarded as a medium for understanding 'other' cultures, there is also a need to look into the interplay between intercultural education and university English language education.

According to some educators, the internationalization of HE must have a systematic and explicit cross-cultural dimension. Knight (2003) states that, with respect to internationalization and higher education, international, intercultural and global dimensions are three aspects of a 'triad', which represents the "richness in the breath, and the depth of internationalization". She also points out that international education involves and relates to the people, cultures, and systems of different nations (1999, quoted in de Wit, 2002: 119). Internationalization should be interpreted in a broad sense rather than as simply being able to read "foreign texts" and converse in a "foreign tongue". The intercultural dimension of foreign language learning and teaching

requires a broad view of different cultures, different worldviews and a space for students to “cross cultural borders”. Cultural border crossing experiences not only enrich students’ understanding of Self and Other, but also at the same time their classroom encounters with Otherness broaden their worldview. Ideally, this attitude is transferable to the Otherness they encounter outside the classroom, in their own country and abroad.

Although foreign language is generally claimed to be a medium to increase intercultural understanding and broaden one’s world view, cultural and intercultural learning are not substantially emphasized in the Taiwanese foreign language curriculum or practice, nor are they part of the rhetoric of the government’s policy. However, the government and academia are anxious to improve standards and to widen student participation in foreign language learning. An additional major concern involves utilizing easy to apply evaluation measurers, such as the number of courses offered and taken. The simplistic rationale is that if people learn English, they will be equipped with cross-cultural ability and a broad worldview. The current university English education, however, is by and large directed towards enabling students to pass easy to measure standardized proficiency tests rather than contributing to students’ growth as a ‘whole person’.

According to Huang (2000), Taiwan is classified as a multicultural society. In addition, the White Paper in Higher Education (ROC MOE, 2001) claims that Taiwan's higher education is moving from ‘elitism’ toward ‘universality’, from ‘controlled’ toward ‘open’ systems, and from being ‘monolithic’ toward being ‘pluralistic’. Therefore, universities in Taiwan are explicitly encouraged by the government to develop “pluralistic, liberal, democratic and international” dimensions (ibid). In terms of international dimensions, English is considered the most important foreign language because it is deemed a de facto global *lingua franca*. In this regard, however, English education in Taiwan prioritizes an instrumental orientation, and examination-based language requirements are generally used for admission to universities or job markets. However, it is fallacious to regard competence in English as equal to having a global

vision and being ‘internationalized’, and it is wrong to consider easy to measure standardized exams as adequate to quantify and compare student progress toward intercultural understanding.

In most universities in Taiwan, the English curriculum is usually understood as an element of the core curriculum in General Education that aims at “whole person” education. Therefore, apart from mechanical and formulaic aspects of language learning, the humanistic aspect of culture learning is important because it not only facilitates students’ understanding of Self and Other but also has potential for providing them with a critical intercultural stance. Providing university students with the competence needed to learn from Otherness while reflecting upon their own self in the process of learning English is therefore necessary. Having intercultural competence helps students not merely to go along with the Western values transmitted by a powerful language but also to extend their interest in activities related to Otherness beyond cultural boundaries. Therefore, it is important that how intercultural competence developed in the language classroom assists students to move across cultural frontiers, and have an effective dialogue with Otherness.

## **2. Research Area**

Based on the perspective and the rationale discussed above, this research will address issues related to internationalizing Taiwanese Universities and Taiwan itself through an emphasis on intercultural education in university English language classrooms. This study will examine the impact of Taiwan’s linguistic ecology and globalization on English education in Taiwan. It will examine how the integration of Cultural Studies with the English as Foreign Language syllabus can provide students with chances to enter an ‘inter’ space where they cross linguistic and cultural boundaries and where they are able to engage in cross cultural dialogue. The research will include the impact of involving Cultural Studies topics such as gender, race, class, and other social issues in a foreign language curriculum and the student’s ability to identify the values and beliefs



of others. In this regard, the integration of a cultural syllabus into the English curriculum can have great potential for empowering students to develop not only English literacy but also critical literacy. This study will look into the significance of integrating the teaching of culture in English language classrooms in order to provide students with a deeper understanding of Otherness as well as their own culture and identity. Also, whether or not cultural learning can enrich foreign language learning will be explored. Moreover, this research will examine the possibility of establishing a cultural framework for language classrooms in the already hybridized Taiwanese society.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching research question is how Taiwanese University English Language Courses can be integrated with Cultural Studies in order to provide students with both English communication skills and the cultural understandings and intercultural competence necessary in a multicultural world. The study will also investigate whether or not implementing a socio-cultural syllabus that includes Cultural Studies, literature and popular culture can help to create a “third space”, where students can enunciate cultural differences and reflect upon their own culture.

The research questions can basically be divided into four categories:

1. Is there an educational demand for integrating a cultural syllabus with the University English language classroom?
  - Is there a gap between the Taiwanese government’s expectation and Taiwanese university students’ expectation of English education?
  - What are the students’, teachers’ and the Taiwanese government’s perspectives of internationalization and the development of intercultural competence?

2. Can an effective model for the English Language curriculum, based on cultural differences and integrated with a Cultural Studies syllabus, be developed to facilitate Taiwanese university students' cultural awareness and intercultural competence?
  - Can a curriculum model be developed that integrates Cultural Studies with University English Language courses?
  - Can a syllabus be designed that helps Taiwanese students cross cultural boundaries and juxtapose other cultures with their own?
  - Can a model of culture and language teaching be developed based on cultural difference?
  - Can effective criteria be established to select from among textbooks that are developed and published by foreign publishers that are generally in the United States and the United Kingdom?
  - Can English literature materials containing cultural references enrich the University English Language classroom and cultivate critical thinking?
  - Can “popular culture” media such as film, TV, music and books, be used in the University English Language classroom to teach Taiwanese students to distinguish the positive and negative impacts of other cultures, and not simply mimic cultural elements?
  - Can objectives from Cultural Studies be translated into instructional practices in the Taiwanese University English Language classroom?
3. How can a postcolonial view of an ‘inter’ space enable learners to reflect upon “Self” and “the Other” and thus be enriched with the value generated from cultural differences?
  - Can students in a Taiwanese University English Language classroom be taught to reflect upon their own culture, and another culture, and be enriched by understanding the values and differences encountered?
  - What Cultural Studies content can be used to enable students to stand among the Self, the local, and the Otherness?

- Can such a space empower students to negotiate cultural contradictions and conflicts and thereby increase their critical thinking ability?
4. To what extent will a culturally based English as a Foreign Language curriculum articulate with the Taiwanese government's goals for higher education?
- To what extent does an integrated Culture Studies and Taiwanese University English Language curriculum support the Taiwanese government's goal of internationalizing universities and the country, and help the nation to compete globally?

These questions will be used to examine whether an intercultural dimension can be developed in the HE English language classroom that is currently oriented towards exam-based learning.

### **3. Importance of this Research and the Possible Contribution to English Education in Taiwan**

Currently, there is almost no study of the cultural dimensions of English education at the tertiary level in Taiwan. In addition, most of the research on, and models of cultural dimensions for language teaching in secondary school or HE are still based on the western social context (e.g. Byram, 1994, 1997a,b,c, Kramsch, 1993, 1995) or some postcolonial states where English is taught or used as a “second language” (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999). Hence, it is important to explore whether an appropriate conceptual framework of English language learning integrated with culture studies can be implemented in the language classrooms at the tertiary level in Taiwan. This study may serve as a paradigm of EFL in HE courses based on cultural differences within the social context of Taiwan. This research will also examine the role that cultural knowledge plays in the language classroom in terms of its facilitating students intercultural competence and critical thinking. It may help determine future policy for English education in higher education. The research will further examine a connection



between the students' English competence and their development of a 'global vision'. It will provide an insight into the role that university English education can play in fundamental humanistic education, intercultural competence, and Internationalization in Taiwan.

#### **4. Thesis Overview**

The current chapter presents an overview of the thesis, a rationale for the research, and the main research questions.

Chapter two presents the existing literature on cultural learning and intercultural competence, as well as the conceptual framework of this research. This chapter further presents a rationale for the role of intercultural competence in the university language classroom and in the internationalization of universities and of the country. It discusses the impact of globalization on higher education in general and on Taiwanese higher education in particular. Also, chapter two argues that being international should include the intercultural competences that provide one with the ability to cross the cultural and social boundaries between nations. It discusses the theoretical concept of "inter space", as a crucial dimension in the intercultural classroom that allows students to reinterpret Otherness and their own culture. This chapter will also discuss Byram's five *savoirs*, a set of comprehensive specifications of knowledge and skills for intercultural competence. The Common European Framework and the American Standards, which both provide national standards for language learning in the U.S.A. and Europe, will also be explored with respect to cultural/ intercultural aspects of language learning.

Chapter three will investigate the research background including Taiwan's linguistic landscape, English education in general, and university English education in Taiwan in particular. It will first present a brief history of language policy in Taiwan and how the linguistic landscape affects the interplay between language and identity. Higher

education, being the nation's intellectual pool, is the main focus of the country's goal of internationalization. In this regard, university English education is crucial. This chapter will probe the current status of English education at the tertiary level and the government's related policies for improving English language education. I also examine whether university English education is consistent with the broad goal of whole personal education.

Chapter four will discuss various approaches taken to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. It will include a description of the research design, a discussion of data collection techniques and research methods.

Chapter five is primarily dedicated to analyzing the quantitative data. It will present the viewpoints of government administrators, teachers, and students with respect to language and culture learning and will argue that intercultural competence is necessary. Possible ways that language and culture learning can be developed or enhanced in the language classroom will also be discussed.

Chapter six will discuss how language classrooms can develop cultural contact zones and open an 'inter' space between and among different cultures. It will present both theoretical and practical sides of a potential culturally based university English course design. The discussion will include essentials of Cultural Studies, choice of materials, topics, and approaches. It will also explore how a cultural syllabus that utilizes generally available materials can be interwoven into the English language classroom and provide students with opportunities to critically voice their own opinions.

Chapter seven will present specific examples of texts and tasks for an intercultural English Language course. Qualitative data will be analyzed to explore the intercultural competence that students developed in such a course, including attitudes, knowledge, skills and critical thinking ability. A review of student perspectives collected from student interviews provides an evaluative indicator of the effects of implementing an



intercultural English reading syllabus. These data demonstrate how in a university English classroom, English can be more than simply a ‘foreign tongue’.

The eighth and final chapter will present implications of this research, including potentially new prospects for the traditional university English language classroom in Taiwan. This chapter also discusses implications for policy and practice and suggests additional future research regarding intercultural dimensions of language learning.

## Chapter II

### Conceptual Frameworks

In this chapter, since intercultural competence by definition has ‘culture’ as its core, the meaning of ‘culture’ as a major component of ‘intercultural’ leaning in the foreign language classroom will be discussed first. The theoretical framework of ‘inter’, (between) cultures will also be presented and developed in order to construct a foundation for ‘intercultural’ teaching in the foreign language classroom. The objectives of intercultural competence, identified by Byram’s 5 *savoirs*, will be subsequently discussed, particularly within the Taiwanese educational context. The succeeding sections delve into the interrelatedness among internationalization, higher education, English education, and intercultural education. In the last section, this chapter will explore the role that culture plays in the *National Standard for Foreign Language Learning* and the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* that respectively give guidance on language learning in the U.S. and Europe. I shall consider the extent of their relevance to the Taiwanese educational context.

#### 1. Culture in Foreign Language Teaching

It is generally believed that one cannot really understand a foreign language without learning the related culture. As language and symbols carry the knowledge of the past and history over generations, they give people an identity and a ‘form of life’ (Wittgenstein, 1968). The term ‘Culture’ in Chinese is ‘Wen-Hua’ and involves two words: ‘Wen’ stands for language and symbols, while ‘Hua’ represents cultivation, civilization, and change. According to Thiong’o (1995:290), language is not culture-free nor is culture value-free because “language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world”. Valdes (1986) states that language learning is intrinsically ‘bound’ to cultural learning. Recent studies have

focused on the relationships between language teaching and teaching the target culture (Alptekin, 1993, Kramsch, 1993), and have expanded this relationship to include general culture (Alred *et al*, 1993, Byram, 1988, 1989, 1994, 1997a, b, c, 1998, Broady, 2004, Damen, 1987, Kramsch 1993, 1995, 1998, 2001, Hinkel, 1999, Jong 1996). Equipping the language learner with transferable skills and attitudes towards the Other's culture is also emphasized by Kramsch (1993) and Byram and Zarate (1997b). This transferability is necessary in order for a foreign language user to become an intercultural speaker, as discussed in a later section (2.2.2).

With regard to the place of culture in foreign language learning, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Byram and Kramsch built on works of Damen (1987) and Seelye (1981) and extended the dimension of culture in the language classroom. Kramsch (1993) argues that a second or foreign language learner inevitably becomes a learner of the target culture. Similarly, Byram (1997a) indicates that language teaching can rarely occur without implicitly involving culture teaching since language consistently relies on the understanding of, and references to the other culture and the world. Published literature in this field has been expanding ever since. Several different models for integrating culture and language teaching have been proposed. These include the works of Bennett *et al* (1999), Byram (1988, 1989, 1991, 1994, 1997a), Corbett (2003), Dłaska (2000), Fisher (1996), Kramsch (1993, 1995), Phipps (2004), and Seelye (1994). Although Byram (1997a) suggests that culture is a hidden curriculum that can be implicitly taught in the process of foreign language learning, teaching culture explicitly in the foreign language syllabus has been even more strongly urged by Pulverness (2003), Kramsch (1993), to name a few. These conceptual frameworks are generally based on European or American contexts, and share the common concept that an effective foreign language learner is also an effective culture learner because s/he needs to understand the context of the language. Before further exploration of this argument, the meaning of culture will be examined.



## 1.1. The Definition of Culture

### 1.1.1. Culture

Culture is unanimously considered one of the most obscure and difficult social science terms to define. The word culture, from the Latin *colere*, with its root meaning “to cultivate”, generally refers to patterns of human activity (Williams, 1988:87).

Although there are continuous disputes over the diverse meanings of culture, the definitions have generally evolved from elite cultural artifacts of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries into definitions with a more anthropological view from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From an anthropological view, culture is seen in the context of large groups of people and that which they have in common. This includes their history, their worldview, their language and the languages of the geographical location. The earlier anthropologist view of culture was somewhat limited. For example, the following definition of culture expressed by Barrow (1982) is typical:

A culture is the way of life of a group of people, the complex of shared concepts and patterns of learned behavior that are handed down from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation.

(Barrow: 1982: 3-4, cited in Roberts and Sarangi, 2004)

Raymond Williams (1983), from a Marxist view, argues that culture in the broadest sense is ‘a whole way of life’ which includes ideas, attitudes, languages, practices, institutions, and the whole range of cultural practices which includes artistic forms, texts, canons, architecture, commodities and so on. This view has helped to shape the definition of ‘culture’ for Cultural Studies that deals with different facets of life.

Likewise, UNESCO’s Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) states that culture is “a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs”. Because culture is inseparable from society, as Kramsch indicates (1995: 83), the term ‘cultural’ has always been associated with the term ‘social’. This research will also use

‘socio-cultural’ to refer more comprehensively to the patterns and structures of human activities.

Despite the diverse meanings of culture, its definitions, according to Kramsch, (ibid: 84) generally fall into two categories: one is culture in form, and the other is culture in concept. The first definition is more ‘material’, and according to Kramsch (ibid), comes from the humanities. It is culture with a ‘big C’. The elements of the latter category are generally “unconsciously or subconsciously accepted as ‘right’ and ‘correct’ by people who identify themselves as members of a society” (Brislin, 1990, quoted in Kramsch, ibid: 84). This is culture with a ‘small c’. Both definitions of culture are now widely applied in culture learning in foreign language classrooms. This research will not attempt to formulate a rigorous definition of culture, but will adopt the two above-stated categories to exploit in the intercultural language classroom.

### **1.1.2. Culture in Form**

Culture in form generally includes traditional concepts of high culture such as art, music, literature, and popular culture related to everyday living. In this respect, high culture and popular culture are cultures produced by people. High culture is itself a manifestation of human civilization and traditionally focuses more on intellectual and artistic achievements. It is generally institutionalized and transmitted through education or from one generation to the next. Cultural activities normally include art exhibits, concerts, or talks on literature. Therefore, a ‘city of culture’, for example in the sense of officially designated European City of Culture, usually means that it has many cultural activities and/ or has museums, galleries, theatres, distinctive architectures or relics related to the history of civilization. A person is ‘cultured’ because s/he is interested in the above high cultural activities.

Culture, nonetheless, is not necessarily refined or sophisticated. It is a ‘form of life’ containing aspects of customs, food, and costume. Culture can also be a reflection of ‘human nature’ such as folk music as produced by working class people or handcraft as

designed by indigenous people. This non-elite culture is now accepted as 'culture' in a different form. Non-elite literature, for instance, in the postindustrial era, is becoming the form of popular culture that means goods or activities produced for or consumed by the masses. It is more related to people's lives. Freccero (1999) indicates that the concept of 'popular' can be used in Cultural Studies to express the everyday life experiences of people. It can also be applied to discussion of 'mass' culture, that is, the popular cultural forms found in the mass media.

### **1.1.3. Culture in Concept**

Culture in concept is comprised of values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that members of a group share in the process of socialization. These traits are either transmitted across generations or acquired through the influence of members of a group of people. In this regard, culture was once taken as a set of fixed values and beliefs. However, this fixedness can easily lead to cultural stereotypes, both negative and positive. Atkinson (2004: 287) also indicates that often cultures are unproblematically confused with big-picture political groupings like nation states and ethnic communities such as American culture, Japanese culture, and Chinese culture. Some commonly held stereotypes are that Chinese are more inductive whereas Americans are more deductive, or that English people are more aloof whereas Scots are friendlier. Such groupings, however, overlook possible inter-group differences or conflicts.

However, culture is not static, nor are values and beliefs unchangeable. According to Geertz (1973), culture is related to a system of meaning. He argues that culture is "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" (89).

Therefore, people are living according to the system of meanings. The system of meanings both acts upon, and is acted upon by people's actions, so that cultural systems both shape, and are shaped by, individual actions. Echoing this perspective, Frow and Morris (1993: 356) present a Marxist view of culture that is "a contested and conflictual



set of practices of representation bound up with the processes of formation and re-formation of social groups”. In this regard, culture is not fixed but temporary; it is continuously making and being made.

In this postmodern era, it is no longer easy to envision people as simply members of homogenous and unified cultural groups. The postmodern views of culture (Appadurai, 1990, Lyotard, 1984) emphasize discontinuity, hybridity, difference, disruption, and deterritorialization. In addition, the interaction of global cultures and local cultures has created a new climate of culture. Global flows of people, media, ideas, and technology are endemic aspects of the late 20th and early 21<sup>st</sup> century that, according to Appadurai (ibid), have brought new meaning to the definition of culture. Beliefs, values, and practices of every day life are developed under the influence of exposure to popular culture in all forms. Culture Studies has emerged and focused on the examination of ‘contemporary culture’ (During, 1993). Cultural knowledge has been transformed from a mere presentation of systems of facts to the foundation of further analyses and understanding of human experiences. Cultural Studies therefore has been widely applied to different disciplines and helps to broaden the cultural and intercultural dimension of foreign language teaching as well (Byram, 1989, 1997a, Pulverness, 2005, Kramsch, 1993, 1997).

## **1.2. Culture Teaching in L2 and EFL Education**

As Byram indicates, recent attention to cultural dimensions in the foreign language classroom has begun partly because of “recognition that communication in a foreign language can lead to merely encoding the learners’ own culture-specific meanings which are not necessarily comprehensible to other speakers of the language for whom it carries their culture-specific meanings and connotations” (1997a: 60). Early models of teaching cultures as ‘facts’ (Brooks, 1975, Nostrand, 1974) often simplified cultural artifacts into what Kramsch (1993:218) called the four Fs: food, fairs, folklore, and statistical facts. This perspective often simplistically looks at surface level of behaviors and overlooks the important underlying values and meanings of these facts in

whole social systems.

As most societies are becoming increasingly multicultural and the world is being viewed as a global village, teaching culture in the language classroom no longer means focusing on a few lessons about holidays, customary clothing, folk songs, and food. Recent models have shifted to a more dynamic teaching method and content because combining cultural-specific and cultural-general learning is understood as a way to facilitate intercultural competence. Cultural-specific learning focuses on the attainment of knowledge and skills relevant to a given target culture, usually of the target language. Cultural-general learning, on the other hand, refers to general and transferable knowledge and competence that lead to understanding when confronting other cultures. According to Myers and Kelly (1995), cultural-general skills include the ability to understand and respect other cultures and to have interest in knowing more about Otherness.

Furthermore, Cultural Studies is comprised of a variety of studies in everyday social and cultural contexts (Fiske, 1992), which can be introduced into foreign language teaching (Giroux, 1992, Bassnett, 1997, Byram, 1991, 1997a, Corbett 2003, Kramsch 1993). In addition to gaining “empathy” with foreign cultures, foreign language learners are also expected to gain competences of analysis and criticism through Cultural Studies in the foreign language classroom (Byram 1997c: 61). Creating social and cultural space in the foreign language classroom can facilitate the development of intercultural competence based on the kinds of knowledge and critical practices that all could share. Overall, cultural-specific and cultural-general learning and Cultural Studies help learners to progress towards intercultural competence in the foreign language classroom. In the subsequent chapters, the role Cultural Studies plays in the language classroom will be continuously discussed.

Being intercultural is generally considered having the ability to reflect upon and analyze Otherness and thus have better understanding of cultural differences (Alred *et al* 1997,



Bredella, 2003, Byram, 1997c, Damen, 1987, Seago and McBride, 2000, Corbett 2003. Risager, 2000, Scollon and Scollon, 1995). The process of understanding others can generate a better understanding of our own culture. It is generally believed that foreign language learning should enable students to interpret and reinterpret cultural facts and so become mediators between their own culture and other cultures (Byram, 1997a, 1998; Byram and Zarate, 1997b, Morgan, 1998). In this regard, Byram proposes five *savoirs* to express the components of intercultural competence (1997c). These *savoir* will be discussed in detail in section 3. Also, with regard to cultural competences, cultural differences should not be reduced to mere differences in ‘lifestyles’ such as dress or food or ‘form of expressions’ such as language. Instead, a meta-cultural approach should take students a step further. In the view of Gordon (1991, cited in Seelye 1996: 10), “multiple perspectives developed from learning multiple cultures” are considered valuable resources for developing intelligence and intercultural competence. Multiple cultures produce cultural diversity, which, according to UNESCO, is “about plurality of knowledge, wisdom and energy which all contribute to improving and moving the World forward” (UNESCO, 2005).

### **1.3. The Cultural Politics of Education in English**

Although culture learning is widely advocated, voices of resistance are heard in opposition to the *de facto* status of English as a *lingua franca*. With the ending of the British colonial era and the rise of U.S. neo-imperialism with its multiple powers of economy, military, and popular culture, the advent of English as an international language is beyond question (Pennycook, 1994, Crystal 1997, Kubota 2002, McKay 2003). Pennycook (1999) points out that the acceptance of English as a *lingua franca* detaches English from its cultural content, and he deems it a ‘neutral and transparent’ medium of communication. However, the supposed neutrality of English does not diminish doubts cast on the cultural politics embedded in English language teaching because the English language can also be viewed as “a tool of power, domination and elitist identity” (Kachru, 1995: 291). The spread of English as an international language, accelerated by ELT, has concerned some English educators who see it as a

form of neo-cultural colonialism (Phillipson 1992, 2000, Pennycook 1994, Canagarajah 1999, Lam 2002). In this regard, Phillipson (1992) points out that it is politics and the power structure that endow a language with intrinsic imperialistic qualities.

Therefore, he indicates that English language teaching should not create “structural or power inequalities” (ibid: 318) between groups, which he considers a type of “linguicism”. He cautions that terms such as ‘global English’ actually conceal the fact that “the use of English serves the interests of some much better than others” (Phillipson, 2000: 89).

Even though resisting voices are heard concerning the pace of globalization, most developing or Far Eastern countries still place English education in the foreground of the landscape of global competitiveness. This will be discussed further in a later section of this chapter (4.2). Since it is unrealistic to strip EFL teaching and learning of its cultural context and history, these very elements can be exploited in the EFL classroom in order to provide students with knowledge and competences needed to inhabit in a more pluricultural world.

#### **1.4. Cultural Resources in the English Language Classroom**

Given the diversity of issues within the field of Cultural Studies, several forms of cultures have been introduced into the foreign language classroom. Generally, literary texts, Cultural Studies and popular culture are recommended for forming the foundation of cultural learning (Kramsch 1993, Byram 1994, 1997, Reagan & Osborn, 2002, Corbett, 2003, Jong, 1996). Disagreements over the use of literature in the foreign language classroom are based on its complex structure, lack of pragmatic function and overly specific cultural perspective (McKay 1984); however, although literature traditionally has been deemed the culture of the elite, it still remains a rich resource for learning culture (Brumfit, 1986, Burwitz-Melzer, 2002, Byram, 1994, Kramsch 1993, Lazar, 1993, McKay, 1984, Pulverness, 2005, Wallace 2003, Vales 1986). Most commentators suggest that exposure to a variety of literary texts can enhance students’ interest in exploring the others’ cultures hidden in the texts and thus give them chances

to explore different layers of social and cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, because popular culture is inseparable from the experience of everyday life, it provides good material for Cultural Studies. It has recently been suggested that studies of popular culture be included in the university humanities curriculum in higher education (Byram, 1997a, Giroux, 1999, 2002, Freccero 1999, hooks, 1996, Ogdon, 2001) since it provides a means of looking into issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality. As Freccero (ibid: 20) emphasizes, it also presents an arena for cultural contestation and discussion. In the field of foreign language teaching, popular culture embedded in mass media is also advocated as a good resource for foreign cultural learning by virtue of its presenting a variety of issues and values (Byram, 1997a, 1997b: 19, Corbett, 2003: 171-190). With the advent of multimedia technology, it is presently common for students to have access to, and use the mass media of the target language as material for teaching or learning linguistic skills. Chapter 6 will further elaborate the intercultural EFL syllabus, and the rationale for using such materials and topics.

The next section examines the theoretical concept of ‘inter’ that is the other core component of interculturality. How can the process of Othering, the emergence of difference between cultures and the creation of a ‘third place’ all help the language learner to transgress the boundaries of the classroom?

## **2. The Theoretical Concept of ‘Interculturality’**

### **2.1. The Postcolonialist View of ‘Inter’ Space**

Postcolonial theorists have provided some fundamental concepts for constructing a framework for the intercultural dimensions of English language education. The field of intercultural education has traditionally focused on cultural differences and the understanding of Self and Other. Postcolonial theory, however, offers an opportunity to go beyond these fixed notions of differences and develop a new perspective concerning the differences encountered. This perspective is described by Bhabha (1990, 1994), in terms of ‘third’ space and “in-betweeness”, where cultural differences



clash. This third space is echoed by Kramsch's 'third place' in the foreign language classroom, which will be discussed in 2.2.3 below. The meeting of cultural boundaries and borders goes beyond creating a simple binary conflict. Instead, in this 'in between', or 'inter', space, cultural differences can be the catalyst for cultural hybridization (1990: 210). This space is created in the process of Othering and the emergence of difference. This 'inter' space is therefore valuable to the language classroom because it is here that the meanings of the learner's own culture and the Other's culture are reread and reinterpreted. It provides language learners with opportunities cross boundaries and develop critical cultural awareness.

### **2.1.1. Otherness and Othering**

The concept of 'Otherness' was introduced by Hegel (1931) and was later developed in the psychoanalysis of Lacan (1949). Hegel is well known for his theory on the relationship between 'Self' and 'Other', which is best illustrated in his master/slave complex. According to Lacan (ibid: 1-7), one can identify the Other as one's own mirror image. The mirror image is the reflection of the Self; nonetheless, it is not the 'same' Self because the position of the mirror image is reversed. One needs the mirror image to identify oneself whilst difference between oneself and one's mirror image is also observable. The relation between oneself and the mirror image is like Self and Other. Although Self and Other are interdependent to a certain extent, differences exist. As one looks at the mirror, one looks at the image from one's own perspective in one's own position. Therefore, the way one sees the image is different from the way that others see oneself. Moreover, the formation of Self is influenced by Otherness and the perspective of Otherness also affects one's view of oneself. For example, in face of global culture, many cultures are defining and securing their own identity more actively than ever before. According to Baudrillard (2003), when a culture has lost its values due to globalization, it can only seek 'revenge' by attacking those of others. For instance, the Islamic group Al Qaida believes that its cause is rooted in the widespread corruption of Islamic culture and identity brought on by global, principally

Western influences. Global culture is the mirror image, which makes people see their own local culture and influences their perspectives towards their own identities.

In *Orientalism*, Said (1991) explains that the Western notion of the East as Other is constructed by its relation to the West. The oriental Other is a mirror image of what is considered inferior and alien in the West. This means that the existence of the Orient is to be the "contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (1991:2) for the West. At the same time, the Orient is used to create, define, and solidify the 'West'.

For Lacan, the identification of 'Self' is always in terms of the 'Other', that is the Self's mirror image. The Self can only be understood through the binary perception of Self / Other and this binary perception can be seen as organizing the very existence of individual subjects. According to Lacan, the Self's identification with the mirror image is based on a neglect or disavowal of difference. This kind of identification with one's mirror image is actually a 'misrecognition' (ibid). This false identification is what Bhabha later (1994: 85~92) explains as 'mimicry'.

In the process of Othering, mimicry of Otherness, according to Bhabha (1994), however, is not solely limited to subordination. Although the formation of Self is based on Other, the difference between Self and Other can also make Othering a form of subversion. Mimicry can appropriate the Other, or it can be a sign of 'the inappropriate'. It can rebel against both the "'normalized' knowledge and disciplinary powers" of the center by closely observing the Otherness (1994:86). In other words, by knowing the Otherness, one gains power to reinvestigate fixed beliefs and powers that are tuned into a positive force for challenging or subverting existing powers and traditions. Spivak (1995), however, prioritizes difference instead of the interdependence between Self and the Other, which is urged by the above theorists. Spivak argues that Othering is a dialectical process producing subjectivity in both the colonizer and colonized. Therefore, the quality of being different is determined by the process of Othering (Spivak, ibid: 271~313).

In the language classroom, Otherness emerges during the process of learning a ‘foreign’ language and culture. The emergence of Otherness provides a chance for the learner to see ‘Self’. In the EFL classroom, the process of Othering is nevertheless ambiguous. On the one hand, the globalization of English seems to obscure the definition of Otherness because it implies cultural homogenization. On the other hand, the powerful culture carried by a dominant international language, that is, English, is deemed by many to be a threat to learner’s cultural identity and to the indigenous culture. The English language learner might succumb to English speaking cultural authority, appropriate it into his/her culture, or alternatively deem it an unrelated and possibly threatening ‘Other’. Both situations occur when English is regarded as a powerful ‘foreign’ language, as will be discussed in detail in section 4.2 in this chapter.

With the pace of globalization, English language and culture as represented by its inner circle of nations including the UK, US, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand have an immense influence on learners’ view of the ‘Other’. The mass media hastens cultural hybridization, or, homogenization. For some people, learning English goes beyond its pragmatic use, and may indicate an obsessive regard for Western society, economy and culture. Such an identification with foreign cultures is *de facto* a ‘misrecognition’. English is considered by many (e.g. Pennycook, 2004) to be a signifier of social status and prestige. Thus, in some instances the outcome of English learning is limited only to mimicking English native speakers’ accents and expressions, and adopting their culture and lifestyle. In these instances the positive cultural value produced by hybridity is often neglected in the process of English learning, as is a change of perspective regarding Self and Other.

Therefore, in an era of electronic communication and mass learning of English, the intercultural agenda is moving to the center stage of the language classroom. In the language classroom, it is important to allow learners to have opportunities to explore Otherness in order to activate their personal reflection upon Self. The examination of



Otherness is a valuable resource for increased knowledge of a language and culture, and as a basis for the emergence of difference. In the process of examining the Other, one's understanding of Self and identity can be enhanced. The present research will investigate how by this process of Othering can become an impetus for students to confront difference.

### **2.1.2. Difference**

In postcolonial terms, difference is singled out as an important element of Otherness. Difference comes from the existence of Otherness. Bhabha (1994: 34) points out that the distinction between “cultural diversity” and “cultural difference” is subtle but significant. Cultural diversity is pre-given knowledge whereas cultural difference results from the process of “enunciation of culture as ‘knowledgeable’, authoritative, adequate to the constructions of systems of cultural identification” (ibid). He further claims that cultural difference is more difficult to represent, because it requires one to question one's own established understanding of others' identities. It contradicts the manner in which identity is historically constructed. Cultural difference does not rely upon a range of fixed objects, but concentrates on how these objects speak, or come to be recognized. The term addresses the process through which we understand other cultures, thereby, acknowledging the “homogenizing effects of cultural symbols and icons” (ibid). In this regard, Hall (1990: 225) also indicates that difference constitutes ‘what we are’ or, rather, ‘what we have become’.

Bhabha (1990) further illustrates the claim that difference cannot be resolved within a common framework. It is very difficult for one to match together different forms of cultures and pretend that they can coexist. It is very dangerous to assume that at a certain level, different cultures can be understood in a universal framework because:

Different cultures, the difference between cultural practices, the difference in the constructions of cultures with different groups, very often set up among and between themselves  
incommensurability. (ibid: 209)

Cultural clashes do not create binary relationships; rather, they create the opportunity for cultural hybridity in ‘in-betweenness’. Bhabha suggests that if we look at examples of hybridity, we can distinguish the “process of signification” through which cultures can be differentiated. He claims that it is impossible to diminish differences. Bhabha claims that the process of cultural hybridization “gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (ibid: 211). In this case ‘translation of culture’ is a process of imitating the original, in which the original can be copied, transferred and transformed (Bhabha: 1990: 210, 1994: 2). It is not merely a reproduction. Instead, cultural translation denies the essentialisms of a prior given original or originating culture. Therefore, the translation of a culture can be both a representation and reproduction. For example, McDonald’s rice burgers in Taiwan can be seen as a representation of local ‘rice’ culture and at the same time a reproduction of American fast food culture.

Even though hybridity opens up opportunities to renegotiate existing cultural forms, it could gradually relegate local culture to unimportance because of the immense impact of globalization, which is some ways synonymous with Americanization. By virtue of globalization, most cultures are to some extent hybridized. ‘McWorld’ is not just an economic mirage; nor are ‘Cocacolonization’ and ‘McDonaldization’ simple cultural invasions. Starbucks might symbolize a cozy ‘modern’ or western lifestyle around the street corner while at the same time the Internet opens up a borderless community, primarily in English. These can be seen as hybridizing of cultures by U.S. economic power enforcing the homogenization of local cultures along American lines.

At this point, the intervention of the Third Space can help to prevent homogenization of cultural identity and different cultures made necessary by globalization. This Third Space will be further explored in section 2.2.



### **2.1.3. Difference as a Cultural/ Intercultural Asset in the Language Classroom**

In today's world of globalization, and with the impact of powerful cultures and languages such as English, the traditional language classroom can leave the learner unprepared to deal with cultural differences. In the language classroom, differences emerge from new linguistic and cultural learning experiences. As the previous sections suggest, differences emerge because of the existence of Otherness.

Encountering differences and foreignness from an 'other' language and culture make it possible for learners to experience a process of seeing their own culture as "constituted in relation to that Otherness internal to their own symbol-forming activity" (Bhabha: 1990, 208~210). Otherness, as the mirror image, enables one to rediscover Self.

Therefore, when language learners encounter contact with Otherness, difference can be seen when their own culture and the other culture are simultaneously examined. The feelings of displacement, one experiences when confronting a new culture introduced by a new language, provides opportunities for articulating difference and understanding 'Self'. It is in this process that intercultural competence can be enhanced. By confronting different cultures, foreign language learners are enabled to 'rediscover' and 'reconstruct' their own culture and go beyond mimicking a 'lifestyle' or culture. It is by rediscovering and reconstructing their own culture through learning a foreign language that other cultures are reinterpreted and new meanings are articulated.

Perceiving foreign language learning in this way allows one to look beyond traditional approaches to culture and identity in EFL settings. By providing learners with cultural learning skills and opportunities for encountering difference EFL teachers can develop an enriching process for creating new identity and new cultural space that is greater than the sum of two cultures. Furthermore, this process allows the learner to know that culture is fluid and changing. Cultural stereotypes, which are still prevalent in some standardized EFL textbooks that are published for the global market, as well as in the EFL classroom, can thus be reinvestigated and challenged. Stereotypes, according to Bhabha (1994: 75), are not just a simplified 'false representation of a given reality'. Instead, they are a simplification of a 'fixated form of representation' without taking

difference into account. Culture is not unitary; it is not ‘we all belong to human culture of mankind’, or we can ‘place ourselves in their position’ (ibid: 36). Hence, involving cultures of others in the language classroom provides the possibility for overcoming exoticism when dealing with cultural diversity and difference. From this difference, a third space can be created where one’s voice is heard. In this kind of English language classroom, the learner would no longer place the Anglo-Saxon culture in the center and situate his or her own culture in the periphery. Nor would English be considered solely a privileged language for social distinction or for instrumental purposes. In the language classroom, learners do not see Otherness merely through the lenses of their own values. Neither is it necessary for learners to find a universal framework to explain values and beliefs found in Otherness. At this point, English can be *de facto* an international language that enables one to negotiate, to communicate, and to enunciate one’s own voices in a world with cultural diversity.

Difference, however, does not automatically empower one to be intercultural or critical. Making good use of the third space as it emerges in the foreign language class thereby provides a chance for rethinking the new meaning from hybridity and from the process of reconstructing one’s cultural identity.

## **2.2. The Third Space**

The “third space” as it relates to the intercultural dimension, is where one is situated in an ‘inter’ or ‘in between’ space, between differing cultures. In Cultural Studies and language education, this third space is regarded as the place where one is able to see cultural differences and can interpret or reinterpret, mediate, and create a new meaning from clashes between two cultures (Kramsch, 1993, Byram, 1997a, Bhabha, 1994). It is further expected that “critical voices”, the ability to articulate newly found cultural meaning, can be produced when confronting cultural differences (Byram 1997a, Guilherme, 2002, Phipps, 2004). Finding a third space, according to Lo Bianco *et al* (1999: 5), is “at the core of intercultural competence”. With respect to intercultural competence, the “third space” refers to the reconstruction of the learners’ identity in

non-fixed space. It also refers to the space in which one can negotiate among firmly held old fixed concepts of one's native culture and/or of the newly introduced culture. When cross cultural encounters occur, this third space is created in order to not only open up successful relationships, but also to empower one to produce one's own voice during the process of confronting and observing differences between oneself and the Other.

### **2.2.1. Postcolonial Theorists' Views**

Postcolonial theorists' concepts of the third space provide new perspectives regarding the cultural contact zone in language learning. Otherness creates an open space where identity is reinterpreted and intensified in the process of continuing to confront Otherness. As culture keeps changing and hybridizing, cultural meaning can be reconstructed in this place. In addition, in this space, the hegemonic center is challenged. Different perspectives are encouraged but the process of constructing and reconstructing identity and the ability to articulate a newly found meaning seems to be more important. Homi Bhabha's definition of 'third space' sheds light on this 'inter' space. In this space, the concept of the binary nature of difference produced by the clash between two cultures is challenged. Bhabha points out that cultural difference is not a simple duality. It is not merely black or white, high or low, north or south, and so on. Instead, when one encounters differences and hybrids found in other cultures, 'something' new may be reconstructed. Furthermore, according to Bhabha, the third space is a social process. It is a space that "does not simply revise or invert dualities, but revalues the ideological bases of division and difference" (Bhabha, 1992: 58). Its emergence enables one to challenge the traditional concept of cultural knowledge and cultural identity as a "homogenizing, unifying force" (Bhabha, 1994: 37).

In this third space, Bhabha values cultural difference because experiencing it is the process that induces cultural interaction and introduces a split between the traditional concept of culture and the new cultural meaning. This space serves to deny rigid views and suggests that culture is ambivalent, negotiable and that dualities and



polarities do not apply. In this place, Bhabha celebrates hybridity in which “the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (1990:211). It is in the third space that fluidity and hybridity ensure that ‘the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (Bhabha, 1994: 37). This third space also serves as a place for resistance. Individuals are able to emerge as the Others of themselves. One is thus no longer merely filled with voices of Others; instead, s/he can rewrite earlier voices into his/her own.

### **2.2.2. The Perspective of Language Educators**

According to some language educators such as Kramsch (1993, 1997), Byram (1997a, c), and Lo Bianco (1999), the third space, when applied to the language classroom, is a place where a learner can see and mediate differences. From differences they will be able to articulate their own critical judgment or thinking. In this third space the language students can transform themselves into intercultural speakers. Byram and Zarate (1997b) point out that an intercultural speaker is able to cross the frontier and to some extent carry cultural property and values back and forth over the frontier. Byram specifically proposes five *savoirs* to evaluate the abilities acquired the intercultural zone in the language classroom. In this contact zone, attitudes, cultural knowledge, skills in real time communication, and critical cultural awareness are developed. These five *savoirs* will be further discussed later in section 3. Some educators set other goals in terms of ‘boundary crossing’ and critical intercultural awareness. For example, Guilherme (2002) echoes what hooks (1994) suggests: in a classroom it is significant to “teach to transgress”. Transgression is a movement against and beyond cultural boundaries that brings excitement into the classroom and that enlightens learning, particularly in higher education (hooks, *ibid*).

### **2.2.3. Kramsch’s Third Place**

Kramsch also values experiences of transgressing cultural boundaries (1993). She

emphasizes the importance of finding ‘third places’ in the language classroom. The third place emerges between the culture in which the learner grew up, and the new one that s/he is introduced to. This place is a personal space in which learners can see the world and their every day life from a different perspective. By encountering Otherness, they may be able to develop a space of their own that they can carry throughout their life:

For most, it will be the stories they will tell of these through these tellings and the dialogues that they will have with people who have had similar experiences. In and through these dialogues, they may find for themselves this third place that they can name their own.

(Kramsch, 1993: 257)

Echoing Bhabha’s perspective, Kramsch does not see the third place as ‘a fence [or] as a dichotomous boundary’. Entering this place enables the learner to discover that culture is not homogenous; rather, it is fluid and full of potential for change. She examines theories of ‘thirdness’ from three scholars, Peirce, Bakhtin, and Bhabha. From these three perspectives, she determines that cross-cultural communication creates a space where “difference, hybridity, transience, migration, the dangerous unreliability of language but the equal dangers of silence are highlighted” (1999). This third place, when realized in the language classroom, enables learners to grow between their own cultures and the culture they encounter. New meaning will be constructed when students encounter the “unexpected meaning of the new target culture” and “familiar meanings” of their own culture (1993: 238). With regard to Bhabha’s third space, Kramsch also does not think that differences can be bridged, and she further believes that the gap cannot be diminished. She states that exploring “irreducible differences between people’s values and attitudes” is fundamental (1993: 9).

In this regard, to Kramsch, the intercultural dimension of language learning is not intended to bridge the gap between cultures. This is not a feasible objective. However, the ability to accept the existence of the gap and then to understand why the

gap is generated is a noteworthy goal. Kramsch (ibid: 228) likewise stresses that students will usually judge any new cultural awareness from their own cultural view. Kramsch further suggests that “we can teach boundaries, but we cannot teach the bridge. We can talk about and try to understand the *differences* between the values celebrated in [contrasting] cultures. However, we cannot teach directly how to resolve the conflict between the two” (ibid, emphasis in original). Therefore, the process of exploring the boundary between cultures and then exploring oneself in the process should be the focus of intercultural dimensions in the language classroom. This research probes the possibility of creating this space from encounters with difference in the EFL classroom at the tertiary level; in addition, it explores how such a space helps students to develop intercultural competence appropriate for life in a more hybridized but at the same time diversified world.

#### **2.2.4. The Third Space and the Language Classroom**

Bhabha’s “third space” and “culture in between” offer an opportunity for the language and culture educators to reexamine the possibility of empowering students when they confront a foreign or dominant culture. If English language education can become a way to better understand the world and other cultures, and if it can incorporate the perspectives of ‘Self’ and “the Other’ at the same time, then the cultural differences learners encounter will open up a third space. Hence, learning another language and culture should provide one with new worldviews arising from “the collision between differing points of view on the world” (1990: 208). With respect to language and cultural learning, the third space is a ‘contact zone’, a place where students encounter different forms of cultures, where they confront differences, and from which they are able to experience the power of diversity. This diversity, according to UNESCO’s Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), is a source of ‘exchange, innovation and creativity’.

This notwithstanding, when a language learner in the classroom confronts “authentic” cultural materials, s/he can easily succumb to a powerful dominant culture presented by



a foreign language, in our case, English. Kramsch points out that the in-between space can also cause learners to feel powerless and subordinated because they are constrained by using a foreign language and possibly by their own internalized socio-cultural patterns (1993: 238). Therefore, if the target culture emerges as the center of learning, it is noteworthy that reflection upon similar aspects of their own culture can create a third space. This space allows learners to reaffirm their own culture that might otherwise be relegated to the periphery or even diminished in the language classroom. If properly explored, a foreign language such as English is no longer an overpowering and dominant medium, but an intellectual tool that can empower students to be intercultural speakers. In place of mimicking, s/he is able to reread the culture by examination of his/her own. In this third space and in the process of language learning, students can continue to construct their own cultural identity.

Enabling learners to cross or transgress boundaries and move between them are necessary cultural skills. However, evidence shown in the qualitative data of this research also indicates that without proper guidance, learners run the risk of moving into the third space without adequate skills or with faulty cultural materials upon which to make judgments. Crossing boundaries triggers critical cultural awareness, but if interpretation of culture is based on improperly chosen materials, the result of applying critical thinking techniques can result in inappropriate and potentially harmful conclusions. For instance, Chang (2004) indicates that the American sitcom *Sex and the City* can be amorally romantic in the eyes of the new and well-educated generation of non-American youngsters living in modernized cities like Tokyo and Taipei. In this researcher's experience, some university female students, by comparing these women's lifestyle to their own and adopting some westerner viewers' perspectives, regard these four savvy women as embodiment of feminism. Using this kind of TV drama in the English language classroom without proper mediation or guidance increases risks of stepping into a 'pseudo' inter place. This pseudo or problematic third space will be further explored in Chapter 7 (section 2.1.2.). In the language classroom when students engage in interpreting, mediating and creating a personal "voice" in the third

space, the teacher must be ready to step in and assist by clarifying appropriate applications of skills as well as suitability of materials. How this can be accomplished is the basis of discussion in a topic in Chapter 6. Also further study needs to be directed to developing appropriate teaching strategies and curricula that are critical to developing intercultural learners and speakers.

## **2.3. Critical Cultural Awareness**

### **2.3.1. The Interplay between the Third Space and Critical Pedagogy**

In the third space, apart from being able to see the difference and similarities between cultures, learners are also able to gain additional critical cultural awareness and then to activate their critical thinking ability. Some language educators (Byram 1997a, c, Kramsch 1993, 1996, Fairclough, 1992, Pennycook, 1995, Guilherme, 2002, Luke 2004, Norton and Toohey, 2004, Wallace, 2003) stress the importance of ‘the critical’ in foreign language learning, particularly in some postcolonial states or in some countries on the periphery. Critical pedagogy is introduced to the foreign language classroom in order to transform the language classroom into a place where different cultures meet and where intellectual and critical spirit can be developed (Guilherme, *ibid*). Critical pedagogy favors the postmodernist celebration of difference and challenges hegemonies. However, it does not completely rely on the indefinite limitations that Postmodernists place on difference. Instead, it regards difference as an incentive for learners’ to begin a journey towards critical consciousness. In this regard, ‘difference’ encountered in the process of foreign language learning is considered a catalyst for change (Frye, 1999) or a force toward dissent and then to empowerment (Guilherme, *ibid*). In the third space, one is able to engage in dialogue and produce one’s own thinking.

Critical Pedagogy is often associated with the work of educators such as Freire (1972), Giroux (1992, 1994), Luke (2003), McLaren (1989), and hooks (1994, 1996), to name a few, who all value learning through reflection and action. Critical pedagogy initially referred to educational theory and teaching and learning practices that were intended to raise learners' critical consciousness regarding oppressive social conditions. It is also



intended to subvert the traditional teacher / student positions in the classroom and encourages learners and teachers to engage in dialogue. Teachers and students must take part in a dialogic relationship. This dialogue is not merely asking and answering in class; instead, it is an interactive and active relationship. When the students are empowered to voice their opinions, new meaning for knowledge can be produced through dialogue between instructors and learners.

Critical consciousness has played a vital role in critical pedagogy. Freire's works about the concept of critical consciousness in relation to critical pedagogy continue to influence a variety of liberal and radical educators. To Freire, education should not be a "banking" system, in which students passively receive whatever knowledge teachers deposit (1972: 72). Instead, he sees the classroom as a location where new knowledge can be produced through meaningful dialogue, based on shared experiences, between students and teachers. This concept echoes Dewey's assertion in *Democracy and Education* (1917:38) that "education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process". For Dewey, education must be founded in experience and active seeking of knowledge. As such, he encourages educators to provide students with opportunities to reflect upon their experiences. Relating knowledge learned to life experience enhances the learning process and also helps one to develop his/ her critical awareness. In this regard, Freire (1974: 151) also indicates that by implementing praxis<sup>1</sup> that integrates actions and reflections, voices can be heard. These voices are not merely the accumulation of knowledge but instead a demonstration of critical perspectives (ibid). Echoing Freire, educators such as bell hooks (1994) and Giroux (1992) continuously promote the notion of praxis by constantly bringing theories into real life. The everyday experience of students is valued as a rich cultural asset for constructing critical ability. Therefore, language learning and teaching can be turned into a constructive process where students seek new knowledge actively and seek

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<sup>1</sup> Praxis is a complex activity by which individuals create culture and society, and become critically conscious human beings. Praxis comprises a cycle of action-reflection-action that is central to liberal education.



to cross the borders between the classroom and outside reality, and between cultures.

### **2.3.2. Border Crossing**

By transforming traditional reception of knowledge into active reflection and action, teachers can encourage students to engage with knowledge as border crossers (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991: 118). In other words, they will not only have the knowledge of the Other, but are also able to investigate Otherness within their socio-cultural context and the Other's. Moreover, border crossing also means that they can go deeper into the meaning that is below the surface and understand the underlying socio-cultural practices. According to Aronowitz and Giroux, students should be able to "engage knowledge as border-crossers, as people moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power" (ibid). They also state that border crossing is a way to understand Otherness and "to further create borderlands in which diverse cultural resources allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power" (ibid). Hence, border crossing is a way students by which will be able to resist cultural domination and promote social change. Therefore, with respect to course syllabuses, Giroux suggests that serious topics in the classroom such as gender or class are not merely add-ons, but rather that they serve as a mirror to the students' everyday lives.

In support of 'border crossing', bell hooks claims that the purpose of teaching is to help students to transgress the boundaries, not only the physical boundaries of the classroom but also social and cultural ones. She takes seriously the topics such as race, class and sex broached by her students in the classroom. According to hooks, teachers also become border crossers by being able to listen critically to the voices of their students, and exercising their ability both to make different narratives available to themselves and to legitimate difference as a basic condition for understanding the limits of one's own knowledge (hooks, 1994).

Both Giroux and hooks suggest that in terms of humanities education, integrating

Cultural Studies into the classroom should be considered seriously and some socio-cultural topics should be included in order to empower students to cross boundaries. For instance, they both think that socio-cultural topics found in popular culture presented in the mass media can be brought into the classroom because students in current society are heavily influenced by the media, which is a major resource of information in their real life. According to Giroux (1989, 1992, 2002), the media present their own invisible pedagogy by constructing representations of race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, occupation, age, etc. on the screen. hooks (1996) also claims that popular culture has great power in everyday life and “popular culture is where the pedagogy is”. She urges that students should “think critically about our life” and she believes this kind of critical thinking is transforming our life. Both educators seek to make critical pedagogy apply to popular culture and reveal how and why certain representations are constructed. In light of border crossing, they affirm that studies of culture, particularly popular culture, provide opportunities for students to investigate difference and Otherness and thus enable them to transgress boundaries.

Border crossing can also be understood as crossing the boundaries between cultures. Guilherme (2002) argues that students should be able to ‘translate’ culture into their own context. They should be able to reference socio-cultural issues encountered in the Others’ culture to their own and thereby be able to clarify their own thought. In order to become empowered producers and mediators of culture, teachers and students need to critically decode the messages they receive in their everyday lives and other cultures and to creatively construct their own voices (ibid: 52). In this way, translation of culture, in Bhabha’s term, becomes a way to subjugate the dominance of a powerful culture in the process of learning the powerful language as students are enabled to hold a stance by knowing more about the Other.

### **2.3.3. Implications of Critical Thinking in the Intercultural Language Classroom**

Critical thinking is also closely related to the position of Self and the Other. Luke (2003:26) points out that critical awareness is not only to engage with the Other but also

to position Self as 'Other' in the dominant text. This process echoes Spivak's concept of the mutually Othering of Self. Luke (ibid) argues that the process of Othering Others and Othering Self provides a chance to see the world in a broader sense. However, Luke also questions that in order to be critical, according to a postcolonialist definition, one needs to have physically, physiologically or symbolically experienced oppression. The learner, although not an object of dominant foreign culture, might not be able to escape the vast influence of globalization. When the English language is defined as a necessity and a student's success is partially defined by their success in English, s/he can also be the object of a powerful 'Other' language and to a lesser extent, culture. In this regard, critical thinking is not only a way to analyze differences, but also to deconstruct, and to dissent and therefore to reconstruct Self and Otherness in the EFL classroom.

Traditionally cultures are viewed as homogenized, traditional, stable, and representative (Brooks, 1975, Nostrand, 1974) whereas the critical view of 'culture' is as more diversified, dynamic and changing. Therefore, in a foreign language classroom, making good use of the students' experiential learning and cultural assets enables them to see the cultural differences and enter the third space to voice their own critical thinking. In this way, classrooms can become a forum where students are able to voice opinions that might have been silenced by practices of traditional pedagogy. Moreover, upon encountering a new culture, students can bring prior knowledge and experience into the classroom, which in turn forms the basis for their construction of new knowledge and reconstruction of their own history and culture. They can see the difference and reflect upon the issues emerging from the foreign culture while re-examining cultures that they are living in but have never seriously reflected upon.

Therefore, learning English as a foreign language is an active process instead of merely a matter of 'Othering'. Through critical reflection and dialogue, students may change what they believe and expand their understanding of the world. Rather than passively absorbing knowledge based on the linguistic four skills, they are actively engaged with



each other and with the world. Giroux and Simon (1989:131) consider contemporary language education “as somewhat bizarre in that it legitimates and limits language issues as technical and developmental” and believe that language education must be “viewed as a form of learning that not only instructs students into ways of ‘naming’ the world but also introduces them to particular social relations”. This is also true of EFL learning. If English is indeed an international language, it should be able to facilitate a student’s ability to address global issues as well as motivate him or her to understand other cultures. Critical thinking helps them to maintain their own ‘Self’ position in the torrent of globalization. By applying critical thinking skills students can use English as a language to understand, to reflect upon, and to expand their learning.

#### **2.3.4. Critique of Critical Thinking in EFL Education**

Although critical cultural/ intercultural ability has recently received attention in foreign language education, some concerns are appearing that suggest the need for further study. For example, as Hammond and Macken-Horarik (1999:531) point out, having access to linguistic and cultural resources and a means to critique them is important for dealing critically with text and culture. However, at the same time they are concerned that students will only be able to undertake effective analysis and critique if and when their language proficiency allows them to fully comprehend the text. They perceive a dilemma between developing students’ understandings by use of a broad array of the language and literary resources and issues, and developing their ability to effectively engage critically with text (ibid). Some pragmatic aspects are therefore called into question. First, time constraints may force teachers to opt for less time-consuming didactic techniques of teaching. Second, the teachers’ ability to cross boundaries themselves has been put into question. In this regard, Guilherme (2002) doubts if many teachers would allow students to deconstruct their domination in the classroom and thereby create a critical arena. For teachers to ‘teach to transgress’ as a way to broaden the students’ horizon, teachers themselves need to be willing to transgress first. Third, there is no common base of shared course materials needed to evoke critical thinking. In order to create effective pedagogy for developing critical thinking in the

EFL classroom, effective linguistic resources for students and effective pedagogical techniques must be developed. As Guilherme and Phipps (2004) point out, critical dialogue is not a laidback chat without critical reflection and action. Without appropriate resources and pedagogy, widespread development of critical thinking skills may not be possible.

Overall, the process of Othering, locating difference, stepping into the third space and developing critical awareness appears to have the potential to help one to become a mediator between cultures. However, it is necessary to investigate how this intercultural competence can be developed in the language classroom and thereby transferred to real-time interaction. Without proper knowledge and skills, Othering might be what Holliday *et al* (2004:180) see as problematic because it tends to be reductive and stereotyping. However, how can ‘proper knowledge and skills’ for Othering be tuned into curricular goals for the intercultural classroom? The next section will discuss Byram’s five *savoirs*, which set out to be a comprehensive specification of knowledge and skills for intercultural competence in practice.

### **3. Intercultural Competence and Byram’s Five *Savoirs***

As well as being able to cross boundaries as previously discussed, the intercultural speaker is not only a mediator in the third space but is also able to articulate his or her own critical opinions. An intercultural speaker is defined in the *Encyclopaedia of Language Teaching and Learning* as having the ability to:

Negotiate between [his/her] own cultural, social and political identifications and representations and those of the other, that is, [s/he] must be critical. The critical ‘intercultural speaker’ takes critical advantage of the world opened wide to them by appreciating different narratives available, by reflecting upon how they articulate, how they are positioned and how their positions affect their perspectives.

(Byram ed., 2000:298)

For instance, a foreign language user, in the face of a new culture, can reflect upon difference and speak their own viewpoints about the difference. Therefore, in terms of interculturality, the native speaker norm is no longer the ultimate goal for foreign language learning (Kachru, 1992, Byram 1997, Kramsch 1993, 1998, Widdowson, 1994, McKay, 2003). Learning a foreign language has gone beyond seeking accurate reproduction of language or even the fascination with a foreign culture. The foreign language learner, situating him/ herself between cultures, is able to use cultural knowledge learned and experienced to produce his/ her own perspective.

Byram has developed a framework of five *savoirs* to in an attempt to define the intercultural communicative competence that enables a foreign language learner to ‘mediate’ between differences. These five *savoirs*, according to Corbett (2003: 31), are presently “the most fully worked-out specification of intercultural competence, which involves .....the kinds of knowledge and skills needed to mediate between cultures” and are generally referenced when discussing interculturality. The model purposed by Byram consists of five separate but interdependent components: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction, which together lead to critical cultural awareness. This ability empowers students to voice their own opinions so as to facilitate personal growth that prepares one to be a global citizen. Byram’s 5 *savoirs* also correspond to Hanvey’s definition of global perspectives, which should include elements such as thought, sensitivities, awareness, competencies, attitudes, skills, and knowledge (Hanvey, 1976 quoted in Kasai 2003: 20).

### **3.1. Five *savoirs*: Definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

The objectives Byram (1997c) set for these five *savoirs* are used to evaluate learning and teaching intercultural competence.

These are:

1. *Savoir être*: Attitudes, curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about



- other cultures and belief about one's own,
2. *Savoirs*: Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and one's interlocutor's country and the general processes of societal and individual interaction,
  3. *Savoir Comprendre*: Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own,
  4. *Savoir Apprendre/Faire*: Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communications and interactions,
  5. *Savoir s'engager*: an ability to evaluate, critically on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

The following section will examine the feasibility of utilizing the five *savoirs* with their objectives (Appendix 1) in the EFL classroom at the tertiary level in Taiwan.

### **3.2. Application of Byram's 5 *Savoirs* to an EFL Educational Context**

#### **3.2.1. *Savoir être***

Byram indicates that in the language classroom, the learner should suspend preconceived ideas about one's own and other cultures. This willingness to receive something new, according to Byram, is not for 'the exotic or profitable'. Developing an interest in discovering the perspectives of others as well as one's own, and also being willing to question values and beliefs in cultural practices similar to those that are present in one's own social context, are regarded as valuable assets for intercultural learning. This attitude, *savoir être*, is a prerequisite for intercultural competence because it allows one to know and reinterpret Otherness and reflect upon and reinterpret Self. In the EFL classroom, this attitude is particularly crucial because English is normally the medium between the learner and English native/ non-native speakers.

According to Byram, *savoir être* includes the interest that the intercultural speaker develops in “the other’s experience of daily life in contexts not usually presented to outsiders through media or used to develop a commercial relationship with outsiders” (1997c: 91). What s/he is interested in is “the daily experience of a range of social groups within a society and not only that represented in the dominant culture” (ibid). In the EFL classroom, this interest can lead the learners to venture into the ‘foreign world’ in general. Thus, it can further motivate the learners to expand their experience, realize similarities and negotiate possible differences as Byram suggests (2003:48). Students will be willing to go beyond the facts on the surface when confronting the other culture and search for more knowledge that might lie outside their previous experience. In this sense, the learner’s interest can thereby surpass the commercial purpose or mere fascination with the ‘exotic’ and he or she is motivated to understand Otherness and the world.

### 3.2.2. *Savoirs*

*Savoirs* is defined as knowledge. According to Byram (ibid: 90), the intercultural speaker does not only ‘gather facts’ about the other culture, but s/he is able to involve these facts in dialogue with information about his/ her home culture. Intercultural competence turns learning from shallow learning to deep learning, which according to Entwistle *et al* (1992), enables the learner to interact with content and reflect and then produce his or her own thinking. Along with attitude, cultural knowledge is regarded as a precondition for the other *savoirs*. Byram’s ‘*savoirs*’ include knowledge of a wide range of aspects that involve both one’s own culture and the Other’s.

The objectives of *savoirs*, though feasible, are quite demanding in reality. For instance, although Duffy (2002) in her study of secondary French learners suggests that identifying contemporary and past relationships between one’s own and other cultures and society is more appropriate for the undergraduate level, this is not necessarily true in the Taiwanese university context. Due to the kind of social inequality discussed in Chapter 3, learners’ linguistic or cultural knowledge may vary before they step into the

university EFL classroom. Moreover, the national examination system could also be an important factor in determining the level of the learners' knowledge about other countries' past and present. In Taiwan, secondary education often provides some basic knowledge about general history of the world without focusing on particular foreign countries or cultures. Therefore, historic and contemporary relationships between one's own and the interlocutor's countries rely on the students' individual learning from other resources. In terms of past relationships between one's own country and the other's, when it comes to more specific social and cultural phenomena such as the influence of British missionaries to Taiwanese society in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the learner is usually required to do their own study, which can be very demanding on some students.

Another example of an objective that needs to be reinvestigated regarding the EFL classroom is objective (d) that states the learners need to understand "the national definition of geographical space in one's own country, and how these are perceived from the perspective of other countries" and objective (e): "the national definitions of geographical space in one's interlocutor's country and the perspective on them from one's own". These objectives are not easy to integrate within the syllabus of the university language classroom due to the difficulty in obtaining "the perspective of other countries' on national definitions of geographical space". This objective, however, can serve as discovery procedures for students to explore by themselves. This objective could also be a sensitive issue in some countries such as Taiwan. Taiwan is presently struggling to win other countries' recognition as a sovereign state. Different recognitions of Taiwan's national memories or current status are becoming debated political issues related to ethnicities and identity. Therefore, teachers tend to avoid sensitive issues such as domestic issues, which are generally considered to be a taboo subject in the classroom.

Cultural knowledge, in sum, should be included as the content of language tasks in the EFL classroom in order to provide a basis for students to reach out to other resources.



In this regard, the sources from which students get their cultural knowledge about the Other needs further investigation. National memory about Inner Circle countries in the EFL classroom has to a great extent been influenced by media and to a lesser extent formed by the stereotypical images and concepts in EFL or ESL textbooks. The spread of Anglo-American culture to every corner of the world via mass communication has made an impact on a learner's cultural knowledge of Otherness, which will be discussed more fully in Section 4. In addition, when culture is taught in the classroom, it is usually implicitly regarded as static and homogenous, merely factual knowledge, and is seldom challenged. Moreover, some educational systems such as that in Taiwan, directed towards national examinations, leave students no extra time to explore additional socio-cultural facets of other countries. Therefore, opportunities should be provided for students to explore foreign socio-cultural knowledge in the EFL classroom.

### 3.2.3. *Savoir Comprendre*

Byram describes this *savoir* as “an ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain and relate it to documents or events from one's own” (ibid: 98).

Both *Savoir Comprendre* and *Savoir Apprendre/Faire* (3.2.4) are categorized as ‘skills’.

The use of the word ‘skills’ has been questioned by both Duffy (2002) and Blez (2003:71) because ‘skills’ carries the connotation that these objectives can be gained through technology and transferred without any obstacle. How these skills can be properly taught or developed through classroom activities remains very challenging.

The processes of intercultural learning: identifying, referring, and interacting, are considered very complex activities (Blez: ibid). These processes need more proper texts and tasks to help students develop these ‘skills’, which will be more fully discussed in Chapter 5. Activities such as ‘repair a car’ described by the *Common European Framework* (108) might be able to train “the ability of the learner to come to terms with new experience (new language, new people, new ways of behaving, etc.) but has very little to do with heuristic skills such as bringing ‘other competences to bear’.

These other competences can include observing, grasping the significance of what is observed, analyzing, inferencing, and memorizing.

Another objective needing re-examination is (b), which requires the ability to “identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunctions in an interaction and explain them in terms of each of the cultural systems present” (ibid: 61). Students need to be highly sophisticated in order to be able to implement this task because a ‘cultural system’ is a complicated concept for them to grasp. In addition, students need to have ‘real’ time interaction in order to practice this *savoir*. Therefore, in the EFL classroom these situations can be fictional and skills can be developed from classroom tasks such as rehearsal, role play, or presentations.

#### **3.2.4. *Savoir Apprendre/Faire***

This *savoir* is defined as skills of discovery and interaction and of acquiring new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices (ibid: 98). The ability to practice knowledge, attitude, and skills in real time interactions requires extensive real-time communication, which may not be feasible in some circumstances, as discussed in an earlier part of this section. However, the ability to continuously acquire new knowledge about a ‘foreign’ culture via language learning is essential to motivate students to learn English as a medium to understand Otherness and then reflect upon their own values. The learner is not expected to compromise between differences. The outcome of the application of these skills is not necessarily a “balance of opposites, or a moderate pluralism of opinions” (Kramsch, 1993: 231). Instead, this process of interpreting a document about an event from another culture and then relate it to documents from one’s own may result in as what Kramsch claimed “paradoxical, irreducible confrontation that may change one in the process” (ibid). Although this process could involve a series of psychological adjustment stages, this change makes intercultural learning a process of, what Hall (1996:2-3) suggests, ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’. Self-identity is thereby constructed and reconstructed. This should be deemed a positive value in the language classroom and finally lead to critical cultural awareness.

### 3.2.5. *Savoir s'engager*

This *savoir* is developed after the other four *savoirs* and is aimed at developing the ability to critically evaluate perspectives and cultural practices. It is indeed the core of intercultural competence. Gathering facts, identifying, interpreting, and mediating differences and similarities are not enough for one to be considered intercultural competent. Intercultural speakers must be able to generate their own critical opinions when confronted by cultural differences and similarities. Byram (1989:136-148) indicates that “cultural awareness teaching should...involve both viewpoints, making learners both ethnographer and informant, allowing them to gain a perspective through comparison which is neither entirely one nor the other”. Therein lies the possibility for gaining intercultural competence through the process of comparison from two viewpoints. According to Pulverness (2002), this kind of learning has always occurred in EFL classrooms, but only in the margins and was seldom considered an objective in the language syllabus. To Pulverness (2005), the foreign language classroom offers an area where critical cultural awareness can be developed. Different from consumer tourist competence, intercultural competence is considered a “comparative approach that ought to lead to reflection by learners on both cultures and about the differences between them” (Pulverness, *ibid*). This is what Byram calls ‘a modification of monocultural awareness’ (*ibid*).

This critical cultural awareness prepares the learner to be able to evaluate differences seen from the third space. According to Byram (1997c: 103), this not only enhances the transferability of skill and attitudes but also serves as “a basis for study of other cultures and languages or for coping with interaction in other culture and linguistic environments”. Critical cultural awareness motivates students to reach out into the world and thereby see the differences as a positive force to facilitate their global literacy. This global literacy will help the learner go beyond naming facts and events and prepare him/her to look at them from their own and others’ perspectives and values. This critical dimension is of particular importance when EFL is part of general educational aims. As Guilherme (2002) maintains, only through critical cultural awareness, can



students be responsible citizens, and global citizens in this intercultural world. This critical cultural awareness, emerging in the third space, will be one of the constant themes in this thesis.

## Summary

Overall, the definition of the *savoirs* remains at a level of abstraction that appears difficult to apply directly to Taiwanese EFL classroom situation. The *savoirs* give objectives but little guidance on how these objectives might be achieved in the messiness of the teaching and learning context. In addition, the cultural knowledge learners bring to the classroom might not be the same. Therefore, in an education system where students have been spoon-fed in their previous education, the learner's change in attitude becomes relatively more important in intercultural learning.

Another concern is to do with skills nurtured by the opportunities to interact with Others. Byram's theory is based on a European context, where sojourning /or residence abroad experiences are very common with schools exchanges/ trips and in tertiary education established programs such as ERASMUS or SOCRATES. Most of Byram's objectives are formulated on the assumption that learners can travel and experience Otherness directly. However, Taiwanese education situation offers fewer opportunities for such foreign contacts in their community and limited experiences living abroad. However, it is also notable that sojourning experiences do not by themselves automatically empower students to be 'intercultural' (cf. Coleman, 1998, Yersbova *et al*, 2000). In this regard, turning the classroom into the major milieu for learning intercultural competence and a base for crossing boundaries is necessary. Some other activities or methods also can be developed such as electronic communication for providing opportunities for foreign contact. This will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

Apart from some objectives that seem overly demanding, and the practice of 'real-time communication and interaction' that needs to be tailored for EFL context, this model provides fundamental and detailed elements needed for measuring intercultural competence. Although Byram's 5 *savoirs* were developed for language teaching and

learning, initially for the secondary level and based on a European context, they may be adapted to EFL education at the university level in Taiwan, where the learner is generally considered more intellectually mature and sophisticated. In the EFL classroom, the intercultural and cultural dimension should not be marginalized; neither should a cultural syllabus be directed only to teaching and learning cultural facts about the UK and the USA. Though culture found in EFL materials is mostly limited to Inner Circle countries, particular the USA and the UK, students' attitudes and the ability to acquire knowledge and mediate different cultures can be developed. In addition, because English is now more frequently used in a global setting (cf. Graddol, 1997), attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness are becoming increasingly essential alongside cultural knowledge. Openness and curiosity enable students to be willing to receive a new set of meanings, values and phenomena whereas at the same time, critical cultural awareness secures their stance in-between and therefore can empower them to articulate their own voices after identifying differences and similarities.

In principle, there is a general awareness that English learning should include cultural learning although in practice teaching is still limited to its pragmatic aspects such as linguistic skills or communication skills. Moreover, intercultural goals in the EFL classroom are usually vaguely conceptualised and it is rarely recognized that language and cultural learning are interactive. Language is a medium through which cultures can be known, and cultural knowledge can be a motivator and resource for language learning. This framework not only offers a reference for syllabus design but also can be used as a model to evaluate students' intercultural competence. Also, Byram's *savoirs* provide a fundamental structure that introduces a new approach to designing the cultural dimensions of language programs that correspond well with the role of EFL. How this framework can be modified and applied in an EFL context where students lack international mobility will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Albeit with all the possible issues raised and obstacles, the framework that Byram proposes sets a clear guideline for teaching and evaluating intercultural aspects in the

language classroom. The objectives of each *savoir*, although not necessarily directly applicable to the EFL classroom at the tertiary level in Taiwan, pin down the competence and knowledge required of intercultural speaker to negotiate between Self and the Other.

Overall, the process of Othering, observing differences, stepping into and navigating in the third space and then developing intercultural ability empowers one to own 'subjectivity' in the torrents of globalization. The impact of globalization is evident in every domain and English, as a *lingua franca*, serves as a catalyst for globalization (cf. Graddol, 1997). The next sections will discuss how 'cultural' and 'intercultural' matters have been addressed under the influence of globalization and how English education can help to develop intercultural competence in the process of the internationalization of higher education.

#### **4. Globalization**

Although its original emphasis was on economic integration among countries, generally speaking, globalization now stands for the global interaction of cultures, economies, politics, information, and technologies beyond the boundaries between countries. It is generally regarded as a force that joins people together as a result of the dissolution of national barriers. It is now seen as a cultural phenomenon in a broad sense, one which is moving towards a more complex form of transcultural exchange (Jay, 2000). On the one hand, globalization creates more opportunities for people to get to know and contact Otherness. This increasing interaction among different people through globalization means that people connect with one another, and they influence or are influenced by other people on a global scale (Pike & Selby, 1988, cited in Kasai, 2003: 19). As the term suggests, globalization seems to diminish the binary conflicts between, for example, West centered Orientalism and East centered Occidentalism. Therefore, it gives an impetus to cultural hybridity. On the other hand, the dynamics of capitalism and the forces of imperialism have undoubtedly played a large part in bringing the



world into a compacted condition. Globalization therefore generates a standardization based on Western or American values, which in turn results in an Anglo-American hegemony. Nonetheless, these opposing forces can be seen as unitary because many cultures are already hybridized with Western or Anglo American cultures.

Disputes are continuing over the positive and negative outcomes of globalization. The adverse results of cultural homogenization or Westernization brought by global capitalism have been addressed at great length (Jameson, 1998, Jay 2000, Loomba, *ibid*, Pennycook, *ibid*, Robertson, 1992, Baudrillard, 2001, 2003). According to Jameson (*ibid*), this global cultural hybridity is *de facto* a form of American standardization. The world is uncertain about the threat of Western culture being forced upon the cultural identity of postcolonial nations, on other nation states, and to a lesser extent upon the newly industrialized countries. Although Bhabha celebrates the hybridity that emerges from clashes among differences, some critics such as Loomba (1998) and Jameson (1998) see hybridity as a “mish-mash” of homogenized Western cultural forms and patterns of consumption. Hence, hybridity and multiculturalism cannot be unthinkingly celebrated.

It is generally believed that globalization can endanger the cultural identities of some national states. Some postcolonial countries regard it as an attempt to take them back to the colonial era. In contrast, most newly industrialized countries such as Taiwan, Korea, and China set globalization as their prime goal to increase their economic competitiveness. Although these countries’ conception of globalization is in terms of access to the world market, its influence is multifaceted. At a national level, this impetus towards globalization blurs the possible negative impacts of globalization on cultural identity or local culture. Some countries such as Japan are aware of the conflict between maintaining a national identity and the need to internationalize. For example, in Japan the power of globalization has cast doubt over whether learning a foreign language, namely, English, has adverse effects on the culture and language of the learner (Kubota, 1999). Although there are some countries such as Chile adopting

English as an official 2<sup>nd</sup> language, few nations would be willing to achieve globalization at the expense of their own culture.

The meaning of global culture, similar to that of culture, is one of the most debated concepts in the social sciences (Wallerstein, 1990). With high-speed information transmission, one can observe global culture with one click into the virtual world. The “imagined world”, according to Appadurai (1990), has created a global climate in which cultures are gradually merging together. Global culture serves as “magnet attracting people to particular ideas, regarding economic opportunity and consumption” (Spring, 2001: 7 cited in Singh and Doherty 2004: 16). Appadurai (ibid) pointed out that human experiences have extended beyond Anderson’s “imagined communities” (1991) to an “imagined world”. People form the ideas of the world through the flow of people, technology, money, information, images and ideas. Deterritorialization makes the flow possible. He argues: “the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be seen in terms of existing center-periphery models” (ibid). However, although global culture brings sameness and differences, there are debates over whether or not global culture can replace individual national cultures. According to Smith (1990), it is not easy to map a global culture because many national cultures still divide the world deeply. He further pointed out that unlike a national culture that is composed of “a sense of continuity”, “shared memories” and “common destiny” of a people, a global culture is basically “memoryless” (ibid: 179) and does not include any of the above characteristics. Hence, global culture cannot really supersede national cultures.

With the pace of change in global contact, visible signs of the formation of global culture are however apparent. The world, according to Barber (1995), is turning into a McWorld, which is defined as “an entertainment shopping experience that brings together malls, multiplex movie theatres, theme parks, spectator sports arenas, fast food chains (with their endless movie tie-ins) and television (with its burgeoning shopping networks) into a single vast enterprise” (ibid: 97). This McWorld, through media and

consumerism, contributes to the homogenization of global culture. Jay (2000) also questions if globalization is “a radically homogenizing force, one that inexorably spreads Western foods, fashions, music, patterns of consumption, and values wherever capital expansion and the media go, laying waste to local forms of identity and cultural expression”. To him, there is hardly any place in the world now we can call either local or indigenous. Pennycook sees CNN reporters in every corner of the world and “sounds of Michael Jackson [are] tumbling from a dusty stereo in a roadside restaurant” (1994: 4). This global cultural climate has hastened the spread of English, and the spread of English has in turn created a more Westernized global culture (cf. Graddol, 1997). In this regard, what English education can do is not just enabling people to catch up with the speed of globalization. Instead, it should provide a contact zone, where learners are able to interact and negotiate in the face of the other culture, and not merely drift along with the global trend.

#### **4.1. Globalization and Higher Education**

Universities, which are considered the major resources of intellectual capital (Magrath, 2002) for globalization, cannot escape its impact. Therefore, the extent to which academic forms of globalization may duplicate the worst effects of economic and cultural globalization might serve a background for the discussion of the internationalization of higher education in the next section (4.2).

As Magrath (ibid: 257) asks, “if the globalization evident in business, communication, and finance is inevitable, how can universities that have provided so much of the intellectual capital for these developments not be affected—and indeed change themselves?” In response to globalization, internationalization has indeed become one of the major goals for higher education in most of the developed or developing countries. It is firmly believed, for example, by the Taiwanese government and educators, that the internationalization of higher education speeds up the internationalization of a country. Generally speaking, most countries’ rationales for encouraging students to flow across national boundaries are: 1. To increase



understanding of different cultures, as in the ERASMUS program in Europe; 2. To maintain a highly-skilled work force by attracting and keeping international students, as is done by the U.S.A. and Scotland; 3. To increase economic return by attracting high tuition paying foreign degree students, as is done by Australia and the United Kingdom; and 4. To avoid parochialism and to increase the intellectual capital and global competitiveness of the country such as in Taiwan, Korea, and China. (de Wit, 2002: 298, Chi, 2004). Apart from the above macro level interest, most institutions of higher learning also aspire to increase their international profiles. Therefore, most universities aim to provide an international dimension to research and to teaching and learning in response to globalization. Sending and receiving students beyond national boundaries are becoming major goals for most higher education institutions. In response to these goals, programs such as the EU's ERASMUS scheme have been established. Countries such as Taiwan, Japan, are increasingly active in attracting more international students and creating more 'international programs' in order to increase their international profile. The U.S., which has enjoyed success in recruiting international students, in part due to its academic reputation and its English speaking environment, is more concerned with its own students' ignorance about global issues and their weakness in global awareness (de Wit, 2002, Green, 2002). For example, guidelines such as American Council on Education International Learning Goals encourage American students to experience other cultures and countries. Overall, these programs aim to increase students' global literacy.

According to Banks (2004), students should develop a delicate balance of cultural, national, and global identifications. Global literacy is now an increasingly important target of education that urges students to understand and respect different cultures in order to participate in a dynamic process of dealing with international problems such as poverty, violence, oppression, or disease. This understanding and respect, nevertheless, should include the reflection upon students' own social context. Global literacy should include intercultural competence that enables one to effectively interact with people and understand cultures in the world.

In terms of increasing students' global literacy and intercultural competence, most universities focus on increasing opportunities for students to have contact with other countries. The major foci are: attracting international students, encouraging student exchanges, establishing courses on global literacy, and making knowledge of a second language a requirement across a range of programs. Generally speaking, competence in a second language is considered essential for individuals or institutions being internationalized. For instance, some studies such as "What Students Know About the World" by the American Council on Learning hypothesized a positive correlation between studying a foreign language and possessing greater knowledge of other countries and international issues (Barrows *et al*, 1981, quoted in Yershova *et al*, 2000: 41). In most non-English speaking countries, this second or foreign language is more narrowly defined as an international language, or to be more specific, English. Therefore, the influence of globalization, in this regard, as Block and Cameron indicate, "changed the conditions under which language learning takes place" (2002: 2). English has become the most powerful *lingua franca* in the world, and to some extent, the only medium for understanding the world. This 'linguistic capital', in the words of Bourdieu (1992: 55), is considered essential for internationalization, which is in turn an asset for a country's global and economic competitiveness.

#### **4.2. The Global Spread of English and the Implications of Globalization for Language Education**

In the domain of higher education, the position of English is unchallenged. For example, 39 out of the top 50 ranked universities reported in World University Rankings (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 2004) and 44 out of Top 50 in the Academic Ranking of World Universities (Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 2005) are from the Inner Circles countries. Although there is no necessary cause and effect relationship between English and the academic and research performance, English is indispensable for one to compete and survive in the global academic arena. SCI, SSCI and Art and

Humanities Index are mainly for English publications. While scholars from the Inner Circle can merely concentrate on their research, academia in the Outer, or Expanding Circle in particular still have to struggle with English in order to get their works published. Martin Ince (2004a), the contributing editor of *The Times Higher Education* and the coordinator for World University Rankings, admitted that:

A comparison between the institutions that do well in citations and those that perform well in peer review shows that this criterion tends to favour institutions in the US and, to a lesser extent, other English-speaking countries.

He also clearly pointed out that the analysis of Europe's top 50 universities, amongst which the UK is home to 18, with another in Ireland, might suggest that the English language is “a powerful aid to academic excellence” (2004b). This perspective is also echoed by Graddal (2006) who maintains that “one of the most important drivers of global English has been the globalization of higher education”. Bollag (2000) in his study of how universities on every continent are struggling with English in order to transform into international ones, indicates that English has become a ‘New Latin’ that dominates in Academe. These data suggest further reasons why English education is prioritized in the internationalization of higher education in some Outer Circle countries and why English proficiency is regarded as a stepping-stone to a wider spectrum of knowledge and expertise.

Not only is academia heavily affected by western disciplines but knowledge in every academic domain is also mediated through English. McKay (2002: 40) indicated that with regard to internationalization, “the acquisition of English is driven by what is typically called instrumental motivation, namely the desire to pass an English examination, to read books in English, or to access information on the Internet”. In order to recruit international students, some universities in the Outer or Expanding Circles use English as the instructional language. Various universities in the Netherlands (e.g. Universiteit van Amsterdam) and the Asian Institute of Technology in



Thailand are examples. Moreover, popular culture, which is largely dominated by the American entertainment industry, has a powerful influence on university student's life. Although popular culture such as film or popular song is not the direct cause of the spread of English, it enhances motivation for young people to learn English and influences their view of a cyber global village. Whether as a commodity or medium, English plays a key role in internationalizing higher education and therefore the globalization of a country.

As a result, in higher education in Japan or Taiwan, although lip-service is paid to learning a variety of foreign languages, the national exam in English and the threshold set for English proficiency upon graduation show that one foreign language is privileged above all others. English competence is the prerequisite for those who intend to participate in 'international' events. It has become a gatekeeper to further education, to a more prestigious career, a higher income, and finally to upper social class status. Kachru's comment: "knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin's lamp, which permits one to open, as it were, the linguistic gates to international business, technology, science and travel" (1986:1) is still true of some contemporary societies from the Expanding Circle. In this case, social inequality created by this linguistic power has aroused some language educators' concern and skepticism about the benefits and 'neutrality' of English (e.g. Tollefson, 1995, Pennycook, 1994).

Debates over English as an international language and its influence on linguistic and cultural ecology began in the early 1990s. Language educators, such as Pennycook (1994, 1999), Phillipson (1992), and Guilherme (2002) to name a few, criticize the linguistic and cultural imperialism or neocolonialism brought on by the emergence of English as the sole international language. In response, some language educators (e.g. Alptekin *et al*, 1984, Adaskou 1990, Modiano, 2001) try to neutralize the position of English by involving other cultures in addition to English speaking ones. Despite the arguments over the standardization of English as a *lingua franca* in terms of lexicon,

phonology, and grammar (Jenkins, 2004, Schnitzer, 1995), some educators postulate that the recognition of World English could be a way to resist the linguistic imperialism (Kachru, 1982, Pennycook 1994, 1995, Phillipson, 1992, Widdowson 2001). However, some Expanding Circle countries still have not questioned if the degree of English competence is comparable to one's global vision, and if the collective English competence of a country indicates the degree of the country's internationalization. Taiwan's position will be discussed in Chapter 3.

#### **4.3. Balance of Localization and Globalization and the Implication for Intercultural Education**

The relationship between globalization and international power relations are obvious. Those countries that have a dominating influence on economy, information, and politics inevitably affect global culture. The United States, despite its firm rejection of its symbolically imperialist image, has spread its influence over the political, economic and cultural stages of the world. The ubiquitous presence of American products and popular cultures indeed catalyze globalization. Although the nature and center of the empire has shifted, the medium of English continues to be an imperial language (Phillipson, 1992). Pennycook (2000) has theorized the position of English in international relations as part of a wider critique of language and politics in the context of globalization. According to Said (1993: 9), imperialism means "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory". Although there is controversy about whether military adventures such as the USA and UK's interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq represent continuing imperialism in Said's terms, or whether they represent an ultimately liberating force, there can be no doubt that every corner of the world is affected by the power of English as an international language. In this regard, the center refers to 'the English' used in the native speaking countries, which is considered the norm, and so it is their cultures that are generally dominant and privileged. If the concept of center/ periphery is applied to the local social context of Taiwan, those who have better English competence are the center while those struggling with the language are the periphery. Said (1991) urges people

to decenter Eurocentric knowledge and go beyond cultural imperialism by no longer abiding by one particular 'tradition' in one field. However, this has not been well responded to in the academic arena. Academia has to some certain extent copied the effect of economic and cultural globalization. English, conceived according to native-speaker norms, has played and will continue to play its role as an important determiner for one's academic achievement in a wide range of disciplines, science in particular.

Some educators such as Widdowson (1994) suggest that no nation has an absolute right over English and learners of English as International Language do not need to internalize the cultural norms of English native speakers who belong to the Inner Circle (McKay 2001, 2002). Unfortunately, as it is discussed in the previous section, language cannot dispel its cultural baggage. Therefore, the attitude offers no defense against the linguistic and cultural imperialism brought by global Westernization.

The phrase "think globally, act locally" (ROC MOE, 2003) is emerging as a strategy to establish a balanced position that can restrain the homogenizing and westernizing impact of globalization. Many educators suggest that learning about global issues can provide students with an understanding of the local-global connection (Kasai 2003, Sampedro and Hillyard, 2004). However, simply presenting global issues does not in itself effectively motivate students to participate in the global society and engage with different cultures. Moreover, the points of view about global issues that are embedded in the instructional materials need to be investigated. For instance, learners might read a newspaper commentary on the Islamic protest against the portrayal of Muhammad in cartoons on Western newspapers. Such an activity would not in itself entail effective intercultural engagement, since the activity might simply involve comprehension of a journalistic perspective that is biased against the other. In short, the provision of materials on intercultural topics does not necessarily result in the acquisition of intercultural competence.



McKay (2002) indicates that one of the main uses of EIL is for people from both Outer and Expanding Circle countries to share with others their cultures and ideas. Emphasis therefore needs to be placed on ‘cross’ cultural and cross-national competence rather than only on the instrumentality of the foreign language. Learning other languages and cultures can empower learners with new worldviews that arise from “the collision between differing points of view on the world” (Bhabha, 1990: 208). Intercultural competences can enable learners to engage with the world in a global and local sense.

As it has been discussed, the impact of globalization on higher education is evident by virtue of the fact that internationalization, a catchall term, is deemed by the government and general public to ensure the nation’s competitiveness in the torrent of globalization. Internationalization has been placed high on the agendas of institutions of higher learning. In the next section, the intercultural dimension in the internationalization of higher education will be discussed. The importance of including intercultural teaching and learning in the language classroom can therefore be seen from the significance of intercultural education in the internationalization of higher education.

#### **4.4. Internationalization of Higher Education and Intercultural Competence**

Internationalization and globalization are alternatively used in compelling institutions of higher learning to catch up with economic and technological developments in the highly competitive global climate. As discussed in the previous section, the foci of internationalization of higher education are generally on the mobility of faculty members and students through activities such as student exchange programs. These activities are used to measure the degree of the internationalization of a higher education institution. For example, according to the World University Rankings, two measures used to evaluate universities are: the percentage of overseas students and percentage of international faculty members. Presently the target is 5 percent of the total in each category. These percentages are designed to encapsulate a university’s international orientation. Consequently, universities all over the world are gradually directing their international policies towards sending students abroad as well as

receiving overseas students.

In Taiwan, internationalization is also a high priority in universities and is listed as one of the indicators for evaluating a higher education institution by the national University Assessment Exercise. For example, according to the most comprehensive University Assessment held in Taiwan in 2005 (MOE, 2005), the indicators used to assess the degree of a university's internationalization are generally based on the actions that are taken by an institution and how effective these actions are in improving students' English, in encouraging faculty and student mobility, and in attracting foreign students (Appendix 2). The assessment of the internationalization of an institution seemingly follows the World University Rankings and takes the number of overseas students and foreign faculty members as criteria to evaluate the degree of its internationalization. This kind of assessment has had a profound impact on the orientation toward internationalization at a great number of Taiwanese universities. More detailed discussion on the Taiwanese government's English education policies will be presented in Chapter 3, section 2.

#### **4.4.1. The Meaning of Internationalization of Higher Education**

Although there is no general consensus about the definition of the internationalization of higher education, (cf. Groenings, 1987, cited in de Wit, 2002: 107), internationalization can by and large mean, as the Association of University and Colleges of Canada concluded in 1993, "a multitude of activities aimed at providing an educational experience within an environment that truly integrates a global perspective" (cited in de Wit, *ibid*: 109). Knight indicates that it is "the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension in the teaching, research and service functions of the institution" (1999: 16; 1997: 8). Knight further suggests a conceptual framework consisting of a 'triad' that integrates international, intercultural, and global dimensions (Knight, 2003) into teaching, research and service in higher education. Ebuchi also states that internationalization should enable a higher education system to become "internationally and cross-culturally compatible" (1990, quoted in de Wit, 2002: 113).

Yershova *et al* (2000) urge more serious discussion should focus on intercultural competence in international education. According to these educators, intercultural competence is considered an individual ability as well as an institutional capability to cope with the global environment. With respect to education, Knight (1999, quoted in de Wit, 2002: 119) specifically indicates that “international education involves the people, cultures, and systems of different countries”. The cultural rationale she provides focuses on the role of one country’s own culture and the importance of understanding foreign cultures:

The respect of cultural and ethnic diversity within and between the countries is considered as a strong rationale for the internationalization of a country’s education system.

Related to this point is the need for improved intercultural understanding and communication.

The preparation of graduates who have a strong knowledge and skill base in intercultural relations and communications is considered by many academics as one of the strongest rationales for internationalizing the teaching/learning experiences of students in undergraduate and graduate programs. (Knight, 1997:11)

Based on the definitions stated above, intercultural dimensions are vital to the growing internationalization of higher education institutions. Improving understanding of one’s own and foreign countries is one of the major tasks in the process of internationalization. In a broad sense, global literacy should also include intercultural competencies that enable students to develop skills to effectively interact with people from different cultures and countries. Higher Education should provide students with insight into what Lam (1999: 389) suggests, “today’s global cultural landscape” which is “the intermingling of customs and life-ways and the presence of multiculturalism within national borders”. Teaching of culture should not be limited to the surface cultural facts, but also include critical and social processes that lead to understanding of the other’s socio-cultural facets and the learners’ own. Curricula such as intercultural education, multicultural education, international studies, and global education are also



gradually being developed to strengthen human resources for international competitiveness.

#### **4.4.2. The Significance of Intercultural Dimensions in Internationalization**

Husen (1994) calls for more study of ‘cross-disciplinary’ international education and seeks links to multicultural education. He argues that global interdependence requires internationalizing education, which has two major objectives; one is somewhat idealistic and obscure while the other is realistic and tangible:

In the first place, by means of certain programs in the formal educational system, a heightened awareness is sought among young people of global interdependence by presenting them with, among other things, certain basic facts. This could be regarded as sensitivity training in international thinking with the purpose of fostering certain attitudes that lead to international solidarity, rejections of racial prejudices, and understanding of other cultures. The other overriding objective is to impart certain skills and competencies that will enable young people to function in an international setting, such as mastery of foreign languages, knowledge and insights into foreign cultures, and the history and geography of other nations.

(cited in de Wit: 2002:108)

The practical objective, that is, providing students with knowledge and insights into other country’s cultures and history and enhancing their ‘foreign language’ skills, can facilitate the more idealistic objective. In light of understanding other cultures, Stier (2002) also indicates that internationalization of higher education should provide students with opportunities to understand “the relativity of cultural beliefs, values, living patterns, ideologies” as well as “inoculate tolerance, respect and contribute to a sense of global as well as national community and solidarity and work against ethnocentrism, racism and academic self righteousness” (ibid). Hence, internationalisation should not be predominantly seen as a one-way flow – “they” can learn from us, but “we” have little to learn from them or vice versa. The process of

internationalization needs to enable students to be more engaged with Otherness in mutual ways.

### **5. The *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning: preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment***

The literature on cultural learning and teaching thus far in the Taiwanese foreign language classroom has been extremely limited. To a large extent this is because assessment of cultural competence is still difficult to standardize and justify. In addition, the education system remains fundamentally dependent on an examination system of assessment, and the curriculum at all levels has not yet explicitly included cultural teaching. Reference to external frameworks is only limited to linguistic skills. The Taiwanese Ministry of Education on the one hand urges the educators to refer the external frameworks such as the *Common European Framework of References for Languages*, on the other hand keeps neglecting the cultural/ intercultural dimension in the EFL classroom. This section will investigate the role that culture plays in two important frameworks for language teaching and learning. These two frameworks are the CEF and the American *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning: preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. They can offer a view for the government to develop a potential framework for both language and culture learning.

*The Standards* and the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language: Learning, teaching, assessment* have been respectively developed for elementary and secondary school students in the US and language learners in Europe. With respect to the competence levels set for foreign language education, these two frameworks are influential. Since the Taiwanese Government is seeking a proper point of reference for its English education and the students' English proficiency, these two frameworks will be investigated with respect to their linguistic and cultural objectives. This section will first present their historical development and original cultural context. The

different approaches to cultural teaching and intercultural training will subsequently be explored. It is also necessary to consider whether these two frameworks, which are fundamentally designed for pre-university students, can be used in higher education in Taiwan. Finally, I shall discuss whether or not the adoption of these two frameworks by an outsider country such as Taiwan is appropriate, as well as the appropriate uses that Taiwanese HE education has for them.

## **5.1. Cultural Context**

### **5.1.1. The Standards – Multicultural Country**

*The National Standards of Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (The Standards) is a collaborative project among The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, The American Associations of French, The American Associations of German, and The American Associations of Spanish and Portuguese. It provides basic standards for American foreign language education at the elementary and secondary school levels. The Standards are based on the rationale that the US must educate students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. In this regard, it assumes that language and culture together are the foundation of successful communication.

Although there is no clear governmental language policy, the historically dominant role of English is undeniable. In the USA, the linguistic situation is becoming more complex now with the growth of pressure to recognize the need for bilingual policies. The Standards recognize that a foreign language can be learnt through content-based courses based on a variety of subjects such as history, social studies, science, the fine arts, and so on. This approach helps students to “develop an interdisciplinary perspective at the same time they are gaining intercultural understandings” (ACTFL, 1996: 12). In this regard, knowledge of a second language and culture when combined with the study of other disciplines shifts the focus from language acquisition to broader learning experiences for the student (ibid: 1996). Overall, the Standards emphasize on both linguistic and cultural insights that come with foreign language study and consider



it “a requisite for life as a citizen in the worldwide neighborhood”. Although the learning context is the United States, the Standards’ aim of providing students with a broad concept of knowledge and a worldview might be more generally applicable.

### **5.1.2. The Common European Framework -- Plurilingual Europe**

In Europe, languages constitute an essential part of the European cultural heritage. Therefore, the Council of Europe deems it necessary to safeguard different languages in order to promote access to culture. With respect to increasing understanding among countries, governments have the responsibility to expand the range of foreign language learning opportunities available to their citizens.

Similar to the rationale of the American Standards, the general measure of the CEF is for learners to be able to deal with everyday life in another country and help foreigners to do so in their country. In addition, by acquiring the languages of other member states and the skills of using those languages, learners are expected be able to exchange information and ideas with speakers of other languages, as well as to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of life and thought of other peoples or cultures (ibid: 3).

One of the aims of the Council of Europe is to protect and develop “the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe” as a valuable common resource (ibid, 2).

The CEF further emphasizes that cultural diversity must be appreciated and identities be respected. Generally speaking, the CEF aims to enable learners to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

## **5.2. Different Approaches to Culture**

In this section, cultural learning and intercultural learning in these two frameworks will be examined and evaluated.

### **5.2.1. Culture Learning in the Standards**

The Standards, as it claims at the beginning, is not a ‘curriculum guide’. Instead, it

provides a logically ordered sequence of language study and some recommendations for course framework development and reasonable expectations for the students in different parts of the country (23-26). Instead of discussing the skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing separately, the Standards create broadly conceived standards. The infrastructure of the Standards is based on 5 Cs: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. The standards that each C targets at are described as the pillars of the vision (Appendix 3).

An overview of these basic elements of the Standards demonstrates that culture is a crucial component. It is noteworthy that linguistic learning is not independently presented. Instead, it is embedded in a broader concept of cultural learning. As the guidelines specify, “the true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and the vocabulary, but the cultures expressed through that language” (ibid: 43).

Although communication is still considered the heart of second language study, three major elements of the Standards focus specifically on cultural learning: Cultures, Connections and Comparisons. In addition, the 5 C’s are based on three assumptions about language and culture, learners of language and culture, and language and culture education (Appendix 4). The Standards presuppose that competence in more than one language and culture enables people to develop awareness of self and other cultures and look beyond their customary borders. Moreover, all students can be successful foreign language learners provided they have access to language and culture teaching that is integrated into the core school curriculum.

Met and Byram (1999) categorize cultural content in the Standards into: 1, Aspects of culture that can be learned factually, 2, Knowledge about one’s own culture, and 3, The acquisition of methods of cultural investigations and analysis. Three key concepts are evident in the formulation of The Standards themselves as discussed above:

1. Perspectives: attitudes, values and ideas,
2. Practices: patterns of social interaction, and patterns of behavior accepted by a

society, and

3. Products: books, foods, laws, music...etc.

(ACTFL, ibid: 43 -- 48)

These aspects of culture are consistently woven into the whole Standards framework and as such further support the high value of studying a foreign language because “the study of another language enables students to understand a different culture on its own terms” (ibid: 43). For example, they (ibid: 12) emphasize that students need to be able to identify, discuss, analyze tangible or intangible cultural products and be able to evaluate themes, ideas and perspectives related to the product being studied. Students are also expected to explore the relationships among the products, practices, and perspectives of the culture. In understanding and interpreting written and spoken language on a variety of topics, students also need to understand the ‘cultural nuances of meaning’ (40).

The Standards emphasize that teaching cultural similarities and differences in the language classroom is important. In this respect, it recognizes that cultural teaching does not provide a fixed image of Otherness or stereotypes; instead, it is a process. The Standards continue their emphasis on cultural learning by stressing the importance of students knowing that people do not necessarily share the same culture just because people speak the same language, and that people tend to make assumptions about other cultures based on their own personal cultural beliefs. In other words, personal exploration of culture in the foreign language classroom empowers students to develop cross-cultural understanding and respect. Consequently, cultural learning in the classroom leads to acquiring intercultural experiences.

### *The Role of Intercultural Competence*

The Standards promote intercultural awareness in foreign language education, such as developing students’ insight into their own language and cultures and enable them to interact with greater awareness of self and of other cultures. In terms of intercultural



competence, students are able to discuss, orally or in writing current or past events that are significant in the target culture and that are being studied in another subject. In addition, they are expected to be able to exchange their opinions with peers and/ or speakers of the target language on different topics. With respect to the *Cultures* section, gaining knowledge and understanding of other cultures is essential for further understanding of Otherness and human kind. In this section, it is specifically stated that:

American students need to develop an awareness of other people's world views, of their unique way of life, and of the patterns of behavior which order their world, as well as learn about contributions of other cultures to the world at large and the solutions they offer to the common problems of human kind. (p.43)

The Standards justify the role that intercultural competence plays in the contact zone when students are confronting a foreign language and culture. It points out that intercultural awareness is crucial to students making naïve assumptions about other languages and cultures merely based upon knowledge of their own. It will also help students to “discover that other cultures view the world from a perspective different from their own” (ibid, 54). The Standards, in terms of this contact zone, mirror Bhabha's and Kramsch's view of ‘the third space’. It suggests that students should take off their own cultural lenses and understand Otherness and how the Other sees them. In this third space, students can “view concepts in a new light as they probe apparently similar concepts in the target language” (ibid). For example, the perception of bread in a different culture can be related to a set of different concepts. Although *pain* (French) and *brot* (German) means bread, its different shape, taste, or type that illustrate how a society, people, culture and language have interacted over time. These intercultural encounters in the language classroom have the additional aim of educating students to be global citizens because “the study of a second language and the resulting intercultural exploration expand learners' view of the world in different ways” (ACTFL, ibid).

### *Examples of Scenarios for Classroom Practices*

The Standards do not merely provide a set of descriptors of language learning. It provides an overview for classroom practices as well as examples of ways classroom practices can be implemented and how the five Cs can be equally integrated in classroom instruction. Scenarios about how these five elements can be integrated are illustrated with standards targeted and levels identified. Examples are numerous. For instance, a study of newscasts in a Spanish II class in a high school targets interpersonal and presentational communication, practices of culture, making connections, knowing school and community, and lifelong learning. A comparison between American and German television commercials provides a good opportunity for language and cultural comparisons. Using a Chinese calendar in the classroom provides activities such as how students interpret the importance of a calendar within a culture, and the role that the calendar plays in their own and other cultures. Overall, with a few exceptions such as international science, most sample scenarios are related to culture learning. In the suggested scenarios, linguistic skills are implicit as is the cultural aspect of language learning to improve communication. Most linguistic learning is pointed toward better cultural understanding and communication.

### **5.2.2. Socio-cultural Knowledge and Intercultural Competence in the CEF**

While the Standards indicate that, though it is not a ‘curriculum guide’, it provides various ‘types of curricular experience’, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* (CEF) aims to provide a common basis for ‘elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe’ (2001: 1). Compared to the Standards, the CEF has placed greater emphasis on skills learning in foreign language education. The CEF aims to provide students with sufficient linguistic competence in the changing European cultural context whereas the Standards are more targeted at the global context. The CEF also recognizes the importance of the interactions between language and culture, even though there is little evidence to support the idea that culture and language learning are measured equally on

the same scale. As was previously emphasized, in the Standards linguistic skills are implied in the 5 Cs whereas in the CEF, culture is largely implicit in the detailed linguistic learning framework. Throughout the whole CEF, socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness or competence is randomly interwoven through the framework. The CEF devotes only limited space to the explicit discussion of the competence related to world knowledge, socio-cultural knowledge, and intercultural awareness. In this respect, Heyworth (2005: 7) in his discussion of the importance of the CEF also indicates that “much more useful descriptions of cultural differences and intercultural competences” are needed to avoid potential problems such as assuming that knowing someone else’s language automatically promotes understanding and respect.

In the CEF, socio-cultural knowledge is broken into several concrete concepts which are defined as distinctive features of a society such as everyday living, living conditions, interpersonal relations, value, body language, social conventions, and ritual behaviors, each with a set of descriptors (101-103). For example, everyday living includes food and drink, meal times, and public holidays, etc.. Values, beliefs and attitudes cover issues such as social class, occupational groups, and regional cultures, etc..

Intercultural awareness is based on Byram’s *savoirs*. Emphasis is placed on knowledge, skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*), and ‘existential’ competencies that include *savoir être* and *savoirs apprendre*. However, *savoirs s’engager* is not included. Unlike the American Standards, critical thinking is not directly addressed. Also, there are neither further ‘guidelines’ about how these elements can be integrated into curriculum, nor any detailed criteria or descriptors such as the Common Reference Levels (24, 26--29) for linguistic learning. Although the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction are intermittently brought up throughout the whole framework, there is no specific description of how communication in the intercultural settings can be improved or how it can be better integrated with the language classroom.



With respect to task performance, the CEF stresses the importance of socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural competence. Classroom tasks are basically communicative, related to ‘real life’ or pedagogical in nature. Knowledge and experience of the world, socio-cultural knowledge are all taken into account when performing foreign language activities. With regard to assigned performance tasks in the language classroom, students should be familiar with the relevant socio-cultural knowledge such as “life in the target community and essential differences between practices, values, and beliefs in that community and the learner’s own society” (158). At this point, the CEF associates the potential for learners to expand their knowledge of another society and culture into intercultural awareness. Byram’s *savoirs* are visible in this section. For instance, intercultural skills are further explained as skills necessary to mediate between the two cultures, and which will enable the learner to effectively cope with what is implicit in the discourse of native speakers (161). The difficulty of a task is related to the level of the learners’ present socio-cultural knowledge and experiences, their attitudes towards Otherness, and their willingness to be an intermediary between cultures (ibid). These directly relate to Byram’s *savoirs*, *savoir être*, and *savoir apprendre/faire*. The overall meaning of cultural learning extends to the mediation between two cultures albeit without reference to critical thinking. Compared to the Standards, there are no other concrete examples about how mediation between/among cultures can be integrated with linguistic learning or how the interaction between language and culture can promote one’s linguistic and cultural or intercultural competence.

### **5.3. Application of the Standards and the CEF to Higher Education**

#### **5.3.1. The Standards and University/ College Language Education**

Although there is limited literature about whether the Standards and university general language education have mutual effects on each other, concerns remain as to whether or not the Standards can be extended to college level. James (1998) argues that some of the content of the Standards already exists in college/ university education, for example,

Cultural Studies and intercultural communication. The Standards with its enormous flexibility provides opportunities to create and develop new curricula at the collegiate level. He therefore urges university foreign language educators to examine how they can make the best out of the Standards to benefit language education in higher institutions. Similarly, Welles (1998) and Lange (1999) also indicate that the coordination between the Standards and college level needs to be enhanced. According to Welles, firstly, university teachers have not been well informed about the Standards and that they might not be able to extend the value of the Standards. However, she accredits the fact that because the Standards are organized around the connections between language and culture, they provide a framework on which to build the competencies and accomplishments appropriate to college-level work in literature and other fields. These educators think the Standards, with proper coordination, can be extended to college education. Smith (1999) applies the framework to college classrooms and promotes the framework as feasible for the tertiary classroom given the proper choice of themes and related ideas that should be determined by “students’ interest and what is age appropriate”. Welles (ibid) suggests that an illustration of how the use of “literary text—or a film, historical work or another cultural product” in a rich linguistic and cultural context at various level can provide college teachers better ideas of what the Standards are meant to be. Prestigious institutions also play a part in disseminating good practice. For instance, Harvard’s core curriculum, which is widely imitated, gives us a glimpse of the role foreign languages and cultures play in its ideal of general education. The curriculum offers two types of Foreign Culture courses: first, one-semester courses devoted to major cultures distinct from that of the United States, taught in English or in the language of those particular cultures, and second, full year foreign language courses beyond the introductory level, with substantial cultural content (Harvard website, 2005, Appendix 5).

### **5.3.2. The CEF and UK University Level Language Education**

UK universities, unlike their American counterparts, generally do not have general education or core curriculum program requirements for all students. Therefore, most



students, except the Modern Languages majors, do not necessarily opt for any language or cultural module. Even the Modern Language departments are struggling with a decline in numbers of students taking languages at university. Those non-language majors who take foreign language modules usually do so because of the language's relationship to different parts of the degree curriculum. The motivations, therefore, are considered to be instrumental and work oriented (Coleman, 1995). Phipps and Gonzalez (2004) warn that the increasing focus on the instrumental purposes of language learning is turning foreign language instruction toward serving mere "service" purposes. An example is the Glasgow University Language Center courses such as Languages for Chemistry. The literature about ways the European Framework can become integral and extended to university level education is very limited. There are studies (Nott, 1995, Mughan, 1999) concerning the interplay between language and culture at the tertiary classroom, and these mainly concern languages or degrees affiliated with languages. Coleman (1995) in his study found that most European students study languages because they like the language, or because of pragmatic concerns. He also found that U.S. students, compared to UK students, view languages more related to culture than in professionally oriented ways (Roberts 1992, cited in Coleman 1995: 5). Whether or not such results are related to differences between these two frameworks for foreign language education and educational systems needs further study.

#### **5.4. Reviewing the Two Frameworks**

The examination of the two frameworks, the Standards and the CEF, and their connection to university education has shown that both recognize the importance of cultural learning in the foreign language classroom. Both give descriptors of the standards, levels and gains expected for linguistic skills. The Standards direct language learning towards cultural learning and aims at providing students with a broader concept of language, culture, and knowledge of other subjects. The goals are also designed to enable students to appreciate differences, and develop personal perspectives and critical thinking ability. On the other hand, the CEF places more



emphasis on criteria for linguistic skills and guidelines for the learners' language proficiency at different levels. By and large, it is comparatively more instrumental. Culture in the Standards is a prominent component to enhance linguistic learning while in the CEF it is embedded in detailed targets related to linguistic skills. Intercultural awareness and competence is more explicitly encouraged in the Standards. The American university foreign language education is quite consistent with the objectives set by the Standards, probably due to its general education system. However, in Europe, or to be more specific, in the UK, language-learning objectives are more profession related. The international projects or programs in each country are also quite consistent with the emphasis of each framework.

## **5.5. The Adoptions of External Frameworks for English Language Learning**

### **5.5.1. Appropriateness of Applying the CEF to the Taiwanese Education Context**

In Taiwan, the Ministry of Education posted the CEF's Common Reference Levels of linguistic skills on its website ([www.edu.gov.tw](http://www.edu.gov.tw) 2005), as a reference for language teachers or schools of different levels. The MOE in its official news release strongly recommended that the CEF Common Reference Levels be referenced for English language assessment. This is in response to the public's concern following the ROC Fair Trade Commission's penalizing the Language Training and Testing Center in Taiwan for its inaccurate descriptors of different levels of GEPT<sup>2</sup> (11.11.2005, Department of Social Education, MOE). Neither the objectives of the CEF nor its fundamental socio-cultural knowledge indicators are recommended by the MOE. Socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness in language learning are completely absent from the excerpts it posted. The MOE is seemingly anticipating that the CEF's wide-ranging and 'comprehensive' scales of linguistic skills will be

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<sup>2</sup> General English Proficiency Test. Commencing in 1999, the MOE, to encourage the general study of English, supported the Language Training and Testing Center's development of the General English Proficiency Test or GEPT. The GEPT is divided into five levels with content appropriate for each level. Each level incorporates listening, reading, writing and speaking components. Elementary, Intermediate, High-intermediate, Advanced and Superior Levels are now available (Homepage of GEPT, LTTC).

directly borrowed to create a more authoritative basis upon which to establish reliable ‘scales’ for English language learning in Taiwan.

Because this announcement was so recently made, the acceptance or adoption of the CEF in English education at different levels is presently difficult to judge. Also, no information about how teachers can make good use of the 260-page book and no extensive discussion of why such a reference should be adopted has been provided. Because the MOE expects that universities will make establishing English proficiency thresholds a priority, it might also wish that English language educators make use of the ready made linguistic descriptors to assess learning outcomes for related thresholds. This notwithstanding, the issue of their applicability to the Taiwanese English educational context remains problematic and requires further examination.

The CEF resulted from over ten years of research by a number of leading language professionals and educators and provides a detailed model for language use, skills, and knowledge. However, in relation to the current situation of English education in Taiwan, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, some issues must be addressed when adopting this framework.

First, there is the question of whether the Taiwanese foreign language educators will adequately understand this massive framework. Marrow (2005) indicates that the published version of the CEF is not user-friendly:

There is little to guide the first-time reader around the materials; the print is small, the layout dense and ‘heavy’, the language itself is ponderous and often convoluted; specialist terminology abounds, and is often used in ways which seem idiosyncratic – and there are seemingly endless tables and descriptors whose relationship to one another is very difficult to discern.

(Page 7)

In this case, the capabilities of educators from an external, non-European context to

fully understand the framework without professional guidance are doubtful. Marrow (ibid) suggests the CEF should be used as a detailed map whereas the users decide their own route. However, he also warns that because the CEF is so detailed, the user might not be able to see the wood from the trees. From a personal perspective, I should not be surprised if most Taiwanese users give up at the beginning upon confronting a highly complex and overwhelmingly large task.

Furthermore, additional problems are created by referring to the suggested Common Reference Levels as the basis for performance and assessment. As Morrow (2005) points out, some descriptors are not precise. For instance, the first sentence of the B1 level indicates that learners are able to “understand the main points of clear standards input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc”. Such ‘main points’ are hard to define and there is no guidance to help decide, for example, to what extent that a learner should be expected to understand a wide range of demanding texts. Also it is impossible to develop an exhaustive list of language teaching situations. For example, topics such as ‘work’ or ‘leisure’ cover a wide-range of subtopics. Therefore, it is unclear which of the main situations the learners should know and which situations in the learner’s own cultural context, or those in other cultural contexts, need to be learned.

Second, the CEF provides numerous ‘can do checklists’ concerning the four skills. These ‘can do checklists’ do not necessarily match those of the Taiwanese national guidelines for English curriculum, which as we shall see in Chapter 3, are very simplistic and have insufficient descriptions. Moreover, the government now urges universities to set thresholds for English proficiency. Most Taiwanese universities set at least ‘intermediate’ level thresholds, and some of the leading universities, or majors, set ‘high intermediate’ thresholds for graduation. These levels are still generally based on the GEPT, an internal commercial language assessment test, even after its credibility was called into question. How the Common Reference Levels, with a set of more thorough descriptors, fit into these levels seems not to have aroused great concern.



Third, under the current Taiwanese education system, most teachers still use more traditional methods of teaching and learning languages. These methods are often driven by numerous achievement tests and external texts. Self-assessment is currently almost impossible. According to Smith (1999), even teachers who are trying to assess the students' performance levels find the detailed descriptions and the 'cumbersome' assessment tables very difficult to follow, for example, when they give speaking assessments. In addition, in Taiwan, normally English teachers have freedom to choose their own textbooks at the tertiary level, and even at some lower levels. Given that individual teachers and universities are able to determine what is to be taught, assessing student performance or achievement on the basis of a common standard is very problematic. In addition, the national examinations play a significant role in leading pre-university education as it will be discussed later in Chapter 3. The examination system is prescriptive, and in this respect, there is little fear among the teachers and the authorities that the Common Framework could become prescriptive once it is introduced. If the common levels are widely accepted and set as objectives, the possible result is that Taiwan will be saturated with more language "buxiban" (cram schools) oriented towards these objectives. Then again, EFL textbooks in Taiwan might be tailored to meet the 'can do checklists' of the CEF Common Reference Levels, which has been already used by some commercial textbooks.

Likewise, the Standards have their controversial issues. As with the CEF, the Standards have raised concerns among teachers regarding instructional challenges such as obtaining appropriate materials and approaches needed to implement the goals (Met and Byram, 1999: 68). Although the Standards provide scenarios that illustrate subjects, materials, and activities that can be used integrally in the classroom, the teachers still need to decide the theme and find materials. No doubt, in the U.S., many teachers, like those elsewhere, find it challenging to transform a written document into effective classroom practice. In addition, ways to assess students' performance and establish criteria need to be developed for new materials. For non-native speaking

teachers, these tasks appear even more demanding particularly because most of them are accustomed to relying on ready-made textbooks. There are also some additional challenges such as whether teachers need extensive knowledge to effectively deal with cultural teaching or to develop appropriate instructional approaches to implement learning goals set for each of the five C's.

#### **5.5.2. What use can Taiwanese HE educators have from these two frameworks and what use can they make of them?**

Although whether an external framework such as the Standards or the CEF can be adopted in the Taiwanese English educational context still remains questionable, making good use of them can potentially benefit a reform of the current English curriculum or support the development of a new curriculum.

The Standards, with the break away from the four skills as a framework, provide a new perspective for structuring the EFL curriculum. At the practical level, culture is never considered an integral part of the English education in Taiwan. Therefore, the Standards provide an illustration of how culture and language can be integrated into the Foreign Language classroom. As the Standards indicate: "The true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and the vocabulary, but the cultures expressed through that language" (43). This provides a chance for the Taiwanese government or language professionals to look at the feasibility of changing the emphasis from memorization of words and grammar rules to the exploration, development and use of "communicative strategies, learning strategies, and critical thinking skills as well as the appropriate elements of the language system and culture" (ACTFL, 97). The objectives for the 5 C's can provide references for Taiwanese educators to reflect upon the possibility of interweaving interpersonal, interpretive and presentational functions of language. For instance, the idea of a scenario can be referred to when designing a curriculum or lesson plans. As Byram indicated, language teachers are not necessarily experts in the target culture. Most important of all, students need to develop the transferable attitudes and skills necessary to become

what Met and Byram (1999: 68) specify as, ‘an independent cultural learner’. Such classroom practices provide opportunities for developing these competences.

Three of the five *C*’s, Cultures (culture studies, area studies), Connections (language across the curriculum, interdisciplinary studies, distinctive viewpoints from other foreign cultures), and Communication (communicative language teaching), can be applied to the EFL classroom at the tertiary level in Taiwan. James (1998) argues that the changes these components can bring to teaching could impact on the long needed reform of foreign language programs at the university level in America. Likewise, in Taiwan, if teachers can integrate components such as Cultures and Comparisons with the EFL syllabus, students will have more opportunities to use language to mediate between cultures and investigate the differences. Language learning will go beyond merely memorizing or practicing what appears on the assessment tests. In addition, from a more practical perspective, the objectives of ‘Connections’, can prepare students for language across the curriculum, which is presently expected by the government as one of the ways to internationalize higher education institutions. Taken together, objectives from these components can help students to cross their personal boundaries and become willing to see the world, which is the macro goal for major Taiwanese educational policies.

The CEF, despite its detailed, convoluted, and difficult to implement descriptors, can be used for scaling language use and the different kinds of knowledge and skills required. Primary and secondary English education can use it as a blueprint to improve the curriculum and establish expected levels for each grade rather than just giving out a vocabulary list. This will shed new light on the university EFL classroom. English language educators in higher education can also reference it to determine the bottom up competency and assessment structures and establish feasible goals to shape each stage of teaching and learning. The intercultural dimension of the CEF, despite its current lack of sufficient illustration, can be taken into account along with the more comprehensive discussion of culture learning found in the Standards. Where



appropriate, Byram's five *savoirs*, particularly *savoir*, *savoir être*, and *savoir s'engager* can be referenced together with the Standards.

The CEF and the Standards can be used complementarily in terms of linguistic descriptors and cultural teaching. Both the government and language professionals can make good use of these two frameworks. For example, Smith (2006) points out that “actions developing from ‘curiosity and creativity’ are constrained [by the CEF] because they do not fit into the ‘framework’ and there is no time for them”. The Standards, on the other hand, actively encourages students to be inquisitive and creative learners. For example, at Grade 8, “students hypothesize about the relationship between cultural perspectives and expressive products by analyzing selective products from the target culture and their own” (ACTFL: 56). The strength and weakness of both frameworks can be used to develop Taiwan's own framework.

## Chapter III

### Research Background

#### 1. A Brief History of Language Policy in Taiwan

In terms of identity and language, it is generally believed that Taiwan serves as a ‘textbook’ for how politics can influence language policies (Chen, 2001) and as a laboratory of identities (Corcuff, 2002). This view was echoed by Tsao (1999), and Balcom (1999) who ironically states that in terms of postcolonial studies, Taiwan is a “gold mine” because of its hybridity of languages. In the past few years the Taiwanese language policy has changed from supporting only the single language Mandarin, to the present policy that strives to include both English and the Taiwanese language, Southern Ming, with Mandarin. English education now begins in primary schools and the Taiwanese mother tongue was recently introduced at the fifth level. This section will present background information regarding language issues in Taiwan that to a certain extent explain the emergence of English as a powerful and unchallenged ‘international’ language in the country. This linguistic landscape helps illustrate the role English plays and further supports the necessity for providing intercultural training in the higher education language classroom.

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##### 1.1. Taiwan in the Postcolonial Stage

###### 1.1.1. Repressive Language Policy

The indigenous languages of Taiwan are Taiwanese, also known as Southern Ming, Hakka, and the aboriginal language. These three languages were oppressed first in the period of Japanese colonization and later by Chiang Kai-Shek’s Nationalist government that retreated to Taiwan in 1949. Since that time, conflicts concerning these languages have continued. The linguistic diversity in the Taiwanese society of the 1940s and 1950s is best illustrated in Hou Hsiao-Hsien's 1989 award winning film *City of Sadness*. In the movie, Japanese, Taiwanese, Shanghai dialect, and Mandarin were used to reflect

the postcolonial state of Taiwan and the era of neo-colonization by the Nationalist government. The Nationalist government at that time (in the 40s and 50s) still claimed to be the only legitimate government of China. All its policies were based on the ideology of recovering China in the future. Therefore, language planning policy and implementation was based on the assumption that Taiwan was a Chinese province and so Chinese Mandarin, or Gouyu, was promoted as a symbol of the unity of the Chinese nation (Chen, P., 2001:103). For a period of time, the government forcefully implemented the assimilation policy and thus made the term 'Taiwan' "associated with anything negative in language, culture, and even social science research generally" (Huang, 2000: 144). In addition, Hakka and the Taiwanese aboriginal language were then considered indicators of the lowest social position.

### **1.1.2. The Emergence of Diglossia**

In short, in this post Japanese colonial stage (from the 1940s to 1970s), Taiwan was again treated as a colony, albeit this time by the so-called 'motherland' represented by the Ko Ming Tong (KMT) government that retreated from China in 1949. Unlike some other postcolonial states that had a long struggle between their indigenous language and the colonizer's language, it did not take the KMT government very long to eradicate the language of the previous colonizer, namely, Japanese. Although a former Japanese colony, Taiwan now has few traces of linguistic influence from Japanese. Ironically, according to Huang (2000), this is probably because of the KMT government's suppression of the Taiwanese mother language, which has a profusion of lexical borrowings from Japanese. For a period of time it was required that Mandarin be learned as the national language. It was further promoted as the only official and acceptable language in the public domain including educational instruction. Mandarin, according to Fishman's definition of diglossia (1967), was H (high language) as an official language with prestige and power and Taiwanese was L (low language) as a vernacular. Chinese Mandarin was predominant in the public service domain, schools of all levels, and the media.



During that period of time, the “mother tongue”, mainly Taiwanese, was diminished to “low language” and even worse--a “vulgar” language. Only 3 decades ago, pupils who spoke Taiwanese at school would be penalized and humiliated. Even people whose Mandarin was thickly accented with Taiwanese inflections were automatically understood to be socially inferior. TV programs in Taiwanese were also discouraged or restricted from being broadcast until martial law was lifted in the late 1980s and the restrictions on radio and TV programs were lifted in the early 1990s. Nonetheless, the promotion of Chinese Mandarin as the national language had been successful. Despite the political transformation and upheaval in the 1980s and 1990s, Mandarin still remains a *lingua franca* on this island.

## **1.2. Postmodern Taiwan and the Era of a More Multicultural Society**

Along with economic growth in the 1980s came democratization, and the lifting of martial law accelerated both democratization and pluralism. People found that their collective memory had long kept ‘China as the center and Taiwan on the periphery’. This ideology had permeated textbooks at all levels of education as well as in major government policies. However, beginning in the early 1990s, Taiwan ROC (Republic of China), has gradually become a central entity, though perhaps not yet exclusively, at least equal with ‘China’. People began to question what it means to be ‘Taiwanese’ in postmodern society. In seeking its identity, Taiwan has begun “constructing a distinct national identity and culture, and reconnecting with its roots”, as Zerubavel indicates a ‘new’ nation would do in the wake of a nationalist movement (1995:3 cited in Chen, 2000). As urged by former president, Lee Den-Hui, Taiwan is becoming “a living community of shared destiny” for all people on this island to identify with, regardless of their individual ethnicity (Lin, 2002).

### **1.2.1. A New Taiwanese Identity**

People on this island have been striving for a Taiwanese identity. When Taiwan was ceded to Japan in the Ching Dynasty, efforts to construct a feasible Taiwanese identity gradually submerged under Japanese oppression. When the nation was recovered and

returned to the “motherland”, the continued suppression of Taiwanese identity and language in the 1940s and 1950s by the government widened the distinctions between the immigrants coming to Taiwan from China and local residents. The gap between ‘local’ Taiwanese and the new rulers that was generated by events such as the February 28th Massacre (1947) was not closed as time passed. Since then, people have been struggling between a Chinese and a specifically Taiwanese identity. Pathos for being a ‘Taiwanese’ emerged in the process of the construction of an identity (Liao, 1995). Tse (2000, 152) claims that “no people in the modern world are more split than the Taiwanese people with respect to their identity as a group”. The lifting of martial law and the establishment of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) whose doctrine is for independence, along with the ‘economic miracle’ have helped the rise of a confident Taiwanese identity.

The new Taiwanese identity has also been shaped by continuous conflicts between China and Taiwan, and China's relentless military threat, and is bolstered by Taiwan's seeking more international recognition for its sovereignty. The mainland Chinese military threat during the time of first presidential election in 1996 is generally deemed to have been a constructive force to increase the Taiwanese people's identification with their island rather than a destructive force to shatter their faith. It is generally believed that China's opposition to the sovereignty of Taiwan and its continuous military threat and intimidation have made a profound impact on the Taiwanese people's sense of their national identity (Huang 2000, Lin, 2002, Marsh, 2002, Tsao, 1999, Tse 2000, Yip 2004). China's intention to isolate Taiwan has further awakened Taiwanese consciousness. Once taboo, the topic of independence has been debated for the past decade. The change of attitude towards identity can be clearly seen from several surveys and polls over the past decade. In 2004, after the presidential election, most Taiwanese acknowledged Taiwanese identity, and only roughly 8% of population thinks they are exclusively Chinese compared with 25% about ten years ago. The rise of Taiwanese identity and its endorsement by political figures such as President Chen (BBC interview, March 30, 2004) has had an impact on the linguistic ecology of the island.



### **1.2.2. The Rise of Taiwanese Identity and the New Status of Southern Ming**

The rise of a Taiwanese identity not only elevates the status of Southern Ming but it is also reflected in an emerging culture which has developed “a code mixed language using either Mandarin or Taiwanese as a grammatical base overlaid with a profusion of Taiwanese/Mandarin lexical elements in an utterance” (Huang, 2000:144). The mixed use of Taiwanese accented Mandarin known as Taiwan Guoyu, was once considered low status but has recently become fashionable (Feifel, 1994), and has been made popular in both television and daily conversation. This mixture nonetheless represents a poignant reminder of decades of authoritarian rule when the Nationalist government had tried to sinicize the people (Huang, *ibid*). Taiwanese accented Mandarin is no longer a ‘market’ or vulgar language but is now imitated by students on campus and some expressions have become their own particular language. The acceptance of Taiwanese-Mandarin by university and secondary school students is an embodiment of the gradually vanishing boundary between the low and the high language. Speaking standard Mandarin is no longer deemed prestigious; instead, Taiwanese can be a way of showing the degree of solidarity among people. It is a way of redeeming the local values that were threatened in the long period of colonization by Japan and to a lesser extent by the KMT governments in the postcolonial stage. To a certain extent, it is also a sign of speaking back to the early oppression by KMT. The awareness of local identity not only turns the Taiwanese language into a marker of this identity but also a political tool to appeal for people’s support. Even politicians of the second generation of mainlanders must learn Taiwanese in order to prove their solidarity with the people and to demonstrate their shared commitment to the island.

## **1.3. Taiwan, Globalization, and English**

### **1.3.1. A New Global Taiwanese Identity**

As language has become a less important marker of social status, it seems that people on the island are realizing that ethnic-group boundaries are disappearing and a new Taiwanese identity is formed because people now recognize that their ‘mother land’ is where they grow up and inhabit, and what they commit to (Tse, 2000:162-163). The



focus on a new Taiwanese identity is an attempt to diminish the boundaries between different groups and introduce the idea of ‘think global, act local’. Diplomatically isolated, Taiwan seeks economic development in the international arena. While Taiwanese rises as a marker of local identity, English is receiving more attention because of its role as an international language and a means to improve Taiwan’s global competitiveness and visibility. The government has decided that its status will improve if its people learn English. Because of the importance of English as an international language and Taiwan's heavy international trade, English now plays a vital role in the globalization of Taiwan.

### **1.3.2. The Unchallenged Position of English**

As we begin the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in Taiwan there are then two forces in operation. The government has introduced both English education as well as mother tongue education into the elementary school curriculum. On the one hand, English is considered a requirement for modernization and globalization. On the other hand, mother tongue education is a way of guaranteeing authenticity within one’s own society. Fishman speculated that these two forces might result in tension (Fishman 1989:126 quoted in Huang, 2000: 146); however, in Taiwan this appears not to be the case. Although there is anxiety regarding learning English from elementary school to institutions of higher learning, there was almost no opposition to the government’s decision to begin by moving the English language class requirement from the first year of junior high school to the third year of elementary school, and then later to the first year of elementary school. For instance, according to a survey done by the Taipei City Government English Education Promotion Committee in 2004 regarding the degree of satisfaction of elementary pupils, parents and teachers on English education, 84 percent of the parents and 57 percent of the pupils agreed to have English education from the first year (age 6). Presently, 70 percent of pupils go to a private English language school after class (Central News, August 5, 2004). From the street vendors to the university professors, attitudes towards their children’s English education are remarkably uniform (*The Common Wealth*, 2004: 102). Furthermore, the Minister of Education recently

announced that passing certain standardized English proficiency tests (for example, TOEFL, or GEPT) is to be required for undergraduate and graduate degrees. The implication of this will be discussed in the next section (2).

English is becoming cultural capital in Bourdieu's terms (1986), in that people believe it will help them succeed more easily. No parent wants his or her children to fall behind. This pressure to learn English has resulted in a high level of 'English anxiety' that is presently permeating the society. One result of this is that English learning is shaping people's values and perceptions. The pressure for English language learning particularly affects the academic domain.

Generally speaking, in Taiwan English is the *lingua franca* of modern business, scientific and diplomatic intercourse. Enmeshed in its difficult political and diplomatic situation, Taiwan is seeking other ways to connect with the world. First, the advent of English as an international language is especially significant to a country that is seeking a way to break its diplomatic isolation. The U.S.'s promise to help to defend against China's threat is crucial to Taiwan's ability to maintain its informal independence from the mainland. The U.S., Taiwan's most important foreign ally, is an English speaking country. The unofficial affiliation with the United States enhances the motivation for learning the language of this super power. Second, along with democratization has come the so-called "economic miracle" in Taiwan. Taiwan's economic dependence on exports and international trade has furthered the country's search for an international stage where English is the medium. Along with the economic transformation of the country, the importance of English in the scientific field has enhanced its unchallenged position in Taiwan.

### **1.3.3. A New Social Status Marker**

English has penetrated the boundaries of Taiwan and changed its people's habitus, which according to Bourdieu (Jenkins, 1992) is an ideational environment. The forces stated above are forces to form new beliefs that shape the values and perceptions of

people. English competence at the micro and macro levels, therefore, represents success. The language is at the same time spreading its cultural influence. Elebe's investigation into the reasons why Taiwanese people study English indicates that English can serve as an access point to Western culture and to the countries themselves (2002). Due to the uncertainty of Taiwan's future and the convenience of holding a foreign passport, many rich Taiwanese either study abroad themselves or send their children abroad. Both Ebele (ibid) and Yip (2004) point out that good English ability is a hallmark of prestige in the culture and therefore a good educational investment.

Taiwan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a democratic society in which pluralism is encouraged and appreciated. Linguistic hybridity is common in the mass media and even the lexis of the predominant language, Chinese Mandarin, now extensively includes Taiwanese, Japanese, and English borrowings. Taiwanese linguistic hybridity has also impacted on its culture. The Taiwanese society of the late 1980s in Ho Hsiao-Hsien's film *The Daughter of the Niles* (1987), compared with the society of the 1950s in his *City of Sadness*, is interwoven with imported youth cultures as the leading character, a young woman is working at Kentucky Fried Chicken, reading Japanese comics, drinking coca cola, and hanging out in the night clubs in the materialistic, neon-drenched, westernized Taipei. This multicultural society since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century has been transformed from a hybridized mixture of Taiwanese, dialects from different provinces of China, Japanese, and Mandarin into a present society with a lexical profusion of Mandarin, Taiwanese, and English.

#### **1.3.4. English in the Taiwanese Linguistic and Cultural Landscape**

In a society with conflicts produced by the interplay of language, politics, and identity, English does not appear to endanger national identity nor does it complicate the social context as it does in Singapore or Malaysia. Resistance to the idea of English language and its cultures 'colonizing' their own ones is almost absent from the Taiwanese social context. Compared with the Philippines' government's recent advocacy of vernacular language in the elementary school against English (Burns, 2004),



the introduction of ‘mother tongue’ education in Taiwan elementary schools is rather a reaction to the earlier oppressive language policy and an enhancement of identification with the island. In addition, English does not intensify linguistic conflict because it is considered to be mainly for instrumental purposes. It was not involved in the battle of identity and language waged by ethnic groups in the disputes and politics of Modern Taiwan. While the Taiwanese “mother tongue” can be politically used as a tool to appeal to local people to provide support, English is socially, economically and academically deemed a stepping-stone to global connection. Cultural imperialism produced by learning or using the language that is discussed in some other parts of the world (Phillipson, 1992, Pennycook, 1994) has not influenced the status of English in Taiwan. Furthermore, in Taiwan, English has generated little concern over cultural homogenization; instead, with its status of ‘*lingua franca*’ and ‘instrumentality’, it has created a new kind of superiority.

Prior to Taiwan entering its ‘economic miracle’ stage, there was a time that the potential linguistic and cultural dominance of the English language did attract attention. English has been taught as a compulsory foreign language in Taiwanese schools since just after World War II. In the 1970s and 1980s, when Taiwan had not yet completely left its postcolonial era behind, cultural critics were aware of the threat that English language might bring forth. For instance Siangtu literature<sup>3</sup> and New Cinema<sup>4</sup> are very critical of the growing influence of the English language and American/Western culture. This was particularly true with the economic exploitation and geopolitical domination of Taiwan by Japan and the West in postcolonial Taiwan. Li once expressed his

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<sup>3</sup> Siangtu Literature (Grass Root literature) is generally defined as a reflection of social reality in the 1970s. Its themes cover not only the peasant life but also urban life in Taiwan and it reflects people who are struggling with life in all walks. One of the definitions is the common experiences and memory people living in the same land share.

<sup>4</sup> New Cinema (which roughly began in the 1990s) directors grew up post-WWII during Taiwan’s socioeconomic restructuring from agricultural to an industrialized and capitalist society. New Cinema films examine the various problems the Taiwanese people have to cope with in an increasing modernized society.

unhappiness with the gradual dominance of English in scientific field: “Chinese [speaking] scientists using Chinese materials in Chinese [speaking] settings nevertheless compose their research reports in a stilted, unnatural foreign tongue” (Li cited in Chen, 1978: 58-59 cited in Yip, 2004: 17). Chen further supported this argument by noting that Taiwanese academia was similarly marked by Western education. Chen (1978, cited in Yip, *ibid*) postulates that unquestioned Western power and global authority make English and its related culture increasingly dominant over the local culture.

In recent years, reflections about the influence of Western education and language on the society have rarely been seen. Rather, there are increasing concerns over the younger generation’s English proficiency. Learning English is a definite road to success on the way to globalization. As many people in academia and government authority indicate, it is the way to increase the power of the country and to survive in the torrent of globalization. Evidence is seen in different national level policies and reports to be elaborated in a later section of this chapter.

The importance of English in internationalization is extensively and constantly addressed in several national policies in Taiwan. The degree of English proficiency is usually considered equivalent to the degree of internationalization. The impact of English as an international language on the national curriculum became evident not only when English education was introduced into primary schools but also when later it was considered for inclusion as a subject in both superior and general national civil service exams. In this respect, English is gradually turning into a marker of social and economic status as it has in other postcolonial countries. It has become a gatekeeper for more prestigious universities, which means a better job and admission into elite circles. Even though historically it is not related to either Mandarin or Southern Ming, it functionally became another form of High language, which enjoys prestige and power in several domains such as education, civil services, and science. This prestige and power was enjoyed solely by Chinese Mandarin only three decades ago.



## **1.4. English and Its Culture in Taiwan**

### **1.4.1. A New Hybridized Culture or a New Form of Cultural Colonization?**

In Taiwan, as noted above linguistic imperialism related to English education is not a major concern. Instead, great attention by the government, educators, and parents is paid to comparing the Taiwanese students' average TOEFL and TOEIC scores with scores of students in neighboring countries such as Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Korea. The cultural imperialism brought by American popular culture and consumerism, has been neglected by comparison. Ebele (2002: 58) in his study investigating the reasons why Taiwanese learn English points out that English has exposed people to a considerable amount of Western culture, and "this exposure in turn seems to have affected their attitudes towards both Taiwanese and Western people". According to his findings, the Taiwanese think that the more English they learn, the more Western culture they will be absorbing. In addition, people generally have favourable attitudes towards Western culture. Western culture, which is mainly represented by the U.S., is welcomed, even adored. With few exceptions such as the responsibility to take care of the elderly, Western culture is generally appreciated and often imitated. However, the kind of culture Taiwanese learners receive from the omnipresent English education is not clear. Is this favorable attitude an unmediated acceptance of 'foreign' culture because it is an English speaking culture? Or, is it based on their ability to appreciate differences? Western culture, and to a larger extent the culture of globalization, has according to Jameson (1998: 67), turned into "a standard form of American material life, along with Northamerica [sic] values and cultural forms, [which] are being systematically transmitted to other cultures". An extreme example of this tendency is seen in those who urge Taiwan to become the 51<sup>st</sup> state of the United States and thereby avoid a possible war across the strait (Chen, 2000).

In the complex context of Taiwanese identity, politics, and language, then, English remains a 'neutral language' and its position need not be challenged in the Taiwanese local linguistic ecology. As Crystal (1997) indicates, English is taken for granted not only in Britain or the States or some other postcolonial states; it is taken for granted as a



prerequisite to live in the modern society. Unlike in some postcolonial countries such as Malaysia or Hong Kong, support for English in Taiwan is not complicated by either colonial discourse or Orientalist discourse. The cultural impact of English language learning has almost never been called into question.

#### **1.4.2. A New Linguistic and Cultural Landscape**

From the “Chinese Mandarin Speaking Movement” to the “All Citizens Learn English Movement”, we can witness a shift in society and the interplay between language and identity. While Taiwan continues its quest for national identity and internal reconciliation, as Huang (2000:144) points out, at the same time it strives to move its people towards the global horizon. With the government’s support for multiculturalism and respect for other minority or aboriginal languages, Taiwan is substantially turning into a more multilingual society, even though Mandarin is still the official language. Nevertheless, social division and identity politics become more and more evident with every major election. The establishment of new political parties has heightened the struggle between ethnic groups. Domestically, conflicts among ethnic groups have not decreased; rather, they have increased as political issues heat up. At the same time, the people’s and university students’ lack of a ‘global view’ continues to be the country’s major concern. The society is multilingual and multicultural, but people are not necessarily moving towards an intercultural state. The local, cultural and global identities keep struggling in the new linguistic ecology. Thus far, it cannot be determined if Taiwan will continue be a melting pot of cultural diversity or if it will be submerged in western culture.

#### **1.5. What Can English as a Foreign Language Education do?**

Various educational policies related to internationalization serve to ensure that the role of English is maintained and perpetuated in Taiwan. At the university level, English is promoted as the medium of instruction to attract more foreign students and the intellectual capital that students need to have to increase their own and the country’s competitiveness. In this respect, domestic politics have not influenced English

language policies much. Instead, it is the global ecology that makes English a new marker of one's ability to participate in global progress.

However, if the emphasis in English education is merely placed on learners' linguistic skills, the cultural messages a language carries will be merely taken for granted, ignored or even rejected. Therefore, there might be two consequences of an emphasis on language skills alone and the neglect of culture: 1. Taiwan will wind up being swamped by western culture, or 2. People will remain insular and not able to cross borders or engage with Other. The English language, apart from its instrumentality, can be a medium to connect cultures and further to promote interactions between them. By taking advantage of English's neutrality in Taiwan, intercultural education can be safely introduced into the language classroom. As Kramsch indicated, intercultural training should enable each person to "learn to see the world through others' eyes without losing sight of him or herself" (1993: 231). This intercultural competence on the one hand helps students understand that one cannot abandon one's own culture or ignore that of the target language. On the other hand, learning English as an international language does not mean taking Anglophone culture as the international norm of culture. The anxiety of learning English will not merely become a mimicking of foreign cultures. Instead, intercultural learning through a foreign language can further enable students to understand the other and therefore reduce the friction among different groups. English education can further enable students to use the cultural knowledge they learn from the language class to investigate the sameness and differences between cultures. This cross-cultural understanding can be transferable and provide an 'in-between' space for students to understand different perspectives. They would be thereby able to manage conflicts, even among different groups in their own country. As discussed in Chapter 2, the global dimension brought by English learning can therefore help coordinate the local and global cultures that together compose the modern dynamic society.

## **2. The Current Status of English Education in Higher Education in Taiwan**

As presented in the Linguistic Background in the previous section, Taiwan desires more international visibility and global recognition by using English, as a medium to connect with the rest of the global community. English education is expected to elevate the internationalization of higher education and eventually lead to the internationalization of our nation. This section will present the status of English education in higher education in Taiwan. It will first portray the government's concept of internationalization through some existing policies for college English education that are prioritized, though roughly stated, in goals aiming at the internationalization of higher education. In significant national level guidelines, English competence is deemed an indicator of global awareness and internationalization.

It is, however, vital to note in the process of internationalization of Higher Education, the English language does not automatically enable students or citizens to reach out to the world. As discussed in Chapter 2, internationalization needs to include an intercultural dimension. Engaging in cultural dialogue in the process of language learning is important, because as UNESCO (2001) urges, through intercultural dialogue cultural segregation, cultural entrenchment and conflict can be prevented. English is crucial, however, not only because of its being recognized as the primary international language but also because a competence in English can help Taiwanese citizens develop the potential to enrich their personal lives by encountering Others in this global village.

### **2.1. The National Guidelines for English Education: Rhetoric and Reality**

This section opens with a discussion of the existing national guidelines for secondary and university education. The government rhetoric is that English education aims to provide opportunities to increase cultural understanding and global understanding in addition to linguistic training. In reality, the examination-oriented policy steers the direction of education.



### 2.1.1. Guidelines for Pre-university English Education

Current English education in Taiwan can be roughly divided into four stages:

1. Primary school (grades 3 to 6)<sup>5</sup>,
2. Junior high school (grades 7~9),
3. High school (grades 10~12), and
4. University.

As noted in the preceding chapter, the government has not as yet provided its own clear guidelines comparable to the Common European Framework. Neither has it had language professionals set learning and teaching references such as the American Standards or the CEF. The ROC Ministry of Education (MOE), has nevertheless provided a limited set of basic English Language teaching standards as part of a Grade 1~9 Curriculum Alignment<sup>6</sup> document (MOE 2001). An additional set of rough standards for high school English curricula is available (ibid). The itemized and simply stated goals are restricted to a framework of the traditional four skills training that includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. The macro-goal is to increase cultural and intercultural understanding. The description of each goal is reinforced with instrumental training as seen in an example of a comparison of guidelines for English reading proficiency levels from junior high through senior high school (Appendix 6).

These curriculum guidelines, in addition to increasing English competence nurturing a broad global view through understanding different cultures is one of their focuses and

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<sup>5</sup> In some cities such as Taipei, English courses start in grade 1 because the local government provides a high level of funding or because parents are willing to pay extra for English classes. Also, some parents send their children to private language schools or bilingual preschools.

<sup>6</sup> Grade 1~9 Curriculum Alignment was introduced in 2002 by the Ministry of Education with the goal of providing coherent curriculum guidelines to replace the traditional curriculum for teaching. At the same time the curriculum Alignment was introduced, the teaching of Taiwanese, the local dialect, was also introduced.

objectives. In addition to traditional four skills training, teaching goals include students having familiarity with and understanding of both their local culture and foreign cultures in the global mainstream. However, a closer look at their itemized goals shows that the four language skills remain the ultimate goal. Whether or not these abilities have any connection with preparation for a better global view is also difficult to judge. Methods are not provided to assess whether the stated objectives of increasing understanding of international affairs and foreign cultures has been achieved. The question remains as to whether students are becoming better prepared to enter a more internationally oriented academic environment or whether they are still simply being trained to pass linguistically-oriented examinations.

### **2.1.2. Guidelines for English Education in Higher Education**

English education in higher education has ostensibly changed in step with the democratizing changes in Taiwanese society over the past 3 decades. Foreign language education policy was once limited to English language that had been required in every higher educational institution until 1994 when the Higher University Law approved the establishment of principles of university autonomy and academic freedom. Since then, developments in their curricula show universities' increasing self-determination. Accordingly, the implementation of autonomy in higher education has removed requirements for minimum obligatory credits for English courses for graduation. This means that universities or colleges can establish their own requirements regarding courses and credits. During the past 5 decades the number of higher education institutions in Taiwan has expanded from three, with approximately 1500 students, to over 150 colleges and universities with a student body of over 700,000. This quantitative increase, however, has not been accompanied by corresponding improvements in the quality of education, the English education in particular. In this regard, university faculty members generally agree on the importance of foreign language education and share concerns about the perceived deterioration of their students' English competence.

Despite the acknowledged problems, the government still deems the promise of English proficiency one of the most important reasons for conferring a leading role on higher education in the current impetus towards globalization. The government's determination to improve higher education in order to increase international status is clearly seen in several important policies and projects and implicit in its decisions on funding. From the documents and reports produced by the MOE it is evident that the much-vaunted concept of 'internationalization' of Taiwan's universities entails the following:

- Improved English language skills for teachers and learners
- More international students attending Taiwanese universities
- More students engaged in first hand experiences in other countries
- Additional English courses and courses taught in English
- Establishing English proficiency graduation thresholds for university students, based on standardized exams.

The government's and even academia's conception are obviously built on linguistic rather than intercultural competence. There is no clear framework for the internationalization of Higher education as discussed in Chapter 2. Nor is there evidence of any detailed consideration of intercultural competence as an important element in the process of internationalization.

#### **2.1.2.1. "White Paper on Higher Education" by the ROC Ministry of Education**

The White Paper on Higher Education, initiated by the MOE in 1999, based on "the advice and comments of many experts and scholars concerned with higher education," reviews current developments and explores problems of higher education in Taiwan, ROC. It provides an insight into existing problems such as the distribution of resources and the insufficiency of internationalization. The Paper, offers "concrete measures" for short- and mid-range proposals, including ways to raise "international competitiveness" and visibility, which are major endeavors toward reaching excellence



in higher education. In addition, it continues to affirm the need for universities to pursue serious research by discovering new insights, creating a new university culture and realizing new ideals that will enable students to cultivate a “whole personality”. In short, the White Paper states that universities, generally, should continue their march towards being “pluralistic, liberal, democratic and international”.

The White Paper further clarifies its concept of academic globalization as international outreach in its “Ideals of Education” Section (section ii, part 2. 2001). It points out that “globalization not only extends the life of a university, it also helps higher education to continually develop” (ibid). It further specifies that the “internationalization of universities is a major step toward the internationalization of our nation” (ibid). With solid scholarship, universities are encouraged to enroll more overseas students and are expected to recognize the fact that “the work of internationalization is a long-term process that must be supported with concrete planning”. However, apart from these conceptual goals, the White Paper does not elaborate on its suggestion of “concrete planning” with substantial guidelines. In the Section titled “Policies of Higher Education Development”, the White Paper admits that there remain many areas needing improvement in the internationalization of higher education. It recognizes the fact that the degree of the internationalization has indeed been “shallow”, and that the process remains at the “primitive stage of mostly importing foreign knowledge”.

Deficiencies in foreign and English language competencies are deemed major problems regarding internationalization of HE, requiring additional efforts by both government and higher education institutions. In addition to recognizing that “performance in diverse academic disciplines continues to lag behind”, the White Paper also recognizes the lack of international competitiveness resulting from a lack of appropriate competence in a foreign language (later identified as English) on the part of students and teaching staff. The reality in Taiwan is that “our students have difficulty reading foreign texts in the original, and they are unable to converse in foreign tongues, let

alone write papers in foreign languages. Many who teach in our universities and hold local doctorates dread the idea of going abroad for further studies, of participating in international symposia or presenting conference papers” (ibid). Improvement in the English speaking and writing ability of faculty, staff and students is deemed “a major target for Taiwan’s national efforts toward internationalization” (ibid). Overall, English competence is a recurring concern in internationalization of Higher Education.

In the White Paper, enrolling foreign students is considered a necessary element of internationalization and a recurrent emphasis in all sorts of documents related to internationalization of higher education. Therefore, English is again recognized as being of indispensable significance. The Paper also recognizes that English medium education is not sufficient itself: “to attract foreign students it is not enough to change our curricula and merely use English as the language of tuition”. The primary concern should be whether higher education has offered a sufficiently competitive academic environment and whether our academic research is sufficiently sophisticated and advanced to “inspire” scholars to come. Even though it is fully understood that internationalizing higher education is not accomplished by merely making English the language of instruction, it still urges universities to begin enrolling more international students and to “conduct classes in the English language”. English across the curriculum here is still contradictorily regarded as a panacea for inadequate internationalization in higher education. In this regard the obsession with internationalization is seen in issues such as how to create an international social environment and strengthen the internationalization while at the same time regionalizing the educational content.

Even when no particular language is specified, in Taiwan the term ‘foreign language’ is widely accepted as a synonym for English. Throughout the entire White Paper, English is therefore considered to be a major factor, albeit not the only factor, which determines the level of the internationalization of higher education.

#### 2.1.2.2. Reports on English Education

*The MOE Report of Comparison of the Quality of Higher Education Among Neighboring Asian Countries* (Jan 2003) and *The Report of the National Education Development Conference: Guiding Taiwan to the E-Century* (September 2003) also respond to the concerns about internationalization of higher education. One of the three main agendas of the NED Conference was to promote the quality and effectiveness of higher education and thus to promote international competitiveness. These two reports in response to the MOE White Paper proposed that universities cultivate students' global awareness, construct an internationalized learning environment, promote students' foreign language competence, and enroll more overseas students in order to increase the competitiveness of universities. The Medical Education section of the Education Convention specifically designated English as one of several core course requirements, which include "Ethics, English, and Logic Analysis, Communication and Communication skills with patients".

Both the convention discussion report and the comparison report suggest ways to enhance the internationalization of higher education. The comparison report specifically proposes methods of promoting foreign language competence among university students that include having compulsory general English courses and optional professional English courses to increase students' English competence, implementing placement tests in order to meet the different needs of students, and providing a variety of opportunities such as exchange programs, online courses, affiliation with foreign schools, etc., in order to increase intercultural interactions among students. It is hoped that "through all kinds of international academic activities, students can promote their foreign language ability, which can put the international learning into practice".

Both reports put forward a number of suggestions, included few innovative proposals or concrete guidelines. These reports do, however, expose many weaknesses of current English education at the tertiary level. The same generalized emphasis can be seen in the following national projects.



### 2.1.3. Guidelines in General

#### Two National Projects

Two important national projects further illustrate the government's perspective of the relationship between internationalization and English education. The 'Challenge 2008 National Development Plan: E Generation Cultivation Project'<sup>7</sup> was officially launched in 2003, as a major program designed to lay a foundation for national development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Globalization is prioritized. In an overview the government expresses the need to provide avenues for its citizens to meet the demands of globalization through education, and better-designed learning conditions, especially in foreign language learning and proficiency. Special attention is given to English: "English is the official language of the international community, it is necessary that we also strive to promote English proficiency here in Taiwan". One goal of this project is to establish an internationalized living environment to promote the English competence of citizens. The ultimate goal is creating a bilingual environment, thereby developing global citizens. In this regard, promoting internationalization of higher education, promoting English and international learning are also major focuses. This project again states that in order to elevate the English proficiency of university students, provisions such as those listed earlier should be put into effect. More specifically, it recommends that students taking other courses taught in English receive extra credits and that all Master's and PhD theses should be required to be written in English. Implementation of this goal is expected to elevate the students' English competence and therefore to broaden their 'international horizons'.

In 2005 the Ministry of Education announced another major educational policy. This policy includes "Formulating Global Strategies for A Creative Taiwan" and 'Promoting Human Potential for Our New Generation', which includes four major themes: Cultivating Modern Citizens, Establishing Taiwan's Originality, Expanding the Global

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<sup>7</sup> In contemporary Taiwanese society the term 'E generation' is generally used to categorize people born after 1980 and raised in a more electronic, Americanized and affluent society.

Vision, and Enhancing Citizens' Commitment to Society. The recurrent emphasis on proper development of citizenship, respect to multiculturalism and diversified values is noteworthy. With respect to Cultivating Modern Citizens, the document prioritizes foreign language competence, and in particular English competence. The Minister of Education in this document and his interview with the *Common Wealth Magazine* emphasizes that language can provide the younger generation a window to the world and enable them to cross the boundaries between the past and the present and among different countries. Languages will also help one to "understand history and culture and absorb the strength of different civilizations"(2004:7).

Globalization is also a major goal of the 'Formulating Global Strategies' project (See Appendix 7). Enhancing English proficiency" in order to establish global links is one of the chief objectives. "To think globally and act locally" is a way of keeping Taiwan current with the rest of the world. Cultivating global awareness is the cornerstone of this project albeit with insufficient details for concrete planning and implementation. One newly added objective is to raise at least one university into the top 100 world-ranked universities, albeit without indicating the criteria to be used. Overall, in terms of former policies related to English, this project is a 'simplified' and 'summarized' version of the previous projects. Again, the means for understanding multicultural world is oversimplified as linguistic competence in English.

The aspirations stated in these two national scale projects represent 'rhetoric' rather than 'reality'. The reality is that the policies still place most emphasis on encouraging teachers of all levels and university students to pass 'standardized' English proficiency examinations. Nonetheless, there are different opinions about the descriptors for different standardized examinations. For example, as mentioned briefly in the preceding chapter, the standards set for different levels of the GEPT, by the Language Training and Testing Center are questionable regarding reliability. Beginning with the 2005 to 2006 academic year, the MOE therefore suggests that because reliable comparisons among standardized tests are unlikely, the Common Reference Levels of



the Common European Framework (CEF) of Reference for Languages may be used. Therefore, the proposed ‘concrete’ goals include having university students pass the B1-Threshold in reference to the CEF. Overall, the belief that good language ability automatically instills one with a global vision and understanding of other cultures is deep-rooted in this document.

## **2.2. Reality and Implementation: The Current Situation and Implementation of English Education in Higher Education**

The success of the government’s efforts to construct a better English learning environment remains questionable for several reasons. First, current English education in higher education lacks common goals, guidelines and references for the English curriculum (Chang, 2003). No thorough and thoughtful planning and detailed implementation timeframes can be found in any of the important policy papers cited above. In addition, little academic research has addressed the existing problems. Every university autonomously sets its own curriculum and standards. English courses in Taiwanese universities are usually offered in the first year of undergraduate studies. Universities usually provide no further language training until the end of four years. In recent years, in response to the government’s expectations, some universities have extended English courses to the second or third year.

Liou (2003) points out some problems of current English education at the university level. These include lack of careful studies of teachers training and development, lack of comparison of the curricula with English programs in different universities. Liou further indicates that lack of proper supervision of English curricula aggravates the problem. The responsibility for curriculum planning and teaching usually falls upon departments of English Language and Literature or other related fields in which most of teachers consider teaching General English unrelated to their expertise in literature or linguistics. Teachers generally rely on textbooks; most texts and materials available in Taiwan to English instructors of ESL students are published in North America. Discussion of materials will be continued in Chapter 6. The problems in college level



English education meant that instead of being a stepping-stone on the path to globalization, as the government likes to view it, English is in danger of becoming a stumbling block.

The next section will further investigate existing problems with University English curricula, teacher training and development, student motivation, and general research on college English education.

### **2.2.1. The Curriculum**

As stated earlier, most English courses in higher educational institutions are classified as general education courses or core curriculum courses, and are usually offered during the first year of undergraduate studies. General Education English courses range from traditional training in the four skills, to specific courses such as Reading Newspapers in English or professionally-oriented courses in English for Biology or Nursing. Most schools require 4 to 6 credit hours of compulsory English courses before graduation (Shi and Chung, 2002, MOE, 2001). Instructors are usually given the freedom to determine course objectives, materials and methods of teaching. Out of 27 Taiwanese universities surveyed by Shi and Chung, one third of them use placement tests to classify students in different levels (2002:36-40). This practice has been questioned by researchers such as Chiang (2002) as being more beneficial to instructors and stronger students than to weaker students. Some universities classify students according to the level of their proficiency and plan the curriculum in line with the GEPT levels namely Elementary, Intermediate, High-intermediate and Advanced Levels. As a result, English classrooms have tended to become sites to train students to pass the necessary exams or attain the required levels of linguistic competence. Shi's study (2003) also indicates that most university English curricula are focused on the fundamental four skills training with emphasis on reading and listening comprehension.

### **2.2.2. Teacher Development**

It is fundamental for the successful development of students' understanding of the world

that Teachers themselves have sufficient cultural knowledge and a willingness to cross cultural boundaries. However, there are few formal English teacher training and development programs in higher education, and it remains questionable whether English teachers are prepared for a more globalized country. Research about the academic role of the HE English teaching staff is quite limited because there are divergent positions about whether more emphasis should be placed on teaching or research, and also because the culture of Taiwan generally gives great respect to teachers. Liou (2003) indicates that teachers should improve their IT skills in order to catch up with the ever-changing techno-society. However, computer skills do not necessarily guarantee teachers' growth in this ever-changing world.

In addition, whether or not native English speakers, with their "natural privilege", are the best language teachers has long been an issue for debate (Kramsch 1998, Byram, 1999). There has been insufficient research on the role of the English native speaker in higher education (Liou, 2003). In one quarter of universities interviewed by Shi (2002), one quarter to one third of the teaching positions were taken by native English speakers. While it is not proven whether the expectations that students in higher education benefit from interaction with native English speaking teachers have actually been met, most universities keep at least some native speakers<sup>8</sup> on their teaching staff. Although the concept that native speakers are the best teachers has been challenged (Byram, 1998; Kramsch, 1993: 79), there is still insufficient training of native English speaking staff in higher education. Phillipson (1992: 256) states that some native speakers are reluctant to learn the local language often because of a "lack of respect for and interest in local culture". In Taiwan, such reluctance might be intensified by the complex language situation and the difficulty Anglophones find learning Mandarin or Taiwanese. Native speaking teachers are not necessarily successful in providing an "inter" cultural or international perspective. Furthermore, it is common to find a native English speaker with a bachelor's degree in any subject, working in a private

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<sup>8</sup> Foreign teachers in Taiwan are required by the Ministry of Education to have a master's or PhD degree in order to teach at the college level.

language school, with a master's degree teaching in a private college or university and with a PhD degree teaching in a public university. The idea that "if you've got nothing better to do, then go to Taiwan to teach English" is not only a satirical joke in a TV commercial<sup>9</sup> but it could be a fact in the real English classroom.

### **2.2.3. Student Motivation**

Students' lack of motivation towards learning English, in addition to the problems with the curriculum itself, also result from factors such as geographical irrelevance, a rapid increase in domestic postgraduate programs, and the strengthening of local identity. The recent boom in higher education, and particularly postgraduate programs, has produced a wide variety of channels for advanced studies, further reducing students' motivation to pursue advanced studies abroad, resulting in a further decrease in the incentive to study English.<sup>10</sup> Liou (2003) also points out that students' attitudes towards English courses, usually taken in the first year of undergraduate studies, remain very questionable because they have just been released from the pressure of preparing for university entrance exams. One of the teacher respondents in this research shared Liou's concern by stating that students are distracted by too many extracurricular activities. It appears that motivation to improve English proficiency will diminish if students do not intend to utilize language skills academically for pursuing an advanced degree abroad, or professionally in preparation for working for an international company.

The rise of a local Taiwanese identity and the transformation of society toward Taiwanization can have an impact on students' motivation. Huang (2000) described

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<sup>9</sup> In a famous TV commercial for a language school, two shabby homeless Americans sat on the street corner, chatting about what they were going to do. One of them suggested: "Let's go to Taiwan to teach". The other immediately deemed this a bright idea. The commercial implied that the school in question hired qualified native speakers while its rivals did not. However, it also satirized the general beliefs about native English speaking teachers in Taiwan.

<sup>10</sup> According to the MOE Report on a Comparison of the Quality of Higher Education with Neighboring Asian Countries, the number of students studying abroad fell from 61,000 in 1996 to 46,000 in 2001.



Taiwanization as “a conscious effort to elaborate a distinct Taiwan identity”.

According to a survey by a local newspaper, 60% of the Taiwanese young people also believed that Taiwanese was more important than English (personal communication, 2005). The trend toward cultural and historical localization has been slowly entering into higher education (Huang, *ibid*), and language is implicitly associated with a distinct new local identity. The impact of the changes in the Taiwanese language base is unknown. This and the impact of changes in local identity formation should be examined in future research.

#### **2.2.4. Research on College English Education**

Since there are no national standards for English education at the university level, independent research generally focuses on the policies of individual schools, various aspects of ELT instruction and linguistics, rather than on a holistic in depth perspective. For example, except for a few presentations on general subjects such as “Teaching Cross-Cultural Issues to Taiwanese Students” (Anderson, 2002), in the proceedings of the International Symposium on English Teaching / Fourth Pan-Asian Conference<sup>11</sup> held in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005, papers focused on the instrumental aspects of instruction. An examination of conference programs revealed that most conferences focused on linguistic accuracy and comprehension because they have the national exams as a common goal. The research on individual policies of higher educational institutions generally falls into the three categories of curriculum design, placement tests, and needs analysis (Shi, 2002). These research projects remain focused on the four skills with the exception of one research paper related to “Integrated Thematic Instruction” (Wang 2000, cited in Shi, 2002), which takes a more humanistic approach. There are currently some projects, funded by Ministry of Education and conducted by different universities, involving a wide-ranging study of College English education.

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<sup>11</sup> This annual international conference is held by The English Teacher Association of the ROC, and with over 1500 participants is considered as the largest conference in Taiwan. The conference usually covers a great variety of topics such as preschool English education, using technology to teach English, or literature teaching at college level.

However, these projects mostly focus on how to promote students' linguistic skills. For example, a major project conducted by Shi and Chung on Freshmen English Education of the National Taiwan Normal University concluded that more effort should be placed on elevating students' linguistic skills (2005). There is, however, no indication if this will become an important reference document used by the MOE to establish guidelines.

## **2.3. Government's Measures to Improve University English Learning Environment**

### **2.3.1. Measures and Actions**

Chen Wei Zhao, the president of National Taiwan University, a leading university in Taiwan, albeit without providing empirical evidence, stated in a NTU alumni newsletter (March, 2001) that the English competence of university students could be worse than that of high school students. Since then, the worsening English ability of university students has been a high profile issue in the academic arena as well as within the Ministry of Education. With regard to this situation the Ministry of Education has initiated a variety of actions to show their determination to promote improvements in the language-learning environment. These include:

1. Urging universities to improve students' English competence and encouraging them to increase the number and variety of English course offerings.
2. Providing substantial grant funding for universities to improve student English skills. Also, providing funding varying from millions to tens of millions of Taiwan dollars to encourage English education with the primary emphasis on developing plans to encourage and assist students to pass standardized tests.
3. Providing a variety of scholarships and student loans to encourage students to study abroad.
4. Conducting three surveys to investigate the current status of English education related to the goals set by the aforementioned national policies and projects. These studies investigated the variety of different English courses offered and the number of courses taught in English or bilingually, graduation requirements

for English proficiency, competency thresholds set by each university and the number of students who have passed established thresholds. The thresholds were based on written or computerized standardized tests such as the TOEFL, the IELTS the GEPT.

### **2.3.2. MOE Surveys and Implication of Results**

The three MOE surveys conducted in 2003 (a and b) and 2005 respectively are the first comprehensive nationwide surveys of English curricula and university requirements in the last decade. Although the results of the first survey illuminated the connection between national policy and the implementation of English education in universities, the results are inconclusive<sup>12</sup>. Using only data from the completed forms, the first survey results (2003a, Appendix 8) show that most of the universities provided compulsory English courses ranging from 6 to 8 credit hours in the first year. Despite the nation's intention to provide students with additional resources for learning English, the first survey revealed that very few schools required students to continue English education beyond eight credit hours.

The second MOE survey (2003b, Appendix 8), done together with the second one, was to investigate whether or not each school had set an English competence threshold, or had a timeline for setting such a threshold, for specific departments or for the entire school. The results (2003b) reveal that, except for English courses, few schools offered courses that were conducted either entirely in English or bilingually. This contradicts the MOE's claim at the national educational conference that numerous professional courses have been taught in English (National Education Conference Report, 2002)<sup>13</sup>. The goal of "English across curriculum" serving as a springboard to

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<sup>12</sup> Forty two out of the 156 schools surveyed simply left parts of the form blank or failed to provide the requested information. The incomplete surveys were mostly from colleges or universities that had been upgraded from junior colleges to four-year technical colleges.

<sup>13</sup> The report also indicates that although the number of courses taught in English has significantly increased, further effort is needed to raise the quality as well.



the internationalization of higher education seems to remain a distant prospect. In addition, among a total of 22 schools that responded to this item in the affirmative, only 6 schools specified the type of threshold used, and these were generally based on TOEFL, GEPT, and IELTS. The result of this part of the survey revealed that the implementation of English education, although not running counter to national policy, did not actually follow through with the government's expectations.

The above notwithstanding, because English education is generally considered an indicator of the degree of internationalization of a university, more and more universities are setting thresholds for graduation and reorganizing their curriculum to meet this goal or get more funding. In 2005, a third nationwide survey of seventy universities was done to investigate whether the thresholds had been set or not, and to determine the number of students graduating that year who had passed the standardized exams. The results here again showed most universities trying to cope with the government's expectation by setting a threshold for at least one or a few departments. These surveys leave many questions open. For example,

- Does the chosen statistical evidence point to any association between English education and international competitiveness?
- Is there any qualitative indication that simply providing compulsory courses improves the student's English competence and instills a global view?

In addition to the surveys, the government's funding orientation has a possible backwash on university English education. As noted, universities now direct their English teaching towards preparing students to pass standardized exams. A few universities explicitly include GEPT or TOEFL preparation in their English courses. Implementation of concrete measures to enhance students' four skills is usually accredited by different teaching and research assessments. 'Service language' (Chapter 2) courses such as Scientific English and Technology English are encouraged. The government provides funding to this type of curriculum change and considers it an

effective way to promote the students' language proficiency.

#### **2.4. A Review of the role of English in Current Status of Taiwanese Higher Education**

Given the fact that Taiwanese society has become increasingly multilingual and multicultural, English Education in higher education requires a solid infrastructure. Despite the autonomy of universities, the government needs to work together with academic professionals or, as in Japan, appoint a national commission to analyze foreign language policy. Investigators should not only probe problems, but consider good practice in successful programs elsewhere in order to formulate effective benchmarks and guidelines at all educational levels, as suggested in Chapter 2. The ways that English competence empowers students to participate in the international community is also an important issue that requires to be addressed. The rush to globalization should not come at the expense of the voice of locality (Parker, 1999, Chung, 2002). The significance of intercultural education in university foreign language education therefore needs urgent attention.

Bakhtin argues that hybridization is not only “double-voiced...but is also double-langued [sic]; ...it is the collision between differing points of view on the world and they are embedded in these forms...and such unconscious hybrids...are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new ‘internal forms’ for perceiving the worlds in words” (1981 cited in Bhabha, 1998:33). English is not only a vehicle for communication, but also a global *lingua franca* that equips students to be double-langued; it is a bridge for students in Taiwan to engage with a world in which cultural diversity is the norm. As the ROC National Science Council (1997)<sup>14</sup> indicated, appropriate foreign language and literature teaching helps students avoid blindly drifting with the trend towards globalization. It is imperative to ponder how

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<sup>14</sup> The Fundamental Problems of Foreign Literature Research and Education, Report on the research direction of Foreign Literature Discipline, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, National Science Council.

Taiwanese English education can evolve from textbook based linguistic and four skills training, to providing students with the intercultural competence and critical abilities that will enable them to confront this multicultural, transient and pluralistic world and facilitate their ability to learn in different spheres. This research now turns to a consideration of the potential for including and developing intercultural dimensions in the EFL curriculum at the tertiary level in Taiwan to achieve the goal stated above. The following chapter will outline the research methodology and is followed by two chapters of data analysis and discussion.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Research and Methodology Description**

#### **1. Introduction**

##### **1.1. Defining the Research Questions**

In this chapter, an account of research tools, designs, informants and data collection procedures are provided. Details of the research questions are outlined and accompanied with an explanation of how the various research tools were developed or adopted for the different studies and sets of data collected. The studies are:

1. Student, teacher and the government administrator perspectives of English language education and cultural learning in the EFL classroom,
2. Appropriate socio-cultural topics for an intercultural language classroom, and
3. The development of an appropriate model for a university level English foreign language curriculum that is based on cultural differences and integrated with a Cultural Studies syllabus.

These studies, although separate, are interlinked with the intent that the qualitative data will provide rich insights into and an enhancement of the findings of the quantitative data.

##### **1.2. The Research Approach**

After the research questions and hypothesis are presented, we are faced with the choice of a methodological approach or approaches appropriate for collecting the necessary data. The selection of approaches is usually influenced by the aims of the research, the type of information required, and the nature of the informants. By using a variety of procedures and by obtaining data from a range of resources, the researcher can obtain rich and comprehensive data (Seliger and Shohamy, 1997:160). The data was

collected using questionnaires, interviews, student oral presentations and written products. The decision to collect different types of data is based on the hypothesis that one set of data should have the potential to support and inform the other. In this research, it is anticipated that different elements of the exploration would be attitudes, perspectives, and expectations, and the appropriateness of an intercultural curriculum for the university EFL classroom. Therefore, the data collection requires the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Generally speaking, both quantitative and qualitative methods, as Patten (1990: 13-4) indicates, have their unique advantages:

Qualitative methods permit the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth and openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, require the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned.

These two methods are used in this thesis to build a more holistic discussion on this topic (figure 1). In general, quantitative research generates reliable information and generalizable data. Qualitative research generates rich and detailed data that can contribute to an in-depth understanding of a specific context. In this research, I use quantitative data to establish general attitudes towards intercultural learning in HE in Taiwan, and qualitative data to establish the specific outcomes of particular classroom practices in my own institution.



# The Structure of the Research Methodology

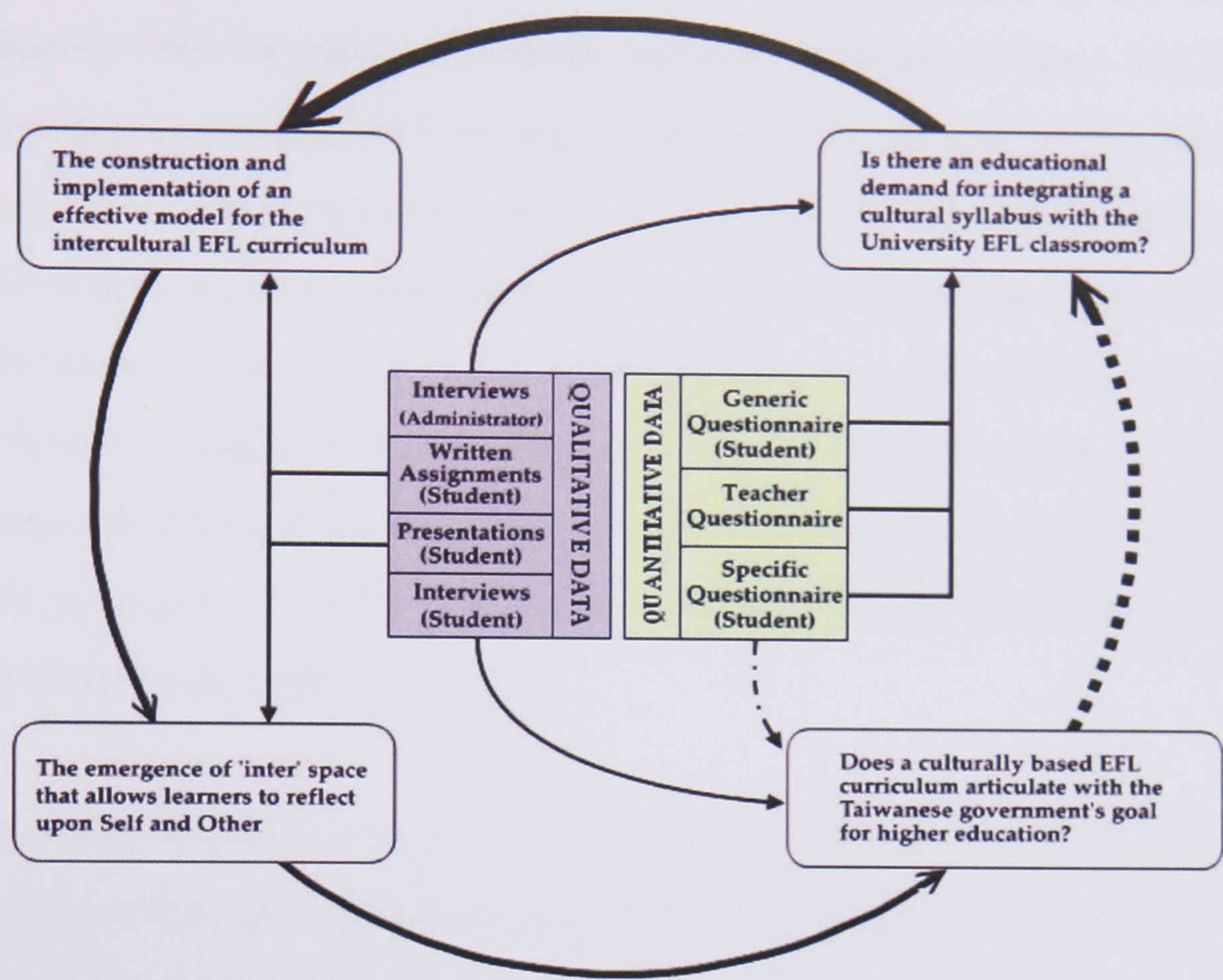


Figure 1

## 2. Quantitative Data: The Design of Research Tools and Data Collection Procedures

Quantitative research methods use structured instruments such as questionnaires in which the response options have usually been predetermined and a large number of informants are involved. The major quantitative method used in this research is the questionnaire.

### Questionnaire

Although the use of questionnaires for data collection is sometimes challenged, questionnaires are generally considered one of the most effective tools for getting “an overview of a particular situation” (Birley and Moreland, 1998:34). According to Cohen and Manion (1995:83), questionnaires provide information to be gathered from a



particular point in time and the analysis can be varied in complexity. Moreover, questionnaires are a low cost means of gathering and processing data from a large number of informants. In addition, according to Gullham (2000: 6), they can provide suggestive data for testing a hypothesis, and avoid interviewer's bias. The basic data regarding the opinions and knowledge of the learners is obtained by questionnaires and can be used for the researcher's further investigation and reflection (Wallace, 1997). This research uses two questionnaires to gather data about attitudes and perspectives. The Generic Questionnaire explores student perspectives of language learning and culture in the English language classroom. The Specific Questionnaire additionally yields information necessary for the integration of a cultural syllabus into the university EFL classroom. It further provides some basic opinions that helped the researcher devise the student group interview.

As suggested above, collecting data through questionnaires has its problems. For example, Wolf (1997, quoted in Aldred, 2002: 107) indicates that certain assumptions are made in the use of questionnaires. These assumptions include:

1. That the respondent can read and understand the questions or items,
2. That the respondent possesses the information to answer the questions or items,
3. That the respondent is willing to answer the questions or items honestly.

In addition to the above concerns, the respondents might be motivated to give the responses they think the researcher is expecting. To overcome potential problems, piloting the questionnaire is necessary to ensure respondent understanding. Moreover, the researcher's presence when administering the questionnaire can help ensure that the respondents understand the questions. Regarding the honesty of the respondent, the researcher can create a situation where there is no apparent reason for them to give a false answer. Sellitz *et al* (1981:147) suggests:

.... It may be reasonable to assume that people will tell the truth about themselves unless we have

specific reasons to think otherwise. The researchers should identify particular, sensitive topics and try to take into account the sensitivity through proper interviewing techniques and question words.

Therefore, when designing the questionnaires, questions that might result in misunderstanding or topics that might induce sensitivity are reworded.

## **2.1. Overview of Three Questionnaires**

### **Generic and Specific Questionnaires**

1. Each questionnaire took about 8 to 10 minutes. These questionnaires were designed by the researcher who is a Chinese native speaker; they were delivered to the respondents in Chinese, and later translated into English by the researcher for this thesis.
2. The Generic Questionnaire was administered via the web during the first week of the first semester and the Specific Questionnaire was similarly given out on the web after two thirds of the curriculum had been covered.
3. The total number of informants for the Generic Questionnaire was 1131 from one Taiwanese HE institution (Kaohsiung Medical University). Newly entering freshman informants numbered 1064 and a further 67 informants were in their sophomore Dentistry classes, taking their English course in their second year. The informants for the Specific Questionnaire were 45 members of a Freshman Reading class from the same institution.
4. The researcher was always present while the questionnaire was being completed, to make sure every question was fully understood. A link to the questionnaires was put on the website of the Language Center of the university.
5. Both questionnaires were group administered. Each class was given a different password to access the questionnaire and the link to the questionnaire was taken away right after they finished it to avoid students repeating the questionnaire. The return rate (n=1131) was roughly 99%, the 1% being those who were not present in the class. The return rate for the specific questionnaire (n=45) was 100 percent.

6. All questions with a '\*' sign had to be answered in order to proceed to submitting the questionnaire. Therefore, apart from two sets of questions that were to be answered in accordance with which of two different options were clicked, all the rest of the questions had to be answered in order to submit the questionnaire. The item response rate overall for the questionnaire is therefore close to 100 percent.
7.
  - a. The main purpose of the Generic Questionnaire was to find out the general attitude and perspectives of newly entering university students towards their university English curriculum in terms of pragmatic learning and cultural learning.
  - b. The purpose of the Specific Questionnaire was to find out students' perspectives toward cultural learning in the English classroom, including materials, topics, and resources for cultural knowledge. It also aimed to explore student expectations for the university EFL classes and student perceptions of internationalization and globalization.

### **Teacher Questionnaire**

1. The teacher questionnaire (n=8) was provided in paper form. The return rate was 100 percent.
2. The last 5 questions were designed as semi-structured questions and a few interviews were conducted.
3. Most of the teachers teach part time at Koahsiung Medical University and also at other universities in southern Taiwan. This therefore provides a view of the general attitudes of teachers at some other universities, including ones upgraded from the colleges of technology.
4. This questionnaire was designed to elicit EFL teachers' viewpoints about cultural aspects of learning, their usage of cultural materials in the language classroom as well as their understanding of English as an international language.
5. This questionnaire includes nominal and ordinal scales and a five-point Likert scale.



## **2.2. Informants**

### **2.2.1. General Background of the Student Informants**

The number of informants would ideally have been larger and included samples from different universities. However, due to time constraints and the fact that the freshman curriculum in some other universities is more open to individual teacher decisions, access was more difficult to obtain. Informants therefore were restricted to Kaohsiung Medical University in Southern Taiwan. KMU is composed of 6 faculties and 19 departments. Although sciences and social sciences comprise the majority of the disciplines, this university has taken “whole person” education as its overriding goal. Great emphasis is therefore placed on humanistic and language education because together they prepare students for both future careers and personal development. The three-credit English course was divided into two classes: English reading and English speaking and listening. The course was four hours a week, 16 weeks per semester and lasted two semesters (one school year). The student body is composed of students from all parts of Taiwan plus a relatively small number from overseas. The demographics of the students responding to the general questionnaire in this research was approximately: 52 percent from southern Taiwan, 26 percent from northern Taiwan, 20 percent from central Taiwan, and 2 percent from other less populated areas such as eastern Taiwan and some Taiwanese islands.

The total number of participants was supposed to be 1140 from 20 departments. Of the 1140 informants, 1131 submitted the questionnaire. The return rate was roughly 99.2%. The possible reason for those students failing to return their answers may have been their absence from the class from which the questionnaire was conducted.

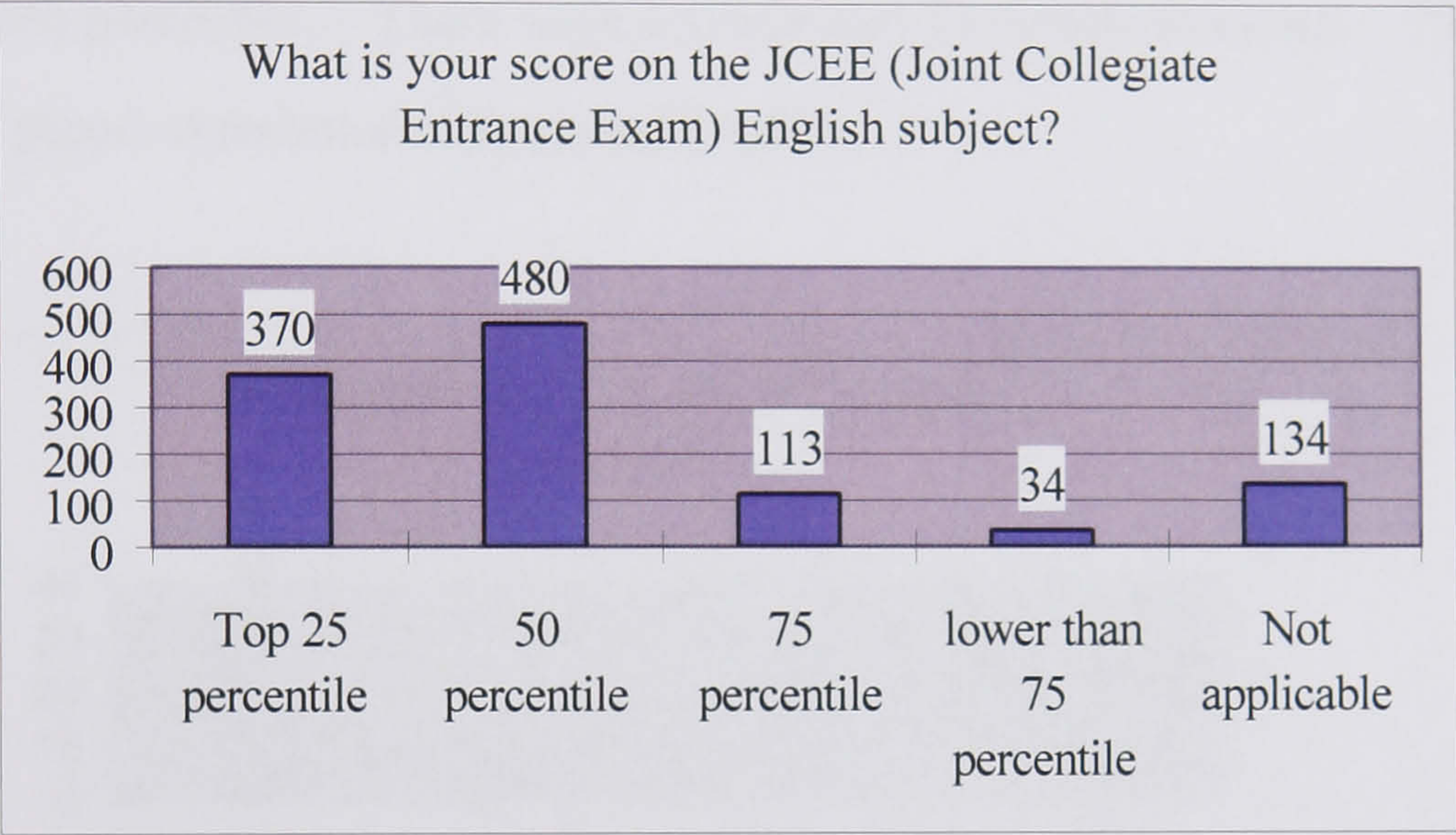
### **2.2.2. Participants for the Generic Questionnaire**

#### **Group A**

The informant group from KMU consisted of students of different levels from different areas of the country. Among the 1131 informants, 370 were in the top 25th percentile on their Joint College English Exam, (JCEE), 480 were between the 25th to 50th



percentile, 113 were between the 50th to 75th percentile and 34 were below the 75th percentile. The rest of the students (134) were not judged by this standard mainly because they were admitted by an application method that involved a different national exam. Generally speaking, from their grades it seems that three quarters of all first year students ranged from intermediate to advanced level in English. However, it is also important to note that their grades on JCEE English did not necessary reflect their true English competence.<sup>15</sup>



The questionnaire was administered in the first two weeks of the first semester. Students were not placed into different levels according to their English proficiency. They were taught as a whole class. Some of the majors such as medicine with a large student population (about 150) were divided into 3 sections. Generally speaking, students with particular majors like Medicine, Dentistry or Pharmacy usually need to have at least average or even higher percentile on their English subject exam in order to be admitted.

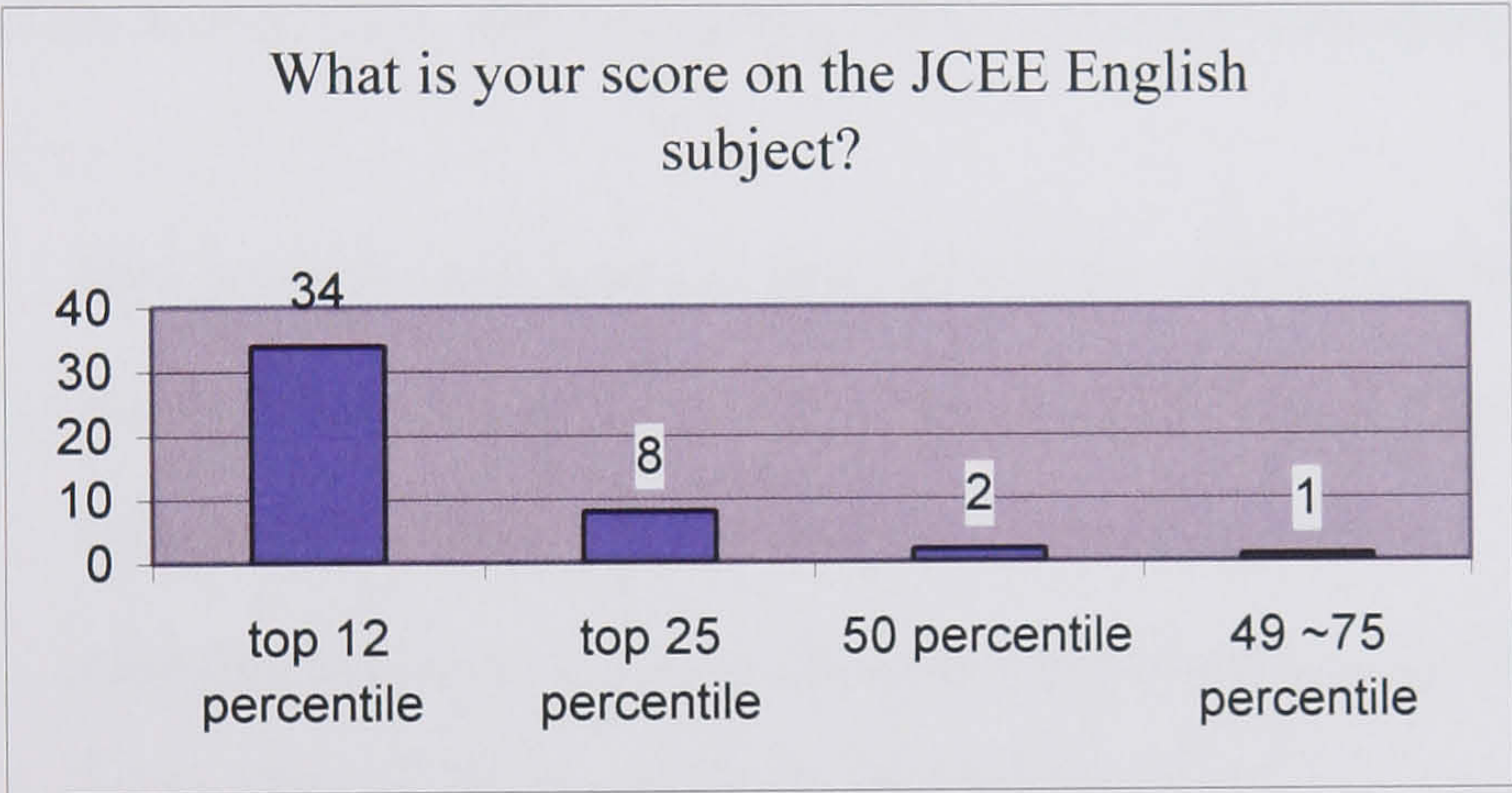
<sup>15</sup> The JCEE English exam is a written test whose focus is on grammar, vocabulary, idioms, reading comprehension, and translation and writing. The test questions are basically quite formulated. Some students who are good at rote learning and score high on the test are not necessarily able to use language well in real time situations.



2.2.3. Participants for the Specific Questionnaire

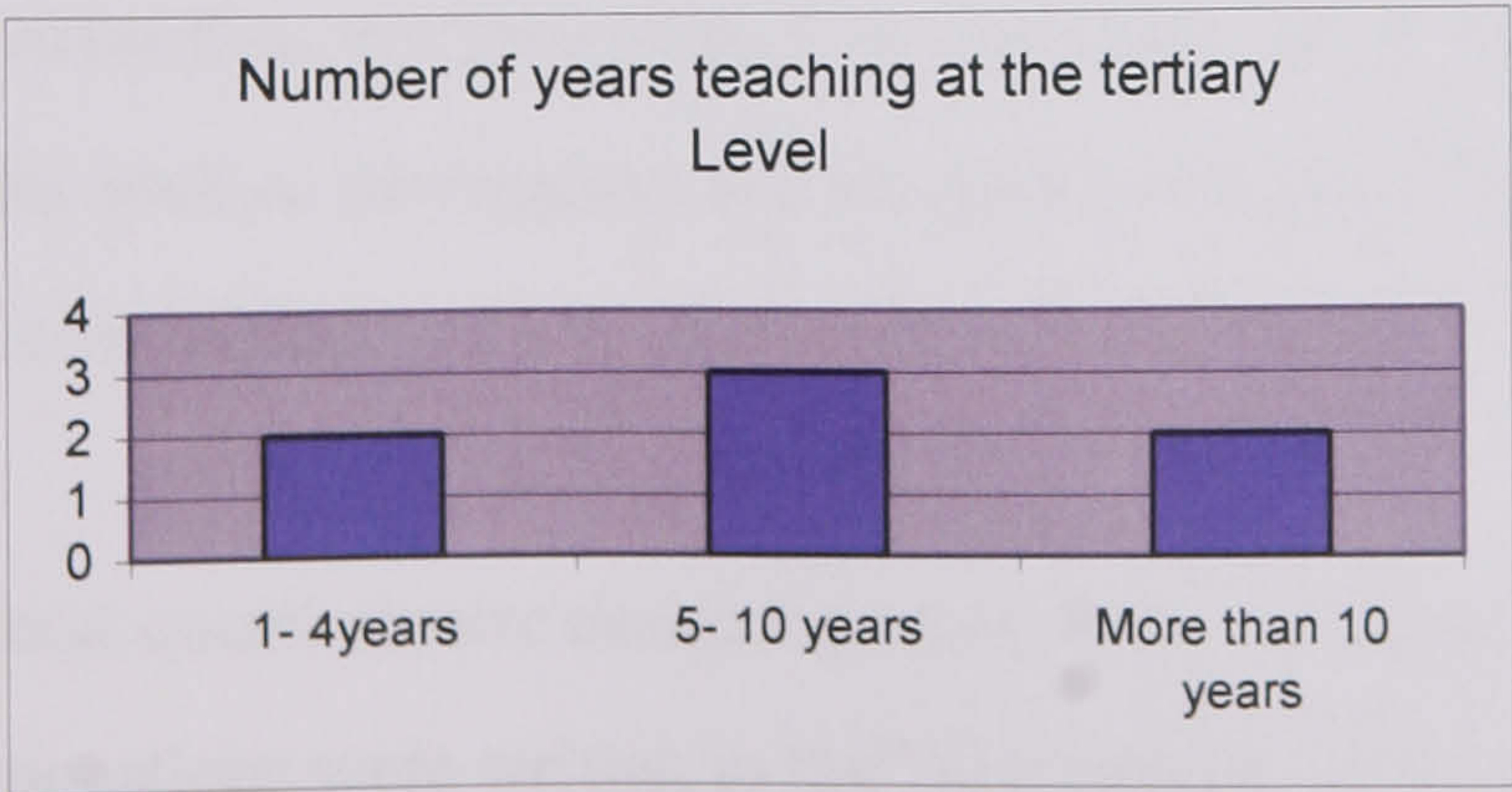
Group B

The participants are one group (about 45 students) of first year medical students. In order to enter the medical program, students usually need to excel in Chinese, English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. Therefore, they are usually considered to be more advanced students in terms of English at this university. Among the 45 students, 34 students' grades on the Joint Collegiate Entrance exam fall in the top 12th percentile, 8 in top 25th percentile, 2 in 50th percentile while only one was below the 50th percentile. There were 31 male and 14 female students. They had an average of 8 years' experience of studying English.



2.2.4. Teacher Informants

The 8 teacher participants were teachers teaching Freshman English, either 'Reading' or 'Speaking and Listening' or both at the KMU. They were also teaching English in some other comprehensive university, college or technical university upgraded from Junior College. One of the informants was an American.





## 2.3. The Design of the Three Questionnaires

### The Generic Questionnaire

The generic questionnaire was first generated as a paper in April 2004 and administered to 8 informants, who were KMU students in the second half of their first year and who approximated the intended informants. The researcher was in Glasgow and therefore used a video link to help the pilot informants to do the questionnaire. A few questions were raised by piloting informants regarding some wording that resulted in modification of some items. Additional checks were made informally with several pilot informants to further assure their understanding of each question.

Cohen *et al* (2003: 246) suggests three stages for operationalizing a questionnaire:

First, a questionnaire's general purposes must be clarified and then translated into a specific, concrete aim or set of aims. The second phase of the planning involves the identification and itemizing of subsidiary topics that relate to its central purpose. The third phase follows the identification and itemizing of subsidiary topics and involves formulating specific information requirements relating to each of these issues.

For instance, one aim of the General Questionnaire was to determine generic perspectives of the informants regarding English language learning and the role culture plays in English language learning. With this data, the next step was to itemize subsidiary topics that relate to the central purpose, such as their opinion about interesting materials to use in English classes. Then, specific questionnaire items were formulated so that they related to issues such as informant opinions about using mass media such as newspapers and magazine articles, TV sitcoms, films, songs, and advertisements.

Several questionnaire designing techniques were also taken into account. For instance, the questions were written in the "first person" in order to induce a personal response.

According to Oppenheim (1970), this helps to arouse interest and link the statements to the informants. The closed format questions usually took the form of a multiple-choice question employing a Likert-scale with five choices of answers. These choices were 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'not sure', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree'. A neutral or no opinion response was permitted. This was allowed even though they are not universally supported. According to Brown (2001), students tend to 'sit on the fence' and take a neutral non-opinion option. Furthermore, Rust and Golomobok (1989:154) state that there is "a tendency for respondents to show indecisiveness in answering questions and avoid either agreement or disagreement by opting for the middle category". However, avoiding a neutral option may result in some inaccuracies because the respondents may actually have no opinion or are not sure. Furthermore, the results of the two questionnaires in this research did not show a tendency to over-utilize the neutral option.

The questionnaire was later made available in a web format. Twenty sets of the same questionnaires were provided with a different password and assigned to different classes. All classes completed the questionnaire in the first two weeks of the first semester of the school year 2004. This is a time when student expectations and attitudes had not yet been influenced by the class and teacher's teaching. The questionnaire was administered in the English Listening and Speaking Course that took place in the multi-media lab that is equipped with computers with Internet connections. The link was put on the web site of the Language Center at the university just before the class started and was taken away soon after the students finished it. This was done to keep students from resubmitting the questionnaire or having students from the other class link to a second questionnaire and contaminate the data.

The researcher was present in every class to provide the password and make sure that students had no problems accessing the questionnaire and submitting it. The informants were properly informed of the nature of the research and the purpose of the questionnaires on the first page and only after they agreed, and clicked their agreement.

could they proceed to the questionnaire. The researcher checked the number of submissions from the web immediately after the whole class had finished to make sure that all the students present had submitted the questionnaire.

### **The Specific Questionnaire**

The piloting process was similar to that of the Generic Questionnaire and was also administered in April, 2004. The questionnaire was later made available on a web site as well. Most of the questions were written in a multiple-choice format. Apart from a few questions, only one answer could be chosen. The students from one section of a medical class, which the researcher taught for one semester, did the questionnaire in week 10, the second week of the first semester of the school year 2004 after the midterm examination. The link was located on the web and the procedure for collecting data was the same as that of the Generic Questionnaire.

### **The Teacher Questionnaire**

The Teacher Questionnaire is consisted of twenty questions. This questionnaire was augmented with 5 semi structured interview questions. Fourteen of the 20 questions in the questionnaire used a Likert scale and six open questions. The questionnaire was generated and piloted in May 2004 with 3 teachers from cohort similar to the target informants. The questionnaire was later made into a paper format and distributed to 8 informants teaching at the Kaohsiung Medical University. Regarding the last five questions, five informants returned written answers and the other three received interviews to answer these questions. Two informants supplemented some other opinions and these were recorded for further analysis.

## **2.4. Data Analysis**

The data of Generic Questionnaire were compiled for each department and later for the whole group. The data were first processed using EXCEL. A special computing program was also created exclusively for this set of data in order to perform necessary



statistical analysis<sup>16</sup>. Since the sample of the Specific Questionnaire and the Teacher Questionnaire was relative small, EXCEL was used to process the data. The data analysis included both analytical and interpretative analyses. Because the interpretation could have been subject to the researcher's own values, the presentation and the discussion of the findings, analysis and conclusions were made as transparent as possible.

### **3. Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research provides insights not available through quantitative research.

Qualitative research is considered by Seliger and Shohomy (1989:116) as "heuristic and not deductive since few, if any, decisions regarding research questions or data are made before the research begins". With respect to data, Punch (1998: 176) indicates that qualitative research studies "spoken and written representations and records of human experience, using multiple methods and multiple sources of data". Usually, the data is people's words and actions. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest that useful ways of gathering these forms of data include participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, and collection of relevant documents. In this research, interviews, student presentations, and written products were used to collect data and provide more comprehensive and qualitative evidence. Such methods allow the researcher to capture respondent attitudes, knowledge, and skills and critical cultural awareness.

#### **3.1. Interviews**

Interviews in this research were used to revisit some definitions, general attitudes, and reflections on English education. According to Cohen *et al*, (2003: 246) interviews may be used to serve three research purposes. First, it may be used as the principal means of gathering information having a direct bearing on the research objectives; second, it may be used to test hypotheses or to suggest new ones or as an explanatory device to help identify variables and relationships; and third, the interview may be used

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<sup>16</sup> The program, created by Dr. Ying-cheng Lu and Bo-wen Hsueh, facilitates statistical analysis.

in conjunction with other methods in a research undertaking. In this research qualitative data served the first and third purposes. The purpose of conducting the interviews was to understand the student experiences and perceptions regarding the focus of the inquiry stated in the next paragraph. The interviews were used to support/highlight and attempt to explain any trends found in the quantitative and qualitative data and thus provide a more qualitative approach. Therefore, in this research, interviews provided one part of the triangle of data suggested by Brown (2001:221). Findings in the questionnaires and student presentations and writing assignment guided the researcher as she prepared questions for the student interviews. The interviews were then used to extend the investigation beyond the controlled focus of the questionnaires, as well as to provide opportunities for more individualized responses (Seliger and Shomany, 1997:166).

This research then utilized the method of a semi-structured interview. Such interviews can be conducted in either of two formats: individual interviews and group interviews. In this research, individual interviews were conducted with the MOE administrators, whereas group interviews were conducted with students.

- A. Interviews with MOE administrators investigated the national policy regarding the role higher education plays as part of globalization. The definition of “internationalization” of higher education as referred to in several national-scale policies needs further clarification, and this was sought in the interviews. The possibility of establishing national guidelines was also explored.
- B. Interviews with student subjects were based on the preliminary questionnaires in order to further explore their opinions. Their perspectives on a socio-cultural syllabus integrated into the EFL classroom are probed.

### **3.1.1. Interviews with ROC Ministry of Education Administrators**

Two official documents of the current status of university English education in Taiwan

served as background for these two interviews. The “Main Principles of Educational Policy” (MOE, 2005) and the White Paper on Higher Education (MOE, 2001) provided the basis for forming the core questions. Moreover, findings in the student General Questionnaire guided the preparation of questions for the administrator interviews. The interviews were used to investigate the government’s attitude and perspectives towards internationalization, English education, and intercultural education beyond the printed official documents.

#### **3.1.1.1. Procedures of Data Collection**

The researcher first contacted the Ministry of Education, and explained the research and the purpose of the interviews. The Bureau of International Cultural and Educational Relations, and the Department of Higher Education were recommended for the interviews. The Deputy Head of the Bureau of International Cultural and Educational Relations and the Division Director of the Higher Education Department, in charge of internationalization of higher education, agreed to be interviewed.

The interviews were conducted in November 2004 in the administrators’ offices. Both requested that the researcher email them the interview questions in Chinese and English before the interviews were to take place. The interviews were conducted in a semi formal format with a semi open structure that allowed informants the flexibility to talk about their opinions. Each interview lasted about 50 minutes.

During the interviews, the administrators discussed the policies that the government had implemented or was planning for future implementation. Generally speaking, these data shed light on the government’s ongoing policy on English Education and its role in Internationalization of HE. In this regard, both HE and BICER administrators were anxious to explain and defend the government’s policies. It is noteworthy that the Division Director of the HE Department provided details that explained the government’s policies and the implementation measures without giving extensive



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personal viewpoints. The Deputy Head of the BICER articulated some of his personal opinions on some specific topics.

#### **3.1.1.2. Data Analysis**

The interviews were conducted in Chinese. The interviews were recorded with the informant's knowledge and consent and then transcribed and later translated into English. Data analysis was based on the translated transcripts. A decision was made that the transcriptions should not be detailed linguistic records because the study was not focusing on linguistic analysis but concerned with identifying data that would convey ideas and perspectives. Therefore, some repetitive data has been omitted and some data was paraphrased. Data analysis was based on translated transcripts.

In addition to the two interviews, consideration was given to a printed interview given by Taiwan's Minister of Education, Tu Cheng-sheng, in a special issue about Education in the *Common Wealth Magazine* (Chou *et al*, 2004). This is one of Taiwan's most prestigious news magazines. The title of this special issue was "*My Child, I Want You to Be More Internationalized than I Am*". It dealt with topics on English education in relation to internationalization. Minister Tu presented his platform of education policy from 2005 to 2008, in which localization and globalization are the axis. The journalist elicited Tu's perspectives of the relationship between English education and the global vision. Therefore, some concepts that emerged from this printed interview were evaluated in conjunction with the administrators' responses.

#### **3.1.2. Student Interviews**

The student interviews were conducted from the 12<sup>th</sup> week to 15<sup>th</sup> week of the semester. They were based on a 32-hour English reading class, taught over 16 weeks at Kaohsiung Medical University in Taiwan. This examination of various aspects of intercultural learning in English class related to both the achievement of some of certain goals of the course and the development of effective pedagogical strategies for reaching

these goals. The informants were from the researcher's class. Twenty five students were interviewed.

Interviews were conducted with small groups ranging in size from 4 to 5. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 104), the most important quality of the group interview, is using "the dynamics of group interaction to gain information and insights that are less likely to be gained through individual interviews or participant observation". They point out that in the informal but somewhat unnatural setting of the group interview, the chance is created to hear and see a discussion of the participant on researcher's research question. In addition, another advantage of group interviews, according to Lynch (1996:130), is that the participants can "question and clarify each other's responses". It was evident that in this research the informants tended to appear more comfortable providing answers while among peers. For instance, when they talked about how much extra time they had to spend on this course, they lightheartedly provided their own anecdotes about their struggling with improving their presentations and writing assignments. Although Lynch (ibid: 130) points out that in a group interview, informants might feel uncomfortable owing to possible conflicts with other informants, it was not obvious during these interviews. From time to time they disagreed with each other. This may have occurred because they developed an attitude of accepting different opinions from their English classes, a point which will be discussed in Chapter 7. The purpose of the interviews was fully explained prior to the interview taking place, and after obtaining the participants' consent.

In addition to the 25 student participants discussed above, interviews were conducted with 5 students having the same medical major, from two other sections. They volunteered to be interviewed after hearing about this research. These students were considered highly motivated English language learners. The English language instructional method for these students was teacher centered. However, the teacher of these two sections in the teacher's survey stated that he did provide cultural knowledge albeit spontaneously most of the time. Initially, the researcher agreed to give these



interviews in order to examine these students' general thinking about cultural learning related to other classes. However, a comparison of their responses with the subject group responses is interesting in terms of their opinions and attitudes towards differences they observed in other cultures. The findings of this interview are included in Chapter 7 (section 3.5.).

#### **3.1.2.1. Data Collection Procedures**

The interviews were conducted in an informal conversational format with a semi open structure that allowed informants the flexibility to talk about their opinions. This format was also chosen to avoid the informants feeling that they were being interviewed solely for research purposes, even though the nature of the research was well described. Core questions were determined in advance. From these the researcher branched off to explore responses in depth in order to gather additional information. The researcher was careful to avoid having students give responses they believed the researcher wanted. The interviews took place in an outdoor café and in an indoor snack bar area on campus. The settings were chosen to create a comfortable atmosphere and to foster a positive climate that would encourage involvement rather than just taking the informants as study subjects. Responses were recorded with a small digital recorder. The interviews ranged in length from 20 to 25 minutes.

The interview followed the general structure suggested by Lynch (1996:132). That is, it started with a casual, put-the-interviewee-at ease question/comment, and then moved to general questions such as "what do you think of the class?". Then specific questions such as "what do you think of cultural learning in the class?" were asked. Follow-up questions were then tailored according to individual responses. Finally, a closing question such as "is there anything more you would like to say about this program?" was followed by casual, wrap-up comments.

#### **3.1.2.2. Data Analysis**

The interviews were conducted in Chinese to allow the informants to fully express themselves in their own language. The interviews were recorded with the informant's

knowledge and consent and then transcribed and later translated into English. Data was analyzed based on the translated transcripts, which was processed as the data of the interviews with the administrators. The researcher let the data reveal their own naturally occurring patterns in an inductive manner rather than impose predetermined categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The amount of data is great enough to allow the researcher to use a “grounded theory” process (ibid), and therefore patterns and clusters gradually emerged from the data. Furthermore, as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested, coding is a process that enables the researcher to identify meaningful data and set the stage for interpreting and drawing conclusions. It allows a researcher to “differentiate and combine the data [he/she has] retrieved and the reflections [he/she makes] about this information” (ibid: 56). This researcher used this coding process to establish the four themes for analysis.

### **3.2. Student Presentations**

The spoken and written data produced by the language classroom is therefore considered a “source of information” which helps teachers learn more about teaching and learning (Wajnryb, 1992: 13). Data about what is really happening in the classroom is therefore needed. Originally, the research was designed to be conducted over a four-month semester, with classroom observations of a tertiary-level EFL course to determine the cultural competence of the students. It was difficult to obtain permission to observe classes because presence of the researcher could have been considered a threat to the teachers’ authority. Therefore, the decision was made to only observe the researcher’s class and the researcher, as the teacher of the class became a participant observer. The main focus was on the student presentations. Observations schedules were designed to collect data.

#### **3.2.1. Data Collecting Procedures**

The student presentations took place in a 32-hour, 16-week, first year Freshman English reading class, taught in at KMU. The students were divided into 10 groups. Each group selected one article to read during the semester in preparation for an oral report.



Oral presentations began in week 5 and continued until the last teaching week. The students spoke in front of the class for 15 to 20 minutes. They talked about and shared their viewpoints of their chosen article and the topic it covered. The oral presentation was a collaborative project for the students who have never really done a similar task in their previous classes. Each individual student participated in the group presentation. The students worked together to organize the presentation and develop their points. They then related them to their own culture in order to make the report more interesting. This effort provided an opportunity for students to expand their linguistic skills while searching for the English terms to accurately describe comparative phenomena in their own cultures. Oral presentations were videotaped with the students' knowledge and consent. This allowed an opportunity for more objective analysis and further ethnographic observation. The students all agreed to the use of their presentation for research purposes by signing the consent form. The nature of the research was carefully explained before they signed a consent form.

The researcher was a participant observer who structured the learning opportunities by suggesting that the students relate the socio-cultural topics revealed in the articles. All the articles were short stories or newspaper and magazine articles from English language sources that were mostly American. Students usually discussed the article first and then extended the topic to similar subjects in their own cultures. Generally speaking, the students made good use of the Internet, magazines, TV commercials, advertisements, and related books to find the data for their reports. They not only attempted to explore more in-depth cultural knowledge regarding the topic but also were able to relate it back to their own socio-cultural experience.

### **3.2.2. Data Analysis**

#### **Byram's Five *Savoirs* and Analysis of Student Presentations**

The researcher used four student presentations to illustrate the ways the students have, or have not, developed intercultural skills and knowledge. Byram's five *savoirs* provide a model for assessing intercultural competence in the classroom. The analysis

was based on the definition offered by Byram as detailed in chapter 2. These five *savoirs* were used to show the level of intercultural learning demonstrated in their presentations and reveal increases in intercultural competence developed through this activity. They also showed any attitude changes towards other cultures, awareness of others, as well as their skills in discovering, relating and generating their own critical opinions when confronted by cultural differences or similarities.

	<b>Skills</b> Interpret and relate <i>(savoir comprehend)</i>	
<b>Knowledge</b> of self and other; of interaction; individual and social <i>(savoirs)</i>	<b>Education</b> Political education; Critical cultural awareness <i>(savoir s'engager)</i>	<b>Attitudes</b> Relativising self; valuing other <i>(savoir être)</i>
	<b>Skills</b> Discover and / or interact <i>(savoir apprendre/faire)</i>	

Byram (1997c: 34)

The informants’ in-class and out-of-class discussions provided evidence of their progress in terms of cultural awareness. However, the researcher had to overcome some instructional and technical difficulties regarding the observation of these in-class and out-of-class group discussions. First, the in-class group discussions took place in an English Reading class taught by the researcher in which it was not appropriate to have extended observations of the student group discussions in class. The researcher deemed it unethical to stay with one group in class for the purpose of research and not spend equivalent time circulating among the other groups. A video camera was considered for use with one group. However, the students became uneasy and their normal performance was disturbed. Secondly, observation of out-of-class discussions also proved difficult because the students regularly met after 10 pm. Furthermore, students would sometimes do a follow up review of their discussion on line after midnight. The researcher while attempting observations of out of class discussions



found that students expected suggestions from the researcher. The researcher then attempted participation in these on-line discussions after receiving the students' agreement. However, this also resulted in greatly limiting the spectrum of student viewpoints. Because of these conditions, the researcher decided to evaluate assignments and projects that involved the students writing reviews of their group discussions. Taken together these provided evidence of the cultural awareness and intercultural competence demonstrated by the students.

### **3.3. Written Products**

A review of the literature on the assessment of intercultural communicative competence suggests that written assessments fall into two categories: 1. Multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and matching tests; and 2. Essays, journals, and project papers that comprised the student portfolio. Assessment of cultural awareness gained in the classroom certainly requires more than pencil and paper testing, and is widely understood as one of the most difficult tasks in language teaching. The researcher investigated students' development primarily through essays and written assignments. These have been analyzed concerning the relationships between the curriculum and the students' development of cultural awareness, intercultural understanding and critical ability. According to Corbett (2003: 198), such reflective essays usually "constitute valuable evidence of the learning process". Short essays that allowed them to evaluate different cultures and have critical reflection were assigned. Two individual essays, 6 group assignments were assigned during the research period that lasted for semester (4 months). A group assignment that is the product of group discussion on an assigned topic was selected to examine.

#### **3.3.1. Nature of Tests**

Test formats provide a way to assess the students' socio-cultural knowledge; however, objective tests alone have shortcomings because they are unlikely to reveal how well the informants understand the importance of cultural facts or how much they personally identify with those facts (Byram 1994:145, Corbett, 2003). Giving objective

assessments might also run the risk of having students continue their rote memory learning practices by reinforcing their exam oriented high school education.

Furthermore, this approach does not assess “‘deep learning’ which involves the ability to organize, synthesize and relate information” (Entwistle *et al*, 1992: 4-9).

Assessment of cultural awareness gained in the classroom requires more than pencil and paper testing. Furthermore, since this was a general English reading course, tests could not be limited to cultural knowledge or awareness related questions. Hence, in order to understand more about students’ cultural awareness and the competence they developed, the researcher developed group discussions, written reports, and a few short essay exams.

### **3.3.2. Nature of Written Assignments**

Written assignments provide a broad measure of what students can do and also enable them produce more than the “timed writing context”. Written assignments generally allow students broad flexibility to demonstrate their competence in cultural knowledge and awareness. In addition, Byram (1997:108) suggests that for intermediate or advanced students, the essay or other similar approaches are considered appropriate to assess students’ “*savoirs*” and ‘deep learning’. In this regard, student discussions about particular themes were required to be presented as essays. In addition, the use of the portfolio is recommended as a means of recording knowledge that can be evaluated by teachers as evidence of students’ cultural knowledge, skills and the extent of the students’ understanding of other cultures (Byram *et al*, 1994). This is considered a part of a holistic approach towards evaluating their cultural learning in this research. For these reasons, as a requirement for the completion of the course students were asked to compile all the assignments into a portfolio.

### **3.3.3. Data Collecting Procedure**

Because the informants were taking a college level general English reading course, some assignments were designed to test general understanding of course materials as well as the socio-cultural knowledge in them. Over 50 percent of the writing



assignments either implicitly or explicitly provided students with opportunities to explore deeper socio-cultural knowledge gained from the articles they read. Group projects were assigned to assess students' ability over a longer period of time as suggested by Corbett (2003: 200). These assignments were not explicitly oriented towards eliciting student viewpoints toward research topics and were included in the findings.

The findings of this study are based on the empirical data of real classrooms rather than from pure research settings. These data were analyzed with a concern for the relationships between EFL curriculum and the development of cultural awareness, intercultural understanding, and critical thinking ability. Although writing is a difficult and complex task for students, they are encouraged to express their ideas at their best. Because this class was not aimed at writing skills, the appraisals that evaluated students' progress and accomplishment were not based on grammatical skills. Instead, the focus was primarily on organization, analysis and argument. All 45 students (15 females and 30 males) in the subject class signed consent forms to allow the anonymous use and citation of their written materials for research purposes. The students were divided into 9 groups. All the assignments were submitted as a group. Individual performance was evaluated by the essay questions in the midterm and final exams. The researcher thus investigated students' accomplishment of *savoirs*. A form was designed to evaluate the levels of cultural awareness and intercultural competence demonstrated in the writing assignments.

All together there were 8 reports due during the semester. These ranged from one page to four pages in length.

The writing assignments included:

1. A small-scale research project on the status of women in the East and the West, and in the past and present. This was based on two main stories the students read in class.
2. An ethnographic study of wedding customs described in an episode of *Sex and the City*.

3. American images presented in Hollywood movies. This was based on an article titled, *Is Hollywood Responsible for 9/11?*,
4. A discussion of gender in their own culture based on an assigned article, and,
5. Other essays that required them to interpret some themes in the reading texts.

### **3.3.4. Selection of Data for Analysis**

The data analyses were narrowed to one major assignment in which the topic is about women's status and that involves four reading texts. The assignment requiring informants to compare and contrast women's status in the East and the West, and past and present revealed their ability to explain their cultural knowledge, to relate to and interpret their own culture, to compare and contrast different cultures, and to produce critical opinions. The topic of women's status was based on 4 reading texts, which will be elaborated in Chapter 7. This project asked them to discuss the status of women in the East and the West, and past and present.<sup>17</sup> The project was assigned in the first half of the semester. The students had training in writing short essays in their high school English classes in preparation for the JCEE English exam in which they were required to write a 100 to 150 word short essay on an assigned topic. However, for many, this assignment was probably their first attempt at a long and more sophisticated writing project, albeit as a group project. The students first had discussions within their group and then worked as a group to put their discussion results into a group paper. Most of their writings illustrated their ideas clearly, although some of the group written reports appeared to indicate difficulty in comprehension.

The following chapter will analyze quantitative data, and qualitative data will be analyzed in Chapter 7 after a description of a sample from a socio-cultural syllabus and project-based approach. These two chapters taken together will discuss if an explicit focus on intercultural competence is necessary in a curriculum that aims to foster internationalization, and possible ways intercultural competence can be developed or

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<sup>17</sup> In Taiwan, the West generally refers to Western European countries and North America while the East refers to the countries that are more adhered to Confucianism.



enhanced in the language classroom. They will also present findings regarding student interest in the cultural and humanistic dimensions developed from an intercultural EFL classroom.

## **4. Research Critique**

### **4.1. Quantitative Data**

During the process of gathering and analyzing data from the questionnaires, several issues arose regarding the validity and value of quantitative design.

Van Lier (1988) indicates that the experience and knowledge of the researcher is vital to a research project. All researchers bring their knowledge and experience to interpreting data; this researcher brings her knowledge and experience to the project. In my case, I am a native of Taiwan. I have gained wide knowledge of Taiwanese university English education from 11 years of university teaching and supervision, and I have intimate knowledge of this research. Given this background, in my best judgment, I encountered few problems interpreting data that could have influenced the results of this study. Moreover, as with all research there is a question regarding bias. I, as the researcher, acknowledge that this could lead to problems of objectivity or biased interpretation if I manipulated the research to provide a desired outcome. Therefore, special care was taken to make interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data as transparent as possible. The critiques of each set of data are therefore presented in the following section. Suggestions for future research alterations are also included in the discussion.

#### **4.1.1. Design**

Issues regarding the questionnaires mainly concern the design. First, in a few instances, the questionnaire design caused some confusion about how the choice of an option in one question determined the sequence of questions that followed. In the Student Generic Questionnaire item 12 that has two options, each of which is followed by a subset of questions. Although there were clear instructions regarding this item,

and the researcher was present to administer the questionnaire and remind the students to answer the correct subset of questions following the option they chose, a small number of informants still answered both subsets of questions. During the analysis the decision was made to use only the subset of answers for the option selected. Future questionnaires will need better design to avoid this confusion. With respect to the Teacher Questionnaire, the findings reveal that teachers have different interpretations of 'culture'. Therefore, in the future research, questions concerning the definition of culture in the language classroom need to be more fully elaborated. Also, item 7 in the Teacher Questionnaire, which encouraged written comments regarding the chosen answer, did not provide adequate space for the informants to write. This may have caused the teacher informants to give brief answers instead of complete ones. In future research, additional writing space is necessary.

Another issue developed because although the questionnaire was piloted with informants similar to the intended respondents, there was one unexpected oversight. The pilot informants were freshmen in 2003; however, beginning in 2004, the JCEE scores were divided into five percentile groups. The new percentile groups that are the 12th, 25th, 50th, 75th and 87th, whereas the former 3 percentile groups were the 25th, 50th and 75<sup>th</sup>. When the questionnaire was being piloted in the spring of 2004, neither the researcher nor the pilot informants were aware of the change. However, this did not affect the findings because those students in the 12th and 25th percentiles were selected into the top 25th percentile and those in the 75th and 89<sup>th</sup> percentile were placed together in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

#### **4.1.2. Reliability**

An issue regarding the reliability of the Students' Generic Questionnaire arose also. Due to the nature of this questionnaire, which was done anonymously and on line, repeated-survey reliability is difficult to measure. Alternatively, an equivalent Generic Questionnaire could be repeated with the same group of informants. However, measuring the reliability of 'equivalent surveys' was not feasible because the Generic



Questionnaire is a lengthy one, and developing two surveys that were equivalent, or parallel, in structure was not a viable option. Therefore, internal consistency reliability was used to examine the consistency of the answers within a single form of a questionnaire administered on a single occasion as indicated by Brown (2001: 173). The result of this reliability test was found to be 99.9 percent. Nonetheless, future research should develop better arrangements such as preparing printed questionnaires for a control group based reliability study in order to enhance the reliability of the questionnaire.

The researcher also considered using Stepwise triangulation to administer the Specific Questionnaire at the beginning and at the end in order to determine any change of attitude. However, this option was discarded because the group would have needed to do three questionnaires. The researcher therefore decided that this would have adverse effect on the students' responses because of the repetition. The internal reliability test of this questionnaire was also found to be 99.6 percent. Future research should consider adapting and simplifying some of the statements, and processing the questionnaires in the second half of the year.

#### **4.1.3. Representativity**

As with most studies, various methodological limitations occur. Ideally the respondents will to some extent represent the whole group of university students. In this research, however, although the informants are from one university, they represent many different areas of Taiwan and most of them had just completed secondary school. The ratio of informants for the Student Generic Questionnaire from southern compared to the other parts of Taiwan is close to 1:1 (figure 2). Weighting the data with regard to regions was rejected because it would make the sample too small to be reliable. In addition, the sampling process would be difficult and complicated, delaying the administration of the questionnaire until late in the semester and thereby responses might no longer represent the students' 'original' expectations. Though these informants as a subgroup cannot represent all Taiwanese university students, they are a



geographically heterogeneous group. It can reasonably be presumed that these findings to a limited extent represent the main group. Therefore, these data do provide a useful profile that indicates the Taiwanese students' perceptions of cultural learning in the EFL classroom. This notwithstanding, in future research the ratio of subjects should be adjusted to better represent all parts of Taiwan.

### Demographic Data of Students

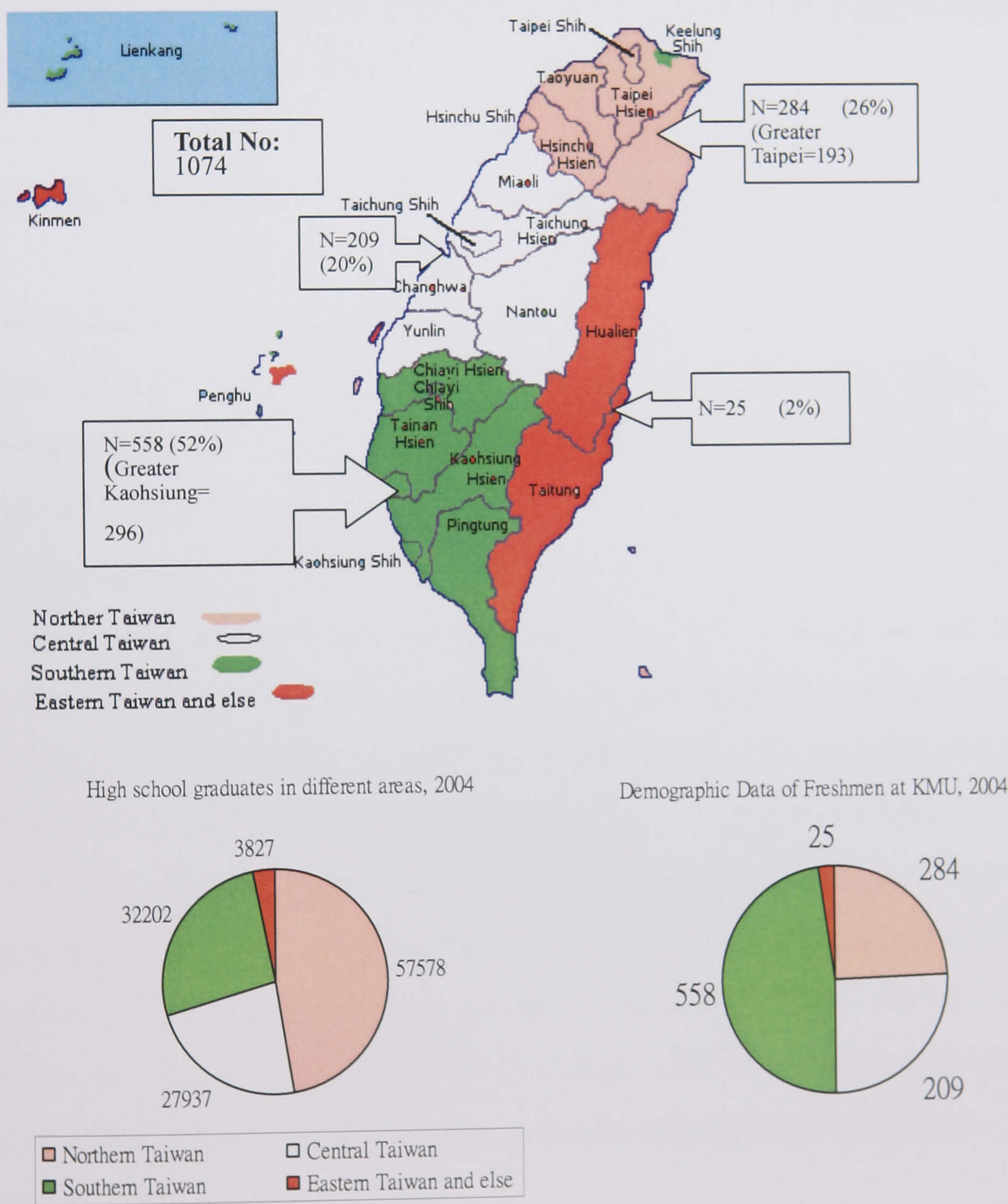


Figure 2



Overall, informants are drawn from a General University English course: therefore, the Student Generic Questionnaire may be said to be biased against factors other than linguistic and cultural ones, because few other factors were included. For example, the perspective of English for Academic Purposes was not explicitly surveyed. However, the Student Specific Questionnaire aims at finding the student's perspective of cultural dimensions in the university EFL classroom, and linguistic aspects of learning were also incorporated into the questionnaire not only to determine the correlations between perspectives of linguistic and cultural learning but also to avoid leading students toward the interests of the researcher.

## **4.2. Qualitative Data**

### *Presentations*

The researcher randomly selected four presentations from the eight recorded presentations, and data from the other four presentations are integrated into the discussions of the presentations in general. The researcher acknowledges that her preconceptions may have affected her choices and she may have been attracted to certain data. However, the researcher carefully avoided excluding less interesting but relevant data in the analysis. Furthermore, all presentations were graded, and the researcher, who was the course teacher, was fully aware of the possibility that students might try to meet the expectation of the researcher. All the presentations occurred in the natural classroom setting. She encouraged students to reach beyond the course materials to find relevant information. They were also encouraged to relate the theme to a larger social context and relate it to their own culture. Peer evaluation was included. Findings demonstrated that in order to enrich their oral presentations, they extensively used cross-cultural comparison and generated their own critical perspectives.

This notwithstanding, at the beginning of the semester, the first two groups to give a presentation were at a slight disadvantage. Their presentations, which merely included

a summary of the text, are more conventional, yet there is evidence that they understood the content of the materials. Although, after seeing the other group's presentations, they requested the opportunity to redo the presentations at the end of the semester, this was not possible because of lack of time to complete the syllabus of the course. The researcher nonetheless assured these two groups of students that assessment of their presentations would be adjusted because they were the first two groups, and still learning how to do a presentation. If the researcher had been able to continue the research and conduct presentation data collection at a later time, the data may have been richer with respect to the development of intercultural awareness as a result of peer learning. However, the data collection fieldwork time was restricted due to the fact the researcher had to resume her study in Scotland. Future research with a longer period of study could allow collection of additional data.

### *Writing Assignments*

Although the writing assignment relates to the students' in class and out of class discussions, individual development is somewhat difficult to determine. A variety of similar topics were included in the exam essay questions to promote student participation in the group discussions. The researcher was also aware of the possibility that students might divide the group writing task into separate parts for each student in the same group to write without thorough discussion. However, this behavior was not obvious throughout their assignments, presentations, and discussions in the classroom. From time to time they were able to support group mates' answers to the researcher's questions or back up their group mates' part of the presentation or classroom discussion. There was, however, one exception. After the submission of one assignment, one student complained to the researcher about the poor collaboration among his group mates and wished that he could change to another group the following semester.

With respect to researcher bias, Fielding and Fielding (32, cited in Brown, 2001: 230) point out two potential sources of bias in qualitative research. These are: 1. a tendency to select data to fit an "idea conception"; and 2. a tendency to select data that are



obvious 'at the expense of less dramatic data'. The researcher did not intentionally select data for the interest of this study. The writing assignment about women's status was selected for analysis because it covered four reading texts and included a wider context for students to work on. In the future, in addition to writing assignments, a more appropriate method might be developed to observe students in class and out of class discussions as a way to better understand the development of their intercultural competence. However, given the constraints on data collection during the period of fieldwork for this thesis, the analysis of written assignments offered a practical and useful means of assessing intercultural skills and knowledge.

### *Interview*

The researcher acknowledges that it is reasonable to suspect that the presence of the researcher as the course teacher might have influenced students' responses to a certain extent. It is a fact that an interviewer's presence may influence responses to sensitive questions and provide less accurate data. However, the students did not show signs of efforts to please the researcher; on the contrary, from time to time they grumbled about the amount of time they spent on this course. Moreover, there are no questions about sensitive issues that might create uneasiness and thereby influence responses. As discussed in earlier sections (3.1.2. and 3.2.1), the interviewer tried to create a non-threatening interview atmosphere and encourage students to express their thoughts without reservation. In addition, the rapport that the researcher established with the students reduced the potential for such a problem.

Although most informants were very articulate, it was noteworthy that two informants hesitated when expressing their opinions. The researcher, however, decided to not attempt to elicit further opinions, and it is true that this could have had some impact on the findings as presented.

## Chapter V

### Quantitative Data: Findings and Discussion

#### Introduction

This chapter will present and discuss the research findings from two general sources, and how they answer the research questions. The first source is made up of the three questionnaires, including the Specific Questionnaire, the Generic Questionnaire, and the Teacher Questionnaire. The second source data include semi-structured questions of the Teacher Questionnaire and Government Administrator Interviews

The findings from the first source address the following research questions:

1. What are student attitudes toward both linguistic and cultural learning in the ESL classroom, at the university level?
2. What are the educational purposes met by integrating a cultural syllabus into the university level EFL classroom?
3. What, if any, implications of adding an intercultural syllabus to EFL are revealed?
4. What, if any, elements of cultural learning for the EFL classroom are revealed?

The findings from the second source address the following questions:

1. How do the student informants' perspectives of intercultural competence and internationalization compared to the national government's perspectives?
2. To what extent might an intercultural curriculum support the Taiwanese government's goal of internationalizing universities, the country and ultimately increase the national level of global competition?



# 1. Quantitative Results

The quantitative study identified several important issues relevant to the research questions, or suggested modification of the research questions. Responses gathered from three questionnaires are grouped according to the types of data collected. Generally speaking, analyses of the Generic Questionnaire focus on the students' attitudes towards linguistic and cultural learning. Analyses of the Specific Questionnaire focus on the cultural content of ESL courses and student understandings of internationalization. The focus of the Teacher Questionnaire is on their general attitude towards cultural teaching and their views regarding the role English plays in the process of internationalization. A summary and a comparison of responses from the three questionnaires is given in order to investigate similar and different perspectives regarding cultural learning among student informants, teacher informants and the government. The raw data of all the questionnaires can be found in Appendices 10 and 12.

## 1.1. Generic Questionnaire

Area	Set of the questions	Type of Data Collected
	1~5	Demographic information of informants
I.	6~11	The general attitude of informants towards learning English
II.	12~36 <sup>18</sup>	The informants' opinions about which of the two major methods (pragmatic/ cultural) can best facilitate learning English.
III.	37	Informants' generic perspectives of the role culture plays in English classes
IV.	38~42	The degree of importance of various goals in their language learning

<sup>18</sup> These two sets of questions were adapted from a questionnaire designed by Chiu, H *et al* (2001) for a project investigating cultural learning in the foreign language (mainly German) classroom for university engineering students.

V.	43~47	The focus of their previous learning and their previous cultural/intercultural learning experiences.
VI	48~54	If materials related to Cultural Studies, media and literary texts are of concern to informants
VII.	55~59 59~64	Informants' perceptions of general education and English classes as a part of general education.
VIII.	66~67	Informants' motivation for learning English and their scores on JCEE English test.
IX	69~72	Informant attitudes towards languages in their personal social context and to what degree they think these languages will be helpful in their future.

**Table 1**

The Questionnaire (Appendix 9) was designed to determine the informants' general attitudes towards cultural learning in the EFL classroom at the tertiary level. Table 1 explains the type of data each set of questions collected. The pragmatic aspects of learning were included to determine their general attitudes and expectations, and also to avoid directing informants' responses towards the researchers' point of view and research interest. A comparison of their responses towards these two aspects illustrates the potential for developing an intercultural curriculum.

## **Results/Findings**

### **1.1.1. General Attitudes towards English Learning (Q 6~11)**

Generally speaking, the informants' attitudes towards learning English are quite pragmatic. The influence of English as a medium for globalization is obvious as 41 % (n=469) of informants agree that the primary reason for learning English is because of its status as a *lingua franca* and 32% (n=364) agree that because it is usually a required course. Ninety-three percent expect to have more training in the four skills, 92% expect English to relate their subject courses or future professions. Their motivation is generally pragmatic as only a small number of informants (8% n=92) indicate that it was a personal interest. As discussed in Chapter 2, globalization is creating a strong belief that English is a requirement both at the present time, and in the future.



Therefore, although few informants study English because of personal interest, most of the informants (76% n=862) would like to pursue further English study after the first year even though it was no longer compulsory. With respect to cultural learning, a majority of informants (89% n=1010) agree that they would like to have a more in-depth understanding of a range of cultures, and most (97% n=1110) expect that they could gain more ability to appreciate English films, songs and literature. This suggests that in addition to pragmatic training, they also wished to have more contact with other foreign cultures by using English as a catalyst.

### **1.1.2 Perception of Linguistic Learning and Cultural Learning**

The preference for pragmatic learning is obvious when the informants have to choose between linguistic based or cultural based English language learning. Having just finished the intense preparation for the JCEE, informants are still more concerned with linguistic learning which enables them to demonstrate their ability in a pen and paper test. When coming to the question of which method they think could best facilitate learning English, most of the informants (71% n=806) favor the pragmatic ways, that is, learning via everyday English rather than learning foreign cultures. Although there is a significant difference between the number of informants that choose culture based language learning and a linguistics based program, approximately 80 percent of the informants report (Q37) that in the English class, culture and language are related and cannot be separated from each other. The responses on this item however contradict the responses in the last set of questions where most of informants favored instrumental learning.

#### **1.1.2.1. Perspectives of Cultural Based Learning and Previous Cultural Learning Experience (Q 26~36)**

With respect to culture-based methods that informants deem most effective for learning English, almost all of the informants who opted for culture based learning (99 % n=318) agreed that using mass media such as watching films and reading English newspaper is effective. The informants' responses to attending cultural activities (94% n=303),

taking English classes that include cultural topics (80% n=260), classes related to British or American Cultural Studies (78% n=252), and joining reading groups or attending lectures or seminars (69% n=223), indicate that they are considered effective.

The majority of the informants (97% n=310) considers that the mass media contributes to a better knowledge of society and culture. Almost 80 percent of the informants (n=253) consider that exploring socio-cultural issues such as gender, race, and class could contribute to a better knowledge of society and culture. Less than half of the informants (46% n=149) report politics and the economy as effective. The remaining topics are generally considered effective. These include issues or subject matter such as education and school systems (59% n=197), and Literature and History (77% n=247), and 94 % (n=302) of the informants report that customs and traditions are important.

#### **1.1.2.2. Perspectives of Instrumental Based Learning (Q 26-36)**

The view of the 806 informants who opted for instrumental based learning in the EFL classroom about what makes for effective learning are unsurprising. The majority (96% n=772) agrees with the usefulness of taking practical courses such as conversational English. Again, having just emerged from the rigid national exam system, most informants also agree that memorizing more vocabulary and idioms would help them their practical use of English. Most informants also agree that studying in an English-speaking environment would help to improve their English competence. For example, seventy eight percent (n=627) of the informants consider joining language study groups traveling to English speaking countries an effective learning method. Almost all informants (96% n=777) in this category agree upon the effectiveness of daily conversations as an aid to learning. The majority of the informants also reports that English for reading newspapers and magazines, and for travel, as well as survival English should be included in the syllabus.

Evidence about informant perspectives of linguistic and cultural learning is also found



in the set of questions from Q 38 to 42. These are designed to find the degree of importance of the curricular goals to the informants. Almost all the informants (n=1110) agree in various degrees that to increase competence in the four skills is their major goal. However, an equivalent number of informants (n=1015) are also positive about expanding their knowledge of other cultures when learning English. When some related questions are cross compared, the findings also indicate that informants value both aspects of learning. For example, among 478 informants who define a good English user as one having competence in the four skills, 70 percent (n=335) of them also indicate that culture and language cannot be separated. Among 469 informants who study English mainly because it is a *lingua franca*, 54 percent (n=254) indicate that having good knowledge of other cultures and being an intercultural speaker defines a good English user. Ninety three percent (n=1050) of those who agree that they need more linguistic training also opt for more understanding of culture. These results show that among those who prefer linguistic learning in the EFL classroom, a majority also recognizes that culture is an indispensable element in English class.

A possible reason for this anomaly is that informants are conditioned by their years of training to regard language learning as largely instrumental in orientation. Their responses reflect this orientation, but also an intrinsic interest in cultural topics that finds little or no outlet in institutional curricular. In particular, while they are interested in other dimensions of learning, they remain constrained by the idea that instrumental learning is the best way to pass the standardized tests currently being promoted by the government as the gatekeepers for a university degree.

### **1.1.3. Student Perception of Their Own English Ability (Q 43~44)**

Generally speaking, although all of the informants have received at least 6 years of English education, in terms of linguistic knowledge, they are not very confident about how much they have achieved. This area of questions aims to determine the focus of their previous English studies. Only when asked if they have the necessary knowledge for examinations did more than 50 percent of the informants agree (figure 3).



Correlation is found between those whose with higher achievement (top 50 percentile) on the JCEE English exam, and those who indicate they have gained the knowledge for examinations. Nevertheless, less than half (49% n=555) of the informants agreed that they have competence in the four skills. This might shed light on why linguistic aspects of English learning still concern them, particularly when the government, and therefore the university, are raising the graduation threshold for English language proficiency. Fifty three percent (n=604) of the informants agree that they have obtained cultural knowledge and 93% (n= 1052) show a willingness to accept and reflect upon cultural differences in their previous learning experience. Generally speaking, findings of this set of questions reveal that students have been exposed, voluntarily or involuntarily, to cultural differences in their previous English classes.

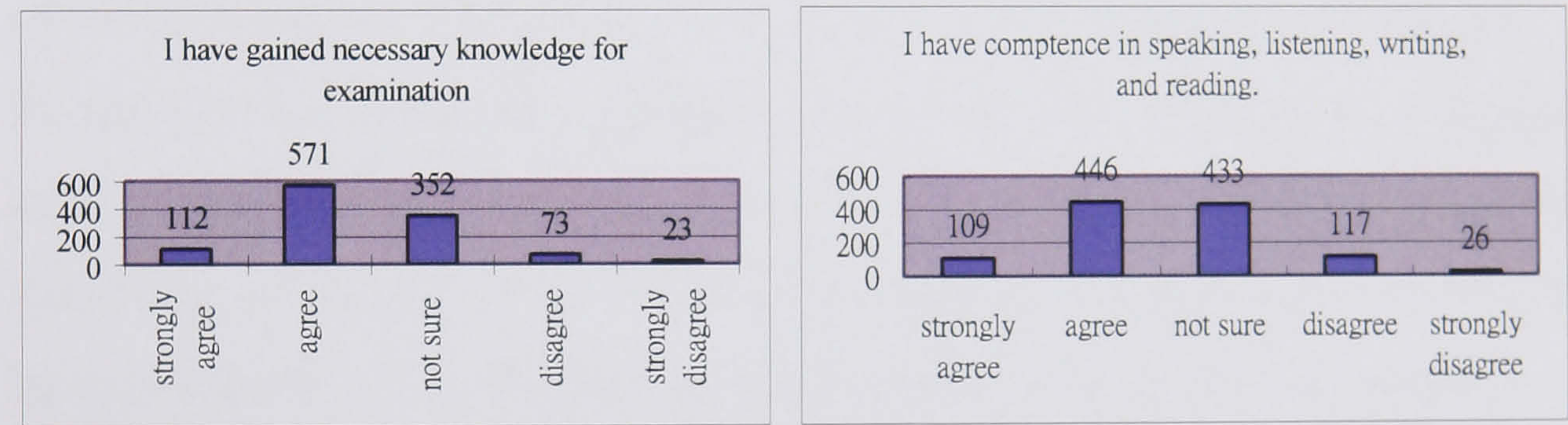


Figure 3

1.1.4. Materials (Q 48~51)

This area of questions is designed to determine materials in the language classroom that interest informants. The majority (96% n=1089)) of the informants indicates that mass media could be interesting to use in the language classroom. They generally agree that materials with topics of everyday ways of life (90% n=1019), scientific articles (79% n=895), and literature (73% n=821) are interesting, while there are fewer informants agreeing upon essays based on issues with socio-cultural content such as gender, race, class and politics (65% n=734), or materials particularly designed for grammar and vocabulary practice (67% n=760). These data indicate that the informants tend to be more hesitant on some topics such as politics that might cause controversy. This finding is consistent with the findings in previous questions about culture-based learning. This materials section also serves as a basis for the Specific Questionnaire.



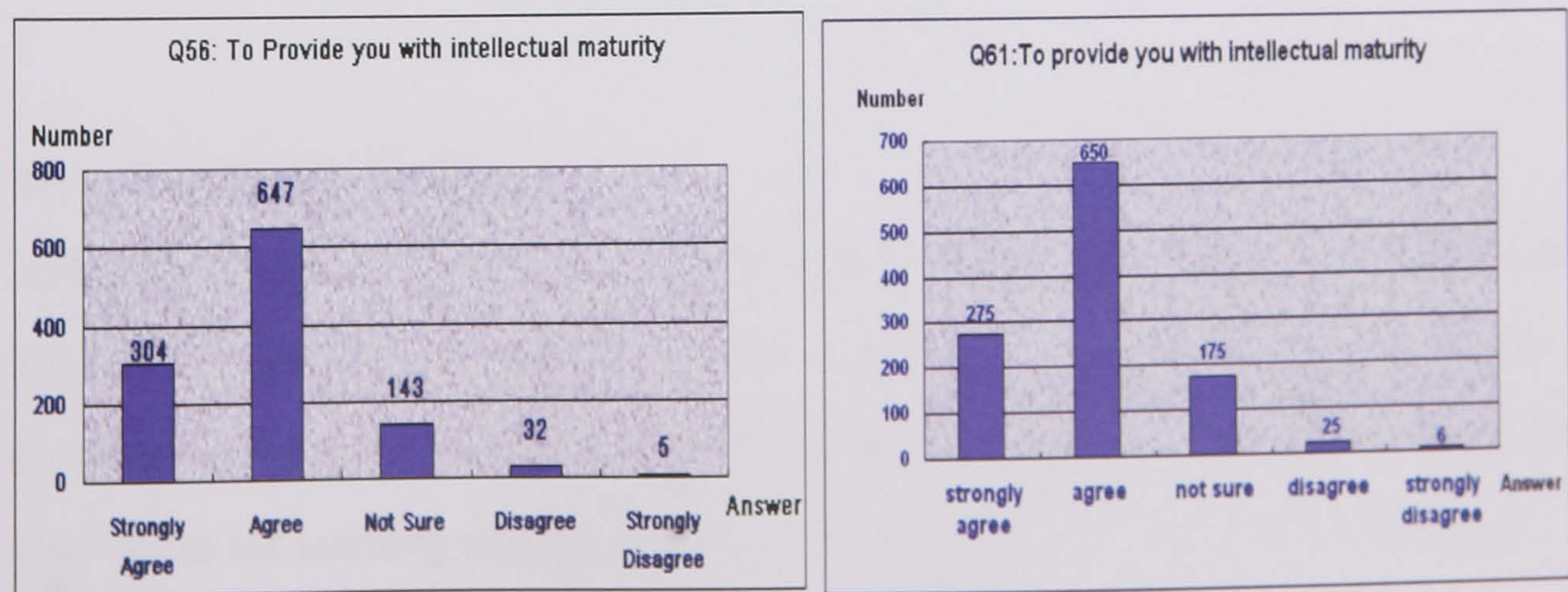
The findings show that in the university EFL classroom, the topics that interest informants mainly are related to Cultural Studies.

**1.1.5. Whole Person Education -- Humanistic Education and English Education (Q 55~58, Q 60~63)**

Figure 4 compares informant perceptions between Humanities courses and EFL classes. The evidence indicates that informants' expectations for these two aspects are similar. In most universities, English courses belong to the core curriculum of general education with the goal of whole person education. Therefore, the humanistic aspect of learning is one of the targets. In general, the informants are positive about the humanistic and critical aspect of learning in general education. This is consistent with the findings for their expectation for their English in this aspect. They reveal the hope that their language learning can at the same time provide them with independent, critical thinking ability, and intellectual maturity. Through language learning, they wish to broaden knowledge and facilitate their life long learning ability. These findings indicate that the expectations for English language learning match with the goals of general education. They, to a certain degree, also echo Byram's statement that it is "only through critical cultural awareness that FLT can claim to contribute to learner's general education and development" (1997a: 63).

What do you expect from your university Humanities courses?

Apart from language learning, what do you expect to learn from English classes?





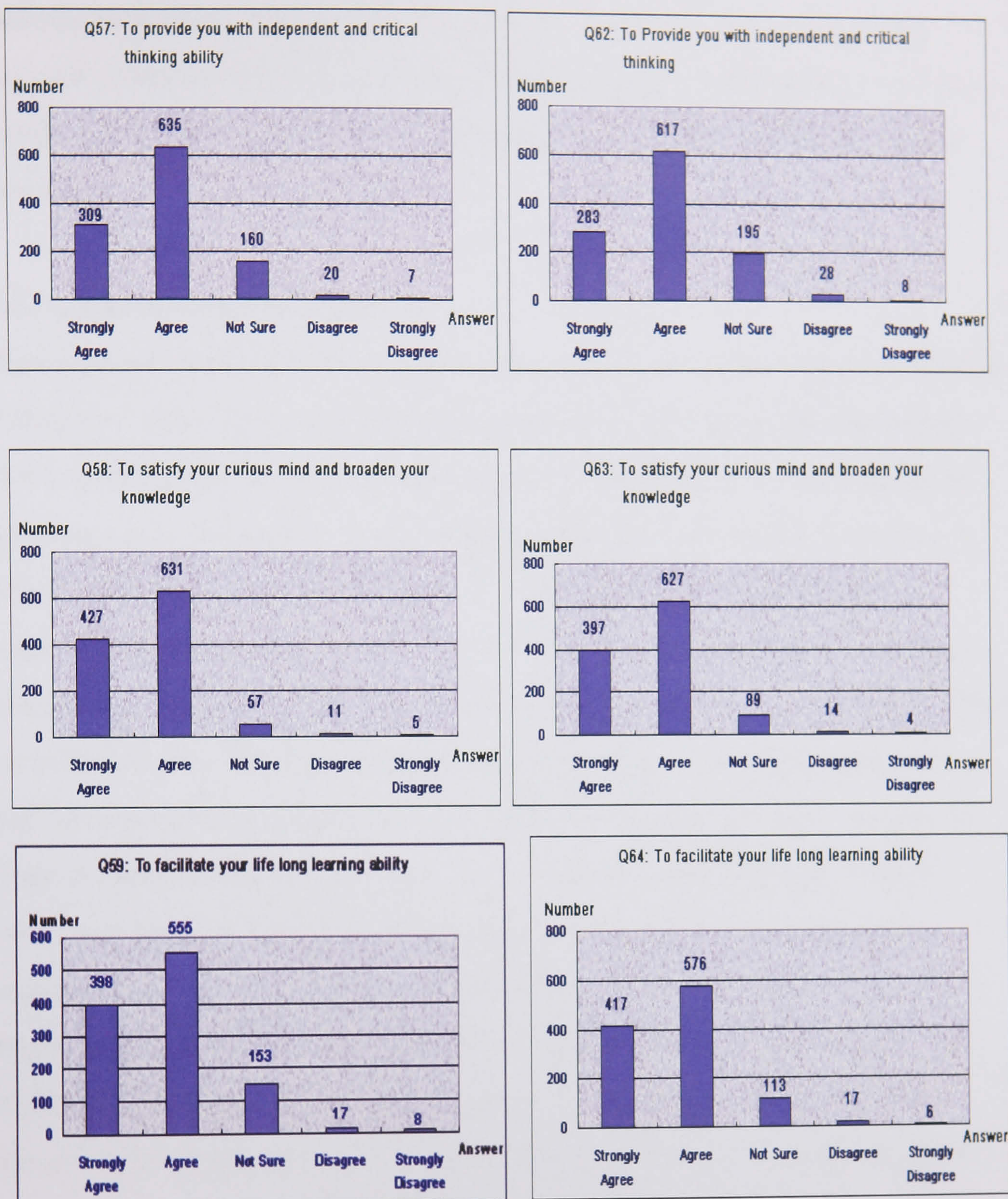


Figure 4

### 1.1.6. Motivation (Q 66)

Although 41 percent (n=469) of the informants indicate that they study English because it's a *lingua franca*, and almost two thirds (n=862) of the informants would like to continue their English study, less than half of the informants (42% n= 484) deem their motivation for learning English as high. Almost half (n=564) of the informants



indicate that their motivation was just moderate. The data reveal no correlation between informant motivation and this definition of ‘good’ English ability. Nor is a correlation found between the level of their achievement in the JCEE exam and this definition.

#### **1.1.7. Attitude to Language (Q 67)**

The majority (98% n=1105) of the informants agrees on the importance of a knowledge of English. Mandarin, as the official language, received the second highest support (94%, n=1065), and Taiwanese the third highest (71%, n=807). In this question, the percentage of the informants who ‘strongly’ agree is 68% for English, compared with 49% for Mandarin and 28% for Taiwanese. This highest support for English is consistent with the result of Question 5 in which informants indicate that the primary reason for studying English is because of the status of English as a *lingua franca*. Half (n=241) of the 480 informants who have high motivation for learning English also indicate that English as a *lingua franca* is their motive to study English. English, in terms of linguistic capital, has superseded the official language Mandarin and the indigenous language, Taiwanese. However, Taiwanese, once regarded as a low language, has received more attention and a majority of the informants recognized its importance in the future. This finding is also consistent with the current Taiwanese linguistic landscape, as discussed in Chapter 3. It is also related to later findings concerning cultural identity found in the Specific Questionnaire. It further suggests that involving ‘locality’ in relation to the ‘global context’ is essential to being ‘intercultural’.

#### **1.1.8. Perceptions of Good English Competence**

The last question (Q74, figure 5) again shows the informants’ diverse attitudes when confronting a preference for either linguistic competence or cultural and intercultural competence. Forty-nine percent (n=551) informants are aware that good knowledge of other cultures and being an intercultural English user, rather than simply being a competent in the four skills, define “good” English competence. This finding



corresponds with the findings of the previous set of questions where the informants tend to value the humanistic aspects of language learning. Passing the standardized exams, as the government urges, is no longer what informants interpret as ‘good’ English competence. However, it should be noted that this survey was conducted in the fall of 2004 when this university had not yet adopted standardized tests as a gatekeeper. Since the fall of 2005, this university has followed the governments’ policy and started setting the threshold in accordance with the standardized tests. Whether this will have a backwash influence and thereby change the informants’ view is worth further research.

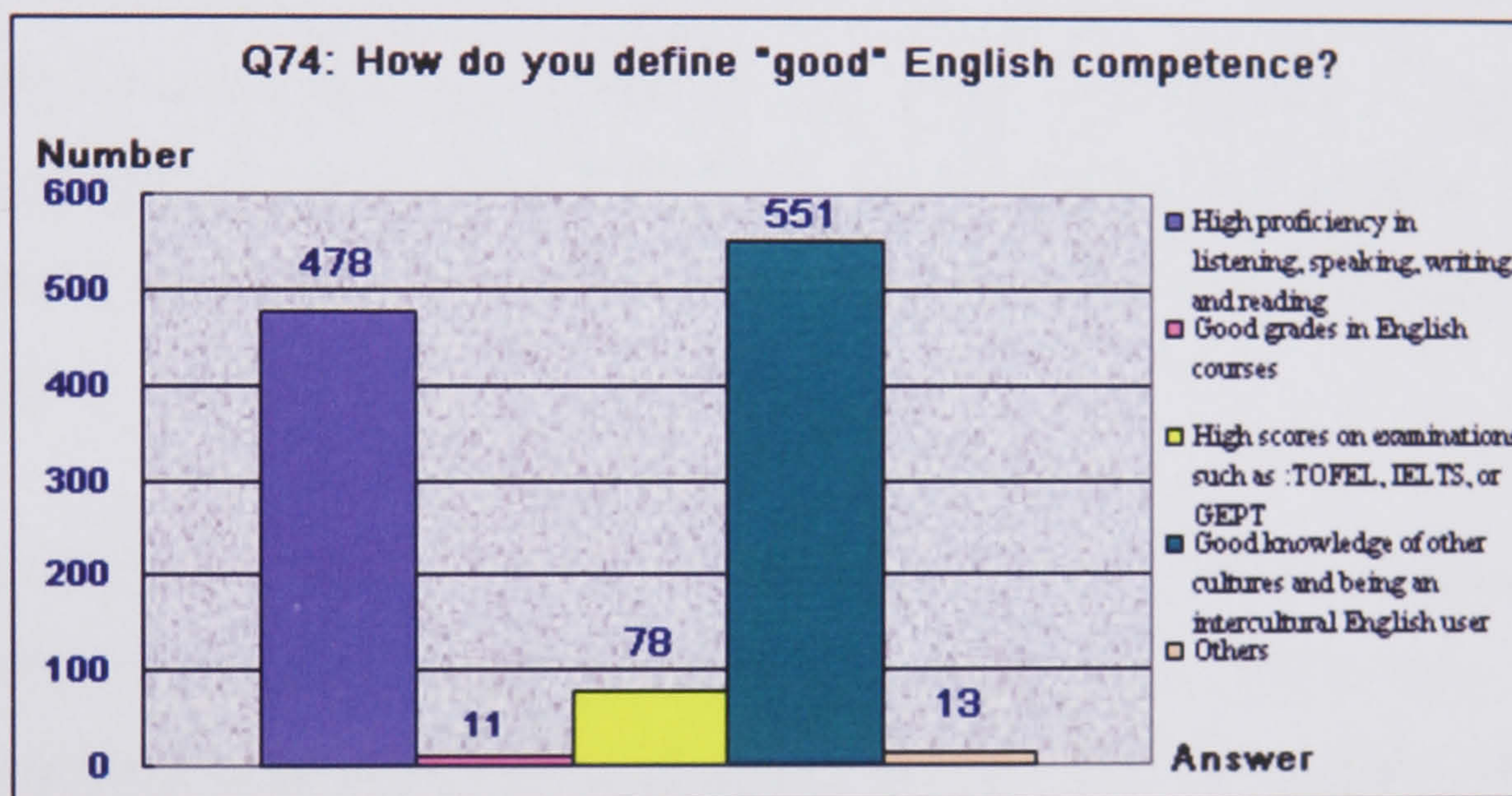


Figure 5

### 1.1.9. Summary and Discussion

The findings of this questionnaire indicate that informants:

1. Generally favor the pragmatic aspects of English learning;
2. Expect to gain more in depth cultural knowledge in the English classroom at the tertiary level and recognize the importance of being an intercultural English user.
3. Are not certain about how much they had achieved in terms of linguistic competence.
4. Are strongly positive about the usage of mass media (films, TV sitcoms, magazines, newspaper...etc) in their English language classroom and recognize the effectiveness of the use of a variety of materials like literary works.
5. Favor socio-cultural topics being covered in their materials.
6. Indicate that they are ready for more humanistic aspects of English language,



consistent with their expectations toward general education courses.

7. Recognize the importance of English in their future, albeit being lacking strong motivation in learning.

Overall, informants strongly recognize the importance of English regardless of what their current study means to their future. These data indicate that instrumental learning is a higher priority than cultural learning, although cultural learning is generally expected in the university English classroom. After at least six years of study that mainly focused on four skills training, the informants indicate little confidence in their linguistic competence gained from their previous learning. As discussed in Chapter 3, the educational and social context keeps informing them English a definite ‘must’ in their future career. These all together might explain their preference for pragmatic learning.

Nevertheless, it is evident that informants are positive about the necessity of expanding cultural knowledge and would like to become better intercultural English speakers. They expected the university English classes to provide them not only with four-skills training but also some other humanistic dimensions. They also wish that language learning could help increase their intellectual maturity and provide them with opportunities for developing independent and critical thinking. Responses to expectations of English learning and General Education are consistent. According to Byram and Zarate (1997b: 7-43), intercultural competence clearly aims at the ‘whole person’ education, requiring not simply the acquisition of a number of main skills, but also the ethical and cognitive understanding or *savoirs*, previously discussed in Chapter 2. Therefore, the creation of a ‘third space’ in the EFL classroom in which they can recognize and understand cultural differences, and to reflect and voice their opinions, appears to be feasible.

Data indicate that informants indicate strong interest in using the mass media in their learning of English. This finding corresponds with the findings from the Teacher

Questionnaire and the Specific Questionnaire. This will be discussed explicitly in conjunction with these two questionnaires. The majority of the informants indicates in the cultural based learning of English categories (Q19) a high value for mass media as the major resource to their knowledge of society and cultures. The data from Q 50~52 provide evidence that materials from mass media concern the majority of informants. In addition, a majority of the informants (n=1019) favors topics related to everyday life and over half of the informants (65% n=734) are interested in a variety of socio-cultural issues.

These findings suggest that in addition to teaching practical aspects of English learning, teaching the cultural dimensions in the university EFL classroom not only fulfill humanistic goal but are also integral to internationalization of HE. The use of mass media needs further examination since it can serve as a rich resource for social and cultural knowledge that are expected from the English classes. Chapter six explores at greater length the roles played by the mass media in providing opportunities for students to develop cultural awareness, to learn cultural differences, and to empower students to reflect upon their own culture.

The impact of globalization is also seen as the informants mostly agree that English is the most important language in the future. The changing attitudes toward the languages in use in Taiwan also indicate a changing attitude to cultural identity. The results regarding language attitudes also appear to correspond with the new linguistic landscape of Taiwan, as discussed in chapter three.

## **1.2. Specific Questionnaire**

The Specific Questionnaire (Appendix 11) aims to find out more details about students' perceptions of cultural and intercultural aspects of English learning and their attitudes towards difference, where the 'third space' emerges. Also, because internationalization is now a major goal for higher education in Taiwan, the level to which the students' perceptions of this goal corresponds with educators' and the



government’s is also investigated. This questionnaire also explores the subject matter that interests the students. These data will serve as support for a socio-cultural syllabus integrated into the EFL classroom, and help map the theoretical basis for interculturality in the EFL classroom.

**Type of Data Gathered**

Area	Set of questions	Type of data gathered
I	4~5	A general understanding of the focus and contents of students’ previous learning in the language classroom
II.	6~7	The subject matter and materials that interest the students
III	8~17	The influence of mass media in English language on students’ understanding of its target culture
IV	18~20	Students’ opinions about literature learning in their previous English classroom and their perspectives of it in the University English courses
V	21	General ideas about their opinions on better channels of cultural learning
VI	22~24	Students’ recognition of their own cultural identity, and their viewpoints concerning integrating local materials into the English classroom
VII	25~27	Students’ perception of internationalization and globalization
VIII	28~30	Students’ perspectives of differences

**Table 2**

**Findings and Discussion**

**1.2.1. Perception of Previous English Language Learning**

The findings about the students’ previous English learning experiences are similar to what the literature indicates, that is, learning was generally based on rote memorization. Concerning their previous English learning, most informants report that it was focused on the knowledge necessary for taking exams and four skills training. Over half of the informants (n=27) indicate they were taught the knowledge necessary for exams while 24% (n=11) of them deem that the focus was four skills training and five (11%) deem

grammar and idioms to be their main focus. These data are consistent with the findings in the Generic Questionnaire, in which 85 % of medical students (n=128/150) agreed that they obtained the knowledge necessary for exams. Only two informants indicate that the focus covered both linguistic and intercultural competence. This presents the Taiwanese pre-university education system in a nutshell. The ability to pass the national examination is the chief goal of most students. Competences in grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing comprise the English subject of the national exams (mainly JCEE). As a result, the intercultural aspects and cultural dimensions of language learning generally are not the students' primary concern of the language classes. This issue is taken up again in the section below on student interviews.

### **1.2.2. Content and Subject Matter**

Responses suggest that in their previous learning course content focused on essays that usually provided model texts for the analysis of sentence structure and vocabulary usage. Simplified literary texts, usually novels, were also used for linguistic training with their relatively more interesting storylines when compared with traditional EFL/ESL texts. These were used to supplement their standard textbooks. According to the Teacher Questionnaire, this kind of simplified literary text is still used for supplementing EFL coursework at the University level. Nevertheless, whether abbreviated novels that are reduced to a 2000 to 3000 word vocabulary, can provide adequate cultural content remains questionable.

With respect to content or subject matter they found interesting, students opt for lived experiences similar to their own (84%, n=38), popular cultures (71%, n=32), and socio-cultural topics (67%, n=30).<sup>19</sup> Although there is no significant difference between culture as a general concept and target culture such as British/American life-style or life-styles of some other English speaking countries, more students preferred target culture (56%, n=25) to their own culture (40%, n=18). Only a comparatively small

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<sup>19</sup> This question allows more than one answer.



number of informants (29%, n=13) are interested in cultures of non-English speaking countries. When English is promoted as an international language in Taiwan, it appears that informants are inclined to limit 'international' to the range of English speaking cultures.

Informants generally tend to agree that cultures similar to their own contribute to their interest in learning English. In this regard, popular cultures and, socio-cultural topics such as race, gender, and class are considered equally interesting to them. These findings to a certain extent correspond with those of the Generic Questionnaire. With regard to their preference for materials to be used in the university English classroom, 71 percent of the students (n=32) report that materials from the mass media including film, radio broadcast, TV sitcoms, and magazine and newspaper articles are considered interesting. Furthermore, when politics are involved, less support is given. As noted earlier, this may partly be explained by politics being generally regarded as a taboo subject in a public form such as a classroom in Taiwan. It is noteworthy that materials focusing on four skills training are no longer of great concern to the informants responding to this questionnaire. No informants opted for materials specifically designed for four skills training.

### **1.2.3. Cultural Resources for English Language Learning**

It is evident that the students' understanding of English speaking cultures is significantly influenced by the mass media. The factors that have contributed most to their current understanding of English speaking cultures are movies and TV sitcoms, followed by English literary works including some best sellers such as *Bridget Jones' Diary*, and popular songs. It is therefore clear that the mass media are not only considered an interesting subject matter and a resource for use in the classroom, they are also taken as major source for their knowledge of other cultures. These findings are consistent with the findings that the mass media provide their favorite subject matter and content in the previous section and in the Generic Questionnaire.

With respect to the sources of major information about English speaking cultures<sup>20</sup>, most informants (93% n=42) opt for films and TV programs and over half of the informants (64% n=29) also indicate 'pop songs' contribute to their understanding. In Q 21, data also indicate that apart from studying abroad, the majority of informants tends to agree that the best way to understand other cultures better is through mass media such as newspapers, magazines, TV programs, and movies. The influence of American movies is particularly apparent according to the responses to question 13. Ninety-one percent of students (n= 41) report that they most frequently watch Hollywood movies. Concerning TV dramas, the informants' responses nonetheless vary and no particular preference is found for American TV dramas or sitcoms (29% n=13). The possible reason might be local TV 'idol dramas' target the youth audience, and Japanese melodrama has been long considered a favorite by younger age groups in Taiwan. Data from Question 15 show that 69 % (n=32) of the students agree that the degree by which their reception of cultural knowledge is influenced by the media is very high. Although this is a conscious reflection, this result corresponds with other findings about the resources from which they learn about English language speaking cultures.

Fewer students (44% n=20), however, would reflect upon the cultural knowledge they have gained from the mass media. For example, the socio-cultural messages in foreign movies are seldom reflected upon. Students (71% n=32) indicate that they are attracted by the plots of movies rather than by the socio-cultural content conveyed. The later student interviews also support the finding that previously they rarely thought about the socio-cultural message in the foreign mass media. Because most student informants receive their cultural messages mainly from the media and the teacher informants report using movies or TV programs to provide cultural supplements, as discussed later regarding the Teacher Questionnaire, the role that the mass media play in cultural and intercultural learning needs urgent investigation.

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<sup>20</sup> More than one answer could have been chosen for this question.



Regarding the literary works used in their previous learning, the students most often report the use of abbreviated novels or short stories. Most of the literary works that they have read, either in their original language or Chinese translation, can be classified as major canonical novels in English or other language such as *Jane Eyre*, *War and Peace*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Moby Dick* ...etc. These literary works may be morally inspiring but less contemporary and less controversial in their socio-cultural content. This notwithstanding, over half of the respondents (51% n=23) indicate that they most want to learn about cultures through expansion of experiences and 22 % (n=10) of the respondents wish to learn about the values and beliefs conveyed in literary texts. Informants who chose the above two items correlate with those who thought that literature in English, indulging best sellers, can improve their knowledge of English speaking cultures (see Q10). One-quarter of them (n=11) wish to have increased aesthetic appreciation. Only one informant wishes to learn more complicated syntax and through it a variety of linguistic usages. Overall, literary works are generally considered by informants as a positive way to gain knowledge of different cultures, different lives, and different values and concepts.

#### **1.2.4. Language and Identity**

The findings of the Generic Questionnaire reflect changing attitudes toward language. In the Specific questionnaire, identity is further surveyed. The findings illustrate that the informants' perspectives generally match the changed attitude towards national identity in Taiwan over the past decade. Twenty students (44%) report that they are exclusively Taiwanese while seven (16%) report that they are Chinese and Taiwanese and three (7%) consider themselves as Chinese. Twelve (27%) of them consider themselves global citizens. These data show that more than half of the informants (60%) have various degrees of Taiwanese identification with mixed attitudes toward their Chinese origins. It is worth noting that even only 7 % (n=3) of the informants see themselves as exclusively Chinese. The data in the Generic Questionnaire again reflects the increased importance of the Taiwanese language, Southern Ming, and indicates that the identification with the Taiwanese language is part of the emergence of

a new cultural identity (See Chapter 3 for reasons for this change). This new cultural identity can serve as a point of reference when teachers are using 'local' materials. It is noteworthy that 27% (n=12) consider themselves global citizens. Paradoxically, students' identification with their country is growing at the same time that the boundaries between countries are diminishing.

This changing attitude toward language and identity to a certain degree has impacted on student attitudes towards the relationships between globalization and localization.

With regard to the local and global contexts, students are positive about the inclusion of local culture in the EFL classroom. The majority of the students (84% n=38) agrees that materials of local context should be integrated to enable them to relate to or juxtapose with their own culture. This, however, appears to contradict earlier findings regarding subject matter of interest to them, which indicates that students do not particularly favor 'local culture' as materials. When the local culture is listed as a single option for materials, students do not particularly favor it. However, the students deem it necessary in the language classroom when considering other cultures. It is also interesting to find that the learning of English as a foreign language has aroused only minor concern about their own identity, as 62 percent of the students (n=28) indicate that it does not jeopardize the recognition of their current identity, 20 percent (n=9) are not sure, and 18 %(n=8) do recognize it as a threat to their own identity. Analysis of the data reveals that students who identify themselves as Taiwanese are not correlated with those who agreed that learning of English will threaten their own identity. This might further illustrate that English indeed occupies a neutral position in the continuous disputes over languages and identity in Taiwan.

### **1.2.5. Internationalization and Globalization**

The informants' opinions are varied with respect to globalization. According to the responses to question 27, 36% of the students (n=16) indicate that globalization has no boundaries, that the whole world would become one village, and 33% (n=15) choose the option that one would be able to communicate with people all over the world.



However, it is also evident that although they watch largely American movies and sitcoms that have an influence on their perspectives of foreign cultures, only a few students (16% n=7) indicate that globalization is equivalent to Americanization.

Indeed, the informants reveal a relatively sophisticated view of the process of internationalization. The findings reveal that their understanding of the relationships between English and internationalization are not as simplistic as is the government's perspective. In assessing their understanding of internationalization, only 27% of the informants (n=12) equate internationalization to globalization. A majority of the informants (58% n=28) indicate that internationalization should include international, intercultural, and global dimensions. Few students regard internationalization as merely the prevalent usage of an international language, namely, English. Informants' expectations for internationalization do not correspond with the simplified concept that the government uses in the blueprint they have drawn up for the internationalization of higher education.

Most informants (78% n=35) do not simply equate the internationalization with the acquisition of a good competence in English. Only ten (22%) informants indicate that a university student needs to only acquire good English competence for this purpose. The results reveal that 58 % (n=23) of the informants indicate that university students should acquire the attitude of willingness to accept cultural differences and be able to speak for their own cultures in order to enable Taiwan to achieve the goal of internationalization. Nine informants (20%) choose having an in depth understanding of different cultures and three (7%) opt for being able to reflect upon the differences between other cultures and their own culture.

By applying the chi-square test for independence, a correlation (type one error: 9%)<sup>21</sup> was found between questions 25 and 26. The test confirms that those who thought that internationalization should include international, intercultural and global aspects, are

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<sup>21</sup> The error of rejecting something that should have been accepted.

correlated to those who thought a university student should be willing to accept cultural difference, to reflect upon and to give voice to their own culture. The informants that indicate that international, intercultural and global aspects are indispensable to the process of internationalization are also positive about the intercultural competence they should acquire. This finding sheds light on students' recognition of the importance of cultural differences and intercultural competence.

#### **1.2.6. Perceptions of Difference**

The students' responses indicate positive attitudes towards cultural differences as discussed in the previous section. Two questions (Q28 and 29) in this area further seek to reveal the students' attitude towards differences and controversial topics. In assessing their attitude towards difference, only two students reject difference because it might cause possible conflicts. Half of the students (n=22) indicate that they accept and enjoy diversity and one third of the students (n=15) indicate that they are willing to see different values and beliefs in relative perspectives. Thirteen percent (n=6) indicate that cultural differences might enable them to reflect upon themselves. Overall, their attitudes toward differences appear quite constructive and positive.

Over half of the informants (53%) indicate that such controversial topics would help them notice values and interests involved in various cultural perspectives. About 27% (n= 12) of them indicate that they would like to exchange views with peers when confronting such topics. It is also noted that seven (16%) of them indicate that they would identify what is right and wrong, and only two (4%) seek agreement from others. Responses to Q 29 indicate that in accordance with their positive attitude towards differences, students seem to accept the change and be able to think and voice their own opinions. These informants, growing up in a Confucian culture, did not seek for homogeneity and harmony as some literature has indicated (e.g. Gao & Ting Toomey, 1998, Holmes, 2006). Student presentations and interviews, which will be discussed later in Chapter 7, also demonstrate student willingness to accept different perspectives from their peers.



The last question, Q30, asks the informants to reflect upon their goals for higher education. Analytical ability (36% n=16) and humanistic dimensions (36% n=16) together receive the majority of the students' support. This again is consistent with the findings regarding the students' expectations for the university EFL classes in the Generic Questionnaire. These findings demonstrate that in the informants' perceptions, the language classroom is not merely a place to acquire a linguistic tool, contrary to what is generally believed.

### **1.2.7. Summary and Discussion**

These findings can be divided into 9 points.

These findings indicate that informants:

1. Believe that the major competences they gained in their previous learning is linguistic skills and knowledge necessary for examinations.
2. Did not have sufficient cultural/ or intercultural learning in their previous English class.
3. Favor using materials from mass media in the classroom.
4. Generally agree that their cultural knowledge is mainly from the media and that although a majority of the students watch mostly Hollywood movies or American/Japanese sitcoms, they seldom reflect upon the socio-cultural issues conveyed.
5. Agree that literature would be a good means to extend their life experiences and learn more about other cultures.
6. Generally consider their cultural identity exclusively or primarily Taiwanese,
7. Generally agree that materials with local content should be included, irrespective of their low interest in including Taiwanese cultures as the primary subject matter in their class.
8. Agree that internationalization should include intercultural aspect and global dimensions, and are positive about knowing other cultures as well as being able to accept differences and speak for their own culture.

9. Are ready to face challenges brought on by confronting difference.

It is evident that students are particularly interested in mass media and consider it the major resources for their cultural knowledge. Therefore, when films and materials from mass media are used in the classroom, the socio-cultural dimension of it could be explored. However, the students also indicate that the socio-cultural messages conveyed in the mass media are usually not reflected upon. It is also noted that literature is deemed by students to be a channel to expand their knowledge of different realities of life. In this regard, the data also reveal that student attitudes towards difference and controversial topics are very constructive. It is, therefore, necessary to re-examine the selection and uses of literary works and mass media used in the language classroom. From these findings, two further research questions emerge. These are:

- How can a cultural ‘inter’ space be created for students thus enabling them to compare, contrast, reflect and voice their opinions in that space?
- What materials can help increase the students’ opportunities to stand in the in-between, cultural ‘inter’, space?

These questions will be further discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

**1.3. Teacher Questionnaire<sup>22</sup>**

Area	Set of Question	Data Collected
I.	1~5	Informants’ general attitude towards cultural learning
II.	6~10	If informants have included cultural content in their teaching and if so, what cultural content they prefer to use
III.	11~12	What medium of cultural content do the informants use in their classrooms?

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix 13 for the complete Questionnaire.



IV.	13~14	Informants' views about cultural differences and having students confront cultural differences in the classroom.
V.	15~20	Informants' views about published materials
VI.	21~25	Informants' views about the relationships among internationalization, intercultural competence and English competence.

Table 3

### 1.3.1. Findings of Question 1 to Question 20

#### 1.3.1.1. Perspective of Cultural Teaching

The attitudes of most teachers toward including cultural teaching in their classes are positive. A majority of the teachers strongly agree (n=7) or agree (n=1) that it is essential for students to be exposed to a variety of cultures and for teachers to include aspects of the target language's culture as part of their classroom instruction. They do not think a student can learn English well without learning about its cultures, although one teacher does indicate that it is feasible. In addition, they tend to agree (n=6) that the student's intellectual maturity has prepared them to address more socio-cultural topics, although one teacher informant disagrees and one is not sure. However, in the subsequent semi structured interview questions, one teacher also indicates that s/he is concerned that students' English competence may not enable them to handle such topics. Responses to question number 5 also show that teachers generally think that learning foreign cultures helps change students' attitude towards their own.

The questionnaire responses suggest that teachers tend to present cultural knowledge rather than provide chances for students to reflect upon their own culture and to compare and contrast. The cultural knowledge presented appears to be limited to behavioral patterns such as conversation patterns and information about festivals such as Thanksgiving. Most teachers always (n=3) or usually (n=4) teach cultural aspects of language and how English differs from Chinese regarding such issues as modesty, giving, responding to compliments, and sensitivity about personal questions. When asked if they provide opportunities for students to contrast their own culture with

cultural examples found in the teaching materials, five of the informants report that they frequently do, one is not sure and two seldom do. Their hesitance over providing a cultural contact zone is indicated in their responses, although previous findings show that teachers recognize cultural differences as a way to help students understand more about their own culture. About half of them do not (n=2) provide or are not sure (n=2) if they have provided students with opportunities to hold and defend a critical stance generated from cultural differences that they encounter. One informant indicates that s/he encourages students to hold and defend a critical stance when confronting differences, though students “rarely avail themselves of this opportunity”.

#### **1.3.1.2. Perspective of Cultural Content**

All teacher informants report they at least ‘usually’ include cultural information about English speaking cultures in their classes. The information that they usually include concerns specific cultural aspects. The examples they provided are life style, ideas, movies, TV, songs, and mass media. Six teachers indicate they usually used supplementary materials to present and talk about western or English speaking cultures. The examples they provide can be placed into two categories. One is literature such as mythology, poems, novels, anthologies or essays, short stories and poetry. One informant favors literature particularly because it “dates” less rapidly than topical essays and it has a much longer shelf life than the other topics. The other category is mass media such as songs, TV programs, news, video clips, and pictures. One informant reports that s/he included holiday culture and customs, such as Christmas.

The topics teachers consider important for enhancing the students’ cultural understanding are, in descending order of importance: everyday life; socio cultural issues such as gender, race, class; economic and political issues; mass media and popular culture; and then literature. Six informants deem topics such as socio-cultural issues important. These responses indicate that they do not include cultural concepts such as beliefs and values shared by a community as frequently as they include specific



cultural aspects in their teaching.

#### **1.3.1.3. Perspective of Published Materials**

Although most teacher informants recognize the value of culture in the English language classroom, the issue needs to be addressed as to whether or not the materials used in the language classrooms provide sufficient cultural input needs to be explored. All of the teachers use textbooks in their classes at all times and reported that their textbooks do include cultural information. However, only three of them ‘slightly agree’ that the quality of cultural content was adequate and two informants regard it as inadequate. The majority of the informants uses textbooks, which include authentic materials such as a variety of literary works, newspaper/magazine articles, song, etc. However, five informants use textbooks specifically written and designed to train the four linguistic skills. Informants also report that the materials they use to supplement cultural content include films or filmstrips, current affairs magazines or newspaper articles, and Internet resources. These responses are consistent with the written answers provided in the questionnaire.

#### **1.3.1.4. Main Points of Findings for Q 1~20**

Most of the teacher informants:

1. Agree that cultural knowledge is important
2. Agree that the cultural knowledge they provided covered high culture, popular culture and cultural facts of everyday life, although not all agreed that they cover beliefs and values conveyed.
3. Agree that they frequently included cultural information in their class although they were not certain that such materials could provide students a chance to compare and contrast or to hold a critical stance.
4. Favor mass media as supplementary materials and believed that these materials can provide knowledge of western cultures or English speaking cultures.
5. Always use textbooks that contain some cultural information, albeit not necessarily

providing adequate quality of cultural content.

### **Discussion:**

Most informants are positive about the importance of including cultural teaching in the English language classroom. They often provide or supplement cultural knowledge by using materials from mass media or literary works. Their responses reveal their preference for using mass media, or more specifically popular culture, as a major resource to supply cultural knowledge. There is a very positive attitude toward using foreign culture encountered in the language class as a way to address differences. However, not all informants are sure if they have provided enough opportunities for students to compare and contrast, or to defend their own stance. The majority agrees that the students' intellectual maturity is sufficient for them to cope with more socio-cultural topics. There is also no implication that when they use materials from mass media such as newspapers or magazine articles, TV sitcoms, filmstrips...etc, they will in fact create a space for students to reflect upon the socio cultural messages conveyed, and relate them to their own culture. Further examination of this aspect therefore is needed.

The teachers use textbooks that are mainly imported from foreign publishers into the Taiwanese market. Such textbooks, as Gray (1999) indicates, are usually designed to be one size-fits-all. Because the teacher is generally expected to be a cultural worker (Freire, 1974, Giroux, 1992, Byram and Morgan, 1994), whether or not teachers' perspective and choice of textbooks might affect culture integration in language teaching remains questionable. The informants assert that exposing students to a variety of cultures and cultural differences is essential and can help to change the students' attitude towards his/her own culture. Materials that provide such opportunities are becoming more important. However, the informants are not confident that the cultural information in textbooks is adequate and other resources as supplements would be required. Therefore, there is a need to investigate ways to integrate these resources into their curriculum and ways to implement methods that will



reach the goal of enabling students to see and negotiate the differences. This will be fully discussed in Chapter 6.

### **1.3.2. Semi-structured Questions**

The aims of this section are to find out teachers' perspectives of internationalization and the role English and intercultural competence play in internationalization of higher education. The findings are also cross-referenced to previous responses.

#### **1.3.2.1. Goals Set for Teaching**

Generally speaking, pragmatic aspects of language teaching are still the major focus of the informants' teaching. Six informants report that the goal of their class is to enhance the students' English skills (four skills) and communication ability. Two teachers indicate that they wish to enable students to appreciate the differences between cultures, and give them a basic understanding of English/ American cultures and current trends. One of these two informants states that the goal S/he wishes to achieve is to motivate students to be critical thinkers through observing illustrations, reading text and finding information by accessing the Internet. One of the informants comes from a different perspective and reports that his/her main purpose is to teach students how to get information and that S/he would "give them a small taste and they would develop an appetite".

#### **1.3.2.2. Internationalization and English Education**

In terms of internationalizing Taiwan, some teachers share the views of the government. Three informants indicate that internationalization is important for Taiwan to maintain its competitiveness economically, and to a lesser extent academically. For instance, one teacher indicates that Taiwan wants to be a financial hub and another one points out that Taiwan should participate in the WHO or WTO. They declare that the degree of Taiwan's internationalization was not high. However, they do not have concrete ideas about internationalizing the country. One informant points out that "people talk about

internationalization a lot but we do not see it a lot”. According to this informant, people are worried that their culture and language will be swamped by a foreign culture.

Teacher informants unanimously agree that English plays an important part in the internationalization of Taiwan. On the whole, sharing the same views as the government, they indicate that the emphasis on English should be increased and the level of English proficiency of the people in Taiwan must be raised. One informant specifically indicates that the emphasis placed on English by our government is not as much as that of Hong Kong, China or Singapore. It is also stated by one informant that there is a gap between internationalization as a slogan and teaching as a practice. This informant also indicates that instruction in English or English Across Curriculum is not practical because students have linguistic barriers. One teacher indicates that competence in English opens a window to the world: that is, a facility in English. English competence gives the students the advantage of direct contact with information about the world. In the opinion of most teacher informants, English proficiency is crucial for individual or collective internationalization.

#### **1.3.2.3. The Role of Intercultural Competence in the Internationalization of Taiwan**

Teachers generally consider that intercultural competence is essential in the internationalization of Taiwan. They indicate that with the advent of globalization, people must have the competence and knowledge necessary for interacting with people from the international community. One of the informants indicates that intercultural competence helps people understand differences between cultures, and that this is crucial when it comes to doing business with people from other cultures. One of them states that intercultural competence is an “understanding” of other cultures, which helps a person appreciate the differences between cultures. Another informant urges that intercultural competences should start as early as elementary school, and that starting at the tertiary level and lasting for one, or at most two years, is insufficient. According to her, because teachers generally rely on textbooks available in the commercial market,



the inadequate level of cultural content and knowledge in these textbooks contributes to the continuing an instrumental focus of language learning in the university language classroom.

Some teachers indicate that cultural learning enhances language learning. One informant points out that intercultural competence and linguistic competence have a mutual impact on each other. S/he indicates that students usually refer to popular culture only, and that intercultural competence can be gained only after students have developed a certain degree of linguistic competence. S/he also indicates that students' recognition of culture is usually in the narrow sense of behaviors and holiday customs. S/he strongly agrees that culture plays an important part in language learning and that language and culture have mutual impact. The more people learn about the language, the more they will understand the culture of that language speaking country. One of the informants indicates that cultural aspects of learning should be included in the conversation class as well, because these classes cover some basic facts, such as lifestyle and etiquettes such as what kind of personal questions should be avoided in a certain culture.

#### **1.3.2.4. Students' Readiness for More Cultural Learning**

Informants have a variety of viewpoints regarding whether college students are ready for cultural learning in the language classroom in terms of their maturity and intellectual curiosity. Generally speaking, about half of the informants indicate that students are ready. However, some teachers declare that in terms of their English ability or maturity, they are not ready yet. One of the informants indicates that the whole education system does not help to develop students' intellectual curiosity or encourage them to voice their own opinions. One informant proposes that cultural learning should be included in the secondary school curriculum. One says that it could be difficult to include cultural content in the language courses and that there should be separate courses on culture. One informant declares the students are not ready as

newly entering university students. S/he maintained that students in the second semester or the second year would be better if they would indulge less in partying. There could be truth in this, as students have just stepped out a rigid secondary school system oriented towards preparing for universities as discussed in Chapter 3, 2.2.3.

#### **1.3.2.5. English Education in Global Contexts**

Most of the informants are quite positive about the importance of including international and global contexts when teaching English cultures. They agree that using such contexts while teaching English could meet students' needs in terms of globalization. Two informants particularly indicate that most of the textbooks they used were limited to American culture and tended to be too narrow. One of them reports that if additional international and global contexts were applied, students would not be misled into thinking that "English equals American English-speaking cultures". Also, this additional context will provide "a large variety which shouldn't be simplified as American culture as misunderstood by many people, especially young people". Another informant states that teachers themselves need to have this awareness, just as the students do. S/he indicates that students must learn to divert themselves from exam-oriented learning. In addition, intercultural competence should be facilitated as early as possible. This notwithstanding, one informant points out that S/he never uses textbooks from a Taiwanese publisher because they are 'outdated'. S/he usually uses books from American publishers, which are considered 'authentic'.

One informant asserts that students usually have knowledge about the world, but they just do not have enough vocabulary to discuss this knowledge. According to this informant, American English should not be the only standard. Students need to learn to understand English in different contexts including different accents. S/he used Time/Newsweek articles to supplement textbooks, because they do not change as quickly as newspaper articles.



Overall, all the informants agree that teaching English in the global context is constructive although one informant demonstrated confusion between global context and American context. They tend to agree that English education should not merely focus on American culture.

#### **1.3.2.6. Discussion of Findings**

Generally speaking, most of the informants view internationalization of Taiwan and of higher education instrumentally. As Taiwan is often under threat from and facing exclusion from China, the informants share the same view as the government and most of the people, that is, only by internationalization can Taiwan's economy be helped, and its international visibility increased. In their view, the English language is a force that will open windows to the world and enable students to gain more knowledge. The teachers, therefore, agree that the emphasis on English should be increased, albeit without specifically indicating how. Like the government, they simply link English proficiency and knowledge about the world. They all agree that culture plays a significant function in the language classroom. Although none specifically points out the relationship between intercultural competence and internationalization, they value intercultural competence, which they maintain would help to reduce friction among nations and people. Some teachers indicate that intercultural competence helps to understand differences in a broad sense and is not limited to behaviors.

On the whole the teachers agree that intercultural competence comes from being able to understand cultural differences; however, not all of them agree that university students are ready for in-depth learning of cultures or are capable of voicing the differences between cultures. The teachers are generally positive about teaching English in the global context but are ambivalent when relating the importance of intercultural competence to internationalization. It is therefore questionable whether teaching cultures continues to remain the teaching of festivals, customs, and holidays. Nevertheless, cultural dimensions in the language classroom at the tertiary level should

not be limited to one-way instruction. There should be opportunities for students to reflect upon their own culture when they encounter another culture. When students encounter differences they should have opportunities to find their own voice and thereby develop a critical mind.

## **2. The Interviews with the MOE Administrators**

The interviews with two MOE administrators, as discussed in chapter 4, aim to explore the current policy of internationalization of HE and English education. These interviews serve to provide an in depth explanation of the government's current policies. Although the interview data are qualitative, they are discussed in the wake of the questionnaire findings, and they reveal some interesting contrasts to the students' and the teachers' perspectives of cultural learning and English Language Education in relation to internationalization.

Three themes emerge from the interviews:

1. Perceptions of Relationships among Internationalization, Higher Education and English Education
2. The role English Education Plays in Internationalization of Higher Education -- Languages open a window to the world
3. Perceptions of Intercultural Aspects of Internationalization—English Competence and English Education

### **2.1. Perceptions of Relationships among Internationalization, Higher Education and English Education**

The advent of globalization and the increasing flow of knowledge, cultures and economics among countries have created a new climate of competitiveness. Anxiety emerged from this global competitiveness and became prevalent all over the world.

Taiwan is no exception. According to the informants, higher education, with its role in developing human capital, plays a key role in the internationalization of Taiwan. The



reasons given for internationalizing HE are numerous. Both administrators specify that the internationalization of HE has become a “mainstream” academic movement in Taiwan and around the world. Their perspectives are consistent with the previous discussion of published government policies in Chapter 3. Either the country has to catch up with this trend or it would be left behind by increased global competition. As a result, internationalization of HE has become one of the chief strategies in the government’s educational policy. Furthermore, the level of internationalization is becoming an important indicator by which to assess a university. To some universities, international ranking is becoming more important than competition with other domestic universities because increasing the international profile is now related to government funding.

The researcher asked both informants about their understanding of internationalization. They both associate internationalization with the future of higher education. The foci of their responses are on creating an international learning environment by extending English-medium curricula, recruiting more foreign students, and encouraging academic exchanges of students and faculty members. Moreover, participating in all kinds of international academic activities is considered to be increasingly significant. To some extent the projects and strategies for implementing the internationalization of HE correspond to the internationalization strategies that Scott and de Wit observes in many universities worldwide. Scott (1999: 116~122) and de Wit (2002: 96) point out that strategies such as curriculum innovation, study abroad programs, faculty-student exchanges, area studies and centers, foreign language study, joint international research initiatives, and cross-cultural training have a great impact on internationalization of higher education.

Both informants indicate that English serves as the foundation of internationalization of HE and a key element to provide university students with ‘the global vision’. They believe the promotion of English education is a definite and accurate strategy for this purpose. In addition, the BICER administrator clearly indicates that English is

fundamental to the internationalization of HE because barriers created by deficiency in an international language will impede the degree of internationalization. This concept is echoed by Minister Tu's perspectives in his interview with the *Common Wealth Magazine*. He states that English would facilitate students gaining a global vision (2004:93). Tu further indicates that 'the global vision' would be included in educational policies of different scales, with the hope that this would provide citizens with global thinking ability and international competitiveness (ibid). Overall, all three administrators think that "although language ability does not stand for competitiveness, it is essential", and it would help students to be a 'global citizen'. Although they begin by talking generally about the significance of learning foreign languages, they eventually focus specifically on English. Ultimately the role that English education plays in HE is deemed to be indispensable.

With regard to the internationalization of higher Education, localization is also discussed. The researcher asks if the overemphasis on English education in the process of internationalization would create a form of linguistic imperialism because 'English only' is prevalent at all levels of education. It is at this point that the administrators raise the issue of localization. The HE administrator stresses that in the process of internationalization, one should have confidence in his/her own culture. Tu also expresses the same perspective in his interview with the *Common Wealth* magazine. According to Tu, there is no conflict between localization and globalization (2004). He states that "having our own local unique features and values would help gain respect from others... and we have to let students know the uniqueness of Taiwan in the past, the present, and the future" (ibid: 88). He also emphasizes: "our education is aimed to equip students with originality, not only to train students to mimic"(ibid). This notwithstanding, neither of the administrators indicates how internationalization and uniqueness of local values could be coordinated in higher education. It is also obvious that they have no concern over the impact powerful foreign language might have on students concerning culture and identity.



## **2.2. The Role English Education plays in Internationalization of Higher Education**

### **-- Languages open a window to the world**

Since English competence is considered fundamental to the internationalization of HE, the role English plays in the whole HE system is gaining prominence. Both administrators' perceptions of the role that English education plays echo some of the perspectives expressed by the Minister of Education. English is by all means a key element in internationalization because as a *lingua franca* it connects Taiwan and the rest of the world, enhances international collaboration, and assists intercultural exchange. As the BICER administrator points out, most college textbooks are in English. He therefore questions if "students [could] survive without sufficient English proficiency". Minister Tu in his interview more specifically questions how one could claim him/herself a college graduate with ability in only one language. He further indicates even though students are not planning to study in other countries, competence in an international language is still needed because a lot of products' tags or descriptions are in English. Students in vocational colleges also need to elevate their English proficiency because "a lot of manuals are in English" and he frankly indicates Taiwan can survive in this globalized world only if university students' English proficiency is raised (ibid: 93).

It is obvious that both administrators echo Tu's perspectives and point out that English has become the prominent foreign language because it is an international language. In light of this rationale, projects have been established (see Chapter 3, Section 2). Both administrators state that the government has made several efforts toward making the internationalization of HE possible. The strategies that they reinforced reflect the key points of the government's national policies that are fully discussed in Chapter 3. Overall, it is apparent that English education is aimed at increasing the number of students who pass a certain level of standardized English tests. Universities are requested to initiate plans and set a timetable for setting the graduating proficiency threshold. The number of students passing the standardized tests was taken into

account as one of the most important indicators of the degree of internationalization of a university. This notwithstanding, these administrators do not provide any explanation as to how passing standardized tests is related to changes in English instruction at the tertiary level, or if this preparation for passing tests in reality prepared students for a more internationalized higher education.

### **2.3. Perceptions of Intercultural Aspects of Internationalization—English Competence and English Education**

The HE administrator states that increasing the knowledge of foreign languages and cultures, and broadening students' global view are two major goals. However, the emphases on multi or intercultural aspects disappear when this issue comes to implementation. English competence is almost solely determined by the standardized English tests. To a great extent these tests have become the indicators of the degree of internationalization. Yet both the White Paper of HE and the MOE *Formulating Global Strategies for a Creative Taiwan-- Promoting Human Potential for Our New Generation* project state that developing students' intercultural competence and enhancing the understanding of different ethnicities are major strategies. In the MOE *Formulating Global Strategies* project, raising language abilities in the national languages and English, and enhancing multi and universal values are the major strategies for cultivating modern citizens. Although both administrators recognize the importance of intercultural competence, they do not elaborate on how it may be enhanced or achieved. Neither do they give any indication that the government has included some concrete approaches to improve students' intercultural competence.

When the researcher delved further into this topic, both administrators gave examples such as the government's newly launched projects to fund students to study for postgraduate degrees in other countries and to recruit more international students. The BICER administrator explains that if one lives in a foreign country one would know the culture and the language of that particular country. Studying in a foreign country,



according to him, would provide a different life experience and thereby “culture infuses into oneself”. Thus, he justifies the government’s support of university graduates’ pursuit of advanced degrees in foreign countries. The HE administrator also indicates that although culture and intercultural education are essential, the government does not have any related guidelines yet. He further states that it is important to increase understanding between different cultures and different countries while acquiring the new knowledge and skills needed for the country’s development. He reports that internationalization of HE wishes to accomplish the following goals:

- To broaden university students’ international experience and vision,
- To increase their proficiency in foreign language and global vision,
- To increase international students’ understanding of our culture and language.

Nevertheless, he specifies that the autonomy of HE allows universities to design their own curricula. It is apparent that when discussing the intercultural aspect of internationalization, both administrators either referred it back to some student exchange projects or gave the responsibility to the universities.

The administrators specify that the economic growth of the society enables students to enjoy more educational opportunities and develop diversified talents. However, this strength has its opposite side. They indicate that the weakness of Taiwanese students is their “lack of vision”, which might be the consequence of a comfortable material life. Tu in his published interview also indicates that Taiwanese students need broader knowledge of the world and cultural understanding. In this respect, students’ lack of motivation in acquiring foreign experiences is becoming a major concern. The administrators generally think that as the society becomes more affluent, the younger generation seems less motivated to study abroad. One of the reasons might be because the mass delivery of HE has made receiving higher education no longer a privilege. The domestic universities provide a variety of postgraduate degrees and the younger

generation is opting for an easier life in their home country rather than greater challenges in other countries. Nevertheless, their concern over students' being short of foreign contact is still related to their concern over ability in English.

## **2.4. Discussion**

The information gleaned from the interviews showed that the informants emphasize the government's policy papers discussed in Chapter three. The findings of this study presented a glimpse of the government's current strategy and policy for English education and its relationship to internationalizing HE. Overall, data reflect the fact that internationalization has become a popular academic slogan in HE and has been influencing some major educational reforms and policies. de Wit (2002:96) also points out that internationalization of HE is mostly directed to internationalization of the curriculum and student mobility. Both administrators agree that the role English plays in these two phases is unquestionably central. The data collected from the interviews with the MOE administrators as well as the printed interview of the Minister of Education indicate that most of the strategies set for internationalization of HE were to bring academics from different cultures and nations together in order to promote knowledge, research and teaching. Therefore, internationalization of HE was based on two aspects: 1) the international substance of the curricula and 2) the exchange of scholars and students.

As discussed in Chapter three, there is a fallacy in the administrators' presumption that the internationalization will automatically facilitate students' global vision and their ability to cross cultural boundaries. This myth is also evident in Japan where Kubota (2002:22) also asserts that the understanding of cultural diversity does not merely stem from learning English.

With respect to internationalization, neither the administrators nor Minister Tu in his interview provided in-depth perspectives. As discussed in Chapter two, according to some educators (Ebuchi, 1990 quoted in de Wit, 2002; Knight, 1997, 1999), the



Internationalization of HE must have a cross-cultural dimension. However, the government's major implementation strategy appears to be to increase students' contact with Otherness through study abroad. Overseas exposure is indeed a stimulus for intercultural awareness but does not necessarily guarantee the gaining of it. Some studies, however, (Coleman, 1998, Yershova, 2000) find that having sojourning experiences does not necessarily facilitate intercultural ability or change much in the students' attitude to their host country. Furthermore, the government so far has not produced well-established mobility programs such as the SOCRATES-ERASMUS scheme in Europe. As noted in Chapter 2, the opportunity to have foreign experiences and cross cultural and academic boundaries therefore is not accessible to most Taiwanese university students. In this regard, the possibility of providing opportunities for Taiwanese university students to cross cultures in their foreign language classes must be seriously considered.

## **2.5. Summary**

The data reveal that the growth of English as an international language and the expansion of English as the language of instruction strengthen the belief that English is integral to internationalization in Taiwan. As Tu (ibid) claims, English helps one to gain leading-edge information and learn "the issues that concern people in the developed countries and their viewpoints on arts, movies and, sports". This notwithstanding, while the government was keen to expand the students' global vision, there was no sign of how they would do it apart from raising the percentage of students passing standardized tests and encouraging student mobility. Increasing students' intercultural competence and understanding of Otherness is talked about but no strategy is set for it. The marginalization or even the exclusion of cultural and intercultural dimensions in HE internationalization implementation is obvious. This neglect is not intentionally to avoid engagement with cultural context. This neglect, however, tends to be based on a lack of understanding of the nature of the connections among English as a foreign language, intercultural ability, and internationalization. Findings imply that the overemphasis on instrumentality in English instruction might be a cause of the

absence of the intercultural dimension of English education. The findings are also to some extent in contrast to the findings of students' questionnaires and interviews. Both reveal students' extensive interest in learning more about cultures and Otherness in their language classroom and their desire to be able to be intercultural speakers.

### **3. Synopsis of Findings of the Three Questionnaires in comparison with the Interviews with the MOE Administrators**

#### **3.1. Attitudes towards both Linguistic and Cultural Learning at EFL Language Classroom**

A comparison between the results of the Student and Teacher questionnaires and the MOE administrator interviews illustrate many significant differences concerning linguistic and cultural learning, internationalization and English competence. A bullet – point synopsis of the results, is given as Appendix 14.

Taken together, the data from three questionnaires probe student and teacher perspectives about English education, student intercultural competence and internationalization at the tertiary level. The MOE administrator interviews illuminate the government's goals for university English education and discuss perspectives elicited from the three questionnaires. While commonalities between teachers and students on some aspects of culture teaching and learning are indicated, perhaps more importantly differences between the policy makers' perspectives and student informants' perspectives towards 'good English competence' are identified. A comparison of these data indicates similarities and discrepancies among findings of the three questionnaires and the government's publicized policies. There is top down pressure from the higher educational administration and the society in general that is related to the students' general agreement that English as a *lingua franca* is a useful language for both education and future careers. However, it is also observable that the students would like to include more 'cultural knowledge' of other countries and intercultural competence along with pragmatic linguistic training. These findings together indicate



that intercultural dimensions should not be neglected in the English classroom.

According to Rosier (1997:161), the ultimate purpose of analysis is to produce sets of statistics that help answer the research questions and also reflect the conceptual framework of this research. Findings from the three questionnaires suggest the need to include a cultural syllabus into the language classroom. According to the student questionnaires, a majority of the informants would opt for having more in-depth cultural knowledge in addition to the traditional four skills training. The findings also indicate that a majority of the students tend to support defining a 'good' English user as one having a good knowledge of other cultures and being an intercultural English user. The Specific Questionnaire also reveals the student's expectation of more cultural learning in the language classroom and their perspectives towards content and materials used in the EFL classroom. Likewise, teacher informants are very positive about the role culture plays in the language classroom.

### **3.2. The Purpose of a Cultural Syllabus in the EFL Classroom at Tertiary Level**

In accordance with the MOE White Paper on Higher Education (2001), data from both student questionnaires indicate that students have a desire for a broader humanistic and intellectual dimension in the EFL classroom. Data indicate that the informants, although having newly entered the university, expect that it can provide them with analytical, critical, and intellectual dimensions of learning and facilitate their life long learning ability. The government, however, according to several published, national level policies and the interviews with the administrators, has focused more on pragmatic aspects that can produce immediate quantitative results. These student expectations suggest a broader view of English education than the one that is currently oriented toward proficiency in exams.

Responses to the Specific Questionnaire further indicate that students' attitude toward differences and challenges brought by confronting different cultures is constructive. In the foreign language classroom, 'conflicts' and 'differences' that spring from

encountering a foreign culture, as discussed in Chapter 2, can help create or increase opportunities for students to understand, to analyze and to criticize and therefore gain a deeper learning of human values. Students see differences brought about by boundary crossing as positive. This further supports the necessity of creating a ‘third space’ for students to negotiate and dialogue. However, some teacher informants have doubts about the student’s intellectual maturity and their readiness for more culture learning. Therefore, developing techniques to take students from “how to” etiquette, through the unreflective idolizing of “pop culture” and ultimately to in depth reading and understanding, will be investigated in Chapter 6.

Findings also suggest that intercultural competence is indispensable to internationalization. Data from the Teacher Questionnaire regarding internationalization indicate that teachers share the government’s perspective and general social pressure because they also believe that English is the quickest path to internationalization. The students’ responses to the Specific Questionnaire nonetheless reveal that their view of internationalization is more complex and includes understanding intercultural concepts, having the ability to reflect upon cultural differences, and the ability to voice their own cultures. Moreover, findings from the two student questionnaires indicate that student attitudes toward cultural identity, the English language, the official language Mandarin, and the Taiwanese reflect the changing society and the macro linguistic landscape.

### **3.3. Implications for Developing a Syllabus to Integrate Cultural Education into the University EFL Classroom**

The student and teacher perspectives about cultural topics, content and materials help construct a cultural syllabus. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 6. Textbooks designed solely for linguistic learning purposes cannot satisfy both students and teachers. The findings indicate that teachers tend to place more emphasis on teaching cultures as ‘facts’, rather than on concepts such as values or beliefs. Mass media, literary works, and essays covering a variety of social cultural topics are expected to



supplement the language skills oriented materials used in the English language classroom. The students' interest in cultural materials is not confined to topics such as holidays, festivals or behavioral cultures. In both student questionnaires, they indicate a broad and deep interest in certain socio-cultural topics. Together, the findings of the three questionnaires indicate that a cultural syllabus needs to be incorporated into the language classroom. Ways in which these data can be used to inform the teaching and learning process are included in the discussion with respect to curriculum design, material selection, and activity design later in Chapter 6.

### **3.4. Can English competence along with intercultural competence help to develop a global vision?**

The issue of whether or not having English competence alone means possessing global vision and intercultural competence is also problematized by the MOE administrator interview data. In an era when hybrid world culture, 'global brand culture' and indigenous traditions have been gradually merged, localization is no longer the only way to neutralize the powerful impact of globalization. Knight (1999) pointed out the internationalization of HE also stood for meeting international standards, which might imply uniformity and Westernization. As discussed earlier in Chapter 3, the fear of cultural and linguistic hegemony and imperialism produced by English as an instructional language starts emerging in countries such as the Netherlands (de Wit, 2002) and some postcolonial countries such as Malaysia. From the findings of the interviews, this does not appear to be a concern in Taiwan. Instead of fighting the dominant role of English or unthinkingly succumbing to the American or western values transmitted by it, there should be another way. Providing university students with the competence needed to learn from Otherness while reflecting upon their own Self in the process of learning English is an attractive option. Having intercultural competence helps students to not merely go along with the Western values transmitted by a powerful language. Academia (Li, 2005, Long 2005) is generally concerned that most university students are aloof to and ignorant about Otherness and global issues. However, mere competence in English should not be deemed a panacea for this

phenomenon. International/ intercultural understanding assists students to improve understanding among groups that are essentially different. The government needs to probe this question: If the target of internationalization of HE is merely oriented towards passing the threshold of English proficiency rather than motivating students to a critical study of cultures, how are students going to be able to effectively explore and interact with the outside world? If English education is considered a component of university education, how it can help to achieve ‘whole person’ education?

Overall, the quantitative data and the interviews with the administrators, taken together, with the theoretical framework, indicate that it is imperative to have an intercultural EFL curriculum at the tertiary level in Taiwan. The next chapter will present ways an intercultural EFL curriculum can be designed for the Taiwanese educational context.



## **Chapter VI**

### **An Intercultural EFL Curriculum**

The quantitative data discussed in Chapter 5 reveal that it is imperative to develop an intercultural EFL curriculum at the tertiary level in Taiwan. Nonetheless, learning a language does not necessarily guarantee that students will become ‘intercultural’, ‘humanistic’ or ‘internationalized’. It cannot be taken for granted that studying English (or any other language) leads inevitably to intercultural competence and a better understanding of humankind. These aspects need to be explicitly included in a curriculum rather than assuming that students will spontaneously acquire them in any language classroom. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the appropriate texts and tasks that need to be included in order to increase the opportunities for students to develop intercultural competence. In the light of the data discussed in the previous chapters, this chapter goes on to consider:

- conceptual frameworks for integrating language and culture curricula
- criteria for determining socio-cultural content and topic selection
- how an intercultural syllabus might be implemented from the resources currently available

This framework can help teachers open a space for learners to take intercultural perspectives and voice their critical opinions, which are fundamental for being a global citizen (Guilherme, 2002, Starkey, 2005).

#### **1. Curriculum frameworks that Integrate Language and Culture**

English language curricula that integrate language with culture learning can be roughly divided into 3 categories

1. A curriculum that integrates the target language and target culture (Brumfit and Carter 1986, Carter, 1996). In the English language classroom, British and American cultures are usually favored by the ‘authorities’ and by individual teachers

depending on their historical, political, economic, or personal affiliation with the target language country. The target culture is talked about in the classroom but often only as an add-on.

2. A curriculum that is designed to progressively develop students' knowledge of socio-cultural aspects of their own country and the interlocutor's during the process of acquiring the target language. The intercultural speaker model promoted by Byram and Zarate (1997b) and Kramsch (1993) can be applied in the English language classroom. Byram's (1991) earlier curriculum model has four components: language learning, language awareness, cultural awareness, and cultural experience in the language classroom. Cultural artifacts, cultural behaviors and the capability to relativize phenomena in the interlocutor's culture to their own culture are valued (ibid: 23). The five *savoirs* he later developed specify component factors that constitute successful intercultural communication (1997c).
3. A curriculum that is focused on English as an international language and intercultural competence in the global context. Diversified culture is encouraged. Cultural artifacts, customs, values in different countries (McKay 2001), and world themes such as world religions or world festivals (Cates, 2005) are believed to facilitate students' global awareness. Global literacy or a global perspective on socio-cultural aspects is generally a macro level goal for language learning which helps to develop global citizenship (Starkey 1995, 2005).

### **Current Curriculum Framework in Taiwan**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the English curriculum is usually taken as a core component in general education that aims at "whole personality" education (ROC, MOE, 2001).

Humanities education is at the core of a general education. According to the Generic Questionnaire, students are positive about learning humanistic and critical cultural aspects in general education. This is consistent with the findings regarding their expectations for their English courses. They expect that language learning will simultaneously provide them with independent, critical thinking ability, and intellectual maturity. However, at present, there is very little discussion about how a humanistic



dimension is related to foreign language education, or about its integration into the language curriculum. At EFL conferences in Taiwan, the ways to present Otherness to students so they can enhance their understanding, empathy and knowledge of human cultures is seldom touched on. Developing intercultural competence and critical thinking ability in the language classroom is almost absent in the goals set for university foreign language education. Currently, as extensively discussed in Chapter 3, the Taiwanese government urges all universities to establish passing a certain level of a proficiency test as a major goal for university English education. It is thereby apparent that most universities have started to steer the aims of English curriculum towards four skills training, or more precisely, mechanical and formulaic aspects of language learning that enhance skills for taking exams.

In addition to the prevalent acknowledgment that culture cannot be separated from language learning, empirical findings from the student Generic Questionnaire indicate that the number of student informants who defined ‘good English competence’ as a ‘high proficiency in listening, speaking, writing and reading’ is similar to the number of those who defined it as obtaining good knowledge of other cultures and being an intercultural English speaker. From quantitative data, four skills training in the university English classroom appears no longer to satisfy students and their aspiration to reach out to Otherness and expand their life experience.

Byram *et al* (2002a) suggests that the curriculum should not be switched directly from one national system to another. This is also supported in this research context. The discussion on the adoption of external frameworks such as the CEF for English language learning in Chapter 2 (5.6) echoes this viewpoint. For example, based on the European intercultural model, real time cultural experience is either taken as a component of, or as a goal of intercultural learning. Yet, because Taiwan is not close to any English speaking countries, visiting other countries in order to gain first hand cultural experience is expensive and not affordable for most students. Politically, being diplomatically isolated, the country has been deprived of many opportunities for

participating in international or global events. Some educators (Long 2005, Li, 2004) believe that this political situation is contributing to our youth's lack of global contact, and worse, their lack of a global perspective. In this regard, geographically and politically underprivileged, students need a language curriculum that can provide them with more opportunities to develop their intercultural competence. Byram (1997), Kramsch (1993) and the authors of the *American Standards* indicate that an appropriate curriculum can help to turn the EFL classroom into a major milieu for students to develop intercultural competence.

## **2. A Conceptual Model of an Intercultural Curriculum**

### **2.1. Whose culture should be included in the EFL classroom?**

In the English language classroom, the issue of 'culture' is more complicated than in some other languages. English is the native tongue of several countries. Among these are the United Kingdom and the United States. These are the key countries that have spread English to every corner of the world through colonialism and economic power. However, the fact that there are several English language cultures makes culture in the English language classroom appear ambiguous and raises questions about which of these countries' culture should be valued. Some teachers prefer either American culture or British culture, possibly depending on what they consider most representative or on where they received their own advanced education. Even so, we can legitimately ask: 'What is Britishness and Americanness?' Bassnet (1997: xxii-iv) for example, indicates that British studies encompass English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish studies. In an investigation of EFL textbooks, Garcia (2005:64) revealed that the relations among English speaking cultures were rarely discussed. In Taiwan, students also tend to view English-speaking cultures as an undifferentiated whole, mainly represented by the US. The major differences might be referred to superficially in terms of accent ('you say toma[a]to and I say toma[ei]to') or national symbols ('Big Ben' vs. the 'Lady Liberty').

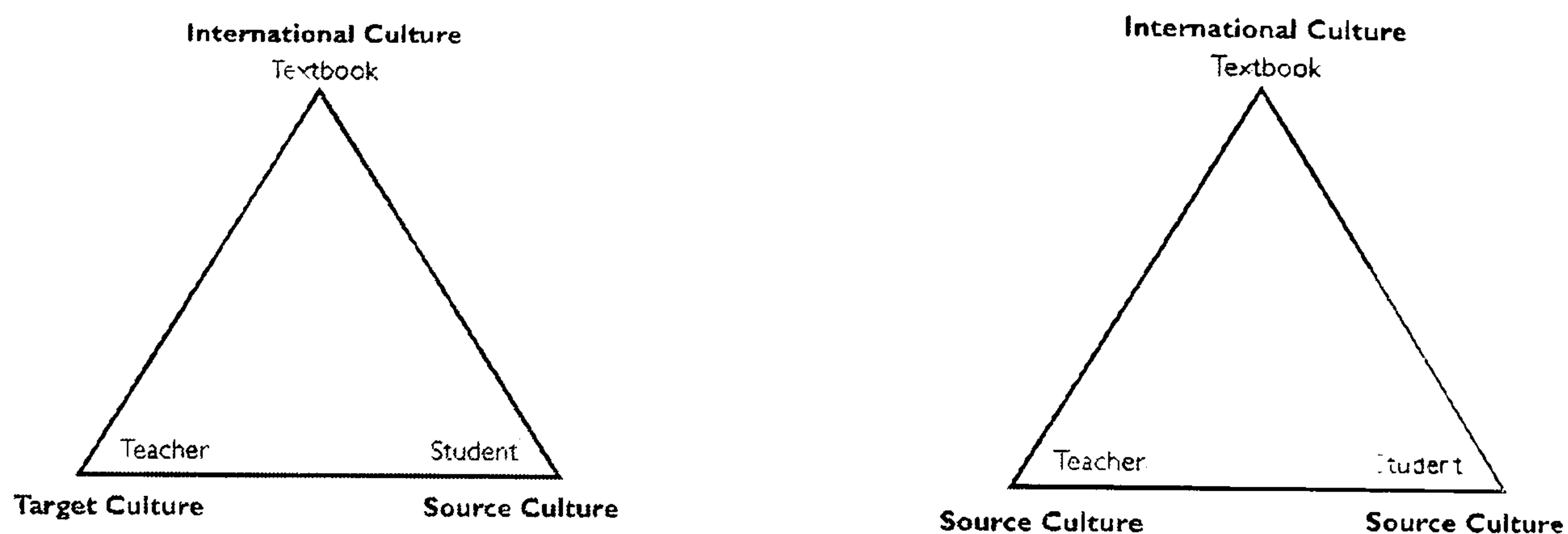
Some language educators such as Pulverness (1995) or McKay (2001) argue that if



English is an international language, then the English language classroom should not be bound to one specific national culture. As such, cultural learning seems to be more general and neutral. However, whether English can be free of any specific cultural context is still a debated issue. Pulverness (1999) indicates that EFL teachers are frequently reminded that English is far more commonly used as a *lingua franca* between speakers of other languages than it is in communication with native speakers of English. This creates an implicit pressure on materials writers and teachers to base their practice on a model of language as a value-free code. In this case, learning culture in global context seems to be a safe path. Nonetheless, do general and neutral cultural learning necessarily provide a basis for developing the skills transferable to any culture?

## **2.2. What is International Culture?**

International culture, as the term suggests, means one that it can be applied to any other culture and basically expressed by an international language. McKay (2002: 92), suggests a model (figure 6) directed toward international culture which she defines as target culture ‘representing many English and non-English speaking countries’. Regardless of whether a teacher is from the source culture or target culture, the use of international culture could benefit students in several ways. For example, she indicates that using international culture could exemplify the manner in which English can be used internationally (ibid: 93). However, sampling different national cultures does not represent an international culture, nor does it necessarily broaden the students’ view or develop intercultural competence. Moreover, the ‘vastness of the culture concept’, to borrow Stern’s (1992: 207-212) words, makes inclusion of every cultural topic or every different culture unlikely. No matter how much the teacher tries to cover, there will always be more. Furthermore, textbooks targeted at international cultures may also feature stereotyped cultural artifacts or omit culturally important but controversial materials. Most textbooks, as Prodromou (1988) and McKay (2002) argue, present western, middle class or even white life styles. Although such content can be used to train students to be resistant readers in terms of class and race, these issues can be approached in a more explicit way.



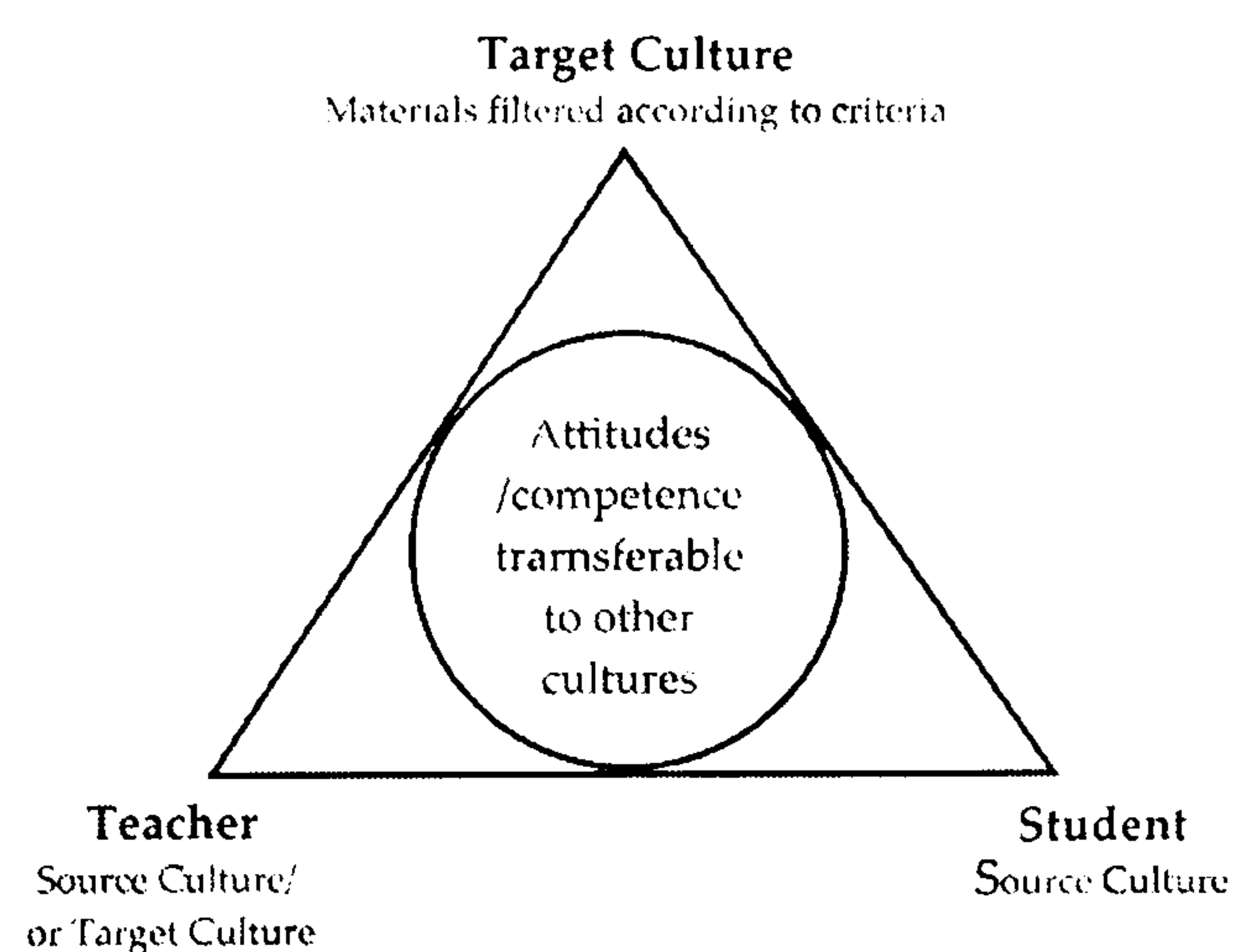
**Figure 6**

English is championed as a medium to learn global issues in the language classroom (Cates 2005, Osler and Starkey, 2005, Penttilä, 2005, Nakamura, 2002, Small, 2003) and to nurture students' global literacy and global citizenship. However, addressing global issues might be the simple "transmission of information about the people of the target country, and about their general attitude and world view" that Kramsch (1993:205) warns against, which would not automatically facilitate students' development of intercultural competence. Although some resource books such as *Global Issues* (Sampedro and Hillyard 2004), or textbooks such as *In the Global Classroom* (Pike and Selby, 1999), aim at exploring world themes in the language classroom, little literature has thus far discussed how knowledge of global issues can increase students' intercultural understanding and how intercultural competence can be transferable to different settings in the world. Some educators, Cates (2005) for example, suggest that global issues are often limited to the understanding of cultural artifacts or national descriptions such as music, festivals, education, and flags. Knowledge of these without further exploration will just scratch the surface of diversified global issues. Furthermore, social issues often have varied meanings in different contexts. For instance, poverty in Glasgow, Scotland where unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse are major concerns might not mean the same as it does in Somalia where hunger steals lives. Recycling can be an environmental issue based on a modern western perspective



from countries that overexploit resources, whereas it may have little meaning in countries that do not even have safe drinking water. Unless the EFL curriculum includes an intercultural component for global literacy, these topics might only develop discourse that is based on a western cultural perspective and make few if any connections between the development of intercultural competence and a truly global context.

In figure 7, I suggest a model modified from McKay's model for an intercultural language classroom. The target culture is integrated in either an explicit or implicit way that helps learners associate it with their own culture. The target culture can be presented by teachers who are either from the source culture /or home culture and by the materials used in the classroom. The students are able to bring their own home culture into the classroom and develop intercultural competence. The intercultural competence, defined by Byram's five *Savoirs*, can thereby be developed and transferred to other cultures. The third space between the student and the teacher or between the source culture and the target culture is where students can develop attitudes and abilities that are transferable when confronting different cultures or 'global issues'.



**Figure 7**

### **2.3. Target Culture and Target Language**

Pulverness (2004) indicates that every language is the outcome of a long and complex social history and has rich cultural meaning. English is no exception. Just because

English is the recognized *lingua franca* or international language, English language classroom instruction should not exclude the cultural meanings of the target language. In addition, cultural specific settings can serve as a basis to develop transferable competence for encountering other cultures. Byram (2002a) indicates it is unlikely that a curriculum will include all possible situations. Likewise, it is unlikely that the English language classroom will contain a large variety of settings from all different English speaking countries. Therefore, it is more important that students are able and willing to explore for themselves socio-cultural aspects of content in the target language. As discussed in Chapter 2, this competence will boost their general interest in Otherness and help them seek more opportunities to see the world from different perspectives.

Because the source culture interacts with the target culture, learners need to develop an attitude for acquiring new knowledge while suspending their own preconceived values and beliefs. When they encounter a new culture, they will be able to accept the difference and justify the new meaning emerging from the engagement and negotiation. As discussed in the previous section, this in between space is a contact zone that enables one to reread the previously constructed cultural map. Then, when confronting any different culture, they will be able to move into this third space and negotiate difference. This process helps them to generate their own critical voice and reconstruct their own identity. Without this transferable competence, when teachers try to break the boundaries of the traditional classroom, students might simply set another boundary between what they know and the text and the ‘reality’, which might evolve from the different cultural aspects that are revealed.

## **2.4. Essentials of Socio-cultural Content**

Cultural dimensions in the English language classroom must include essentials that encourage students to relate Otherness to Self and to negotiate between different subject positions. An effective intercultural curriculum will accommodate an ever expanding intercultural / critical cultural competence and content that can be processed reflectively. Neuner (2003: 50) argues that “there is no foreign language teaching without



socio-cultural content”. Therefore, socio-cultural learning, if not explicit, is implicitly embedded in language learning. Because culture and society are fluid and not fixed to any particular group of people, socio-cultural content provides a context where learners are able to relate similar issues in different spaces and times. Kramsch (1995:90), indicates that language learning should focus less on ‘seemingly fixed, stable cultural entities and identities on both sides of national borders, and more on the shifting and emerging third place of the language learners themselves’. In this regard, as fully discussed in Chapter 2, socio-cultural content serves as a springboard for intercultural learning with the learner continuously stepping into the in between space among different cultures.

Since not every socio-cultural situation can be addressed, Artal *et al* (1997) suggest four criteria for the selection of socio-cultural content are interdependent on one another:

1. Meaningfulness in each particular context
2. Relevance to the students’ lives and experiences
3. Possibilities of establishing connections with students’ own culture
4. Explicitness with which the content appear in the text

The above criteria extend the cultural dimension from Otherness to Self and recognize the necessity of building connections between the target culture and one’s own culture. For example, an article about university education in the target culture provides Taiwanese university students with opportunities to investigate the meaning of education and values and beliefs embedded in a micro context. They are thereby able to establish connections with their own socio-cultural context because these are relevant to their own lived experience. This notwithstanding, critical cultural awareness, which is one of the major components of being an intercultural speaker is not explicitly included. Therefore, account should be taken regarding the possibility of creating a third space for students to relate, to compare and to contrast, and thereby generate their own voices as discussed in the conceptual framework in Chapter 2.

I suggest, therefore, that essential content must also focus on helping develop cultural awareness and the critical abilities that are based on the criteria set by Artal *et al*, and Byram's Five *Savoirs*:

1. Explicit/ implicit socio-cultural meaning in each context,
2. Opportunities for establishing connection with students' own culture and society,
3. Relevance to their life in order to motivate them to search for more cultural facts,
4. Opportunities to see differences emerge and to develop the ability to extend their cultural learning, and
5. Possibilities to empower learners to problematize their concepts of lived experience and articulate their own critical opinions.

To modify the earlier example according to these guidelines, the newspaper article about the top-up fees in the UK and the opportunity to reflect upon education as a commodity provide students with a way to see the explicit socio-cultural meaning of higher education in the UK context and then relate it to that in their own culture and society. They are able to compare different attitudes towards top-up fees in both societies, which are also related to embedded cultural values. The extensive discussion of content such as this can help them to better learn about their own and other cultures. Top-up fees in Taiwanese society might be mainly the parents' concern because most parents consider children's education their responsibility. Students therefore can problematize their concept of lived experience by comparing similar phenomena in different cultures and articulate their own perspectives.

These criteria generally lead to developing Byram's five *savoirs* and increasing students' interest in and understanding of the world. Moreover, it turns English language learning into a process of 'decentering', as Byram (1995) urges. The



involvement of one's own culture and reflection upon it makes English language culture no longer a dominating force with the power to threaten learners' cultural identity. Instead, learning English becomes an incentive for learners to expand their knowledge and to look at the same situation from the different perspective of a different culture. Instead of mimicking a 'foreign culture', the differences that emerge between cultures facilitate the learners' ability to problematize their own cultural concepts about social phenomena that they previously took for granted. This process is not merely decentering; it also transgresses ordinary classroom experience. With 'critical cross-cultural literacy', they are able to negotiate cultural meaning in different settings. This is particularly true of the English language classroom because, as Pulverness (2005) indicates, EFL learners have more chances to use English in non-English native speaking countries than in English speaking countries. Doye (1999:97) also indicates that Cultural Studies of one target country could be the starting point for students to draw parallels and therefore facilitate a wider view.

## **2.5. The Choice of Topic**

The criteria suggested in the previous section are directed toward developing the students' intercultural competence. This intercultural competence is expected to provide students with transferable attitudes and skills when encountering 'Otherness' regardless of the target culture. General experiences that people share, therefore, can provide a common ground for selecting proper topics. According to Byram *et al*, an intercultural speaker will succeed not only in "communicating information but also in developing a human relationship with people of other languages and cultures" (2002a: 7). Pulverness (1995) also indicates that learning a foreign language not only enables one to gain access to a different way of seeing the world, but to also reconsider their world view. In this regard, he claims that "all cultural learning can be said to be intercultural" (ibid: 9). Therefore, the topics of the curriculum are not merely a list of topics for students to compare and contrast. Rather, selected topics should enable students to find socio-cultural perspectives embedded both in the text and in their own socio-cultural context.

The socio-cultural topics embedded in the materials need to be sufficiently explicit so that on the first or second reading, the learners are able to identify the central theme of the content. At the same time, the topics need to be implicit to the extent that the content appears challenging and not merely a presentation of socio-cultural stereotypes. Ferradas Moi (2003), suggests that teachers provide students with opportunities to construct meanings out the text which are not ‘obvious’, and whose complexity and concern with the current issues makes them challenging and motivating. Moreover, the degree of generality of topics needs to be taken into account (White, 1998a, 65). Some topics such as ‘shopping’ are too general and almost everything can be talked about, whereas some topics such as the Internet search engine is minutely particular. According to White (ibid), such issues or content might lose the focus of the topic.

With respect to the selection of topics, EFL textbooks are generally directed towards a ‘safer’ and more neutral, that is, Anglo Saxon, white and middle class cultural content. In other words, conflicts in gender, social class, social problems, or race would not be often seen in such texts. Safe topics such as school life, idealized family life, holidays, customs, careers, etc., are, as Starkey (2005:35) postulates, merely limiting learners to their personal sphere without providing intellectual stimulation. Byram *et al* (2002a: 16) also see the danger of limiting culture to the ‘all-too-familiar stereotypical icons of the target culture’ and of believing that there is one ‘authoritative’ and ‘real’ account of culture irrespective of one’s own or other’s. In this case, what learners normally can do in the classroom, for example, is to express ideas about, say, their favorite holiday destination or school life, which obviously provides few opportunities for building cross-cultural understanding and critical awareness.

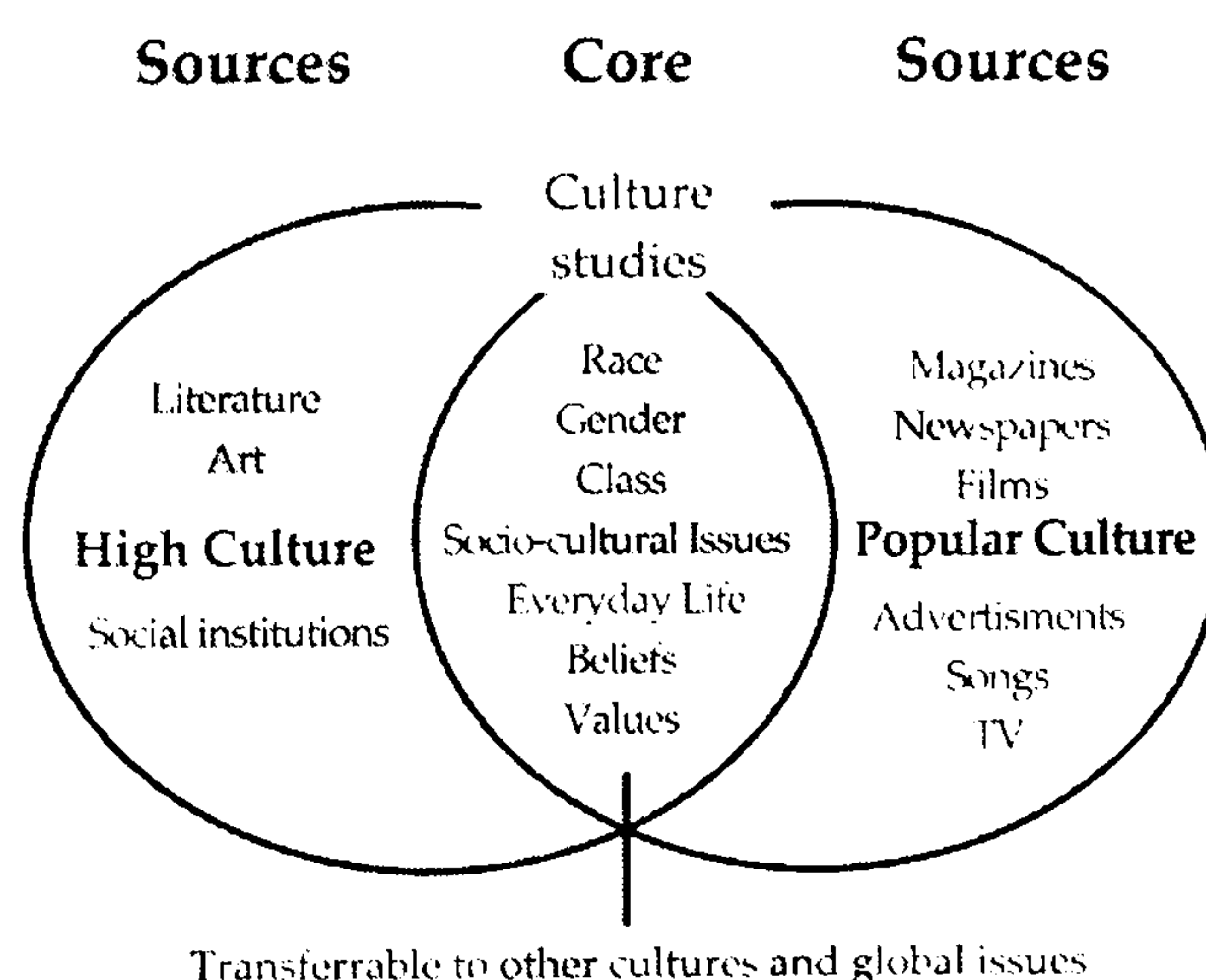
This notwithstanding, the significance of every day life experience should not be discarded. Lo Bianco (2001:457), states that focus in the classroom should not be placed only on general ‘civilization’ but also on ordinary people. He (ibid) expresses his concerns as:



Modes of teaching that look down on everyday life and the commonplace as possible sources of human knowledge in favor of exclusive attention to the detached and distant can have the effect of uncalculating respect and insight only for abstract patterns of life that no one lives.

Therefore, the content should include topics, which, at some level, demand intercultural competences by calling upon socio-cultural knowledge that is connected to their everyday experience.

In this regard, topics such as gender, race, and class are related to common human experiences and can be related to the students' own socio-cultural conditions in which they reinvestigate their own values and beliefs. The decision to include a certain topic would have to be based on a rationale for the fundamental issues and topics that are basic to knowledge of a society and its cultural practices (Byram 1997: 108). Major components of socio-cultural topics in the language classroom are therefore shown in the overlapping areas of two fields (figure 8):



**Figure 8**

The findings from the Specific Questionnaire in this research indicate that with respect to content and subject matter that is intriguing to them, students opted for lived experiences close to their own, and popular culture. The data from the Generic Questionnaire also show that over half of the students agreed that materials with topics

concerning everyday ways of life and socio-cultural aspects are interesting. It should be also noted that the topics suggested here are not meant to be complete or exhaustive. The learner's own world and social experiences play an essential role in their perception and evaluation of socio-cultural phenomena of the foreign world. These experiences can be drawn upon for the selection of topics and the design of tasks.

Teachers can also take heed of the pulse of their own society and integrate current issues with the topics covered. For instance, according to the quantitative and later, qualitative data in this research, sports are interesting topics that are close to the students' lives. In this regard, the interplay between athletes and commercial interest that reveals the social value of popular culture and youth culture seems an ideal topic. For example, the former NBA basketball player, Michael Jordan's 90-second meeting with fans during a whirlwind promotional visit for Nike to Taiwan in 2004 upset the public. Teachers can use this event and choose an article that discusses how Michael Jordan has been elevated to the enviable, extraordinary, and taxing position of American / or African-American hero. Topics for consideration might include the meaning of athletic heroes, and the use of celebrities as advertising commodities. The discussion can be transferred to similar phenomena in other social contexts such as David Beckham in England, a football cultural icon. Such topics include cultural essentials in icons of popular culture, which are familiar to students. This can enable students to compare the cultural messages they represent in the target culture, to similar cultural influences upon their own culture. Students are thereby provided opportunities to establish connections with their own popular culture. According to findings from the student questionnaires, this experience has a great impact on their knowledge of culture and life. Similarly, the findings from a student presentation, to be discussed later in Chapter 7 (2.1) indicated that discussing such a topic empowers learners to problematize their concepts of lived experience and to articulate their own critical opinions.

Socio-cultural content can be found in additional topics and subjects close to the



students' experience. As Byram (2002a) indicates, a theme such as sports can be examined from different perspectives including gender, age and religion. To take the article *Rare Jordan* (George, 1995) as an example again, although it mainly discussed how Michael Jordan, the former NBA player, has been elevated to position of American Afro-American hero, at the same time it implies that Jordan is a counter example to the stereotype of Afro-Americans. Although the article is used to discuss the media's use of celebrities as commodities, the sentence, "Michael Jordan represents the flip side of the image of crack dealers who populate the local news broadcasts of big cities", can serve as a basis for an extended discussion about race and stereotypes. The learners must first deconstruct this sentence's linguistic complexity in order to understand the meaning. 'Crack' as a slang term for 'cocaine' is new to many learners but not the image of 'crack dealer' with which they have been familiarized by their exposure to the media. The socio-cultural stereotypes of Afro-Americans implied in this sentence allow the students to relate to the stereotypes they find in Hollywood movies. As discussed in Chapter 3, the topic of 'race' as such is not a socio-cultural issue in Taiwan although ethnicity is. Subtopics like these, therefore, can elicit more exploration of related cultural themes and provide students with opportunities to extend their understanding and to reflect upon Self and Other.

## **2.6. Filtering Socio-cultural Content**

It is also important to note that other factors might have an effect on selecting topics. Neuner (2003:17) argues that socio-cultural content can never be objective due to the influences from media such as textbooks, the Internet, and audio-visual media and 'authorities' such as the ministries that approve textbooks. He also argues that the books produced in the target language countries do not necessarily provide the best choice of topics. Discussions on textbooks will continue in section (2.1) below. In Taiwan, when choosing textbooks, teachers most often place a high priority on matching the language level of the students. There is generally little concern about the level of diversity in the socio-cultural content of the materials or the students' intellectual level. It is therefore suggested that teachers can improve the course by selecting some

materials from resources such as magazines, newspapers. and literary works.

As students grow more confident and competent, they should also be invited to participate in choosing some course content. Lecturer and students can work on a negotiated syllabus. Allowing students to participate by providing topics that are interesting to them can help them to transcend the classroom and motivate them to expand their learning from a passive stance to an active one. As Pulverness (1995:11) indicates, all topics need to make cross-cultural awareness the central issue for learning that will empower students to ‘transcend the often narrow limits of language teaching’. For example, an article (Chapter 7, 2.1.2.) about an American professor’s sarcastic but insightful comment regarding his students’ attitudes towards grades and university education provides opportunities to discuss not only education, but also related socio-cultural values and beliefs. In the third space, observations are multiple and intercultural competence can be developed as indicated in table 4:

Acquiring cultural knowledge	Reflection upon learners’ own culture	Sources learners can find in addition to text or electronic materials
Education system in the target culture	➡ Their own education system Education systems in other cultures	Foreign contact, overseas students, their own observation
College students’ attitude towards grades	➡ Their own attitude-- collective and individual.	Their peers, their professors, overseas students, their own observation and reflection
Sociocultural values embedded in the attitudes towards grades	➡ Socio-cultural values in their own society and other societies.	Foreign contact, overseas students, their own observation and reflection
Teacher – student relationships	➡ Teacher- student relationships	Their observation and reflection
Possibility to refer back to the similar situations in the target culture	Other factors which influence attitudes toward grades and education in their own society such as parental expectations ←	Their life experiences, peers, media
Possibility to refer back to the same situation in the target culture	Other socio-cultural topics, such as parent-child relationships ←	Their life experiences

Table 4



Although the topic of education is explicit, it does not limit learners to merely looking at education systems or attitudes towards grades in a ‘foreign’ country. From the American professor’s perspective of the relationship between social values and university education, learners are motivated to investigate other socio-cultural meanings embedded in grades in their own society. Students are first motivated to understand the education system in other countries. They can try to determine the values and beliefs that grades represent in the foreign country, and also reflect upon their own individual values and collective beliefs regarding grades in their society. The differences they find can open up a space for them in which they can explore cultural meaning embedded in public perspectives towards grades, and then further extend their discussion to parental expectations. This space enables them to reinterpret their own understanding of grades. At the same time, there is a possibility for them to refer back to the target culture, or other cultures, and investigate whether or not similar phenomena exist. This process empowers them to reach outside their classroom and personal sphere and move back and forth between cultures. This shifting place allows them to construct and reconstruct their viewpoints. Critical cultural awareness is developed in the process. Like Russian dolls, intercultural competence keeps expanding as shown in figure 9.

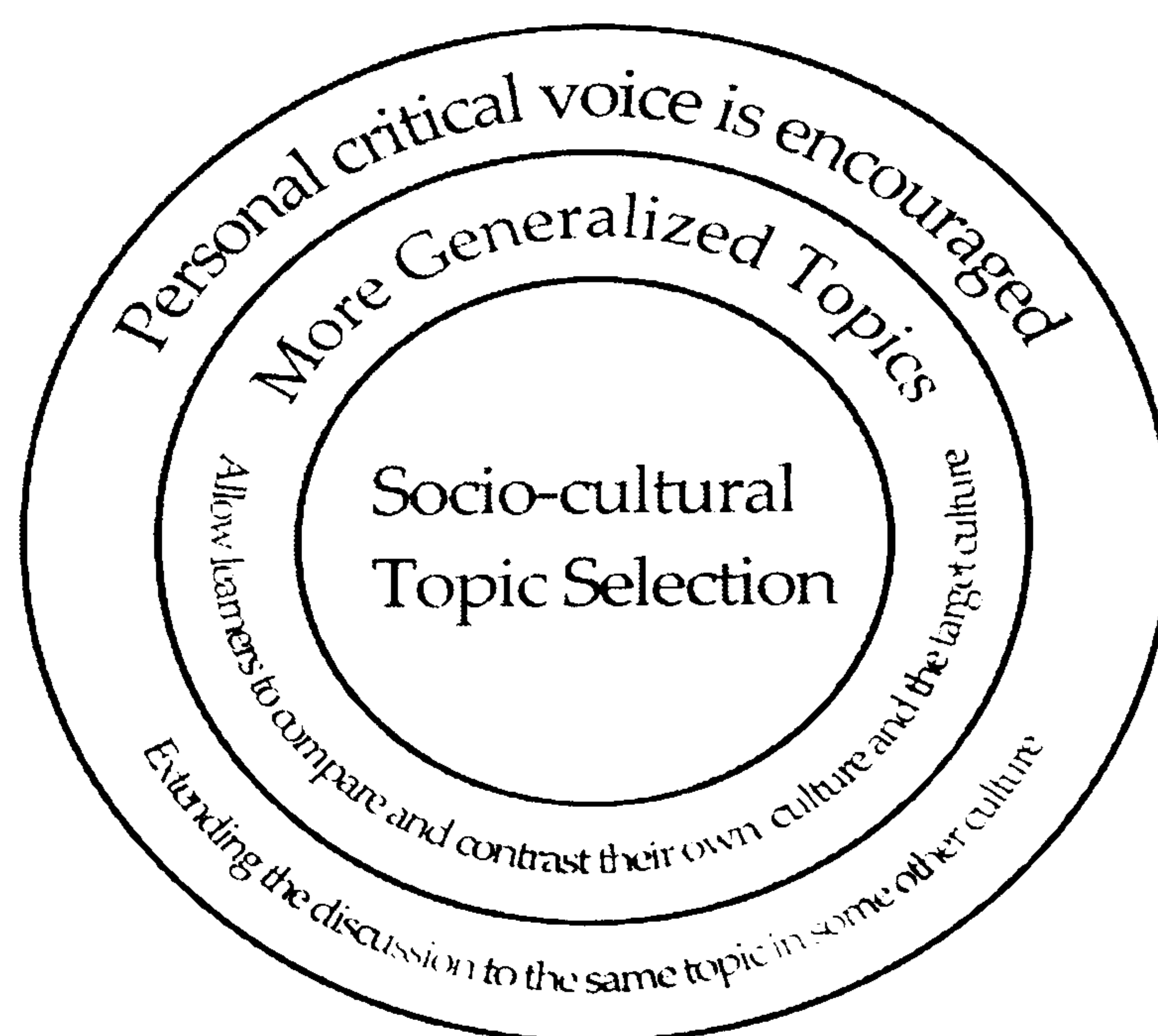


Figure 9

As Durant (1997:23) indicates, socio-cultural knowledge is drawn from many resources such as surveys, television programs, films and etc, in which some of the texts are very useful in the foreign language classroom. For instance, in an EFL reading classroom, printed text is still the major focus while the electronic media can be supplementary. Therefore, in addition to the essentials for socio-cultural content and criteria for selecting topics, devising an appropriate intercultural EFL curriculum also depends on bringing suitable resources to the EFL classroom. Fein and Baldwin (1986, cited in White, *ibid*: 67) point out that some materials, such as those similar to introductory level course materials, albeit with the potential to extend discussions, should be avoided. Therefore, texts such as a general introduction to the parliament system in Britain may not impress students because it might be difficult for them to conceptualize. However, a personal essay reflecting on the values of HE induced by top-up fees in Britain, is close to the students' own lived experience and can enable them to look at values and beliefs about HE in different cultures. Stern (1992:222) also indicates that cultural teaching must not be confused with a formal course in social and cultural anthropology. However, some objectives from Byram's *Savoirs* (1997c) require students to acquire knowledge of the historic and present definitions of the target country's geography or history. This task is too massive to be covered in an EFL syllabus. In the following section, potential materials for the intercultural EFL Reading Classroom are discussed.

### **3. Materials and Resources**

Generally speaking, careful selection of course materials must be based upon curriculum goals, selected topics and student abilities. In the intercultural classroom, Durant (1997: 22-30) indicates that materials can be effectively and thematically chosen from a variety of genres. Selecting and evaluating a range of materials that encompass the socio-cultural essentials are crucial. A group of teachers in Bulgaria who collaborated on a Cultural Studies syllabus (Pulverness, 1998) provide some important factors to take into account when selecting materials for cultural teaching. These are:



effectiveness, appropriateness and provocativeness, flexibility, adaptability and availability. The term “flexibility” focuses on whether or not the materials enable teachers to incorporate Cultural Studies into their language teaching. In other words, the materials should provide a basis for further discussion on people’s ways of life in both their own or the Others’ culture. In addition to these factors, whether or not resources can provide adequate opportunities for the discursive construction of Self and Other and the negotiation of in-group and out-group behaviors, attitudes, and actions are vital. The following sections will discuss two major types of course material frequently used in the EFL classroom.

### **3.1. Textbooks as Course Materials**

In the EFL classroom, the use of textbooks is common, albeit still controversial. Some scholars advocate text books because they provide teachers and learners with “a range of professionally developed materials within tried and tested syllabus structures” (Bell and Gower, 1998:116). Textbooks are also considered a means to ‘reskill’ teachers rather than ‘deskill’ teachers (O’Neil, 1982, Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, Edge and Wharton, 1998 cited in Rubdy, 2003). However, there are some potential risks in using textbooks. Jin and Cortazzi (1999: 200) point out that in the language classroom, a textbook is often seen as an ‘authority’ by the students and teachers because of its reliability and expertise. Textbooks can deskill teachers given that teachers might be overly dependent on them. Jin and Cortazzi (ibid) also argue that textbooks can represent an ideology. Therefore, the cultural system, worldview, and interest-based perspective embedded in the textbooks cannot be overlooked. The so-called ‘universal cultural value’ is normally based on modern western points of view. In this regard, in their postcolonial or critical linguistic view, Pennycook (1994) and Phillipson (1992) also suggest that textbooks produced by the Inner Circle countries, mainly the UK or the USA, express their cultural politics. Albeit even without such an intention, a textbook without proper mediation might easily transmit the views, values, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of English speaking societies. These considerations amplify the importance of selecting and mediating materials in the EFL classroom.

The ‘one-fits-all’ EFL textbook is criticized in several respects. For example, Byram criticizes EFL textbook materials for being mostly superficial and biased representations of reality. Also, most textbooks stay away from controversial socio-cultural topics. Risager (1991: 191) points out that by virtue of postmodern influence, textbooks follow the trend of “fragmentation, objectization and interest in the bright surface, the absence of expressed values and personal feelings, and the lack of historical perspectives”. Absence of values and personal feelings, and the influence of fragmentation found in most EFL textbooks treat the learner as only a consumer or potential tourist, to borrow Starkey’s description (cited in Pike and Selby 1988: 239). The content of textbooks is generally fragmentary information about global culture, or festive or stereotypical national culture, presented in the language of tourism. In addition, historical dimensions, comparative frameworks for discussion about different cultures, and the development intercultural communicative skills are not adequately supported in the textbooks.

### **3.1.1. EFL Textbooks in Taiwan**

In Taiwan, it is very common for EFL teachers and schools at all levels to choose their own course textbooks. Most EFL textbooks in Taiwan are targeted at reaching the widest possible world market, or at least major regions such as the Far East. It is beyond the limits of this section to develop a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of the cultural content found in EFL textbooks in Taiwan. However, the data from the Teacher Questionnaire indicates that when teachers generally rely on the textbooks, they give little attention to whether or not textbooks provide enough cultural content for students to begin having a dialogue about the Other. To a certain extent they reflect what Sercu and Davcheva (2005:107) indicate in their study of ESL teachers in seven countries:

On the one hand, teachers perceive textbooks as not enormously helpful in approaching the cultural dimension of teaching, and on the other, they massively use them in the classroom.



Generally, textbooks available are ‘utilitarian’ in orientation and focus on language training. More recently, however, the content of some textbooks that focus on listening and speaking skills is based on examples of ‘international’ students’ lives in an English speaking country. They attempt to contextualize English learning and to make the English language fit into ‘international’ roles. These roles are often filled by students from more affluent Asian countries such as Japan or Hong Kong (*Impact-Listening*) or European countries such as Italy (*Tapestry*) or Greece (*Family Album*). These ‘international’ student characters are stereotyped as nice, decent young people who speak accented but impeccable English and serve as examples for contextualizing English learning. These student characters are often presented as confused in the face of a new culture in order to introduce related cultural topics. However, they are characterized as the ‘Others’ situated in a fragmented cultural background for the purpose of introducing additional text for four-skill learning. For reading and writing courses at the intermediate level or above, textbooks (e.g. *Active Skills*) often include a set of ‘model’ essays about different topics such as science, customs, life, personal accounts, etc. In general, however, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar continue to be the major foci of the textbooks. Articles about cultural difference are selectively included, but usually are directed towards cultural stereotypes or more binary cultural differences. For instance, a comparison between Japanese and ‘Western’ conversational style might generalize and stereotype cultural behavioral phenomena.

In terms of the amount of socio-cultural learning found in the presently available EFL textbooks, there are only a few textbooks (e.g. *Select Readings*, Oxford) that show interrelatedness among source (home) cultures, target cultures, and international cultures. According to Jin and Cortazzi (1999), the role of culture has received little attention in most of the checklists provided for choosing EFL course textbooks. Likewise, most imported textbooks in which culture is included as a topic or as background are based on the target culture or ‘international’ culture, and with few

exceptions do not include a focus on source cultures. The exceptions are generally texts produced by domestic publishers. However, most teachers opt for textbooks distributed by American publishers, which contain a complete set of supplementary audio-visual resources. With respect to textbooks, Byram (2002a) argues that books produced in the target language countries do not necessarily provide the best choice of topics. In the intercultural classroom, as discussed in Chapter 2, the target culture can serve as the basis for developing students' interest in the Other and constructive attitudes towards difference. Therefore, the effectiveness of materials is dependent on their potential for providing students with intercultural awareness and for stimulating their interest in examining a wider context of Otherness.

### **3.1.2. The Selection of Textbooks**

In the current educational system in Taiwan, the status of socio-cultural content in textbooks is still considered secondary. There are a number of reasons. Firstly, as discussed in chapter 3, the national exam has a backwash effect on secondary school learning. Therefore, it is unusual to find students who, at the beginning of their university courses, are familiar with materials that go beyond the requirements of the national exams. Further, because cultural knowledge is normally not an objective of exam-oriented learning, most university teachers opt for textbooks with clear linguistic targets. When choosing textbooks, teachers generally place a high priority on matching the language level of the students. Secondly, in accordance with its emphasis on 'communicative competence', being able to 'converse' in a foreign tongue is seen by the government and educators as a high priority. This trend strongly influences the choice of course materials. Most textbooks provide little or no stimuli to encourage students to investigate the interplay between the micro level of culture that the text presents and the macro level that the context reveals. In addition, even though socio-cultural elements might be contained in the text, if teachers are not keen to mediate them or provide students with opportunities to explore them, they remain underexploited background. An over-dependency on textbooks is likely to suppress teachers' desire to develop related supplementary materials on socio-cultural themes.



Generally, socio-cultural aspects of the learning content are relegated to a low priority and appear only when the instructor feels comfortable talking about them. Data from the Teacher Questionnaire also reveal that most informants sometimes teach culture ‘spontaneously’, albeit sometimes with a plan. Workshops and conferences seldom focus on cultural or intercultural learning apart from teaching the four skills. Thirdly, at the macro-level, the cultural ideology of the textbook is rarely taken into account because the major standardized proficiency tests such as TOEFL or IELTS are based on US or UK content. Therefore, in Taiwan, the literature concerning the appropriateness of discussing cultural or social materials available in the market or their use is very limited. Even more limited is literature related to any political ideology or center-periphery relationships.

### **3.1.3. Authentic Materials**

Alongside the debate about the effectiveness of textbooks, there has been debate about the ‘authenticity’ of texts (Widdowson, 1998a, Chavez, 1998, Guariento and Morley, 2001). There are pros and cons for using ‘authentic materials’. In terms of cultural learning, the use of authentic materials in the classroom is generally considered beneficial to the foreign language process (Kramsch, 1993, Corbett, 2003, Byram 1997 a). They are seen as more likely to be topical and up-to-date concerning the target culture. Linguistically, authentic materials are considered to contain ‘real’ language that helps students maintain their motivation (Guariento and Morley, 2001). There is also evidence that students find authentic texts interesting and enjoyable (Chavez, 1998), and that they can significantly increase students’ motivation (Peacock, 1997). Data from the student questionnaires also reveal that the informants tend to prefer authentic materials such as films, popular songs, and newspaper articles (journalism English). According to Huang (2005), in Taiwan teachers at the tertiary level feel obliged to provide challenging ‘authentic’ materials contained in imported books by authors and publishers from Inner Circle countries. When authentic materials are used in an intercultural language classroom, the socio-cultural elements they contain are generally regarded as ‘authentic’ for student exploration. However, with regard to textbooks in

the foreign language classroom, Pulverness (2003) argues that authentic written materials are usually treated as unproblematic. Chavez (ibid) indicates that a strict definition of 'authentic material' would mean that none of the material we presently use in class is authentic because it has been removed from its original context. In the present research, however, 'authentic' materials are defined more loosely as those that have been produced for purposes other than to teach language (Nunan, 1988: 99). These include newspaper, magazine articles, films, TV sitcoms, etc..

The guiding criteria discussed in the earlier sections of this Chapter can also help identify 'authentic' materials for intercultural learning. In an intercultural language classroom, an original text can be presented in a textbook format or presented in its original format. Wallace (2003:82) postulated two principles for a reading class: 1. To read the text in its original format, 2. To offer students access to a range of genres. He considers it important for a given text to be read in a wider context. He further states that it is important to promote critical reading of original texts, and that "textual choices related to visuals, graphics and the location within a larger text such as a newspaper or magazine" (ibid) are vital. Likewise, reading socio-cultural texts in a wider context is significant in the intercultural classroom. However, reading text in the original context is more easily implemented in ESL classroom than in EFL classrooms because most original text resources such as magazines, newspapers, brochures...etc. are less accessible to the EFL environment. In addition, given the popularity of the Internet, library subscriptions to foreign newspapers and magazines have been gradually replaced by the electronic media. When a text is not available in its original form, an alternative is often available from other sources such as textbooks or the Internet.

In the intercultural EFL classroom, the choice of resources provides opportunities for students to construct Self and Other and they can enable students to negotiate in-group and out-group behaviors. Furthermore, textbooks can be used flexibly and adapted and supplemented in order to meet course needs. Also, additional 'authentic' materials can be drawn from a wide range of sources such as literary texts, electronic media such



as TV programs, advertisement, even billboards (Corbett, 2003, Wallace 2003: 106, Pulverness, 1998, Huang, 2005). These can be used alternatively as visual images and written text. If teachers do not have a variety of available resources from different countries, materials about specific cultures can be used because they can serve as the basis for developing intercultural competence. Materials can be selected with a particular group of students in mind, so as to include materials related to their life experiences. Examples of a socio-cultural syllabus will be provided in Chapter 7, section 1.

### **3.2. Resource Materials**

#### **3.2.1. Cultural Studies and the EFL Classroom**

Hall (1992, 11) indicates that Cultural Studies programs exist everywhere and that, wherever one exists, “it reflects the rapidly shifting ground of thought and knowledge, argument and debate about a society and about its own culture”. Societies and cultures are continuously transient and fluid (Bauman, 2000). Moreover, as Williams (1983) maintains, ‘culture’ is so complex that nobody could ever grasp it completely. This complexity and fluidity provides students with vast opportunities to critically engage with representation refracted through the dynamics of gender, sexuality, subordinate youth, national identity, and popular culture in a particular culture. Such representations provide learners with resources to construct the Other. Seeing culture as ‘a whole way of life’, Williams cites Matthew Arnold’s definition of culture: “Culture says: consider these people then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds...” (Matthew Arnold, 1963, cited in Williams, 1983: 116 ). Because societies and cultures worldwide are transitional, the non-fixedness of Cultural Studies can help the learner avoid falling into the trap of accepting stereotypes. Evidence from this researcher’s qualitative data also reveals that reconstruction of Other and Self is not necessarily dichotomous. For instance, data from the students’ writing assignments, which will be discussed in Chapter 7,

section 2.2, reveals that by investigating different resources, the students found that in the past women in the US were oppressed, and that, in general, the status of women in current society has greatly improved.

In a foreign language classroom, as Byram maintains (1997: 57), the primary aim of CS is to

enable learners to develop a more nuanced view of a country and society whose language they are learning. At the same time they acquire the means of working on other texts from the same or other countries and the interest and willingness to do so; this contributes to their general education.

The integration of Cultural Studies into the foreign language classroom therefore aims to provide better understanding of social practices, patterns of behaviors, values and beliefs that compose not only the life of the target culture but of culture in general. In this regard, culture in the language classroom is not merely stereotypical nor is it festive. As Johnson (1986:38) indicates, a cultural study has developed ‘the discursive construction of situations and subjects’. Johnson (ibid: 45) further points out that all social practices can be looked at from a cultural point of view. Corbett (2003: 181) also states that with sensible handling, such “social practices can become ‘textual resources’ for use in ELT classroom”. However, the way learners view a particular foreign culture is related to their own society. Therefore, studying a foreign language along with a foreign culture cannot be completely dispelled from a learner’s own culture. Providing proper resources to create opportunities for the learners to actively engage in the Self and Other is indispensable.

Moreover, integrating Cultural Studies in the EFL curriculum does not merely enable students to investigate or reinterpret Otherness and Self in reality, but also empowers them to deconstruct values and beliefs in their and the other society. What Cultural Studies can do in the EFL classroom is more than one expects. Byram (1997a) suggests a cultural dimension is imperative because it introduces learners to foreign



societies and cultures that encompass all ways of life, beliefs and values. According to him, Cultural Studies offer an opportunity for students to analyze, to criticize and then deconstruct (ibid: 57). He further indicates that in general, in EFL classrooms, cultural learning aims to enable students to merely gain empathy, that is, “to accept and understand the viewpoint and experience of the other and not take a critical, analytical stance” (ibid: 61). In the wake of cultural awareness, critical perspectives need to be encouraged. For example, in the present research (Chapter 7, section 2.1.1.), the student presentation about the basketball player Michael Jordan shows the students’ ability to analyze a social phenomenon, deconstruct a belief and reconstruct a value in their society. Investigating such materials enables students to look at similar phenomena in their own society and culture. In the Taiwanese English learning environment, where foreign, western in particular, culture is considered a ‘style’ to imitate, the empathy develops into a kind of worship and even worse, a misrecognition of Self as Other and mere mimicry of western culture.

### **3.2.2. Cultural Studies and Resources in the EFL Classroom**

When CS is included in the EFL classroom, it is a challenge to identify resources that can be formally or informally included in syllabuses. These materials should enable students to ‘find intellectual access and yet not be overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the material’ (Kane, 1991). Cultural Studies generally has a natural link to media studies and literary studies that enable students to investigate both ‘solid’ culture of the past and ‘liquid’ culture of the present, to borrow Bauman’s term (2000). In this regard, as Pulverness (1995) indicates, EFL educators are accustomed to using multi-media materials to supplement their general classroom materials. Findings from both student questionnaires indicate that they tend to agree that media and literary text constitute topics related to everyday life and socio-cultural phenomenon such as gender, class, and race. Literature as high culture provides a historical, specific and contemporary view of human society while popular culture records everyday life. Resources need to provide for the discursive construction of the Self and Other, and for negotiation of in-group and out-group behaviors in the historical or contemporary text.

For instance, both hooks (1996) and Giroux (2006) use films to stimulate discussions about the issues of race, gender and social classes in order to investigate more complex cultural representations. The following sections will examine ways that resources from literature, traditionally deemed high culture, and popular cultures can help create a third space for students when confronting Otherness. The discussion does not intend to be exhaustive; however, it aims to demonstrate how resources from such ‘authentic materials’ can provide the essentials of a socio-cultural syllabus.

### **3.2.3. Literature and Cultural Learning in the EFL Classroom**

The role of literature in the university EFL classroom in Taiwan is becoming less prominent. In Taiwan, the trend of EFL education has undergone what Durant (1997) identifies as the reduction of emphasis on traditional English or American Literature in the curriculum, in accordance with the prevalence of Communicative Language Teaching and the gradual dependence on prescribed textbooks. Literature is nowadays mostly confined to the University English Language and Literature Department. In the EFL classroom, where English is learned for its instrumental purposes, literature is sometimes deemed to be impractical and to lack functional authenticity by virtue of the convoluted syntax and obscure language used in some literary works (Widdowson, 1984, Parkinson and Thomas, 2000). Nonetheless, this is seen also as a virtue, as will be discussed later in this section. In addition, literature is generally considered ‘high’ culture representing the culture of the elite. As such, it is accused of being merely “a ‘pacifier’” compensating for the lack of meaning in the actual world” (Enzensberger, 1977 quoted in Donnerstag, 1992: 597). Some literary contexts are remote from learners in many ways (Parkinson and Thomas, 2000: 9), and are also considered less relevant to students owing, for example, to overly specific cultural perspectives (McKay, 1986).

Despite disagreements over the use of literature in the language classroom, it still remains a rich resource for learning culture (McKay, 1986, Valdes 1986, Byram, 1994, Kramsch 1993, Amar, 2003, Henning, 1993, Donnerstag, 1992). Literature is



considered to have ‘universally appealing’ content as it is generally about human life and no special subject knowledge is needed (Holten, 1997: 380). Therefore, in the EFL classroom, it can be used to understand the English language-speaking world, its cultures and history. As Corbett (2003:174) indicates, the vibrancy of literature lies in “the construction of dramatic voices which, though they are fictional, nevertheless represent the people who inhabit a given culture at a particular time”. Such representations of a given culture at a particular time can be observed in detail because as Collie and Slater (1987, quoted in Parkinson and Thomas, 2000:9) indicate:

It is true that the ‘world’ of a novel, play or short story is a created one, yet it offers a full and vivid context in which characters from many social backgrounds can be depicted. A reader can discover their thoughts, feelings, customs, and possessions: what they buy, believes in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave behind closed doors.

Moreover, Boyle (1986:200) also emphasizes that the general field of language lies in literature because it is ‘human nature in action’. This reflection of life can help students develop their perception of what it is to be human (Brumfit, 1986). As such, literature can further facilitate intercultural learning because it presents a social cultural landscape in ‘mimetic realistic fiction’ (Donnerstag, *ibid*: 598). The values and beliefs that are carried in the mimetic everyday life and human actions in literature can be understood and pictured. Although familiarity with culturally specific references is necessary for a better understanding, Brumfit (*ibid*), and Lazar (1993) believe literature can provide general cultural background knowledge and therefore opportunities for making cultural comparison and association. In this regard, literature provides a way of breaking free from the limitations of one’s own culture and then experiencing the Other. Overall, literature is one of the major forms of cultural information that provides good stimuli for discovering Otherness.

### **3.2.4. Literature and the Intercultural EFL Classroom**

In the intercultural foreign language classroom, literary texts allow learners to explore

and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of a specific text.

Carter and Long (1991) argue that a literature curriculum based on a cultural model would transport the learner into the realm of another culture, and this would provide the learner the motivation to pursue the study of humanities in general:

Teaching literature within a cultural model enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space and to come to perceive tradition of thought, feeling and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such cultures endows. It is this particular 'human' sense that gives literature a central place in the study and teaching of the humanities in many parts of the world.

(Carter and Long, *ibid*: 2)

As such, teaching literature based on a cultural model in the University EFL classroom will increase opportunities for students to step into a contact zone where, according to Pratt (1993:7), the students can engage in interaction, interlocking understandings and practices with the co-presence of Otherness.

In this contact zone, literature provides learners a 'safe' opportunity for contemplation, discussion and formation of their own opinions because most literary works are created and fictional. The cultural and humanistic dimensions that literature presents gives learners a chance to form their own opinions, and also enables them to step into an inter space while observing cultural elements from different perspectives. Wallace (2002) adds weight to "literate English" because it can enhance learners' critical thinking ability. Further, this critical ability enables learners to be more 'global'. Henning (1993: 54) believes that literature has "a crucial role to play" because as "students learn how to read and interpret complex texts, they become better able to manage effectively elsewhere in the real world". In this regard, in the EFL classroom, exposure to a variety of literary texts can enhance students' interest in exploring the embedded facets of the lives of others, and thus give them chances to cross boundaries.



With respect to the selection of literary texts, Durant (1997: 20) maintains that English literature syllabuses for non-native speakers cannot be modeled on ‘authority’ courses such as *Shakespeare* aimed at native speakers because the needs of Native Speaker and Non Native Speaker students are different. Selecting the appropriate literary materials for the EFL classroom is not a simple task. There are some great masterpieces that teachers often want to introduce such as Shakespearean plays or a great novel. However, such literature texts may take an EFL class a whole semester to complete, and by mistakenly selecting an abstruse literary work the teacher could turn students off. Key criteria for selection of literary materials, in addition to consideration of the length and complexity of materials, must include whether or not the content can be used for discussing the selected topics, their relationship to the students’ personal experiences, and whether or not the embedded cultural differences can enable learners to observe the Other and relate to the Self.

In this respect, short stories, short prose, and contemporary poetry with appropriate topics must be taken into account. A short story introduces basic elements of fiction such as plot, character, and conflict and leaves space for students to look into more cultural elements during the process of discussing the theme, characters and actions. The plot and characters are usually intriguing enough to carry students along without making them feel compelled to know every word or get stuck by syntax. Although Dickens’s novel *David Copperfield* can provide a view of 19<sup>th</sup> English society, culture and history, time constraints and limitations of student ‘literacy’ skills might turn the EFL classroom into a miserable and dull zone. However, a short story such as *A Christmas Carol* is comparatively suitable because its length is more manageable without losing major elements of fiction. With respect to poetry, although Shakespearean sonnets are aesthetic and inspiring, a contemporary poem dealing with issues of social class or human conflict such as Edwin Arlington Robinson’s *Richard Cory* might be more effective in stimulating the students’ imagination. The socio-cultural context of this poem can more easily assist students to move from specific to general and relate cultural content such as social class and human conflict to

their life experiences. In general, literary texts such as these not only offer a broad, “state of the nation” view e.g. Tony Harrison’s *V*, but they also give students many insights into the sensibilities of the people and the texture of life in the target culture (Pulverness, 1999).

Literature is also a good resource for the construction of the Self and Other. For example, an excerpt from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* provides students an opportunity to see the character’s fear of confronting cultural contamination in the face of Otherness. Such opportunities also enable learners to investigate how the protagonist constructs Self through Other. Discussions can be extended to related tragic events in recent human history such as the Holocaust. Ethnic fiction, according to Donnerstag (ibid: 605), also makes “the diverse culture voices very explicit”. For instance, in Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*, protagonists negotiate “a double vision alternating between demands of ethnic cultures and those of the American culture”(ibid). Furthermore, in literature, the reader is often allowed to read the characters’ thoughts and this can allow them to construct Center as collective value and Periphery as individual belief. For instance, in the ending of Chopin’s *The Story of an Hour*, the doctor’s presumption of the wife’s death caused by the joy of seeing her husband alive represents the social expectation that is the ‘center’. However, the wife’s perspective of her husband’s ‘love’ being an oppressive force does not fit in the expectation of marriage. By looking at similar phenomena in their own society, learners have opportunities to reconstructing ‘center’ and ‘periphery’. When responding to Chopin’s story, a group of male students invoked the Chinese saying “the most poisonous heart belongs to women” to express their confusion over the protagonist’s being unappreciative of her husband’s love. The group unconsciously constructed the Self on the basis of traditional perceptions of gender relationships, and the intercultural classroom allowed a space to address and challenge such a response (see further, Chapter 7).

Though viewed as intellectually challenging to students, literature is also claimed to expand language learning (Dantanus 1996, Hennings 1993, Welles, 1998). For



example, Kramsch (1993, 79-81) argues that the real peculiarity of any language is found in its sounds and words, and the best models of particularity are literary texts, which can create in the learners a deep, intrinsic motivation for the language in which these texts have been written. McKay (1984) points out that the aesthetic reading of literature increases students' motivation and thereby further develops reading proficiency. More specifically, literature is promoted in ESL and EFL classes for its pragmatic uses such as the use of narratives to teach grammar (Amar, 2003). A more sophisticated level of language is needed when going beyond daily conversation and survival level because learners will need to express their own meanings and interpretations of socio-cultural phenomena. They will need to make sense of literary discourse and employ interpretation processes not required by general reading classes. The expansion of representational language learning through literature can help to go beyond the referential limitations of language use and enhance the learners' competence to interpret and articulate cultural context. An example of the use of literary texts will be discussed in Chapter 7.

### **3.2.5. Popular Cultures and Cultural Learning in the EFL Classroom**

In 1780, the second American president John Adams prophetically wrote, "English is destined to be in the next and succeeding centuries more generally the language of the world than Latin was in the last, or French is in the present age. The reason is obvious, because the increasing population in America, and their universal connection and correspondence with all nations... [will] force their language into general use" (Letter to Congress, 1780). When Adams made this statement, America was still in its colonial stage and the prophecy might not have anticipated that apart from British colonialism, this expanded use of English would also be stimulated by the expansion of American popular culture now considered by many to be a form of cultural imperialism.

The advent of technology is also playing a major part in the booming proliferation of popular culture. The expansion of cable TV channels, the prevalence of DVD, VCD and CD and the rapid growth of personal computers, as well as ever-evolving

information technology also increase the predominance of popular culture in life. Images and words replace books and influence our way of life. An exotic life style is sold as commodity via all-prevailing media. Data from the Specific Questionnaire (Chapter 5, 1.2) and student interviews (Chapter 6, 2.3) also reveal that their every day life is mixed with Starbucks, American sitcoms, Japanese video games, the National Basketball Association, and Hollywood movies. Surveys done by different newspapers, magazines, and foundations also show that Taiwanese youth spend less time reading printed texts than on the media and internet for receiving information from the other parts of the world. Chen (2000) maintains that the youth in Taiwan “grew up in a hybridized culture, [and] seem to passively consume the Western culture through rapidly progressing technology and ever out of date popular culture”. Li (2004) also satirically indicates that students’ global perspective only reaches the NBA (American National Basketball Association).

This criticism notwithstanding, educators view popular culture as relevant to everyday life and perhaps more valuable in the classroom than literature. If most literature is more generally regarded as high culture, then more easily accessible culture that popular culture represents may bring students different perspectives and are more relevant to their life. Giroux and Simon (1989) and hooks (1996) think that socio-cultural topics found in popular culture should be brought into the classroom because students today are heavily influenced by the electronic media, which is a major resource for information in their lives. Giroux and Simon (ibid: 221) claim that popular culture has pedagogical value because it “raises important questions about the relevance of everyday life, student voice, and the investment of meaning and pleasure that structure and anchor the why and how of learning”. According to hooks (ibid), because popular culture has great power in our everyday lives, the process of critiquing popular culture is a viable tool of pedagogy and learning.

Although popular culture is regarded as an effective ‘text’ to study cultures and construct Other, concerns over neo-cultural colonialism by Western or American



cultures have never receded. On the one hand, the popular culture usually conveyed by the mass media, helps to depict a way of life where students can investigate Otherness. On the other hand, it impacts the global cultural climate by generating a standardization based on Western or American values. For instance, according to the Teacher Questionnaire, teachers generally preferred movies, TV programs, or popular songs as supplements for cultural learning. However, popular cultural materials have not received adequate attention regarding their cultural influence in the language classroom. At an international conference on English Teaching in Taipei, in Nov 2004, a panel presentation argued that today's students, due to the prevalence of cable TV, benefit from more 'contact' with 'foreign culture', which was explained as 'movies' and 'foreign TV programs'. The 'foreign' culture was specified as American. One presenter pointed out that "we cannot deny that American culture is the mainstream of English speaking culture". As a result, 'foreign' culture is consciously or unconsciously oriented toward that single culture. The risk of forming stereotypes about 'foreignness' is seldom, if ever, taken into account. If the electronic media do provide sufficient socio-cultural messages and if popular culture materials such as movies and TV sitcoms can boost students' interest in exploring deeper layers of the text, then the influence of these popular culture materials merits serious attention.

Zoreda (1996: 106) indicates that popular culture can help students develop "an appreciation of the complexity of cultures, with all its coherence and contradictions, and free them from erroneous fantasies". Erroneous fantasies created by the 'McWorld', a term used by Barber (1995) to symbolize global Americanization and global consumerism, can be reduced by an analysis of cultures in their deeper layers. This can help students learn to make cross-cultural comparisons and increase their understanding of the world. The following section will discuss how films, sitcoms, sports, popular songs, and cartoons can be used effectively to increase students' intercultural competence in the EFL classroom in Taiwan. Because the amount of popular culture materials available for Cultural Studies are massive, the discussion will be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

## Movies

In EFL classrooms, the dominance of Hollywood films is clear. Knee, (2002:378) indicates that for learners of English, there are few ‘cultural forms as widely shared by its users (or as readily available to students) as Hollywood films’. A reduction of the presence of Hollywood movies in the classroom is not an effective solution to reducing the influence of American media culture that saturates the society. In the EFL intercultural classroom, Hollywood films along with independent films have potential utility in terms of providing a cultural context for learners to construct Self and Other. Topics can range from trivial cultural differences to more serious socio-cultural issues. For example, in *Pulp Fiction*, a comparison of “Quarter Pounder with Cheese” at McDonald’s in France and the USA explains some of the differences between Europe and the United States and as well as global and local marketing pressures and strategies. This can also lead to the discussion of ‘rice burgers’ initiated and later exported to other countries by McDonald’s in Taiwan. Comparisons between these ‘globalocalized’ burgers helps students construct a discourse between Self and Other. Another example is the American movie *Mississippi Burning* (1988), at which at the beginning toilets are marked ‘white’ and ‘colored’. This not merely portrays a piece of American national memory but also can lead to a discussion on the topic of ‘race’ and conflicts among ethnic groups in their own country. Knee (2002), echoing Giroux and Simon (1989) and hooks (1996), indicates that EFL courses should critically deal with the ‘ideological dimensions’ of texts, place them in their proper national and political contexts, and “situate them with respect to both the global realm and the students’ local context”. In addition, many British and American films reflect immigrant and second-generation experiences. Films such as *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), in which cultural stereotypes and conflicts among new immigrants and second generation Americans are portrayed, are intra-cultural texts that can be used to promote EFL learners’ inter-cultural awareness. Such resources provide an intersection of multiple cultures, where students can learn to reinterpret cultures.



## Drama/ Sitcoms

As mentioned above, the popularity of American TV programs precipitates global Americanization. Viewers all over the world were hooked on sitcoms from long time favorites such as 'Friends' to the newly popular 'Desperate Housewives'. Digital technology makes it easy for one to review or catch up on missed episodes and for language teachers to use these programs in the language classroom. TV sitcoms are generally welcomed in EFL language classrooms by virtue of their 'lived' language and light conversation. Meinhof (1998:3) argues that TV plays an 'interesting and important' part in language learning because for example TV dramas or soap operas present stories of the twists of everyday life in an everlasting cycle of conversations and gossip. Overall, TV drama in the language classroom is usually complimented for being 'authentic' linguistic materials and is considered naturally-occurring interactions in the target language community, as what Widdowson urged (1998b). The intrinsic value of its cultural richness cannot be ignored.

This notwithstanding, the pervasive presence of the United States and other Inner Circle countries on TV and in everyday life does not automatically turn students into participant observers of US culture or English speaking cultures. When using TV sitcoms or dramas in the language classroom, the way one interprets the text is very important. Using carefully selected scenes for students to do ethnographic studies not only helps them gain a glimpse of social backgrounds but also provides cultural understanding of everyday life. Just as with movies, the text of TV dramas can be reread and decentered with respect to issues such as race, gender, politics and classes. Sitcoms such as *Friends* and *Sex and the City* are about the lives of mostly single friends who live a carefree and rather hedonist lifestyle in New York. One can see little of the larger social context because the stories only revolve around close friends, even after 9/11. However, an ethnographic study of a dialogue between these protagonists can lead to an opportunity to reconstruct Other. Corbett (2003: 187-8) shows how the humor of a story told in a dialogue from *Friends* derives from the inappropriateness of one streetwise character's assumptions about the values shared by

her middle-class flatmates. Another example is a wedding scene from *Sex and the City* in which four female protagonists watch the wedding bouquet fall in front of them. It provides learners opportunities to discuss wedding customs such as the wedding reception, the bouquet, and the wedding gift that, as Byram (1989:83) indicates, can only be properly understood “in the whole system of meanings which are inherent in the behavior of a wedding ceremony”. Students can be further encouraged to explore similar themes in films or TV dramas presented in their own language. For instance, the Taiwanese movie *The Wedding Banquet*<sup>23</sup> by Ang Lee can be used for intracultural and intercultural comparison based on wedding ceremonies. A comparison between the wedding gift and red packet (money) for the newly wedded couple can reveal embedded values and beliefs. A comparison between in-group and out-group attitudes and behaviors helps students reconstruct Us and Them, enhance their understanding of Other and develop an awareness of Self.

### **Popular songs**

Popular songs are frequently used in language classrooms to provide more enjoyable language learning. EFL classrooms in Taiwan are no exception. Songs are considered a kind of literary text that can be approached interactively (McRae, 1991, Ferrada Moi, 2003). Some song lyrics also contain socio-cultural messages, and the refrains give the listeners a space in which to reflect upon the points made. The words of rock songs are ‘short, and the easy authentic texts are generally rich in cultural content, and are motivating’ (Ferradas Moi, *ibid*). Regarding the proper selection of songs for use in the EFL classroom, Ferrada Moi (*ibid*) indicates that they should be meaningful, relevant and easy to integrate with topics such as human rights, discrimination, race, etc. In the intercultural classroom, the selection can be topical and interrelated. Popular songs such as *Luka*, *Cat’s in the Cradle*, *Father and Son*, and

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<sup>23</sup> *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) is about a marriage of convenience between a homosexual Taiwanese man who tries to fulfill his parents’ expectation and a Taiwanese woman who has to obtain permanent residence in the U.S. The setting is in New York and the central banquet sequence, though buoyant, is loaded with the issues such as differences between generations and cultures.



*Butterfly Kisses* each portray a picture of parent-child relationships in which aloofness, love, and family violence are illustrated in different cultural contexts. Another example is *Cat's in the Cradle* that is a realistic portrayal of many modern double income nuclear families where parents frequently work overtime and send children to after school classes. To a certain degree, this song mirrors the current situation in Taiwan where parent to children relationships have changed from being traditionally close, to being more distant. The 'visiting home from college' scene connects with the current lives of many Taiwanese students and enables them to reflect upon the similar changing family values in their society while reflecting on their relationship with parents since they entered college. At the border between different cultures, a contact zone can be opened up in which learners can practice having interaction and interlocking understanding with the co-presence of Otherness.

Songs that intentionally contain protest or parody can empower students to critically relate to an even wider context. In this researcher's teaching experience in the EFL classroom, the choice of thematic songs to go with current issues such as the song 'Blowing in the Wind' and the Iraqi war, evoked the student's critical thinking. In response to the line "Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head, /And pretend he just doesn't see", one of the students stated this was illustrating the 'world leader' who thought he could justify the war. Ferradas Moi (2003) uses 'Californication' as an example to discuss an American walk of life and stereotypes that are spread through cultural products such as films, TV programs, and popular songs:

In the edge of the world

And all of western civilization

The sun may rise in the East

At least it settles in the final location

It's understood that Hollywood

Sells Californication

‘Californication’ is a loaded neologism that blends California and fornication. A song such as this can be used as a supplement leading to an in-depth discussion of media and its impact on culture and language and then lead to a discussion of what underlies globalization. Overall, material like this can be used to increase instructional variety and provide different ways to look at values and beliefs.

## **Sports**

Sports has become a part of global culture and its connection with consumption cannot be overlooked. Data from the Generic Questionnaire reveals that the favorite TV broadcast station of many male students is ESPN, and the websites they frequently visit are sports related. Also, in interviews with students from the research class, many students showed their interest in reading about sports. As discussed in the previous section, sports stars such as Michael Jordan or David Beckham are both considered icons, and provide good information about Anglophonic cultures in which great athletes are seen as commodities of capitalism or as popular cultural capital. For instance, Jordan was commercially marketed as a ‘cultural icon’ and as an excellent vehicle for purveying American ‘fantasies’ in terms of material consumption (Dyson, 1994). The fantasy is not only athletic but also cultural. In Jordan’s case the fantasy resulted in a stormy reaction to his controversial visit to Taiwan, in which he disappointed fans with a ninety-second appearance. Classroom discussion of this event can be based on, for example, an American magazine article about Jordan, a TV commercial for a sneaker company featuring Michael Jordan and news clips about Jordan’s visit both before and after the fan meeting. In the language classroom, discussions such as this can reveal how students view popular culture and how their perspectives differ.

## **3.3. Summary**

According to Durant (1997), the resources for cultural learning have a scope that includes interactions with people, personal recorded testimony of others, places visited, exposure to another country’s media, social rituals, customs, institutions, surveys, statistical charts, and heuristic contrasts and oppositions. In an EFL course such as a



Reading course, some of these resources such as places visited are not always practical or easily implemented. However, exposure to a variety of literary texts, the reading of literature and the use of the print mass media and the electronic media can enhance students' interest in exploring the hidden facets of others' cultures and give them opportunities to explore different layers of social and cultural backgrounds. In addition, assigning projects that are related to Cultural Studies themes provides opportunities for students to reach outside of the classroom and take advantage of these resources. Evidence discussed in Chapter 7 reveals how students attempted to make use of these resources in their oral and written reports.

#### **4. A Socio-cultural Topic Based Syllabus**

In the foreign language classroom a well-designed syllabus forms the basis for developing cultural and intercultural awareness. It is fundamental to being able to assist students develop the full range of attitudes, knowledge and competences necessary for intercultural learning. A syllabus does not attempt to cover every socio-cultural topic. Instead, it presents socio-cultural topics deliberately chosen by the instructor or negotiated with students from a variety of resources. Furthermore, it needs to be structured in such a way as to give learners insights into the target culture from a native-speaker's viewpoint so they can explore the Other's cultural perspectives and then relate them back to their own society and culture. Therefore, a socio-cultural topic based syllabus aims to help learners generate a general understanding of attitudes, values, and beliefs of other cultures and to provide them with opportunities to reinterpret their own.

Although such a syllabus can be defined as being based on socio-cultural content, this content is not taught as theory. Instead, such socio-cultural content, as Durant (1997) suggests, is thematic. Presenting socio-cultural themes in a variety of sources is intended to enable students to understand that a wide variety of readily available resources can be used directly in their language learning. In addition, including

socio-cultural topics that are indirectly linked the learners' personal lived experiences can provide them with new dimensions and intellectual challenges. Nevertheless, if students find it too difficult to relate to them, such topics might also run the risk of turning students off or diminishing their motivation for further exploration. For example, an article on the interplay between the commercial interests of the business sector and Internet search engines seems to touch on an interesting topic on life and technology. However, although the interaction between businesses and on-line search engines and the way they manipulate the users may be a good case study for an MBA course but it can also be too 'far' from other students' lives to be a useful teaching tool.

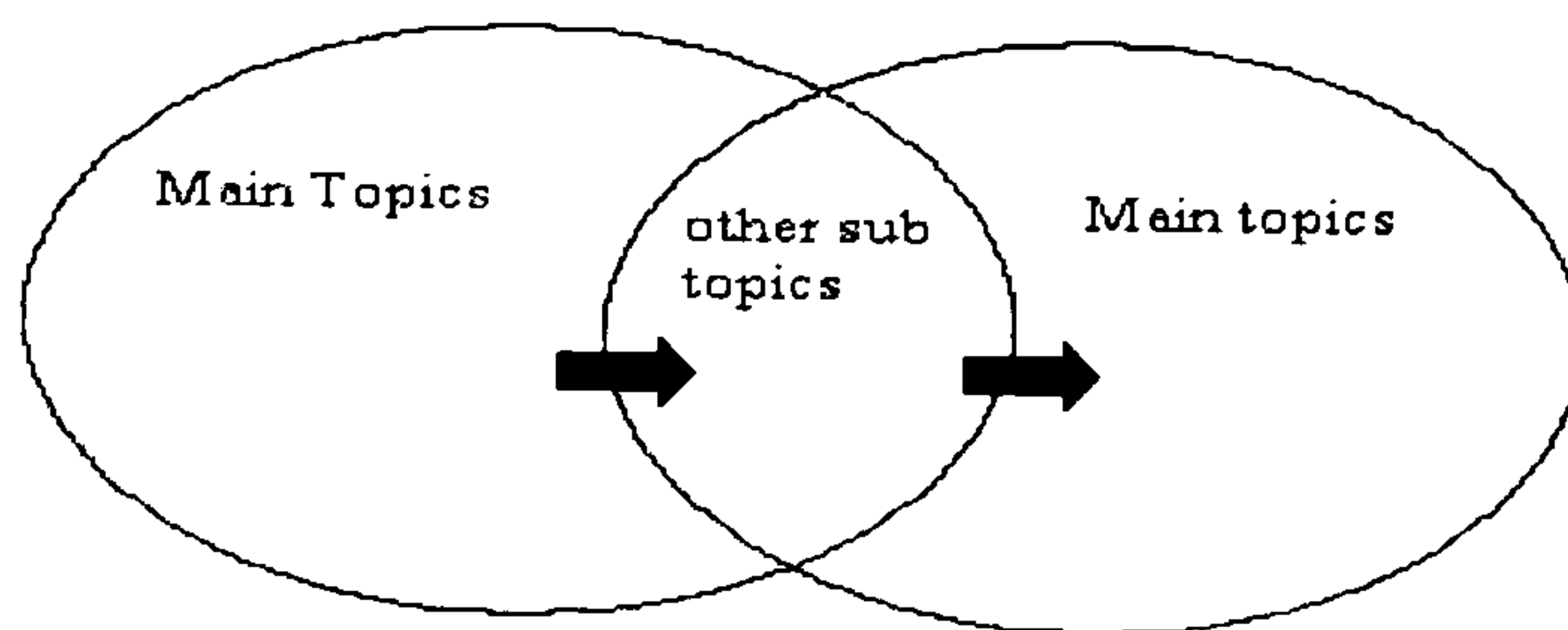
It is generally agreed (Holliday 1994, McKay, 2002) that by taking the learners' socio-cultural background into account when choosing topics, materials and approaches, they can be motivated to bring their own experiences into the classroom. Qualitative data also demonstrate that when topics are close to their lived experiences, students are motivated to reflect upon their own lives. This newly aroused interest can develop into a general interest not only in the target culture but also in other cultures. An effective socio-cultural syllabus aims to enable students to continuously draw parallels to other countries. Doye (1999: 97) indicates that the procedures that concentrate on a single event of the target culture can frequently assist the learner to refer to similar phenomena in other cultures. Becoming intercultural is one of the goals of foreign language learning, therefore, students must be provided with opportunities to transfer their attitudes and competence to other cultures.

#### **4.1. Interrelatedness of Topics**

It is important that the topics are arranged in an interrelated way. The interrelatedness of seemingly unconnected socio-cultural issues provides students opportunities to confront diverse topics targeted at constructing a social or cultural picture of Other and Self. The strategy is to provide learners with some pieces of a puzzle and have them search for the rest in order to form the picture. In the process, they can recognize that there are other possibilities for making different pictures based on the pieces provided.



Culture is non-fixed and students stand in a shifting place as they search for the missing pieces. A topic can be expanded to several subtopics and then reconnected with the main topic as shown in figure 10. For example, an assignment for a medical class, at the beginning of their first year can include 3 articles arranged to be read in a series.



**Figure 10**

**Articles:**

1. *Becoming a Doctor (USA)*
2. *Beacon in the Night (Australia)*
3. *Confession of a Student in the Golden Era (UK)*

**Theme: Education**

Main topic: university education / Medical education

Subtopics: medical education and social value/ culture belief, parents' expectations  
and children's free will to choose their future

Main topic: university education as commodity /students' expectation of  
university education

The first article, which is from an EFL textbook for medical professionals, discusses requirements for becoming a doctor, and some myths about being a doctor. The whole article conveys the basic ideas about the knowledge a medical student needs to know: qualities of being a medical student and a doctor; and the medical education system in the USA. It also raises some issues relevant to medical students such as motivation to study medicine. Security and the social status of this profession seem to be a prevalent belief. The second article is a short story narrated by a teenager whose father wants

him and his brother to take a second generation Jewish medical student as a role model. The setting is in Australia. The Jewish couple worked hard to send their son to medical school but were several years later devastated to find that their son had failed in the first year of his medical school and that he had covered up the truth until they found out. The son's accusation that his parents had 'made' him study medicine, and his desire to not 'break' their hearts, propels Taiwanese medical students to an in-between space in which to reflect upon and observe their own lived experiences. The third article is a newspaper column in which the author remembers the good old days when university education was free in the UK. The author's reflections extend from the relationship between student and university education to that between customer and service provider.

These three articles though seemingly unrelated to one another, together provide the students a stimulus and a space to relate Other to Self. Applying the essentials for socio-cultural content previously discussed to investigate these materials, the socio-cultural meanings are found to be explicit and implicit. In the first article, they can learn about the institution of medical education and values embedded in this career in another country. The general social values and beliefs that the author brought up are close to their lives and they are able to relate to decision making processes in terms of choosing the subject related to their future career. At the same time, they are given opportunities for establishing connection with their own culture and society. They are also enabled to reflect on their own, family, and social values about being a doctor and why they chose to become a doctor. In their society, family factors can be a major influence on their decision for the future. Therefore, when they come to the second article, they can easily identify with the Jewish parents' expectations of their children and refer it to similar phenomena in their society. Relevance to their life can be established. They can be further encouraged to investigate the value of education in different cultures. They will be able to stand in between and discuss the issue related to their own lived experience. The third article brings them back to practical problems they are facing — top up fees and the different social values that emerge from



encountering differences. Although these 3 articles only provide limited information, the learners are able to draw a picture based on these observations. They are able to discuss how the systems, values, and beliefs have varied over different periods of time and across different cultures. Opportunities to see differences continue to emerge when such topics are expanded. As some students stated at the interview, such topics compel them to think seriously about what they are after in their own university education. They are empowered to problematize their concepts of lived experience and articulate their own critical opinions. As such, integrating interrelated themes into a major topic provides students with opportunities to realize their potential for developing competence in relating the similar topics in different cultures.

A Taiwanese educator asked at a conference of English teachers in Taipei in 1997:

Why is it that our students learn in their English classes to talk about the British parliament but not about our local government institutions...

(Warschauer, 2000: 516)

In Taiwan, until now most course materials are filled with standardized cultural artifacts of English speaking countries. Most of the time, students in Taiwan learn to use English to describe the customs and cultures of the US and to a lesser extent the UK. At present, materials about local cultures are suggested for use in the English language classroom (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999, McKay 2002). However, as Byram suggested (1997:114), if the focus is shifted to the topics solely from their own country, it does not provide a foundation on which to develop *savoir*. Findings from the Specific Questionnaire (Chapter 5, 1.2.4) also indicate that when the local culture is listed as a single option for materials, the students do not particularly favor it. However, they deem it necessary when considering other cultures. Target cultures can thereby serve as the basis for students to reflect and to relate. The curriculum framework proposed in this chapter is not meant to serve a restrictive guideline. Instead, it is an illustration of principled criteria that can shape a university intercultural EFL program and enable a

socio-cultural syllabus to function effectively. The next chapter will discuss the implementation of a socio-cultural syllabus relevant to the structure and elements discussed in this chapter. The assessment of the intercultural competence developed by students is based upon data from the students' presentations and written assignments. These data illustrate how theory can be translated into practice. They will also address one of the major research questions: Can an effective model of English curriculum, based on cultural differences and integrated with a Cultural Studies syllabus, be developed to facilitate Taiwanese university students' cultural awareness and intercultural competence?



## **Chapter VII**

### **Implementation of a Cultural Syllabus and Findings and Discussions of Qualitative Data**

The major purpose of this chapter is to explore issues to do with the implementation of intercultural language education, by investigating the impact of a socio-cultural syllabus on the development of both the intercultural and linguistic competence of a group of first year undergraduate students at a Taiwanese University. This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the design of a socio-cultural syllabus based on the criteria outlined in Chapter 6. Theoretical concepts (Chapter 2) will be revisited where appropriate. A sample syllabus that is based on the researcher's experience, along with its implementation, together provide an example of how an English language reading class can produce an intercultural dialogue. The second section presents the qualitative data from student presentations and written assignments that demonstrate ways that a syllabus using appropriate socio-cultural texts and tasks can help students develop intercultural competence as well as traverse the boundaries of their classroom and their own lives. In the third section, interviews with students provide a description of the students' perspectives of their learning experiences. These student perspectives also serve as an evaluative indicator of the effects of implementing an intercultural English reading syllabus.

#### **1. The Design of a Socio-cultural Syllabus**

##### **1.1. Sequence of Topics**

The reading syllabus developed by this researcher is thematic, and addresses issues of gender, class, popular culture, family, and education. It is designed for one semester. The topic of education is placed at the beginning to enable students to reflect upon their own educational experience and assumptions then at the end as a reflection of their learning during the past semester. As shown in table 5, materials are comprised of

different genres of ‘authentic’ materials from literature, such as a short story, poem: from the mass media, such as magazine/ newspaper articles or essays, movies and sitcoms; as well as visual texts such as cartoons. Each text is selected to highlight the central theme.

Theme	Article / Materials	Resources
Education	1. <i>Confession of a Student in the Golden Era</i> 2. <i>Becoming a Doctor</i>  3. <i>A Beacon in the Night (Australia)</i>	1. newspaper article 2. an article from EFL textbook 3. short story
Gender	1. <i>Gender in the classroom</i> 2. <i>Boys and Girls: Anatomy and Destiny</i>	1. magazine article 2. magazine article
Marriage and Social Expectations	1. <i>Lost Lives of Women</i> 2. <i>The Story of an Hour</i> 3. <i>Homeward Bound</i> 4. <i>Barbie Doll</i> 5. Clips from a sitcom and the film: <i>The Joy Luck Club</i>	1. narrative story 2. short story 3. memoir 4. poem 5. electronic media
Family	1. <i>I just Do Not like What You Wear</i> 2. <i>Cuts in the Cradle/ Father and Son/ Butterfly Kisses</i>	1. magazine article 2. ballads/ popular songs
Social Class	1. <i>Daddy Tucked the Blanket</i> 2. <i>Richard Cory</i>	1. memoir 2. poem
Popular Culture	1. <i>Rare Jordon</i> 2. <i>Is Hollywood Responsible for 9/11</i> 3. <i>Califonication</i>	1. magazine article 2. magazine article 3. popular songs
Language and Identity	1. <i>Mother Tongue</i> 2. <i>English is a Crazy Language</i>	1. literary article 2. magazine article
Education/ value and ethics	<i>Making the Grade</i>	magazine article

Table 5

The qualitative data used in this chapter are samples of work from learners who were engaged with the above syllabus.



## 1.2. An Example of a Thematic Socio-cultural Syllabus: Input

This section provides an example from the syllabus to illustrate how a topic composed of materials from literature, popular culture, and culture studies can enhance cultural learning. It will also show how a syllabus that is based on the criteria for an intercultural EFL classroom can create a third space for the students in an English language classroom. Given the constraints on time and space, the following description of instructional practices focuses on the topic of women in marriage and the image/ status of woman in society. It includes a short story (Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*), a narrative (Tan's *Lost Lives of Women*), a *Newsweek* article (Hwang's *A Good Daughter*), a poem (Piercy's *Barbie Doll*), a song (*Reflection*, theme song of *Mulan*), and two clips from an American sitcom (*Sex and the City*). A student written assignment, used as qualitative data, is also based on this example.

These materials together help students look at the issue of marriage and the image of women in different cultures at different times. Tan's *The Lost Lives of Women* and Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* are about women's status in marriage in Asian society and American society respectively about one hundred years ago. *The Lost Lives of Women* is a good example of general social values and beliefs towards marriage, gender and class 100 years ago in China. Students can draw a general picture of culture and society from this narrative and from their own collective cultural memory. Thus it provides them an opportunity to reflect on their own society and construct Self in the present and Other in the past. The story *Lost Lives of Women* is written by Amy Tan, an Asian-American writer who grew up in America and presents her perspectives of women's status within marriage in China a century ago. She describes the culture and society of her own heritage; however, her viewpoints still remain those of an American. Before starting these women's life stories, Tan specified: "they were not peasant women but big city people, very modern.... They were supposed to be the lucky ones". This narrow segment of society leaves a gap for students to explore the life and fate of

women in general. While in *Lost Lives of Women*, women struggle with abuse from their husbands, the heroine in *The Story of an Hour* strives against the confinement resulting from her husband's excessive love. The female characters in these two stories are both submissive and subversive. In these two cultures one hundred year ago, submission was deemed a virtue although it might result in a relatively miserable life. Chopin plays with the reader's understanding of marriage by giving a surprise ending, while Tan seems to suggest that women's inner strength failed to resist the patriarchy. These two stories taken together give students an opportunity to reflect on their own perspectives of the same issue in their own contemporary society. A discourse between Us in the present and Them in the past can therefore be constructed.

Even in a society that claims to seek equality between the sexes, some of the students' responses to these two stories reveal that culturally they are still tradition laden. This can be seen from their misinterpretation of the sentence in *The Story of an Hour* describing the heroine's feeling upon her seeing her husband's face 'that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead'. Most of the students, by ignoring the words 'save with', instinctively assumed that the husband did not love the heroine. Some of the male student's attitudes towards gender issues were mirrored in their complaint about the women's ungratefulness for their husband's love. As noted earlier, in their first reading of the story, some of the male students used an old Chinese saying, "the most poisonous heart belongs to women", in their description of their disagreement with the heroine's later joyous reaction to her husband's death in the story. The surprise ending of *The Story of an Hour* offers students a chance to examine how their own or society's expectations, values and beliefs about marriage influence their interpretation. Some students later realized why they were so confused by the sudden death of the heroine upon seeing her husband showing up alive and the doctor's explanation of her heart attack as caused by joy.

These two stories, written by writers in different ages and with different ethnic backgrounds, show different facets of women oppressed either by society or the family.



Women in both societies were dominated by males and even considered male possessions. This universality of the theme enables students to reflect on their own contemporary society. Seeing a wife's relief over a loving husband's death and Chinese wives' complete submissiveness in marriage, however, pushes students to look at the cultural differences and at the same time to hold a critical stance and to delve into their own thinking about gender relationships both historically and in the present, in their own and the other's culture. Bhabha (1994: 35) states: "the enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representations and its authoritative address". In restaging tradition in the present the past is reinscribed, "appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (ibid: 37). The past and the present are not dichotomous. Instead they are a continuum from past to present. Thus, modernity cannot dispel tradition; it is creating tradition for the future.

A topic such as this has rich resource potential. Materials about similar topics such as women's marital conflicts can be used to enhance the theme. For instance, the storyline of Tan's *Lost Lives of Women* also appears in Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, an ethnic novel about four women who were brought up in Chinese culture within American society. The novel presents the cultural clashes they encountered, and the tears and laughter. A pluralist cultural picture of American society is therefore portrayed. The movie based on this novel can be therefore added to the syllabus for their ethnographic activities. Outside reading such as a *Newsweek* article *The Good Daughter* (Hwang, 1998) with similar theme can also be assigned. This article also illustrates the author's struggle in a multicultural society and conflict between her parents' expectations, rooted in their original culture, and her own as a product of American society. Such content provides many opportunities for comparisons between intracultural and intercultural perspectives.

Choosing a contemporary poem related to this topic but having a different perspective redirects students' attention to their own lives. While considering the status of women

in the past or in another culture, most students, in a liberal society, might deny the fact that women are still considered objects. The poem 'Barbie Doll' can be used to encourage reflection on their own position regarding gender relationships. In 'Barbie Doll', we see a cultural context wherein the female body is commodified and objectified. Friedan (1965, cited in Thornham, 2000:126) points out that that "we sacrifice our girls to the feminine mystique", including the commodification of their bodies. The intelligent and well educated but plain looking girl with a 'great big nose and fat legs' cannot escape the norm that society has set for women's appearance. With this cultural interpretation, the verse: 'she cut off her nose and legs and offered them up' echoes Freidan's concern. Even in Taiwan, the impossible proportions of the Barbie Doll have become many women's ideal figure. Given the space to consider this topic critically, students re-examined their beliefs and values towards beauty, and how they are influenced by the society or western culture. A male student, in his presentation on this poem, showed the Barbie Doll and demonstrated how impossible it would be to sculpt the human body to this shape. This myth has mercilessly developed into another form of oppression in the society. The inspiration and reflection upon Self, Others, their own culture and the Other's culture stimulated by the reading of this poem can therefore become an intercultural experience.

To enhance the cultural dimensions of this topic, video materials can be used to help students apply critical opinions formed from previous lessons and popular culture. A sitcom such as *Sex and the City*, which enjoys great popularity in Taiwan, can be used as an information source regarding subversive female roles in sexuality and at the same time demonstrate traditional gender relationships. An episode in which these four sexy savvy women refuse to catch a bridal bouquet that lands in front of them at a wedding provides an opportunity not only to look at wedding customs but also to investigate the inner perspective and outer perspective of feminism in different culture. For example, the four heroines appear to be revolutionary in this sitcom. However, students might not see that in most episodes that these women, who appear to enjoy their pursuit of sexual pleasure and economic independence, still generally yearn wedded bliss.



Moreover, the white-female or male middle class focus of this sitcom also allows students to think about the center and the periphery. Maxing out credit cards, looking for *Chanel* dresses, and having a glass of Cosmopolitan in nightclubs are not aspects of the life style most women can afford and are arguably anti-feminist in that the apparent hedonism implies an underlying economic dependence and pursuit of male approval. Making good use of clips from sitcoms such as *Sex and the City* not only arouses learner interest because they are close to their present lives, but they offer a good text for socio-cultural studies. Femininity can be discussed as a commodity for consumption and women's fashion fantasy can be used by learners to renegotiate their own identities (Thornham, 2000, 127-153). While providing linguistic practice, sit-coms present values and beliefs about friendship, family, women, consumption, gender relationships among races and classes, and identity issues that are worth observing.

Toward the end of this kind of intercultural lesson, some time can be allocated to using popular songs to highlight the topics. For example, 'Reflection' is the theme song of the animated film *Mulan*, based on a popular story in Chinese culture. The lyrics show the struggle of a girl between her true self and the mask she wears in order to meet social expectations. The doubts of a legendary Chinese girl from one thousand years ago, who wanted eagerly to liberate what was inside her, are expressed via an English song in a Hollywood movie with a western cultural perspective. Students can reflect upon the interplay between their own "inner perspective", that is, how they see the cultural implications of this legend, and an "outer perspective", that is how Other or/and the West interpret this story. The issues of adaptation and translation can be brought forth. The 'time machine' that enables one to interpret an ancient Chinese legendary story via an English song invites students to step into a third place and examine their own and western culture.

The topic can be further explored by asking students to examine other socio-cultural content. For instance, a small-scale project to investigate images of men and women

that are illustrated in local and foreign printed or electronic advertisements can be assigned to determine by observation if students' attitudes and capabilities are transferable when confronting new content.

The input selected for this exemplary syllabus meet the criteria for socio-cultural content and resources. They also provide diversity to assist students to stand in between and to investigate the differences as well as the new meanings that are enunciated. *The Story of an Hour* and *Barbie Doll* are literary works and *Lost Lives of Women* and 'the Good Daughter' are personal accounts using first person narration. Pulverness (2003) indicates that articles using the first person point of view make readers aware that cultural aspects can vary from person to person, and from one social context to another. This can help students avoid generalizing a particular cultural phenomenon as 'fixed' or uniformly representative of a culture. In the meantime, the use of popular culture such as sitcoms and songs connects students with 'culture' in a way that is relevant to their contemporary lives and provides inspiration.

Overall, a syllabus that integrates cultural dimensions with different materials having similar topics, offers diversified ways to look at socio-cultural aspects of the past and present, as well as one's own and other cultures. Including the cultural and humanistic traits of literature and making good use of prevalent popular culture not only makes the EFL language classroom more diverse, it also helps language lessons in General Education classes fulfill the purposes of humanistic and whole person education. Setting the goal of intercultural learning in the language classroom can be the first step away from merely emphasizing linguistic training. In a hybridized society, foreignness should not be a phobia, a blind fashion or a cause for anxiety. Otherness can be a force that enables students to accept differences and generate their own perspectives about the differences.

### **1.3. Task and Process**

If materials, content and topics form the input for intercultural learning in the language



classroom, the instructional activities taken should be tailored to the goals of the curriculum and facilitate intercultural learning. Instructions and activities designed for students should advance both language learning and cultural learning. Doye (1991, 1993, cited in Byram 1994: 178) outlines three parallel stages in political education and foreign language education. These three stages are:

1. Cognitive – Acquire the knowledge
2. Evaluative—Clarify the values
3. Conative -- Action oriented

When applied to the intercultural EFL classroom, these stages outline a process to develop intercultural competence in accordance with Byram's five *savoirs*. The 'Cognitive' learning stage is the input stage where students learn about and interpret written, visual, and auditory data and see the relationships of these data to socio-cultural concepts. This comes from teacher input, individual student readings and research to find examples of socio-cultural concepts such as gender relationships in a foreign culture. The 'Evaluative' stage is where the students recognize that these socio-cultural concepts are present in other cultures and societies though expressed differently. For example, they see that in one culture loyalty means 'unquestioned following' of the country's leader or family's leader, whereas in another culture loyalty is 'thoughtful dedication' to principles such as the Constitution of the USA, or the law, or to individual conscience. The third stage, 'Conative', is where students actively "endeavor" to find and express differing expressions of socio-cultural concepts in written, visual and auditory assignments and in their day-to-day lives. This begins in classroom presentations or 'discussions' and may continue into the future. The Conative stage is where learners are motivated to turn their understanding into action. Although Doye (ibid) and Byram (1997c) both interpret 'action' as 'real time' communication in the classroom, such action can enhance the potential for students to become intercultural speakers.

In this research, the first 6 hours of a 32-hour class were used to introduce the students to, and familiarize them with a content-based topical syllabus and the coherence of this approach. The 2-hour a week classes were generally divided into 3 parts:

1. Student project-based learning (teacher as a facilitator)
2. Teacher-fronted hours (teacher in a traditional role)
3. Discussion oriented activities (teacher as a facilitator).

In this way, the students experienced the three stages themselves. Following the introductory sessions, the first half hour of each session was allocated to student presentations of their projects on the article assigned to that time block. These student-led projects required students to read and reflect upon the socio-cultural issues presented in the text. The project presentation was scheduled prior to teacher-fronted instruction in order to keep the presentation group free from the influence of the teacher's lecture. Also, rapport between the peer audience and the presentation group is improved because the teacher as an 'authority' has not yet intervened.

In the teacher-fronted segment, the teacher presents instruction, and provides linguistic help when necessary, while at the same time the students are invited to reflect upon the text. This is the stage for re-enhancing the cognitive stage. The teacher reviews the whole article and provides the necessary help for students to understand the content and significant socio-cultural issues. The teacher can provide suggestions with respect to possible misunderstanding of socio-cultural messages in a context and why this misunderstanding is generated. In this way, the students do not feel disoriented, particularly when confronting difficult and complex materials. In addition to improving the students' reading comprehension skills, teachers also prepare managerial and substantive questions to assist students to explore socio-cultural issues (Wallace, 2003). For example, teachers can ask students to interpret why Tan specifies that the women in her narrative were modern city people. This activity can lead to exploration of women of varying social status in that society. To further develop intercultural



perspectives, group discussions follow and often continue after class. The outcomes of these discussions are brought back to the classroom where students can reflect, defend and/or question socio-cultural values emerging from the perspectives of different discussion groups. The teacher's role in facilitating tasks in the intercultural classroom will be discussed in 1.3.4.

### **1.3.1. Learning Culture as a Process**

Cultural learning is a process not merely a 'product' of instruction. Williams (1989:36) indicates that culture is not a possession; instead it is a process. Walters (1992:24), echoing Williams' concept of 'a common culture', urges:

Rather than imposing a culture in common, in which all students possess and value the same knowledge, teachers can meet the challenges of today's classrooms and tomorrow's society only if they create a common culture, one in which each group contributes to the pool of knowledge to be mastered as well as the ways of knowing used in gaining the mastery.

Therefore, implementing this process of teaching and learning can enable students to reinvest their existing knowledge into the newly gained knowledge. It is the process that empowers students to master the knowledge of people's lives and the dynamics of cultural diversity. In terms of cultural difference, as discussed in Chapter 3, Bhabha (1990:312) also indicates it is a process which marks the establishment of new forms of meaning, and strategies of identification. It allows the learner to understand that culture is hybrid and shifting, that culture is the past continuing into the present. According to White (1988a:97), a syllabus that utilizes process learning, is an education syllabus not simply a linguistic one. However, linguistic learning remains an integral part of this syllabus, and both receptive skills and productive skills can be increased in this process.

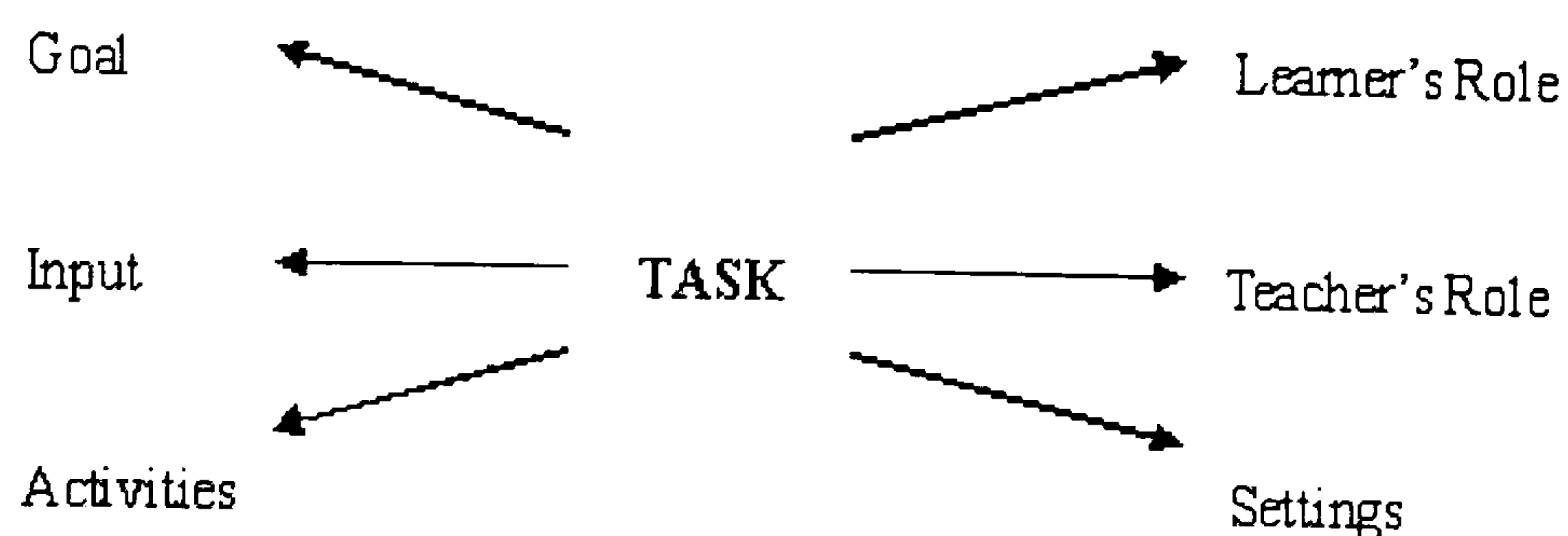
Generally speaking, in Taiwan, the students' productive skills of speaking and writing in English are generally considered weaker than their receptive skills of reading and

listening. As the MOE White Paper and several national level conferences indicate (Chapter 3), students or even staff find difficulty in conversing in a ‘foreign tongue’ or writing academic papers in English. In this process based socio-cultural curriculum, learning the receptive reading and listening skills is based on course material, teacher instruction, and student presentations. Productive skills, and speaking and writing outcomes are direct learning outcomes of student presentations and assignments. These activities are crucial for students to produce meaningful evidence of the intercultural and linguistic competence they have gained. Students are required to use the receptive processes of reading and listening and then use the productive processes of speaking and writing to generate their own product. Kramsch (1995: 90) argues that students’ verbal or written presentations about the text should not only express the thoughts of the authors, but should also be “situated utterances contributing to the construction, perpetuation or subversion of particular cultural contexts”. Therefore, speaking and writing activities in the classroom should not be merely directed towards the comprehension of texts, but also should provide opportunities for students to organize their analysis and critical perspectives into a presentable form. As a recurrent emphasis in this thesis, a competent intercultural English user not only uses English to receive and understand foreignness but also is able to develop his /her own critical perspectives that are expressed in writing and speaking. The final product, therefore, in addition to reading, writing and speaking includes a positive attitude when confronting Otherness.

### **1.3.2. Task Based Learning and the Project Based Approach**

The primary focus of task-based classroom activities is the task, and language is the instrument that the students use to complete it. The task, therefore, is an activity in which students use language to achieve a specific outcome. This approach replaces the traditional direct instruction method that is heavily teacher centered. Nunan (1989: 10-11) illustrates the components of the communicative tasks as figure 11:





**Figure 11**

This notwithstanding, task based learning is criticized by Block (2002) as another example of McDonaldization because the outcomes of tasks are usually expected to be similar. However, in this regard, Corbett (2003:41-46) presents further elaboration and support for Nunan’s model by applying it directly to the intercultural classroom, as shown in table 6. The goal of the task changes from an aspect of communicative competence to one of intercultural communicative competence. The model is flexible and teachers can create materials to draw parallels between cultures and allow students to expand their learning and interest through a variety of activities. In addition, the task-based model and socio-cultural syllabus adopted by this researcher, allows students to develop their critical perspectives by working individually and/or in a group.

**Corbett’s model of Intercultural task based learning (ibid)**

<b>Goal</b>	1. Intercultural exploration 2. Linguistic competence
<b>Input</b>	1. Authentic materials (not necessarily used in the same way as with L1 speakers.) 2. Materials constructed or structured by teachers to draw comparisons between home culture and the other culture.
<b>Activities</b>	A range of communicative activities
<b>Learner’s Role</b>	1. Earlier stage—need guidance for the activities 2. Later stage – can design their own tasks in a more contributory way.
<b>Teacher’s Role</b>	1. Earlier stage—provide guidance about how to use materials for the intercultural tasks and give linguistic help 2. Later stage – negotiate, or mediate between the interests of the learners and the demands of the institution.
<b>Setting</b>	1. A range of settings from individual work, pair work, and group work to

	whole-class activities.
	2. Suitable for cooperation as pair or group work and individual development.

Table 6

Intercultural communication tasks are primarily focused on process rather than product. In this regard, if students are allowed to voice their own opinions in the security of a ‘third space’, the learning outcomes will not be limited to similar outcomes. Participation in activities such as discussions, writings and oral presentations that are student directed will enable individual students to voice their personal opinions. However, the assigned tasks for students should have topical consistency so that they can see some coherence of approach across the course as a whole.

1.3.3. Project Work

This socio-cultural syllabus for English Reading integrates major tasks that are vehicles for both language and cultural learning. An additional strength of project work in language learning is that language is used as a ‘medium’ to carry out intercultural tasks. Projects in this socio-cultural syllabus are linked to real-world socio-cultural issues both in the target culture and the students’ own culture. For those learners who have little foreign contact, project work creates opportunities to extend their language learning and use ‘the language’ to relate the text to a wider socio-cultural context. Project work, according to Haines (1989, cited in Stoller, 1997), is viewed by most of its advocates “not as a replacement for other teaching methods”, but rather as “an approach to learning which complements mainstream methods and which can be used with almost all levels, ages and abilities of students”.

Sheppard and Stoller (1995, cited in Stoller, 1997) suggest a model to implement project-based learning in a language classroom. In this researcher’s curriculum model, project learning is included to provide students with opportunities to develop their potential to become intercultural speakers. In Table 7, this researcher’s major procedures are compared to Sheppard and Stoller’s model.



**The comparison between Sheppard and Stoller's model and this researcher's  
model of a task-based curriculum**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Sheppard and Stoller's model of a task-based curriculum</b>	<b>The Curriculum Model in the Present Research</b>
1	Students and instructors agree on a theme for the project	Teachers choose materials in accordance with pre-organized topics. Students are divided into groups of 4 or 5. Each group chooses the article that they will present
2	Determine the final outcome	Oral presentation
3	Students and teachers structure the project	Students structure the project, and teachers provide necessary help.
4	Prepare students for the language demands of Step 5	Teachers provide linguistic help to groups that ask for advice.
5	Students gather information	Students work as individuals and with a group to gather information related to their project. This research included extensive reading, data collecting, face-to-face interviews, Internet searches, and media review.
6	Prepare students for the language demands of Step 7	Teachers provide necessary linguistic help.
7	Students compile and analyze information	Students compile and analyze information both from the article and other sources. In addition to drawing comparisons between their own cultures and the other's, their critical opinions are encouraged.
8	Prepare students for the language demands of Step 9	Teachers provide necessary linguistic help.
9	Students present final product	Students work as a group to practice the oral presentation.
10	Students evaluate the project	Teacher (journal, evaluation) Peers (feedback, interviews)

**Table 7**

These procedures mirror Breen's (1984, cited in White, 1988: 98-101) earlier framework of a process syllabus, which, when implemented in order of occurrence, includes five basic levels. These are:

1. Decisions for classroom language learning—the class and the teacher negotiate the general aim,
2. Alternative procedures to be followed for reaching their agreed aims,
3. Alternative activities-- appropriate to the aims and agreed upon procedures.
4. Alternative tasks --to be selected and undertaken within activities,
5. On-going evaluation.

On-going evaluation is the continuing evaluation of the tasks, activities, and procedures with regards to their appropriateness and effectiveness concerning decisions made at the onset. This on-going evaluation provides reference points for teachers to subsequently modify activities, and for students to restructure their future work.

In this research, by using a topic based socio-cultural syllabus, each group was allowed to design an independent project based on the articles they chose at the beginning of the semester. Generally, students first discussed the major topic they found in the article and developed a range of related issues they wanted to discuss. They then divided the project into several parts and each student took responsibility for one part. Every student had a voice and thereby contributed to at least a portion of the presentation. Students supported each other when, as a group, they put the whole presentation together. This kind of project based learning, according to McDevitt (2004: 7), provides students with a situation in which they are involved “cognitively and meta-cognitively in a way which is difficult to replicate in a standard classroom setting”. In addition, it helps promote classroom climates that are cooperative and responsible. Students’ project presentations showed innovations learned from their peer groups. Students learn to work co-operatively with each other, to be responsible for their own learning and to respect multiple perspectives on topics and issues.

Some small-scale projects can also be assigned to provide students with opportunities to work together on the same topic. For example, an article discussing a Hollywood movie can provide the basis for students to investigate stereotypes they found in other



movies. Each group can choose a movie about which to report the stereotypes they found. They can show a five-minute film clip to illustrate their argument. For instance, students cited *Air Force One* as an illustration of American heroism. After the presentation, the discussion may be extended to include the definition of ‘hero’ in different cultures. The student also chose *American Pie* to support their portrayal of American youth as casual sex-seekers and party animals. Another example was an activity that focused on the image of men and women in advertising. The ideology embedded in visual images in print or electronic media can thereby be discussed and clarified by the students. After the presentation, further tasks can be assigned, such as asking students to discuss differences in the way that women and men are presented in the mass media from their home culture and from other cultures, based on the presentations of other groups.

#### **1.3.4. Teacher’s Role as Facilitator**

Although project work is student-centered, teachers play an important role. With respect to this role in the students’ project, it is necessary for the teacher to adopt a non-authoritarian position, while still providing necessary guidance and linguistic help. S/he can pinpoint cultural components or cultural connections overlooked by the students. Pulverness (2005) maintains that the teacher has a vital role to play in “acting as an intercultural mediator and providing some of the cultural coordinates from the textbook”. Byram (1997c: 64) also indicates that teachers can structure and influence learning opportunities without being physically present. By using the metaphor of a jigsaw, Byram further suggests that in the early instructional stages teachers provide ‘corners and edges’ to help the learners to move toward completing the socio-cultural puzzle. The teacher is able to guide them, to offer them some possible directions, and to be available when they encounter problems. McDevitt (1997: cited in McDevitt, 2004: 3) states that ‘the end product of all education should be an independent learner’. Teachers therefore need to provide opportunities for students to move from passive to active learning. In this regard, Byram *et al* (2002a, 16) further indicate that the teacher does not need to be an expert in the target culture. Instead, he

or she can help learners to ask questions and to interpret answers. He also indicates that when direct encounters with a foreign culture are not available for learners, it is important to 'prepare learners for asking questions of the appropriate kind'. The appropriateness of questions about others' perspectives regarding their country is important because the learners need to become aware of the power of perception. Kubota (2003), when discussing difference and inequality in the language classroom, urges that teachers, as intellectuals, not merely be 'technicians of learner-centeredness'. In other words, teachers have a responsibility to bring broader perspectives about critical issues to the classroom. In the socio-cultural classroom, because of deficient research in (cultural) knowledge or skewed perspectives, students might step into a 'wrong' third space. Teachers can thus give the necessary guidance for students to renegotiate the socio-cultural meaning in the third space. Discussion on a potential 'problematic' third space will be continued in a later section (2.1.2.).

### **1.3.5. Project Work and Plagiarism**

Project work also can help avoid students merely copying information from the course materials or source materials. In the literature, two stereotypes are often given as possible reasons for plagiarism that is often committed by Far Eastern students in their writing. First, they are viewed as mostly rote learners who value knowledge gained through memorization (e.g. Cortazzi and Jin 1996,1997; Sowden, 2005). Second, they are viewed as generally deficient in critical thinking ability and they appreciate collective values and (e.g. Atkinson, 1997, Kubota, 1999, Dorji 2001 cited in Sowden, 2005). In addition, Far Eastern students who are bound to Chinese culture are also deemed to have problems with student-centered learning, interactive activities and group work (Holmes, 2005). Support for this point of view comes from Sowden's (ibid) claims that cultural values might be the major factor. This notwithstanding, some voices (Liu, 2005, Kumaravadivelu, 2003, Le Ha, 2004) oppose the belief that Chinese cultures encourage memorization. Corbett (2003: 45) relates his observation of students from Hong Kong benefiting from organizing themselves into study groups. Also, Beckett and Slater (2005) present examples of their Japanese students, who



enjoyed project-based learning in their ESL classroom.

In addressing these issues, the research, echoing Sowden's suggestion (*ibid*), argues that oral presentations are a good method for Far Eastern EFL students to master a subject and will force them to use 'language' in a simple and direct way in order to express ideas they gathered from various sources. Because students are directed to relating unique sociocultural phenomena to relevant counterparts in their own society, it is unlikely that they will be able to fall back on plagiarized opinions. Moreover, through continuous discussions regarding their own presentations, and by questions given as writing assignments, students start enjoying producing their own perspectives rather than plagiarizing others'. If a foreign language classroom uses these kinds of activity-based processes, and if students use the processes of comparison and contrast to confront new socio-cultural concepts found in texts and media, the knowledge gained will not be rote 'banking' of received information. Rather, students will have 'created' and 'recreated' their own perspectives as they 'reflected' upon and 'acted' on the world.

## **Summary**

With respect to intercultural learning, a socio-cultural curriculum and activity-based approaches taken together can enable students to reinvest their previous cultural knowledge in complex activities and at the same time progress in language learning. The learners will utilize the receptive processes of reading and listening and will generate their own products of speaking and writing. The process of 'Othering' through different materials can lead them to a genuine interest in Otherness. As Byram (1997c, 85) indicates:

The lack of significance of contacts at a geo-political level and of the possibilities of real time contact locally meant that these objectives [for interaction] will only become meaningful to learners when they have acquired some knowledge and developed attitudes of interest in Otherness.

A thematically organized socio-cultural syllabus and activity-based instruction, when

taken together, are designed to increase students' interest, knowledge and skills in both cultural and language learning. The next section discusses the data from student presentations and written assignment based on this socio-cultural syllabus and project-based tasks. It will investigate whether the implementation of such a syllabus will enable students to develop intercultural and linguistic competence.

## **2. Implementation of a Socio-cultural Syllabus and Qualitative Data: Outcomes**

The following section investigates whether a socio-cultural syllabus, along with presentations, discussions, and writing activities, is able to increase the opportunities for students to discover differences, step into an inter space, and understand the complex relationships involved in the social construction of Self and Other. The student interviews further help evaluate the activities of the sociocultural cultural reading syllabus, and shed light on how it might encourage students to secure their own position in the torrents of globalization.

Student presentations and writing assignments addresses the following research questions:

1. What intercultural competence have students developed through a curriculum that integrates ESL and a socio-cultural syllabus?
2. Will these data support development of a model for an English language curriculum that develops the cultural awareness and intercultural competence of university students?
3. What is the level of student interest in cultural and humanistic learning that they gained from an integrated curriculum?
4. Will these data support development of a theoretical base for cultural concepts including “inter space”, “Self and Other”, and cultural “difference”?
5. What effective ways to teach intercultural competence are suggested?



## 2.1. Student Presentations

In this research, four randomly selected student presentations are analyzed to investigate the intercultural competence students demonstrated in their group projects. Because of the limits of this thesis, one presentation will be analyzed in detail while the other three will be summarized. As discussed in Chapter 2, Conceptual Framework, and Chapter 4, Research Methodology, Byram's five *savoirs* provide a model for assessing intercultural competence in the classroom. The researcher analyzes these student presentations to illustrate ways the students have, or have not, developed aspects of intercultural competence.

Byram (1997c: 65-67) argues that places for acquiring intercultural competence can be roughly divided into 3 categories: classrooms, pedagogically structured experiences outside the classroom, and independent experiences. As noted, at present there are few university exchange programs in Taiwan. This makes it difficult to structure experiences outside the classroom for students to have real contact with people from other cultures while they remain in their own social context. The classroom, therefore, is the starting point for their intercultural learning. The classroom teachers can, however, in addition to presenting systemic knowledge, offer many opportunities for learning the skills of interpreting and relating various materials. The researcher structured the group presentation activity to facilitate opportunities for students to develop skills for discovering cultural meaning, relating cultural phenomena and generating their own viewpoints. This process for preparing a presentation on a specific topic included first searching the Internet and materials from other media and reference books, and then discussing their topic. It provides students with opportunities to extend their learning outside the classroom.

For instance, a group of students, when working on Amy Tan's article *Mother Tongue* interviewed overseas Chinese students in the class as their fieldwork. One student in that group who had 2 years experience of living overseas shared his experience of being

an immigrant. One group surveyed their classmates' general attitudes on gender in order to compare various views of the same topic in a western educational context. Another group interviewed their professors to compare and contrast their views towards students and grades with that of an American professor who expressed his frustration with his students in a *Newsweek* column. Some students consulted with their key pals by email or chat rooms. One of the groups had a debate over whether or not Hollywood should be held partly responsible for 9/11. This was followed by critical reflection on the attitudes one should acquire regarding cultural differences.

Lectures, group discussions, and students' presentations help turn the classroom into a place to obtain "knowledge about mutual perceptions between countries and cultures". Although students did not have 'real' contact with 'otherness' outside the classroom, such as having fieldwork with foreigners in their community or living abroad as Byram (1997c: 68) suggests, the materials they presented can show if they have experienced "otherness" and "critical reflection".

In the following discussion of four student group presentations, students' words are sometimes paraphrased; sometimes quotations are translated verbatim. Data elicited from these four presentations illustrate:

- How students demonstrate their understanding of the content of the course materials,
- How they relate the content to a broader social context and then to their own social context,
- How they use supplementary materials, and
- How they articulate their own viewpoint.

Course materials included a range of genres such as magazine articles, newspaper columns, and literary works. The four articles these four groups based their presentation on are *Rare Jordan*, a popular magazine article, *Is Hollywood Responsible*



*for 9/11*, *Mother Tongue*, an autobiographical reminiscence, and *Making the Grade*, a Newsweek essay. They are ‘authentic’ articles in the sense that they were not written specifically for EFL students.

### 2.1.1. *Rare Jordan*

The first presentation is based on a magazine article *Rare Jordan* (George, 1996). This article discusses how Michael Jordan, the former NBA basketball player, has been elevated to the enviable, extraordinary, and taxing position of African-American hero. The topics for consideration included the meaning of athletic heroes, and the media’s use of celebrities as advertising commodities. It will investigate how such ‘authentic’ material can open up a space for students to negotiate between cultures and to ‘think critically about our life’.

***Savoir être: Attitudes***—“curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about one’s own” (Byram, 1997c: 50). This *savoir*, according to Byram (ibid), includes having an interest in taking opportunities in knowing others, exploring perspectives of a particular phenomenon in other cultures and their own, and further questioning the values and beliefs in their own cultures.

Overall, the group demonstrated a strong interest in exploring the cultural meaning beyond the general concept of a ‘hero’. They first analyzed the description of Michael Jordan in the article *Rare Jordan*. They then interpreted beliefs from an American perspective in which Jordan, apart from occasional rumors about his gambling, is an impeccable role model, particularly for the Afro-American community. To the youth in Taiwan, Michael Jordan is also widely recognized as a great basketball player due to popularity of American Professional Basketball particularly among male Taiwanese college students. Evidence, which will be discussed later, indicated that the students suspended both their positive and negative views of him from the article as well as other public opinions pervasive in their daily life. They then deconstructed his stardom and analyzed the factors contributing to his becoming an advertising celebrity. Their

curiosity about Others' perspective of this present day American cultural icon was further revealed when they analyzed a TV commercial with Michael Jordan promoting a soft drink. They struggled to interpret the slogan used: on the basketball court, only Jordan could compete with himself. However, they failed to provide additional analysis of how the media influenced a consumers' recognition of the relationship between a product and a celebrity.

During the presentation, they also questioned similar values found in their own society. By citing three examples from their own society, they demonstrated the relationship between media and the celebrity in their own cultural context. Also, by reevaluating the beliefs they were encountering in their own culture they were able to produce some critical viewpoints about the relationships among the media, consumerism and celebrity. Students then used this awareness to reflect upon an event related to their point of departure, Michael Jordan. They thereby urged their audience to examine for themselves the connections between the product and a spokesperson with an exclusive endorsement contract with the manufacturer, before they criticize the manipulations of the sneaker company. Overall, the presentation showed a general attitude of openness that made them ready to relativize Self while valuing Others. Instead of idolizing a foreign cultural icon established through critical reading an understanding of the relationship between their affective and economic relations with Western popular culture. Although there were no follow ups in their learning context to check if they were able to transfer these skills to the real-time interactions with Otherness, they did show a willingness to confront Otherness by developing a critical stance in between their own and the other culture.

### ***Savoirs: Knowledge — Deep Learning***

Byram (1997c: 35) explains that 'knowledge' can be roughly described in two categories. These are: knowledge about aspects of one's own and the other's social groups and cultures; and knowledge of the way people interact both as individuals and also as a collective. Byram (ibid: 97) further points out that assessment of this *savoir*



can reveal whether or not students are able to “use ideas in new situations, to relate factual knowledge to arguments, to draw upon logical relationships within the framework of knowledge and to interpret and come to sound conclusions”. The objectives Byram sets for this *savoir* also include some detailed points such as whether or not learners have knowledge of the Other’s national memories or geographical relationships. In general this *savoir* is adopted to investigate whether or not the students have learned the perspectives of and questioned the values of one aspect of culture from others and their own society.

The students first demonstrated their understanding of Michael Jordan’s struggle to become a ‘king’ on the basketball court and then becoming an ‘African-American’ hero from the perspective of American society. Although Jordan is a familiar figure to the youth in Taiwan, they usually merely recognize his name as one of the most well known basketball players and a spokesperson for the Nike sneaker company. The students presented his biographical information with pictures displaying some of the important moments in his life. For instance, they used one picture in which Jordan was joyously weeping over his gaining the title of MVP (Most Valuable Player). This demonstrated their understanding of the NBA’s status, as the association governing one of the most popular professional sports in the U.S. They also displayed a family photo of Jordan, explaining that his second retirement was because he wanted to dedicate himself more to his family. This showed their adoption of perspectives from the article in which Jordan was adored as a family man who “married the mother of his children” underscoring the family as an important value in American society. The presenter later pointed out that his basketball skills and “allure” made Jordan a perfect persona to market both Nike and the NBA. By showing a clip of a TV commercial that Jordan made for a soft drink and a slide of a poster of a film in which he was featured, students began making the connection between the athlete and the process of making him into a commodity. They indicated that the Jordan in the soft drink TV commercial is “the Jordan at present playing with Jordan in the past”. This led to an idea about their readiness for further discussion on Jordan as a fantasy (or American fantasy) created by

the media that is included in the following section. Therefore, it was clear that they made an attempt to have a deeper knowledge of a “foreign” social context by associating fame, media, and consumption.

By then bringing up Jordan’s controversial visit to Taiwan, the students further demonstrated their ability to relate their knowledge to comparable behaviors in a new situation in their own social group. Regarding this well-known event, students presented various viewpoints about Jordan in their own cultural context. In Taiwan, Jordan functioned more as a commodity rather than as an athlete, let alone as a family man. The students explained how people were irritated by brevity of Jordan’s attendance at a meeting with fans, many of which spent a fortune on a pair (or several pairs) of Nike shoes in order to see him. They further described how customers took Jordan as a symbol of fantasy -- “Be Like Jordan” and “buying shoes is not just because of shoes;” “it’s because of the name Jordan”. Therefore after Jordan’s 90-second appearance at the meeting, customers were shockingly disillusioned, and the anger was then transferred to the sneaker company. As a result, public opinion forced Nike to finally apologize for their use of Jordan as a persona to promote their product. On a slide in which Jordan spread his arms with a basketball in his right arm and several Air Jordan shoes underneath him, students posted a question: “Why [Jordan] came here for advertising but not playing the basketball”? This self-reflective question is related to another of Byram’s *savoirs* (*savoir comprendre*) in which they extended the topic--media and commodification of a celebrity to their own socio-cultural context.

Overall, they saw the cultural meanings of Jordan as an athlete, a family man and a commercial product in American and also Taiwanese society. However, there are a few points the students failed to examine in terms of Byram’s two *savoirs*. They did not go into depth about why athletic activity has reflected and shaped important parts of American society and the culture of sports in that society. Although the article talked about Jordan as a positive image for Afro-Americans, they did not attempt to learn more about the socio-cultural reasons for his becoming “a quintessential pitchman” in



American society or even an All American Man (Dyson, 1994: 123). They also did not address the reasons for Jordan becoming a superstar in their own Taiwanese social context in which sports obviously has a very different meaning. With respect to this, there was little evidence to show that they tried to analyze Taiwan's general affiliation with the US with respect to economic relationships, and how globalization has caused the prevailing American influence on popular culture to be increasingly prominent.

There are some possible factors contributing to their failure to make the attempts mentioned above. In a 15 to 20 minute oral presentation, they could not cover all of the important aspects they may have wanted to talk about. In addition, it seemed to be quite challenging for first year, newly entering university students to analyze the "national memory" of and contemporary relationships between both countries in a more holistic way.

***Savoir Comprendre:*** Skills of interpreting and relating

***Savoir Apprendre/ Faire:*** Skills of discovery and interaction

According to Byram (1997c: 52), *savoir comprendre* is an ability "to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own". *Savoir apprendre* is an ability to "acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (ibid: 52-53). Both *savoirs* are categorized as "skills". These two *savoirs*, according to Byram, can be better assessed on interpretation of documents or on real-time communication and interaction. However, whether or not the students were able to acquire these skills can also be seen from their presentations.

With respect to these two *savoirs*, students have shown the ability to interpret an event from another culture and relate it to events from their own. Based on an article in which Jordan is described as a 'whole human being', they interpreted him as a popular

cultural icon that carried some other meanings in their own social context. They then brought this concept and values into their own social context, in which they discussed how athletic heroes were turned into a vehicle for some other purposes. For instance, they cited two Olympics Taikwondo champions who were immediately regarded as heroes the moment they received their laurels. They were the first Olympic champions ever in Taiwan. Like Jordan, they represented a remarkable achievement and a dream. Students described them as walking icons for the youth as well. Suddenly, the attention that all athletes receive in this country had increased. Both athletes became bearers of meanings of success beyond academic or career achievement that were traditionally regarded as the ‘correct’ success routes for youth. Students revealed their awareness toward similar phenomena appearing in their own society by giving a description of these two athletes’ attending numerous parades, interviews and visits to schools. At this point the students reported that, like Jordan, these two athletes’ symbolic worth was reproduced, packaged and marketed. They were invited to “advertise, to star in movies and soap operas and to do a performance at a domestic (Golden Horse) Film Award ceremony”. What they represented was no longer just a revival of athletic ardor in this country, but a newly produced commodity. They questioned whether they were simply “shooting stars” (in Mandarin) or stars. The students had resolved the cultural differences and stepped into the third space where they found a common ground for human experiences. To some extent, they were able to establish a link between shared values in different cultures. At this point, they commented that fame could be turned into a brand name to guarantee the popularity of the product.

The students went beyond the limitations of the classroom and extended their discussion by referring to one more example from their own socio-cultural context. Knowing that the media plays an important role in creating a popular cultural icon and commodifying the celebrity, they used a famous female model in Taiwan to explain the shared values in their society. In juxtaposition to the soft drink commercial promoted by Jordan, they played a TV commercial for yogurt starring this female model who had become



synonymous with that particular brand. According to the students, her face and figure had become a symbol of a fantasy pursued by a lot of women seeking beauty and fame. Like Jordan, she was no longer related only to modeling; instead, she became spokeswoman for a number of products. The print and electronic press followed her everywhere. By posing a question: “who tell[s] us these [messages]?”, they began the search for the answer to the question of who created this phenomenon. They not only pointed out the domination of media but also further indicated that the process of commodification of a famous figure made businesses the only “winners”. Critical cultural awareness was revealed at this moment and was later highlighted in the conclusion of the presentation.

Regarding these two *savoirs*, Byram’s definitions appeared to be very challenging for the students, such as the requirement that learners acquire the ability to mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena and to operate skills in real-time interaction. Students did demonstrate their ability to justify different interpretations by comparing and contrasting the same phenomenon in their own and other’s culture. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, section 3.2, fieldwork in other cultures was not feasible in their learning context. Therefore, whether they would be able to deal with a real-time situation involving misunderstanding or conflict could not be examined. Evaluation of this *savoir* would be better suited to students who are able to travel or have opportunities to meet people from other cultures in their social context.

***Savoir s’engager: Dispositions/Orientations***—“critical cultural awareness: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures” (Byram, *ibid*: 53-4).

Throughout the presentation, students continuously reflected upon what the cultural messages revealed about similar phenomena in their own and other cultures. They were not constrained to stereotyped ideas, nor did they completely adopt foreign perspectives or share the same perspectives of their own culture on a phenomenon.

They criticized Jordan's visit; but instead of targeting the athlete, they pointed toward the manipulation by the media that created additional value for him. In the process of their evaluation of a particular event occurring in their own society, they were able to maintain a critical point of view and brought in experiences from their own society. They juxtaposed the Jordan phenomenon with a more transitional phenomenon demonstrated by the abrupt success of two athletes and a model in their own society. The students here demonstrated their ability to associate these figures in both cultures with "erroneous culture fantasy" (Dyson, 1994). At the end they urged their classmates to engage in self-examination before they criticized. In this respect, as Byram suggested, they brought a "rational and explicit" perspective from which they were able to evaluate and justify experiences in their own and other's culture. Compared to other groups, this group of students had more linguistic difficulty in clearly expressing themselves. They did, however, manage to cross boundaries and did show their potential for developing some of the objectives of Byram's five *savoirs*.

Overall, this group project enabled students to gather the information needed to juxtapose facets found in the text, to their reality, to Otherness and to their own cultures. Instead of remembering vocabulary and succumbing to whatever the author said in order to take exams, they generated their own questions. They broke the stereotypes of students from Confucian cultures, who often hold an attitude of reverence toward texts or were simply limited to the textbooks. In light of the cultural differences found in these articles, they were empowered to hold a critical stance and therefore subverted traditional learning attitudes.

### **2.1.2. The Other 3 Presentations**

The other 3 presentations occurred in the second half of the semester and will be dealt more briefly here. These three presentations are on *Mother Tongue*, *Is Hollywood Responsible for 9/11*, and *Making the Grade*. Data from still further presentations will also be integrated into the discussion. The summary taken together will illustrate those aspects of intercultural competence students developed in this classroom.



## Attitude

In general, these groups of students demonstrated a strong interest in exploring the socio-cultural message revealed in the article or text they chose. They achieved most of the objects that Byram (1997c) set for a positive attitude toward foreignness that they encountered in the text. For example, the *Mother Tongue* group demonstrated a strong interest in exploring the impact of language on immigrants and also the impact of English on themselves. They investigated Tan's experiences as a second generation American and extended their discussion beyond the classroom by including discussions about related issues in their society. They first explained the harm generated by language in the article and then related this to a similar language problem created by "English anxiety" in their own society. In this case they provided their own experiences to illustrate their struggles with English, to explain this anxiety and evaluate this socio-cultural phenomenon. The group that considered *Is Hollywood Responsible for 9/11* went beyond the issue of the influence of Hollywood movies, and analyzed and evaluated cultural messages by comparing the negative effects of globalization and the destructive actions of terrorists. Likewise, the *Making the Grade* group examined a phenomenon in a foreign academic culture, while at the same time they questioned their own values concerning similar phenomena in other cultures. For instance, they investigated their own attitudes towards grades and elicited opinions from peers, senior classmates, graduates, students from other classes, and professors at their university. They compared these various perspectives elicited from peers from their own university and other universities, key pals, and graduates in order to present a more holistic discussion. Furthermore, they were willing to question their own values. For instance, they pointed out that in their society parents might care most about their children's grades. While confronting an aspect of a foreign academic culture, they showed their ability to reflect on their own experiences, and at the same time they demonstrated their readiness to interact/ engage with people from other cultures.

## Knowledge

### *The Use of Cultural Resources for Intercultural Comparison*

It is clear that when learning about another culture the students draw extensively on not only their own experience and real time communication, but also on conventional sources of socio-cultural knowledge. These resources include reference books, surveys, interviews, biographies, photos, TV programs and advertisements, personal experiences, films, and so on. For instance, one group's presentation on "*English is a Crazy Language*" made use of reference books to summarize the history of English language and analyze its expansion. In addition, to enrich their reports, they used multimedia materials and other references in order to discover "other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena" beyond the materials used in the classroom. Findings of the Specific Questionnaire indicate that most students tend to agree that the media has highly influenced their perception of foreign culture, albeit without too much reflection upon the socio-cultural message conveyed by it. Findings reveal that when facing an 'authentic' text in the language classroom, students are not submissive to whatever they read. Neither do they deny themselves this access to possible new knowledge to be found in texts. This is considered by Widdowson (1984, cited in Fairclough 1992) a proper attitude to critical reading.

### *The Understanding of Cultural Content*

According to Byram (1997c), *savoir* is in part a competence to "use ideas in new situations, to relate factual knowledge to arguments" (Byram, 1997c: 95). Evidence of this competence was found in the student presentations. In *Is Hollywood Responsible for 9/11*, the author argues that although the Hollywood movies do not necessarily provide the ideas for terrorists to imitate, the excessive violence places Americans in a bad light and might be the cause for terrorists to justify their attack. While presenting this argument in the form of a debate, they juxtaposed opinions pro and con. The students demonstrated their ability to "draw upon logical relationships within the framework of knowledge and to interpret them" (ibid). However, they did not limit



their viewpoints to 9/11. Going beyond the explicit position that the title indicates, they posed another question:

Who should take the responsibility for 9/11? The terrorist? The U.S. government? The Media? Or misunderstanding between two races and cultures

By relating factual knowledge to their arguments, and interpreting different perspectives, they presented a holistic view of this topic. This provided students with a sound basis for further developing their critical awareness.

That the students developed *savoirs* for exploring cultural knowledge in the texts is also evident in the other two presentations. The *Mother Tongue* group made the impact of ‘mother tongue’ on Tan’s academic performance relevant to their own English learning experiences. Although they are living in their own country, they are battling with a powerful language other than their mother tongue. The *Making the Grade* group examined the author’s concern over surface values and also investigated the relationship between education and grades in both cultures. They interpreted the author’s viewpoints and related them to their own society where parents more often than students think that “having a good educational background is crucial. Parents often encouraged their children to study hard, because only by getting [good] grades can they become somebody”. The students brought in their own understanding, analyzing the kinds of problems they encountered in their culture, and were able to draw a critical conclusion.

### **Demonstration of Skills: Relating their discovery to a wider social context and to their own society**

It is evident that students also develop skills for eliciting different perspectives and a wider context concerning the topic they present. In most of the presentations students used questionnaires, interviews, debate, role-playing, and self-reflection. For instance, four groups used interviews to enrich their presentation. One group used a questionnaire to find out if their classmates’ viewpoints about gender in the classroom

were comparable to the position taken in the article *Gender in the Classroom*. The availability of foreign key pals also provided them with opportunities to practice their skills in a more ‘real time’ communication. These presentations also showed that they can take advantage of multimedia, and combine graphics, images and audiovisual content to compile their reports.

Although the materials that these presentations are based upon are mainly about American culture, evidence indicates that students are able to relate to a wider social context and then relate to their own social context, and even a general human socio-cultural phenomenon. In the process of relativizing a similar phenomenon found in the foreign culture, they are willing to “question the values and presuppositions” in their own social context. The students’ interest in exploring a phenomenon or issue in the other societies and then relating it to a similar one in their own society is evident in these presentations. Findings show that from time to time, they present alternative interpretations of the same event. Presenting the sum of two different cultures no longer satisfies them. They sometimes challenge the author. Most of time they reflect upon their own cultures in the ‘inter’ space and generated a critique.

### **Critical Cultural Awareness – an ‘inter space’**

As previously discussed, the influence of American life and culture is prevalent in the EFL classroom and many cultural facets and values are seldom reflected upon. As discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, the fear of neo-cultural colonialism being brought about by learning a *lingua franca* has not yet emerged in Taiwan. However, saturating students with the dominant American or Western values in course materials could induce the “boiling frog” syndrome, that is the process of increasing saturation will not be noticed until there is serious consequence or backlash. These presentations demonstrate that even in a foreign language classroom primarily using American materials, the deliberate integration of socio-cultural topics into the language syllabus results in many students developing the potential to become intercultural speakers.



Byram indicates that even if the learners have no opportunity to interact with native speakers, “a critical study of English speaking cultures, American and British in particular, is likely to be more beneficial than to ignore their presence” (1997c: 115).

Almost most of the groups demonstrated their ability to identify and interpret both explicit and implicit values in their own culture and other cultures. For example, the *Making the Grade* group explicitly interpreted values of grades. Through interviews they organized and conducted with foreign students, they found parents in the West generally ‘respect children’s interest’ even though children’s academic performance might admit them to some particular majors leading to more secure professions such as medicine. They implicitly referred to their own society where parents usually play a key role in deciding their children’s future. Their reflections on the influence of parental expectations on their own attitude towards grades were noticeable. At the end of the presentation, they again invited their classmates to reevaluate if a “grade is still the only way to identify one’s ability”?

The *Mother Tongue* group also evaluated and identified values in their own society in the process of assessing the impact of English on their lives, society, and culture. Although English is not an official language, not even a second language, it was considered a ‘must’ and even a high language that shows one’s cultural capital and ‘quality’ just as it is in Tan’s reminiscence. They therefore challenged a general belief about English education in their society, namely, the earlier one learns a second language, the better. This student discussed their shared memory of learning English when they were small. One student said that it was a ‘pain’ in ‘English only’ and ‘no Chinese’ classes. She remembered that they just followed the foreign teachers’ instruction “word by word without any idea about what teachers said”. The student used a personal anecdote ironically to indicate parents’ general anxiety in their society:

Mom always asks me what I learned in class after language school. I replied: banana, elephant...and a satisfactory smile appears on her face. This is our common memory.

This memory reflects a reality in their society in which parents suffer more from English anxiety than children. They not only demonstrated critical competence by evaluating this new cultural myth but also developed an analysis to deconstruct it. They were willing to “question the values and presuppositions in their own lives”. In the face of a strong international language, they however reaffirm the importance of their mother tongue. Their discussion on the habitus that English has created reflects the current Taiwanese linguistic landscape as discussed in Chapter 3.

Most of time, students are able to step into the third space and critically reflect upon a foreign culture and difference between cultures. For example, in the *Is Hollywood Responsible for 9/11* presentation, one student compared the impact of globalization, which in his opinions is a synonym to Americanization, to 9/11. He stated:

“Why are we so hated”? Many American must wonder after the attack...

Arrogance and the sense superiority, this is what we got from images of the US which often [appears as] the strongest country of the world in the movie.

The researcher notes that the students made a connection between globalization and the events of 9/11 that is similar to Baudrillard’s argument against globalization in “The Violence of the Global” (2003)<sup>24</sup>. This is suggestive, at least, of the student’s use of higher level critical analysis skills. The student further explained the influence of globalization and argued that globalization induced by Americanization is even worse:

We cannot get rid of influence of English language and American culture from books, newspaper, Internet, movies, and media in every form. Hollywood movies were only one way to spread globalization. And there is no way to escape globalization.

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<sup>24</sup> Baudrillard’s reflections on globalization and terrorism.



Echoing the author's viewpoints that some Hollywood movies showed America in a very bad light, this group postulated that Hollywood movies are filled with American type of arrogance and sense of superiority. At this point, the immeasurable influence of Hollywood movies, to them, was no longer merely an American concern or Taiwanese concern. Rather, they spoke their opinions from the stance of a global citizen.

This research reveals that when provided with proper opportunities, students no longer simply receive whatever message the media or popular culture gives them. Instead, they become willing to explore the deeper facets of cultural values. In the process of relating a similar socio-cultural phenomenon, a third space opens up. Evidence from these four presentations, shows that students do mediate the differences and are able to enunciate underlying cultural meaning and then articulate their own critical opinions. Critical cultural awareness is revealed throughout the whole presentation. Follow-up evidence such as the use of these skills in real-time interactions with foreigners is not really feasible.<sup>25</sup> However, at a later interview students indicate that this course has 'opened a window to the world' for them. One of the students said: "When I was queuing to buy a cup of Starbucks Mocha the other day, I was thinking why Starbucks are everywhere. Is it a mimicked lifestyle or [something] else"? Translation of Culture is being reflected on here. They also start reflecting upon the embedded messages in the media that they seldom thought about. Another student later in the interviews indicated: "when I watched *Friends*<sup>26</sup> before, I loved the dramatic plot and hilarious lines and took them as the American way. The other day I was surprised to find that while watching *Friends*, I started to think how a certain dialogue might signify the cultural message". Cultural learning therefore can take place in the language classroom and critical cultural awareness can serve as a basis for study of other cultures

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<sup>25</sup> Although a videoconference was held between students of a Culture and English Language Teaching module at Glasgow University, Scotland and the subject group in Taiwan, the one hour contact did not allow students on either side to have sufficient time to do 'real-time' communication.

<sup>26</sup> American sitcom, which lasted 10 seasons, is very popular among Taiwanese university students.

outside of the classroom (Byram, *ibid*: 103). It is a transgression that hooks urges. It motivates students to reach out into the world and thereby see the differences as a positive force to increase their incentive to understand the Other. This process leads to gaining global literacy, which will help the learner go beyond naming the facts and events and prepare him/her to look at them from their own and others' perspectives and values.

### *Resisting Dominant Reading*

Widdowson suggests that in terms of power differentials in the EFL classroom, a reader should not be too submissive or assertive (Widdowson, 1984 quoted in Fairclough 1992). Resisting dominant reading is also found in the data of students' presentations. For example, in the presentation on the 9/11 article, the students were not too assertive as they did not abandon the author's point of view, in which he illustrated the interplay between the media, the event, and the image of America. On the other hand, they were not submissive to the dominant viewpoints revealed in the text. They challenged the prevalent belief and ideology found between the lines. They therefore used factual knowledge to develop their argument while they also resisted the prevalent message embedded in the text. These messages are: 1. terrorists' deeds are evil, 2. the United States is unquestionably a victim, and 3. the media are the source of some evil deeds because people imitate violence in the movies. The students did not completely agree with the embedded claims that the text presented. Instead, they read the text critically. When discussing whether the media should or should not be blamed for 9/11, they provided another space, that is, "What is the implication of 9/11"? The student who presented the conclusion asked the question: "What is [considered] true justice in the world"? Situating themselves in an 'inter' space, they proclaimed that "from a distance of time and space....we can say 9/11 changed everything or nothing". At this point, they not only read the relationship between the media and reality but also read the text critically. The student who presented the conclusion refused to concur with the author's argument over the affiliation between Hollywood movies and 9/11. Instead, he strongly suspected that the root of this disaster might be the misunderstanding of two



cultures and ethnic groups.

This resistance not only emerged when the students read the text, but was also shown when they used other resources to enrich their discussion. The student concluded this group presentation by citing a line in Bush's speech delivered shortly after 9/11: "out of evil can come great good". What Bush meant by 'great good' was that the threat of organized terror would be shattered some day. However, this group read the message differently and indicated the great good should be a lesson learned. The lesson is that different cultures and ethnic groups should be understood and respected. The student further said: "Force cannot solve everything. Only when we know how to respect other cultures, races and religions can we live in a peaceful and wonderful life".

### **A Problematic Third Space**

Evidence also shows that there is possibility for students to step into the 'wrong' third space. For example, the student under discussion in the section above also associated two seemingly unrelated issues. He fancifully speculated that the Twin Towers symbolized the US by pointing out "[the World Trade Center] consumes a lot of [energy] in New York just like the US consumes 40 % of the world's energy". He thereby explained that maybe this was why terrorists clearly picked it as the target despite the fact that terrorist clearly targeted political symbols such as the Pentagon and the financial center. He postulated that the invisible effect brought by globalization might be worse than the terrorist threat and that Hollywood movies played no role in inducing terrorists' actions. This student group therefore thought that the U.S. government should take the responsibility and self examine what was the real cause for this tragedy. Although the idea of comparing American's consumption of a large portion of world resources with the terrorists' destructiveness appeared original and even imaginative, the speculation is unsupported by evidence. The teacher needs to have sufficient related cultural knowledge in order to help students to elicit necessary knowledge to decide if they have stepped into a 'third space' where critical perspectives are based on sound knowledge.

In a situation like this the teacher can provide additional guidance. For example, the instructor can take this opportunity to encourage students to do additional research on Islam and Islamic cultures and values. Historical relationships regarding Islam and the West can be explored as well. Guidance can also be provided in terms of giving more specific examples of resources to support their ideas. In addition to this, students can be encouraged to examine whether or not their own society views the media as the root of evil influence or as a reflection of reality.

### **The Teacher's role in the student presentations**

Literature (Byram, 1989, 1997c, Kramsch, 1993, 1999) suggests that teachers must start a conscious, awareness-raising process surrounding culture learning in the language classroom. As discussed in Section 1.3.4. above, the researcher plays the role of a facilitator. She did not teach cultures exclusively or set intercultural competence as the sole criteria to assess students' performance. This strategy was devised to deter students from using habits formed in their former learning experiences that were oriented towards assessment. These habits included merely trying to please the teacher/researcher rather than developing cultural and intercultural awareness in the process of learning and preparing for the project. Although they did not participate in choosing the course materials,<sup>27</sup> students were allowed to choose the text they wanted to present and then to consider a wide range of ways to present the selected topic. Before preparing for the presentation, some groups had a short conversation with the researcher about the main points of their report. The researcher did not exert authority and seldom gave extensive instruction, with the intention of letting the students develop their intercultural awareness and competence with limited guidance. The researcher sometimes gave some fundamental ideas such as suggesting that they relate the

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<sup>27</sup> As the university required the syllabus to be put on line in the first week of the semester, negotiating the syllabus with freshmen is currently unfeasible. A negotiated syllabus is more feasible for the second semester.



socio-cultural content found in the text to their own society. She also supplied necessary cultural knowledge or gave references for students to further explore the topic themselves.

After the presentations, the researcher pointed out more cultural facets revealed in the text and invited students to participate in comparing and contrasting these to phenomena found in their own country. By including socio-cultural topics in most of the course materials, the researcher found that the texts provided students with a sound basis from which to begin the process of cultural and intercultural awareness. Their presentations revealed that when appropriate topics and materials are provided, students are able to demonstrate their intercultural competence. Throughout the whole curriculum, they gained the skills necessary to look at one cultural or social phenomenon from different perspectives. In this way, developing a critical perspective was not simply an add-on lesson, rather, it was a process integrated with their reflections upon differences.

The findings from the student presentations also reveal some important possibilities for the English classroom. Providing socio-cultural messages embedded in authentic materials can trigger these possibilities. This researcher finds that by situating students in an inter place, the diversity and infinite possibilities, as suggested by Li and Girvan (2004: 13), are “what makes the language teaching and learning landscape a rich and environment” for the students. During the presentations, the instructor stepped back from her traditional instructional role. The students thereby are no longer traditional passive recipients as in the standard EFL reading class. Students took opportunities to speak about their findings and analyses, to write their discussions, to listen to their peers’ opinions, and to read the text and other references. English was used as a language and as a mediator to understand different cultures. Students were not marginalized as readers only. Rather, in making sense of the lives of Others and in exploring their own perceptions and experiences, they were empowered to be intercultural speakers.

### 2.1.3. Summary

Byram's five *savoirs* are used in the present research to as an instrument to evaluate the potential for systematic introduction of intercultural learning through student presentations and to monitor displays of intercultural competence developed through this activity. Findings reveal that the students' attitude towards other cultures is positive. Later in their interviews, students also claim that such a positive attitude is a change from their previous learning. Evidence also shows their awareness of Others and their ability to understand the socio-cultural message revealed in a reading text. It is apparent that students at this point began including their own materials in the presentation and regularly discussed socio-cultural phenomena from different perspectives. On the one hand, they deconstruct the major socio-cultural messages that they receive from the text and relate them to their own society. On the other hand they reconstruct new values. In addition, they demonstrate their skills in relating cultural content to a broader social context and to their own socio-cultural context. It is notable that they also learn from their peer group when they develop the presentation. Such benevolent competition motivates students to pursue wider and deeper knowledge and analysis. Findings show that throughout these presentations, these students generate their own questions rather than simply reading to find the answers to given questions. This technique was encouraged by Fairclough (1992) as a way to raise critical literary awareness in the EFL classroom. When confronting differences they are able to produce their own critical opinions and to a certain extent, albeit not always, with well supported statements.

In this research classroom, since students work on different articles for their presentation projects, class essays and examination essays are used to support conclusions about student learning on each individual topic. Written assignments and written projects that involve the students reviewing of their group discussions were evaluated. These assignments serve as a mirror of the students' cultural awareness and their ability to compare a particular issue in different cultures and in different times. Taken together these provide evidence of the cultural awareness and intercultural



competence developed by the students. The next section will discuss how data elicited from writing assignments provides further evidence of students' development of intercultural competence and transformation through writing.

## **2.2. Writing Assignment: Findings and Discussions on Writing Assignment**

### **2.2.1. Intercultural Approach as Deep Learning**

Findings from the students' writing assignments show that the process of reading, discussing and organizing their opinions into the written form is a process of deep learning. According to Entwistle *et al* (1992), in terms of learning, there are two basic approaches: one that reproduces content (surface learning) and another that transforms it (deep learning). Surface learners usually just accept information and knowledge passively and are more oriented toward assessment requirements. Findings of the Specific Questionnaire and to a lesser extent the Generic Questionnaire indicate that student informants, in their previous EFL learning experiences, mostly learned the knowledge necessary for exams. Evidence from student interviews, to be discussed in the third section later in this chapter, also reveal that their previous learning tended to be 'surface learning' and they felt 'panic' when they first faced a different 'approach' in the classroom where they are asked to 'think' about the content instead of to 'memorize' it.

In contrast to surface learning, deep learning, according to Entwistle *et al* (ibid: 4), relates to the following features:

- Intention to understand material for oneself
- Interacting vigorously and critically with content
- Relating ideas to previous knowledge and experience
- Using organizing principles to integrate ideas
- Relating evidence to conclusions
- Examining the logic of the argument.

Findings of the student writing assignment show that an EFL classroom that is

employing an intercultural syllabus allows students to discover, explore and discuss, and then further to relate, to compare and contrast, and then to produce their own opinions. Such a syllabus is different from a traditional English Reading classroom where vocabulary, sentence structure, content comprehension are the major foci. From these data, it is found that learners use information gained from different resources and form arguments and comparisons. They are able to relate the cultural messages they encountered in the course materials to their previous knowledge and experience. In addition, in most of the assignments, students also display their abilities of integrating, analyzing, and organizing that are taken together as the processes of deep learning (ibid). Intercultural competence as described in Byram's five *savoirs*, and revealed in the findings, enhances the process of deep learning. The findings regarding their competence in extending cultural knowledge, their ability to compare and contrast, and their critical thinking ability will be discussed later in section 2.2.2.

### **Writing as a Process**

The process of learning by engaging in discussions with peers, according to Entwistle *et al* (1992:7), "is particular[ly] valuable in developing understanding". Therefore, the students were encouraged to find and discuss sources in English as meaningful linguistic input. In this case, discussion preceded writing, and the writing went beyond being merely a private out-of-class assignment because it involved whole group discussions and the reorganization of their ideas into a developed written framework. It became a major out-of-class learning activity that not only extended students' cultural learning but also their linguistic learning. They discussed issues extensively and then put their ideas into written form.

### **Writing Approach**

Generally speaking, according to Silva (1990, 12-17), second language composition methods can be classified as follows:



1. Controlled (guided) Composition Approach
2. Current-Traditional Rhetoric Approach
3. The Process Approach
4. English for Academic Purposes

The Controlled (guided) Composition Approach focuses on linguistic artifacts such as lexical and syntactical features rather than ideas or expression. The Current-Traditional Rhetoric Approach concerns logical construction and discourse form. It focuses more on paragraph development that includes the elements of structure and organizational modes. This approach has had an enormous influence on most ESL or EFL composition textbooks. The Process Approach, different from the previous two approaches, focuses more on writing process than product. According to Silva (1990:15), in process writing, students, with the help of a teacher, develop viable instructional strategies including: 1. Getting started (finding topics, generating ideas and information, focusing, and planning structure and procedure), 2. Drafting (encouraging multiple drafts), 3. Revising (adding, deleting, modifying, and rearranging ideas), and, 4. Editing (attending to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics). Compared with the previous two approaches, the Process Approach allows students to explore their knowledge and express their ideas before attempting to fit writing in the prescribed writing patterns and forms. The English for Academic Purpose Approach mainly focuses on familiarizing learners with academic discourse genres and the range and nature of academic writing tasks. Compared to the Process Approach, which engages the writer in the discovery and expression of meaning, this approach aims to enable learners to be a successful writer in academia.

Silva (ibid) points out that these approaches respectively have their critics. Controlled Composition and the Current-traditional Rhetoric Approach turn writing into more formulaic and prescribed exercises. The Process Approach is criticized for lacking practical consideration of generic variations in writing processes such as differences in writing tasks, the development of schemata for academic discourse and so on (Reid,

1984 quoted in Silva, 1990). The Academic Purpose Approach is attacked, mostly by critics favoring a humanities-based approach, for its deficiency in general principles of inquiry and rhetoric.

In Taiwan, training in writing in the secondary school mostly involves the Controlled Composition and to a lesser extent the Current-Traditional Rhetoric approach. These two approaches are used mainly to facilitate students' ability to write a 100 to 150 word essays in the timed English test of the JCEE. Therefore, reading model passages or essays and memorizing useful idioms and sentence patterns are the students' major task. Writing instructions usually adopt the Controlled Composition or the Current-Traditional Rhetoric Approach. Evidence is found in the JCEE exam essays and from the independent annual admission exams to graduate programs. Creative writing is not explicitly encouraged and the Process Approach is thereby not the mainstream writing approach in Taiwan. At the tertiary level, if English writing courses are provided, usually the Current-Traditional Rhetoric Approach or the English for Academic Purpose Approach is adopted.

The writing assignment in the present study aims to provide students with opportunities to work collaboratively, to understand the texts, to extend their learning to other related materials, to discuss and to relate evidence of their learning. Linguistic training and cultural awareness can be together improved. Although the students had little previous training in writing a lengthy essay, they were motivated to write their best. They enriched their ideas through peer discussions and by writing the results of these discussions. Neither the process nor the outcome is predetermined. The researcher at the beginning did not provide a model essay or list of vocabulary, idioms and expressions in order to avoid confining or restricting their discussions. This strategy was implemented to avoid limiting the students' ideas because of a possible obsession with using a specific, correct writing form. Moreover, if a model had been provided at the outset, many students, who had not yet overcome the habits formed by their former examination oriented learning experiences, would tend to imitate the structure and



sentence patterns by merely replacing necessary key words and expressions.

This notwithstanding, liberating students from the constraints of a structured model and the impression of preconceived outcomes does not excuse them from using a good writing format. The focus is placed on how to process ideas and put them in a readable form. It is therefore necessary that a proper writing procedure be applied. White's "process model" suggests a procedural model (1988b:7) as follows:

Task specified → Communicate as far as possible → Study model  
  
→ Practice as necessary → Recycle

This research adopts the Process Approach and then the Current-Traditional Rhetoric Approach. This model encourages learners to develop their ideas as much as possible. A writing model is provided for them as necessary to help structure their thoughts and develop their ideas logically. In an intercultural EFL classroom, the process can be modified as follows:

Task specified → Discuss as far as possible → output (first assignment)  
  
→ Study model as needed → Practice → Recycle

With this model the students manipulate the ideas and arguments that they have developed in the first paper. They then follow the model to reorganize their ideas. By adopting this model, the teacher establishes a feasible goal from which discussion is followed by writing. The students decide what they want to include to develop their topics. They then brainstorm and add more thoughts gathered from their peers through discussions. The students then collect information individually and meet to discuss again. They are encouraged to extend the discussions as far as possible, to collect opinions, to decide what is to be included, to organize their thoughts, and then make

their description, analysis and arguments in presentable written form. At this point, the teacher evaluates general ideas, cultural awareness, intercultural competence and critical ability shown in the paper. Suggestions and help are given according to lexical or grammatical problems that have emerged from the assignments. Comments are also made in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments. After this, a writing model allows the students to manipulate and plan their thoughts and revise their writing based on their own structure and the model provided.

In the present study, approximately half of the initial assignments from the groups were quite well-organized. This indicates that they previously might have had model-based or Current-Traditional Rhetoric writing training. This most likely was a very structured method for preparing for the national examination. The researcher therefore can provide a basic model for comparing and contrasting. For instance, students are instructed to either explain each subject one at a time, or choose to discuss them point-by-point, one aspect at a time. Students should be provided a basic strategy for comparing, that is, by focusing on how the two cases are similar and for contrasting by focusing on how the two cases are different. The students can also be introduced to the way academic writing is organized and how the organization is signaled lexically and grammatically. This information gives them a basic structure, useful sentence patterns and conjunctions for their paper. Some basic help is provided regarding clause relations in information structure. Students are asked to organize their ideas and information from their first draft in a readable and appropriate structure.

An examination of papers from two groups indicates ways students can benefit from the process of writing and Current-Traditional Rhetoric Approach. The paper of one group is interesting and demonstrates their cultural knowledge but fails to present their ideas in the required formal format. The students begin the paper with the heading "East" and listed social expectations for women in each period. In this case, a proper introduction is required in the subsequent revision. The points they list for different periods of time need to be correctly organized and put into paragraphs with appropriate



conjunctions. This group basically used block comparison and contrast. Their writing about western women was generally organized and analytical. However their analysis ends without a concluding summary of their ideas. The suggestions for redrafting therefore included a summarizing conclusion. Another group presented its ideas in an incoherent manner. This group's jumbled organization appeared to be the result of having assigned different parts of writing task to different individuals rather than working as a whole. For instance, the first part of their writing presents their reflections upon women's status in general, whereas the second part was a printout of their on line discussion with key pals. The last part shifts to the current women's status in their society and provides many facts and statistics. Therefore, even with some good ideas presented, their writing appeared poorly organized and inconsistent. In this case, students were asked to base their writing on comparison and contrast and to group their ideas and put similar and different aspects of two societies into a concise form. They then can reexamine and revise their perspectives and analyses and develop them accordingly. They can also determine where more factual information is needed.

Merely adopting the Controlled Composition Approach or the Current-Traditional Rhetoric Approach or providing strict writing models for students to imitate involves the risk of guiding students to seek what they may perceive to be the teacher's anticipated or a predetermined outcome. By contrast, the strategy suggested here allows students to first determine the cultural dimension of their learning and then to organize different perspectives. However, as White (ibid) points out, a model-based approach should not be totally abandoned. Providing students with the writing skills discussed above to review and present their ideas, and refine their writing in the process of revision, with reference to a model where appropriate and useful, helps them to improve linguistically.

University students' English writing ability is usually a major concern in Taiwan's HE because in-class and out-of-class resources available for writing activities are limited in comparison with those for listening, speaking and reading practices. Except for those

students with English related majors, most university students have had little English writing training in their language classroom. In addition, most of the assessments at the tertiary level are still based on multiple-choice, filling in the blanks or short answer questions. Students therefore have had few opportunities to develop writing skills. Compared with more traditional English reading classes, this proposed strategy involves a change from teacher-centered to student-centered lessons, and from mere language input to include both input and output such as using the language to express their cultural knowledge and perspectives.

Overall, the written component of the present syllabus integrated the reading component and so adapted the process approach as follows:

Reading input → understanding course materials → task specified → reflect  
→ discuss as much as possible → reach out of classroom for related information  
→ discussion → writing output → study model → practice → recycle

This model provides students with a sound base of cultural knowledge and also facilitates their ability to articulate their reflections by means of peer discussions and on line discussions with key pals. Students are thereby able to extract the data they need to support their arguments and relate foreign cultures to their own. They put language to use to communicate their thoughts to the reader. Although this is a group project, assessment on individuals can be accomplished by means of exams using short essay questions that are related to the project topic. For example, a question such as “Compare and contrast the women’s status in marriage based on *Lost Lives of Women* and *The Story of an Hour*” provides a sample of the extent to which students have learned from their group project as well as provide an understanding of their personal perspectives.



### 2.2.2. Intercultural Competence Developed in the Process of Deep Learning

The writing process described above provides an opportunity for the informants to demonstrate their ability to go through the process of deep learning and go beyond rote memorization or surface learning. As Durant (1997:23) indicates when study of the culture is required to progress beyond rote learning into analysis, these cultural facts can be considered to “invite correlation, which in turn make possible hypotheses and ultimately forms of causal explanation”. Intercultural competence is developed in this process and Byram’s five *savoirs* are again used to examine the competence the students demonstrate through one written assignment.

#### 2.2.2.1. Cultural Knowledge and Its Resources

According to Byram, *savoirs* are types of knowledge of “social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country” (1997:94). Cultural knowledge serves as the foundation on which students can develop skills with which to interpret and mediate between cultures and further generate critical thinking. The students were given writing assignments based on the exemplary topic discussed in Section 1 in this chapter. The reading texts include three stories: Amy Tan’s reminiscence *Lost Lives of Women*, Kate Chopin’s short story, *The Story of an Hour*, plus a narrative entitled *Homeward Bound* (Janet Wu, 2003) and the poem, Piercy’s *Barbie Doll*. Overall, the students demonstrated their competence in expanding their knowledge of foreign cultures and compared them with their own culture. The outcomes of the assignment on the topic of the status of women are evaluated in this section. Ten group assignments were involved.

The cultural knowledge students presented in the writing assignments include culture in form and culture in concept as discussed in Chapter Two. Data reveal that they first make sense of the assigned material and interpret the embedded social and cultural messages. In the wake of discussions on socio-cultural practices such as concubinage, students explore values and beliefs of their contemporary society. They relate ideas to

previous knowledge and experiences in the process of exploring women's situations in East and West, and the past and the present. Evidence suggests that through a curriculum approach directed towards exploration, discovery and discussion, students' interest in acquiring cultural knowledge can be reinforced.

Findings reveal students obtain socio cultural information from different resources in order to construct hierarchically organized systems of values and beliefs regarding their own and other cultures. Based on this written assignment, in addition to the assigned texts, the resources from which they elicited factual cultural knowledge about their society and the Other's can be roughly placed into four categories suggested by the research literature (e.g. Byram 1997c, Durant, 1997) and the data itself: 1. National Memory, 2. Previous Learning, 3. Media, and 4. Personal Contacts. The cultural knowledge the students demonstrated encompassed a socio-cultural picture of women with regard to marriage, jobs, education, and images.

### *National Memory*

According to Byram (1997c, 51,59), national memory is related to the events or some emblems significant to collective memory. Overall, this written assignment allows students to reflect upon some aspects of women in the Confucian cultures and Chinese society, which they later, claimed in the interviews, to have already known but never really thought about before. The collective memory about women who were abused and exploited in the past were refreshed and discussed in their writing. For example, data show that the students discovered the neglected, embedded or forgotten history and explored beliefs and traditions in Chinese culture from Tan's *Lost Lives of Women*. Furthermore, social practices and customs in the collective cultural memory were explored and interpreted. For instance, findings show the most discussed issue regarding marriage in the past was concubinage, which was merely touched upon in *Lost Lives of Women*. Seven out of nine groups explored the topic of concubinage. They were able to point out that the then contemporary society required that women had bound feet and remained widowed for the rest of their lives after their husbands died.



Moreover, divorced women had a very low status. One group used the saying “an emperor has three thousand beauties”<sup>28</sup> to illustrate the low status women possessed in past Chinese culture. One group indicated that having concubines was the “symbol of wealth and power”, and that concubines had an “extremely low social position” and were viewed as “sexual slaves”. In addition, ‘bound feet’ were usually considered an emblem of women’s status in earlier Chinese society. Seven out nine groups used “bound feet” to show how women had to suffer in order to meet social expectations and more specifically, to please men. One group described how men in the past liked women “who walk[ed] as a lotus swaying in the wind [with their] small dapper feet” which is well known as an expression describing the standards of beauty in the past. Through these conditions, which existed in China 80 years ago, they discovered and refreshed their personal collective memory about the past mistreatment and exploitation of women.

This memory also inspired students to do more historical research on cultural and social concepts of women’s status in a different period of time. Their interest in finding or recalling social phenomena from the past was highlighted. For instance, regarding marriage, most students discussed the topic of women in the past as not having freedom to decide their own marriage partner. Some of the marriages were decided as early as infancy. Famous Chinese sayings, such as “parents’ order and matchmakers’ words”, portraying the fate of women and marriage are used to contrast with the changed attitude towards marriage in their society today. Students discussed how in the past poor parents sometimes sold their daughters as child brides. Several groups mention the pressure women were under to give birth to sons in order to solidify their status at home. In *Lost Lives of Women*, the author’s grandmother became a concubine of the man who raped her. The socio-cultural beliefs surrounding ‘virginity’ and ‘chastity’ were elicited and discussed. Such discussions are evidence of the way in which

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<sup>28</sup> “An emperor has 3,000 beauties in his imperial seraglio” is a saying that describes emperors in ancient China had a great number of concubines in the imperial seraglio. Some of the concubines were never visited by the emperor in their lifetime.

reading materials and the groups' collective memory prompted extensive reflection that in turn fed into their written texts.

### *Previous Learning*

An observation of classroom discussions along with these writing assignments shows that national memory is integrated with their own previous learning when students discuss the status of women. Evidence indicates that the students used previously gained knowledge about history and extend their knowledge to other references. For example, one group discussed differences in the status of women in different periods between the "Period of the Foundation of Culture" (Before 230 B.C.) and the "Period of the Decline of Culture" (from 967 to 1911 A.D.). Students were able to articulate particular parts of historical knowledge about their own culture gained from their previous learning. For example, two groups specifically indicated that the Tan Dynasty (617--918 AD) was the time when women enjoyed expanded freedom. Women could decide their own marriage partner, receive an education, and argue with their husbands. The Chinese history they previously studied in their secondary school provided them a basis to refer to and analyze historical facts related to the topics they were working on.

This notwithstanding, students sometimes take their cultural knowledge or cultural 'facts' for granted and fail to provide supporting details. This suggests that some of their investigations are still limited to surface learning. One reason may be that the teacher is a Chinese native speaker living in the same culture, and they may have presumed that she would understand the embedded cultural artifacts without an explanation. This omission leaves the researcher without evidence to judge their ability to interpret these phenomena. For example, three groups discussed the requirement of "three types of obedience and four types of moral conduct" that are closely related to and transferred to the social expectations that exist even today in Confucian society.<sup>29</sup> These concepts represent the stereotypical ideal of 'a good

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<sup>29</sup> The "three types of obedience" relate to obedience to the father in childhood, to the husband in



woman” in past Chinese society. The researcher therefore could not determine if students were able to explain, or even if they were aware, that the suppression of women was somehow influenced by and connected to these requirements.

### *The Media*

Exposure to foreign media contributes to their knowledge of foreign cultures. This corresponds to the findings of two questionnaires where students tend to agree that media provides the major information for their foreign cultural knowledge. When discussing diversified perspectives of women’s present status both in the East and West, the students took good advantage of the media. Media texts such as magazines, newspaper articles, movies, advertisements, television programs serve as major resources for the students to observe and reflect upon cultural messages in Western society. For example, when comparing attitudes toward divorce, they cited examples from show business, such as the actress Nicole Kidman, to illustrate that women in Western society can continue to prosper after they are divorced. Another group gave the example of Ms. Billie Jean King, a famous American tennis player whose achievement was not only in sports, but also in making it acceptable for American women to exert themselves in pursuits other than childbirth. By discussing this instance, they argued how women attempted to subvert the stereotyped concept of gender in an arena once dominated by men. Data indicate that the students related to information from both the visual and printed media when discussing issues of interest to them. In this regard, it is evident that foreign media is greatly influential, possibly more influential than the domestic media which seem to not provide them with enough comparable evidence.

Evidence also shows that not only were the students able to relate and unfold deeper layers of cultural knowledge obtained from the media, they were also able to reflect and evaluate it. For instance, with respect to the images of women, general impressions

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marriage, and to the son when husband dies. The four types of moral conduct include neat appearance, virtue, manners, and craft.

from the media were discussed. Most groups indicated that pleasing men's gaze seemed to be a universal goal. One group stated that "most of the popular singers and movie stars have perfect figures...some singers want to be thinner so that they [don't] look obese on TV [and] the information shows that the mainstream [concept] of beauty is [slimness]". Here they observed the influence of media on the standardization of beauty and the value of women. In this regard, the media provide them with a rich source of text. They also showed their potential to locate the images, meanings, and values presented in media texts and critically refer them to the wider context.

### *Personal Contact*

Durant (ibid: 24) indicates that interaction with people from the other cultures might offer in-depth and quality experiences of that culture. Because of the limited contact the students have with foreign people, they are encouraged to go beyond their classroom to acquire cultural knowledge from people living in other cultures. Contact with people from other cultures provides them with opportunities to interact in 'real time' situations. The researcher encouraged students to participate in the online intercultural communication site hosted by Glasgow University.<sup>30</sup> Many students used the on-line chat room, which is generally considered a 'non threatening' atmosphere in which students can have a great deal of freedom to express themselves and can increase their intercultural learning (Blez, 2002, O'Dowd, 2003). The students elicited a variety of cultural facets about and perspectives of foreign societies from their foreign key pals and other personal contacts such as overseas Chinese schoolmates from Canada or the U.S. Overall, evidence indicates that contact with people from other cultures helps them to better portray a socio-cultural picture of the status of women in the West.

The students used these opportunities to gain feedback, to negotiate, and to discuss similarities and differences. This feedback allows them to evaluate their own values

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<sup>30</sup> Intercultural Connections is a project facilitated by Prof. John Corbett and Dr. Alison Phipps of Glasgow University, Scotland. It aims to connect teachers and learners of language and culture around the world.



and to defend or criticize their own cultural identity. For instance, with regard to marriage, education and jobs, most groups attempted to explore whether or not women in the West were also generally confined to the domestic domain. One group cited a concept of 3 'Ks' about women from a German student (key pal) referred to their own society. These 3 Ks are Kinder, Kueche, and Kirche that respectively mean children, kitchen, and church. This group therefore compared this concept with women in the East and states that women in past Western society were likewise bound to a lot of duties such as raising children, taking care of housework, etc.. Another group gathered information and opinions from a key pal from Argentina. This source had an unusual viewpoint of women's social status in Argentina because 50 percent of Argentina's population are poor. The above stated examples demonstrate that the intercultural learning is extended to linguistic and cultural environments beyond the target language environment. The world appears more diversified and no longer merely limited to English speaking countries. Students are motivated to learn more about Otherness. They use the base of their cultural knowledge and extend their curiosity beyond the English-speaking target culture. The intercultural skills, to relativise, to compare, to contrast, to reflect their own and to voice critically are shown to be transferable with respect to cultures other than English speaking ones.

Overall, personal contacts provide students a chance to reflect on cultural information they received from texts and the media, and observations of society. Such personal interaction offers in-depth cultural experiences. Durant (1997: 24), however, points out that it is risky to consider such experience representative. Individual experiences differ, and the student must analyze and compare it with other materials in order to avoid invalid generalizations. Evidence shows that they did not over-generalize from the discussion between them and the key pal nor did they present it as the sole cultural resource. They included this encountering experience into their discussion together with information from some other cultural resources and as one group pointed out, the information they got from personal contact was not necessarily 'absolutely true'.

#### 2.2.2.2. Ability to Compare and Contrast

As Durant indicates, cultural knowledge is often considered consisting of a network of facts, which invite correlations between cultures (1997:23). The students' ability to relate and mediate differences found in cultural facts is evident through their assignments. For instance, regarding the custom of bound feet in the Chinese society, two groups of students specifically referred to ways women in the West suffered from social standards of beauty as well. One group of students pointed out that in the past western society, women were required to have a "narrow waist", so they wore a 'bodice' that could help tighten their waist. Although the group did not indicate that this custom started during the Victorian age, they attempted to explain a comparable phenomenon in another culture whose past they obviously had few opportunities to become familiar with. The discussion of customs also involved historical facts. One group, while tracing the history of marriage back to the earliest stages of Western civilization, indicated that there was little difference between the East and West, because in Greece and Rome, a king could also have a wife and several concubines. They stated: "Women at that time, when war[s] occurred so frequently, usually became the war trophies for men". At this point, where behavior appears more or less equivalent across two or more of the cultures being compared, students are able to present interesting comparisons. By finding similarities in customs practiced in the other's cultures and their own, they gained a larger picture of human history.

Moreover, students evaluated a variety of beliefs and values in their daily lives and discussed the differences they found. For example, when comparing concepts of beauty one group indicated that "women in the East [tried] all means to have fair complexion" that is believed to be beautiful in their culture, while women in the West consider women with darker complexion attractive. The way women perceive 'age' has differing underlying values and beliefs in different cultures was also discussed. Evidence shows that students used such life experiences to support their arguments about the way two different societies viewed women. Furthermore, just as they were able to make comparisons back and forth between times, they were also able to cross the



boundaries between spaces. The group that interacted with the German student demonstrated the ability to observe and compare as follows:

Men [were] considered powerful ones in society. For example: they [could] decide all things in the family, but women [couldn't]. They [could] marry several concubines while women [were] required to be loyal to one man]. They [had] a right to vote for deciding things while women [didn't]. We thought it was very unfair for women in the past. In contrast, women nowadays have the same status. Men and women are considered equal [in] every aspect. Women could vote and decide all things they participate in....

When the German student gave her feedback about women's status in her own country and other European countries, she also stated that the Christian religion did not permit polygamy. This group of students, while confronting Others and differences, provided her with further interpretation of this past social and cultural phenomenon by saying: "The man had to support [all his] wives, so it is probably that only rich men [could] do this". At this point they were able to articulate their own evaluation of a phenomenon that occurred in past Chinese society.

The students also demonstrated competence by formulating questions for critical reflection during their discussions as they sought to determine similar aspects between the other's culture and their own. The discursive construction of Self and Other is not only between cultures but between genders as well. It was interesting to find that this ability was also transferred to comparing gender issues in different cultures. Two groups explicitly included the comparison between men's and women's status. One of them stated:

At all times, men are requested to not act emotionally. For example, most people think that men ought not to drop tears in public occasions; they believe that a man should not cry, or cannot cry. But the fact is that whether women or men are creatures with instinctive emotions, why can't men show their emotions without any constraint just like women?

This group further indicated that at the present time, men could fall victim to domestic violence. Another group, however, showed their sympathy toward women by expressing the following comparison between genders: “Men [do not have to] care about his figure because the [social] pressure is focused on women”.

### **2.2.2.3. Critical Reflection**

For these students the classroom was no longer a place where only hegemony and standardized answers are pursued. Their writing assignment reveals the extent to which they developed competence in mediating and producing critical thinking. Critical reflection was interwoven throughout the papers as well as expressed in some concluding paragraphs. In the face of differences, they questioned the established understanding of Others, and look at the neglected facts of Self. Self and Other were reflected in different relationships, and not limited to women in the past and the present, women in East and West but also men as ‘Other’. Data show that students have gone beyond rote learning and are able to mediate, dialogue and then articulate their own voice. It is a process, urged by educators such as hooks (1996) and Guilherme (2002), to see the difference, to dissent, to dialogue and then to be empowered.

Findings reveal that in order to produce more of their own opinions, they examined the current ‘social context’ critically and relativize it to their present society. One group indicated that at the present time a man is willing to share housework, which was definitely considered a humiliation and a “shame” to men in the past. Another group critically pointed out that the concept most men hold for sharing house chores is that “they are ‘helping’ their wives, not ‘sharing’ the chores with their wives”. In addition, some abnormal social phenomena in their contemporary society were discussed, such as the issue of the “foreign bride” being based on mercenary marriage practices. The understanding of this issue is extended to women, no matter from which culture, living in their society. One group engaged in a detailed analysis of women’s status in their



own society and investigated if their contemporary society provides genuine equality to women. They also provided insightful opinions about the difficult situation forced on single mothers compared to single fathers. Other groups echoed issues such as this. When explaining that women are still suffering from social expectations, though to a lesser extent, some groups indicated that the attitudes toward divorced women are still biased since “it is really hard for [divorced women] to earn a living, [let alone] maintain their children”. They frequently juxtaposed two cultures, the past and the present, and could determine the cultural messages revealed. This kind of examination reflects our argument in Chapter 2 that culture is not only what we were, but also what we have become.

Their arguments and analyses usually lead to sound, critical conclusions. These conclusions show their own perspectives and anticipations about gender relationships in their own society. One group at the end of their paper concluded their discussion with the following critical perspective regarding the gender issue in their society:

We all get the fair opportunities to pursue [our] own life regardless of our gender. However, [elevating] the social status of women is not our ultimate goal. Instead, we are compelled to create a more harmonious relationship between two genders.

Most groups were able to refer back to their own society with a more optimistic viewpoint such as:

The society will get rid of these [remaining] prejudices one day in the future because the root of these social [statuses], [and] the thought that physical strength means power have no longer existed.

Some groups, however, had more pessimistic views such as: “There are still many women suffer[ing] and it vari [es] from couple to couple and family to family”. In addition, some groups related their discussion back to their own lives, albeit with a lesser degree of in-depth critical thinking:

Most of the girls at my age are not forced to accept the same destiny [b]ecause finally people realize that it is important to give the same rights and requirement to men and women in order to reach a fair society. We are so lucky.

A group presented statistics that include the decline in the percentage of married women, and the growth in the percentage of single and divorced women since 1976 to show the changing attitudes towards marriage in their society. They concluded that “under the guise of equal opportunities, those who work at home do not benefit from the social insurance system”. The deeper layer of a social system is therefore explored.

It is notable that while discussing women in the present society in the West, findings show that they were able to provide examples of successful women in foreign society, but failed to give examples in their home society to support their viewpoints. Findings show that most groups demonstrated a deeper layer of understanding of this aspect by citing examples from Western cultures. One group included Simone de Beauvoir, a pioneer of feminism, in their discussion and stated that she “broke and rebuilt” women’s image. One group used Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State for the United States of America, as an example to show that women’s status has improved to a great extent. It is noteworthy that they did not cite equivalent examples from their society such as the Taiwanese vice president Annette Lu when talking about similar situations of women in their present culture. It can be presumed that in foreign language classrooms such as this, students may feel obliged to give foreign examples to reveal their knowledge and understanding of the foreign cultures. This apparent obligation to give examples from the target culture to support their argument is evident from several examples discussed in this section.

#### **2.2.3.4. Summary**

Evidence shows that students are able to discover the underlying socio-cultural



messages found in the reading text and use different resources to construct the value of a particular socio-cultural phenomenon in the present, in the past and East and West. In terms of Byram's *savoir être*, and *savoirs*, they have demonstrated open-mindedness and curiosity to Otherness, and expanded their cultural knowledge of Self and Other, individually or socially. Findings also reveal that in terms of *savoir apprendre/faire* and *savoir comprendre* students are able to interpret and relate facts and social phenomenon, although not yet in a sophisticated way. Indeed, it might be difficult to track whether they will be able to perform real time interactions successfully. However, as discussed in the presentation section, having transferable skills is more important than knowing a particular real time interaction scenario. Findings also show that difference initiates more reflection whether on their own or other cultures. In the process of discovering, discussing and relating certain socio-cultural aspects from or to their own culture, to or from other cultures, they are moving to a middle ground to observe their own culture and the Other's. Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) arises and is revealed in their constant personal viewpoints in the in-between space that opens up from the clashes of differences between different cultures and different points of human history.

The writing assessment in this research is considered only one of multiple data sources that taken together are more reliable than any single source of information. Written assignments can be a living, shifting portrait of learning rather than being lifeless evaluation document (Estrem 2004: 125). This writing assignment is a written review of their group discussions, and serves as a mirror of the student's cultural awareness and ability to compare a particular issue in different cultures and in different times. It can capture the depth and breadth of students' learning, and provide evidence of growth that cannot be measured by standardized tests. It also gives a glimpse of students working collaboratively. Evidently, it is a process of deep learning: students tried to understand the materials, interact vigorously and critically with content, reach out to other resources, previous knowledge and their own experience, organize their ideas and further produce their own voices. Analyses show that students' papers can both summarize students'

multifaceted intercultural competence, and create a picture of learning that is discernable to teachers and audiences beyond the classroom.

#### **2.2.4. Linguistic Competence**

##### **Examples of Expansion of Vocabulary**

Findings of this study show that students were able to go beyond the classroom and obtain information needed to support their spoken and written arguments. They expanded their resources to a freer and wider choice of information sources to include the Internet and printed media, and through personal foreign contacts. It is noteworthy that the students' linguistic experiences also moderately expanded in order to explain and discuss facets of culture. Such 'stretched experience' is also found from the data of student presentations. The terms they used in their discussions such as 'sex slave', 'monogamy' 'patriarchy' might have been absent from their former English learning experiences because controversial topics are generally avoided. In addition, they were able to find similar expressions across cultures. For instance, two groups stated that women are men's 'appendage' to describe women's dependence on, or clinging to men with the loss of their own identity. Although these students have been through all levels of objective national tests, it is likely that the longest essay they have written was about 150 words and was either practice for, or while taking the written Collegiate Entrance Exams. Such a writing process enables them to use the language to extend their writing experience and skills.

##### **The Role of the First Language**

Findings also show that the informants' first language assists them when they experiment with different cross language and cross-cultural translations. Friedlander (1990:124), according to his research on Chinese ESL students' writing, suggests that ESL writers should be encouraged to use their first language while composing initial drafts, particularly when the topic is related to their first language experience. Out of class discussions allowed them to express their opinions in their first language with



fewer obstacles. They later translated their discussions into English. Friedlander further suggests that the first language assists retrieval of information on certain topics (Cumming, 1987 cited in Friedlander, 1990:111). According to the findings of his study with his Chinese students, he concludes that translation from the native language into English appears to help rather than hinder writers when the topic-area knowledge is in the first language.

Evidence in this assignment also indicates that students retrieved more cultural content knowledge and attempted to translate certain socio-cultural concepts into English when using their first language. For example after researching in the first language and then translating to English, there was an evidence of use of phrases such as ‘an emperor has 3 thousand beauties’, ‘parent’s orders and matchmakers’ words’, ‘having a son to carry on the family name is the most important idea of marriage’, and ‘men like women who walk as a lotus sway in the wind.... Examples such as these are numerous, and this translated language enriched the socio-cultural tapestry they presented. The translational-interpretive process in that setting becomes the middle ground “in-between” the objectification of another culture as a reified other and a complete identification with the target culture. According to Schnitzer (1995), forming expressions about a particular cultural phenomenon from an EFL learner’s own language tends to be comprehensible in context. The well-known Japanese ‘salaryman’<sup>31</sup> and Chinese ‘lose one’s face’ are good examples. Translation whether across languages or across cultures therefore provides students with opportunities to express their own culture in English.

This notwithstanding, it is also evident that the students’ limited linguistic competence to some extent hinders them from fully expressing their opinions. When they could not find the proper term to describe a certain fact, they usually attempted explanations in their own words. For instance, one group states that “a teenage girl [was forced to] marry an infant for the sake of money. Therefore, the girl [was] possibly sold as [a]

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<sup>31</sup> Salary man in Japanese means office worker.

housemaid by their parents...”. What they are trying to explain is the “child bride” custom. This linguistic barrier would cause some confusion in their argument if readers were not familiar with their culture. It is also apparent that sometimes some expressions cannot explain a social condition with direct translation from their own language. For example, a group uses “the spread of education” which in their current social context might actually mean ‘increasing opportunities for receiving higher education’. Therefore, students can be asked to provide more explanation on this expression in their revision. Furthermore, grammatical errors can create misunderstanding. For instance, when one group discussed women in their past culture with their key pal, they used the present tense, even though they indicated at the beginning it was in the past. This caused their key pal some confusion regarding the time period, which at least had the virtue of indicating to the writer the importance of describing past and present in an accurate and consistent way.

## **Conclusion**

A reading-based syllabus infused with socio-cultural/intercultural dimensions provides a wide spectrum of linguistic learning which covers reading, speaking, and writing. Some educators argue (e.g. Byram and Morgan, 1994) that a course in target culture studies independent of language studies can be provided. However, such courses are not necessarily available in most universities in Taiwan. Fortunately, the development of linguistic competence and intercultural dimensions are not dichotomous. This study provides evidence that the texts and tasks including presentations and written assignments offer a transformation process for their intercultural competence. It is apparent that the students in such a class not only developed intercultural awareness and critical evaluation skills but also could acquire reading, speaking, and writing skills at the same time.



### **3. Student Interview: Students' reflection on an intercultural syllabus**

The aim of the interviews with students was to enhance the findings from the Student Questionnaires and student presentations and writing assignments. The Student Interview in this research is used to investigate conceptions about the classroom integrated with a socio-cultural knowledge. To a certain extent, student perspectives also serve as an evaluative indicator of the effects of implementing an intercultural English reading syllabus. The researcher let the data reveal their own naturally occurring patterns in an inductive manner rather than impose predetermined categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The amount of data is great enough to allow the researcher to use a “grounded theory” process (Strauss & Corbin, 1994), and therefore patterns and clusters gradually emerged from the data. Furthermore, as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested, coding is a process that enables the researcher to identify meaningful data and set the stage for interpreting and drawing conclusions. It allows a researcher to “differentiate and combine the data you have retrieved and the reflections you make about this information” (p.56). A broad range of conceptions about English language and culture learning emerged and four themes were developed from the analysis of the data:

1. Perceptions of differences between their current college English reading course and their high school English courses,
2. Perceptions of cultural aspects of learning, cultural difference, and topics covered,
3. Perceptions of critical thinking ability in the English language classroom, and
4. Perceptions of linguistic barriers in cultural learning.

These findings serve as part of evidence about how their attitude changed, their skills developed and their critical awareness increased. It also reinforces some findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data.

### **3.1. Perceptions of Differences between Their Current University English Course and Their High School English Courses**

Most of the students commented in the interviews that they found English learning in this class very different from that their high school English classroom, in which pragmatic and concrete four skills learning for the exam were the foci. This class was described by most of them as a “shock” when they first arrived at the university, because it required them to see a different layer in language learning and to “think”. Explicit features of learning within the Chinese context, including the use of rote learning and memorization (Biggs and Watkins, 1996), were very obvious in their high school English classroom instruction. One informant pointed out: “The high school teachers would make sure we understood every single word, but now we have to check the dictionary ourselves and understand meaning through context”. Standardized textbooks were the major resources of learning and model essays were used to provide more vocabulary and idioms as well as grammar patterns. Students commented: “we were taught only how to read an essay”, and one informant further indicated, “you just put the textbook in front of you, if you have finished reading and understood the whole essay, your have done your job”. Outside reading materials were provided, but chiefly for the exam. One of the informants reported: “our classes were mostly based on textbooks, then reference books for supplements; sometimes we were assigned to read a couple of articles related to the content of the textbook, which would be included in the exam”. Moreover, the instructional method was basically teacher centered. One of the informants gave a picture of her English class in high school: “We just sat there and listened. If the teacher was trying to ask a question, I would just lower my head and avoid her”.

Although these informants were ‘good survivors’ of the national exams, some of them seemed not very confident in their competence. They indicated that their grades on the JCEE did not reflect their English proficiency at all. One informant reported:

It was quite tricky; you just did as many model exams as you could. You would eventually know



how to answer the questions even though you do not understand the questions themselves. I had a classmate who usually got a full score on English exams at school, but he could never open his mouth to speak one single English sentence. This is what JCEE has led us to be.

Stories like these are not unfamiliar and have been repeated for decades. One informant commented: “Over a summer, I felt I have already forgotten quite a lot about what I have learned at high school and my English proficiency decreased drastically. Thanks to this class, I am ‘forced’ to pick up my English again”. These students, albeit being successful in terms of their achievement with the entrance exam, were not very positive that they have the proficiency that their grades indicate.

A small number of students, however, reported that apart from the focus on practical aspects of learning, cultural learning was also covered in their high school English classroom. One student who went to a high school that put special emphasis on English by providing additional hours of “English Only” instruction reported that they read a variety of socio-cultural topics, although not in depth. The other student indicated it depended on individual teachers because one of his high school English teachers did try to cover some deeper layers of cultural learning. One informant reported cultural learning was introduced to an English study group at school, in which students explored more facets related to the materials they read. It is evident that although the government’s guideline for high school English education indicates that students are expected to be equipped with intercultural competence through English language education, only a few students thought they were trained in this aspect, but even then it was not systematically included in the curriculum.

Having been “spoon-fed” at high school, the students described their first reaction to a university English class that required them to see the socio-cultural messages conveyed and difference revealed as “shocked” “shattered” and “panicked”. However, they later found it “untraditional”, “interesting” and “inspiring”. One student reported, “I was very surprised in the first few hours. I realized I could no longer just memorize words

and sit there listening to the teacher”. There was unanimous agreement among the others in the same group. A major explanation for their reaction was summarized by one informant’s comment:

At the beginning, I did not know what to and how to think; we were simply not taught to do so before. At high school, we were not taught to see the socio-cultural aspects in a language class. This would not be included in the exam, so why were the teacher or we students bothered?

However, students generally thought that despite the “huge amount” of extra time they had to spend, this course was interesting and inspiring while the previous language learning experiences, such as grammar building, were more systematic. One respondent pointed out: “I think we are coming to the university to learn different things and activate our thinking ability, or we can just remain in high school”.

This kind of curriculum apparently is quite demanding for the majority of the students. Several of them indicated that students from the other two English classes questioned them about why they had to look at many different issues and topics. This sounded “strange” to them. One informant said:

Comparing with other classes, our class is so challenging and the loading is quite heavy. They only need to sit in the class. But we have to prepare for the class, to dig out the embedded cultural messages, to discuss, to think, and to write assignments. Every Wednesday night (the English reading class was on Thursday), my classmates from the other two sections would come to see us busily discuss for the following day’s class and then tease us. At the exam, they just needed to fill out numbers, as most of the questions were multiple choice. However, we had to write essay questions.

A few informants touched upon the issue of linguistic barriers and cultural leaning by making comments such as: “You need to prepare quite a lot for this class. To those who have comparatively lower proficiency, it’s very tiring to do all these jobs. To



those who suffer less from linguistic barriers, they will have more energy to notice some other issues”. A couple of informants indicated that they were not ‘afraid’ of the curriculum but rather of speaking English. “We are afraid to express our ideas in English” one informant reported. One interview group reported that: “After class we usually discussed in Mandarin first and then spent quite a lot of time to translate our discussion into English”. One informant said he sometimes could not understand what the article really wanted to talk about due to his own linguistic problems. Obviously, linguistic competence was still a major concern as they wanted to move to the further learning of culture and critical thinking. Nevertheless, several students reported that their English ability was improved a great deal by their continuously researching the articles in terms of cultural knowledge, thinking, discussing, speaking in class, and writing assignments.

### **3.2. Perceptions of Cultural Aspects of Learning, Cultural Difference, and Topics Covered**

#### *Cultural aspects of learning*

The data also reveal that most of the informants in this class have developed a positive attitude towards cultural learning. Although confused at the beginning, they gradually became aware of the importance of cultural knowledge and difference found in the articles they read. Most of them started seeing cultural topics as a tool to help them to think and then to voice their own thinking. Generally, their opinions can be summed up in three main categories. These are: 1, the raising of cultural awareness from values and beliefs found in Otherness; 2, the impact of differences found in others’ and their own cultures; and 3, the viewpoints of socio-cultural topics in the classroom.

Most of the students indicated that they started enjoying different values and beliefs embedded in the articles. They reported that they no longer saw only the surface cultures or behavioral ones. Instead, they understood the difference between cultures and observed a variety of viewpoints in them. With or without personally experiencing foreign contacts, they found cultural learning in the classroom to be useful

in learning more about Otherness. One informant stated:

When traveling in the other countries, we would not notice this much. We do sight seeing or visit the museums and galleries. As tourists, we would not know people's belief and value in that particular society. We visit the museums, in which we probably could only find cultures of the past or even a kind of high culture. Although I never lived in a foreign country, this class has enabled me to see and be willing to understand more about some specific aspects of other's cultures.

The process of learning culture obviously stimulated their reflection upon their own cultures. Several informants reported that even if they knew about issues such as gender discrimination either in their own or others' cultures, they just simply never cared about them. One informant commented: "We know that social discrimination towards women like those in *Lost Lives of Women* did exist; however, we were not aware that gender issue was part of our culture and simply ignored it. Now we start thinking of some aspects like these". In addition, cultural learning also helps them to further understand the thinking process of people living in other cultures. As one informant commented: "I feel that we have reached the level of exchanging deeper layer of thinking". Language at this point is not merely a tool but a mediator, which brought them to "an understanding of Otherness" as one informant reported.

Several informants observed that the cultural learning and thinking taught in the class helped them to read popular cultural texts. One student indicated that she had never before thought about socio-cultural messages conveyed through movies, let alone how much reality or representation a movie truly reflects. "Before, I simply accepted whatever movies present and thought the US is like whatever the Hollywood movies showed". Another informant reported that while she and her classmates were watching *Friends* at the dorm, in addition to laughing at the funny lines and hilarious plots, they started thinking of deeper layers of meaning revealed about that society and culture. One informant also stated:



When I watched sitcoms like *Friends* or *Sex and the City* at home, I only cared about plots. It would have never occurred to me there would be something else if we did not attend this class.

One student clearly pointed out that some ideas he gained from the classroom made him no longer read foreign popular texts in a simplistic way as he did before. To most of them, however, popular texts, that were already generally considered to be interesting material, appeared even more challenging.

### *Cultural Difference*

It is evident that over half of students applied aspects of cultural learning in this class to discover differences. It is also noted that students' attitudes towards difference encountered in the classroom was constructive. One informant reported his continuing awareness of difference:

At the beginning I did not realize that there is such big gap between different cultures. Through numerous discussions, preparation for the presentation, I started noticing difference. I felt before I just lived in this tiny island. I was narrow-minded. However, now English is becoming a mediator of foreign cultures.

Difference, although bringing 'shock' to them, helped them produce a new perspective. They not only related difference as a force to motivate them to delve into Otherness and reflect upon their own life, but also deem it enriching to their learning processes. As one informant reported:

After comparison, difference emerges. We will then research more and find out the reason why differences exist. We find difference is a kind of beauty and diversity is interesting. We compared the "cultural facets" in different spaces. I consider it a "cultural evolution" as we continuously reinterpret our own culture.

It is apparent that an ‘inter’ space has been created while comparing and contrasting different cultures. One informant in particular indicated that she put herself in a “vacuum” condition, avoiding using her own cultural viewpoint to interpret another culture. The “vacuum condition” is a Taiwanese expression used to describe a condition in which one suspends his/her own value or preoccupation and is willing to look at things with a new perspective. This “vacuum condition” therefore allows her and others to hold an “in between” stance. This intercultural awareness can be transferable when encountering people from the other cultures. For instance, one informant referred to the video link experience between her class and a group of students from the University of Glasgow and reported.

We were surprised to know that there were so many differences existing between cultures even on trivial things such as the way we spend holidays or the way we make tea. We therefore started looking at their culture and then reflect upon our own.

To the students, Otherness ceased being strange. The researcher found that the students’ experience of cultural shock did not linger; instead, it empowered them to mediate between cultures.

Moreover, difference is recognized as a force to promote thinking activities. Although students lacked training in their previous English instruction, they reported that thinking about difference has helped them to keep up with the goals for studying at the university. One informant said:

Seeing differences will make us think in depth. Before, when confronting different cultures, we did not know how to think. The reason why we are in the university is to cultivate our thinking ability, not only solely to increase linguistic ability.

### *Cultural topics*

Several informants were positive about a variety of topics related to different cultural



facets that enabled them to “know more about their society” and “different way of thinking”. One informant indicated that most of the articles are very informative and induce some thoughts that never occurred to her before. She commented that even a cheerful article like “English is a Crazy Language” would make her think about the craziness and anxiety over English projected by her own society. Socio-cultural issues, even some controversial topics like mercy killing, are helpful for them to see the embedded values in different cultures. However, some informants (three female students in the same group and one male student) did point out that they found the gender topic a little bit tedious because a lot of socio-cultural issues are related to it. They found it interesting at the beginning but then it became difficult to produce more opinions on this topic. One male informant did not specify the reason, but related gender issues to the women’s movement. This seemed to bother him slightly. He did, however, as did a few other male informants, show particular interest in the Michael Jordan article and would have liked to read more sports related articles.

With regard to topics that interest them, most students indicated they wished to have more interesting topics related to popular culture, and experiences close to their life. For example, a student pointed out the article that discusses the top up fees of the UK higher education system led them to reinvestigate the relationships between education and service, and students and customers in their own society. Several students reported that they would like to have more content close to their experiences by giving the short story *A Beacon in the Night* as an example. Students claimed that this story allowed them to make connection to their own experience as medical students and of their struggle between parents’ expectations and their children’s own decisions. One informant also indicated they would like to know more about the youth in the other cultures. She commented:

We would like to know about the lifestyle of the youth. Why do people say we are “the strawberry generation”?<sup>32</sup> We actually could think in depth. If we have some other topics such as what kind

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<sup>32</sup> The strawberry generation generally refers to the generation born after 1980. This generation is

of difficulties we might encounter in the future, that will be helpful.

Overall, students reported enjoying different cultural facets albeit that they found some topics difficult. They favored topics related to their life but also welcomed challenges from articles presenting more complicated social and cultural issues.

### **3.3. Perceptions about critical thinking ability in the English language classroom**

The enunciation of difference discussed in the last section apparently prompted students to engage in critical thinking. A majority of the students reported that one merit of this class was that they were empowered to think because it provided them with opportunities to think from diverse perspectives. One reported shortcoming was that it was too “brain consuming”, which was actually considered a positive outcome by this instructor/researcher. In this regard, these students subverted the traditional perceptions about Chinese students who grew up in the Confucian culture, in which harmony is encouraged. Most of the informants reported that they enjoyed various perspectives offered by their peers in class. Also, their critical thinking ability is being extended to cultural awareness outside of the classroom. One informant told how he started relating what he learned in class to his everyday life:

Now I feel there are a lot of “weird” ideas filled in my head. When I see Starbucks, I think about its relationship with capitalism. When I see a logo of a foreign brand of sports clothing, I think about its cultural meaning. This never happened to me. I also question myself why I never thought that a male nurse could marry a female doctor. I think before we were soaked in our social values without seriously reflecting upon them.

This empowerment was regarded by most of the informants as an essential element to successful university study. Most of the articles they read were about the United States because most of EFL textbooks in the market are targeted at American culture; however,

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described as “strawberry” because they usually cannot take any pressure and are believed to be pleasure seekers.



the students were aware of the cultural hegemony found in their English language instruction. One informant indicated that she wondered if the other countries also equated globalization to Americanization or if this only happened in Taiwan. Another informant reported that students needed more contact with cultures other than the U.S. This critical awareness has helped them not only to cross the boundaries between Self and Other but also to connect the local with the global.

According to most of the informants, group discussions played an important role in increasing their critical thinking and were regarded as a very good means for understanding different viewpoints among their peers. Also, students reported that it was sometimes difficult for them to understand topics that they had never considered before. They were concerned that when they had to present their own perspectives on certain issues, they could not talk about them in depth or that they might have had nothing to present. However, it was through discussion that they were able to examine their own thinking, which was sharpened by challenges from their peers. Furthermore, they reported that they had to read the articles over and over again to get more detailed information in order to meaningfully contribute to the discussions. Regarding this experience, one student said about English instruction: “this is no longer solely for the exam, and learning is getting more interesting. Compared with the outset, I feel now I have better understanding of each article”. Although linguistic barriers were reported to exist during their discussions, they generally felt that the more they discussed, the faster they thought and the easier it became for them to collect opinions from their group mates. Even though the students found discussions to be time consuming, they reported generally favoring them as a way to improve their thinking ability.

### **3.4. Perceptions of Linguistic Barriers in Cultural Learning**

Some informants were concerned about the mastery of the linguistic skills needed for understanding the course content and expressing their ideas. These anxieties increased when they received evaluations through examinations or assignments. Some informants wanted the teacher to go through the more complicated content word by

word. One informant specifically indicated that he wished the teacher would underline the main points to make reviewing lessons easier, particularly when preparing for the exam. One informant reported that linguistic barriers somehow hindered him from expressing more complicated ideas and shut him up in class. In addition, several students commented that reading authentic materials for the class was tough, and every time they looked at it they got a new meaning. Therefore, they generally wished the time spent on an article in class could be extended and the teacher could provide more detailed explanation.

This notwithstanding, when asked if they would like a syllabus that would better equip them with knowledge for taking standardized English proficiency examinations such as TOEFL or GEPT, none of the informants agreed. They thought training oriented solely towards linguistic skills would be boring. One informant commented:

We do not want to spend time on practicing the difference in pronouncing can and can't. Why can't we just say cannot. Nor do we want to practice daily conversation repetitively like what we are having in our speaking class. It's boring. We want something more.

Several informants reported that even though this class appeared to be very challenging in terms of deeper learning of language and culture, it helped them to expand their linguistic experiences. Several informants cited the sentence "Michael Jordan represents the flip side of the crack dealers who populated the local news broadcasts of big cities" as an example. They reported it was the first time they realized that 'crack' was the slang for cocaine. Examining a society in which stereotypes of different races were found, they were motivated to understand more about the use of "authentic" language. These kinds of cultural and linguistic experiences were therefore considered complementary.



### **3.5. Perceptions of Cultural/ Intercultural Learning from the Informants from the Other Two Sections**

The interviews conducted with five students, having the same medical major and from two other sections, revealed some significant differences emerged between their views and the subject group's views of Self and Other, as well as of difference encountered in the classroom. The five informants from the other two sections, who volunteered to be interviewed after hearing about this research, felt that the articles they read had matched their intellectual maturity and found some of them quite interesting in terms of the cultural elements revealed. However, when asked about their perspectives of foreign cultures learned in class, they seemed to be slightly negative. One informant commented:

We do not even understand what we think about our culture, let alone having opinions towards other cultures. We only know the existence of our culture but cannot explicitly describe it. Therefore it is very unlikely to tell the difference between our own and others.

The informant stated that the lack of knowledge of their own culture contributed to their failure to tell the difference between cultures. It seemed they were only interested in seeking understanding of similarities found in the other culture. Accepting differences between cultures seemed to be unfeasible since there were "gaps". Overall, they rejected "difference".

To this group of students, learning others' cultures was merely considered as a language learning experience. They perceived foreign culture as an addition to their knowledge. When they contacted foreign culture in media and literature outside the classroom, they seldom reflected upon any cultural message it may have conveyed. One informant reported: "We watched Hollywood movies, but most of them are commercial ones, so we did not really think about what is in it". Moreover, most of the informants' attitudes towards difference between others' culture and their own could be considered unenthusiastic. One informant specified:

There are similarities and differences between cultures. Therefore, when encountering the other's culture, if the two cultures have "common points", we can understand and are willing to accept. However, if we are encountering a culture that has no common ground, then there is a gap and it's hard to accept difference found in others' cultures...

This deficiency, therefore, kept them from reflecting upon difference. They chose to accept similarities but not differences. One informant echoed the above statement by commenting:

It's difficult to talk about our culture in a concrete way. We have already unconsciously lived in this culture. Although we could not explicitly talk about our culture, we are still aware of it. Therefore when we have contacts with other cultures, we opt for cultures that are similar to ours. It's very unlikely to accept cultures that are very different from ours.

Generally speaking, the cultural learning experiences in their class were not constructive. It is evident that they were not provided with sufficient opportunities to hold an "in-between" stance to reflect upon and then to voice what they had learned in class.

### **3.6. Discussion of the Findings**

The information gleaned from the interviews presents a glimpse of students' responses to the cultural learning in an English reading course integrated with a cultural syllabus. The findings of this study may also provide insights into the significance of including the intercultural aspect of learning in the language classroom. The researcher did not seek to generalize about other learners on the basis of this study because: first, it was a small sample, and secondly, medical students are usually deemed comparatively advanced in terms of their academic performance in Taiwan. Rather, this study attempts to reveal the potential value of exploring the students' perspectives in cultural learning and an intercultural curriculum, because this aspect has never been seriously taken into account at the tertiary level.



The data collected from the interviews indicated that students found cultural learning constructive in terms of helping them to express themselves in English, thereby increasing their thinking ability, broadening their horizons and aiding their overall development as human beings. In retrospect, they felt that their high school curricula were rather dull and instrumental. In addition, the instructional approach was teacher centered, which contributed to their becoming passive receivers instead of active thinkers. Overall, they were taught at the secondary level to have exam taking skills, but indicated that they would not like to repeat the same pattern of learning at the tertiary level. Although cultural learning in the English language classroom was considered to be a heavy load, they found it interesting because they were able to step into a new dimension. They also found it to be challenging since critical thinking was stimulated. Topics related to popular culture and their life experience were most preferred, but a variety of socio-cultural topics were also favored. It is particularly notable that discussions that occurred in class and out of the classroom in order to write assignments or prepare for the presentations were deemed constructive. Discussions encouraged them to use English to express their ideas and to experience different perspectives. Moreover, it was also observed that the informants had demonstrated the ability to cross the boundaries between the classroom and the real life and extend cultural awareness to their everyday life.

Analysis also reveals striking differences between the informants of the subject group and informants from the other two sections in terms of their attitudes towards the cultural differences encountered in cultural materials. Compared to the informants of the other group, it is evident that the majority of informants in the subject group seemed to enjoy the challenges stimulated by differences. On the other hand, the other group of students showed their confusion with comparing their own culture with others' and they had ambiguous attitudes toward encountering difference. They were not confident in knowing their own culture and avoided cultures different from their own. This is in contrast to the informants in the subject group who reported that their learning

was motivated and enhanced by contrasting different cultures.

These findings illustrate that along with cultural barriers, the students are also struggling with linguistic ones. Authentic literary texts or articles from the magazines or newspaper columns, which contained socio-cultural messages, appear difficult and demanding to them. In spite of the fact that some informants consider materials like these to be aids to expand their linguistic abilities and thus elevate their English competence, it is noted that a few informants express their uneasiness with them. This uneasiness is mainly based on their concern that their lack of English competence might hinder them from comprehending deeper levels of learning and critical thinking. Further research on the relationship between linguistic competence and intercultural competence is therefore needed.

### **Conclusion:**

Some critics and educators in Taiwan, as discussed in Chapter 3, have argued that due to the diplomatic isolation of Taiwan, students do not have enough opportunities for international contact. While Taiwanese university students are often, partly in consequence, criticized for lacking a global view, and knowledge and concern about the rest of the world, these student oral and written presentations serve as counter evidence. An intercultural EFL curriculum can provide students with opportunities to approach multifaceted cultures and enable them to investigate an issue from different perspectives. In this study, the students demonstrated the opposite of the stereotypical qualities attributed to Far Eastern students as being inclined to preserve rather than create knowledge, reluctant to challenge authority, and engaged in memorization rather than analytical thinking (Ballard & Clancy, 1991, Carson, 1992, Fox, 1994, cited in Kubota, 2001:14; Jones, 1999). Students were empowered to articulate their own voice on socio-cultural topics immediately relevant to their lives. Hopefully, this ability will enable them to maintain a critical mind in the flux of a continuously changing world and culture. As Warschauer (2000) pointed out: if English is imposing the world on our students, teachers can empower them to impose their voices on the world through



English.

Moulton and Holmes (2000, cited in Beckett and Slater, 2005) suggest that project-based learning was unsatisfactory because some students found it too difficult and some thought it was not related to language learning at all. This notwithstanding, the research data here demonstrates that process based sociocultural instruction is a viable way for students to use language to develop intercultural knowledge and skills. Because socio-cultural elements in the text are designed to increase the learners' interest in Other and in the rediscovery of Self, and because this is combined with their use of 'the language' to mediate their viewpoints, students can recognize that the course outcomes are not 'fixed' or merely another form of 'rote learning'. The classroom provides them a place to stretch their linguistic experience and articulate their opinions.

In light of the results of this study, this researcher would like to postulate that the qualitative data support that an English curriculum at the tertiary level that integrates a cultural syllabus is both feasible and indeed necessary. Exploring cultural dimensions of learning in the EFL classroom not only provides diversity but further challenges students intellectually and encourages additional dialogues. It is evident that such an intercultural language classroom opens up a third space for them, where the students enhance their understandings of Self and Other and where differences are the force for generating of critical thinking. Students are able to cross the boundaries between Self and Other, and their classroom and their own lives.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Conclusion: Implications and Possible Contribution of this Research**

This thesis has explored the necessity for and possibilities of implementing an intercultural syllabus in university EFL classrooms in Taiwan. This concluding chapter first revisits the thesis research questions and the theoretical concepts related to the research. It then considers the empirical data related to the research questions. The thesis then draws up implications for policy, practice, and future research regarding intercultural education in the university EFL classroom. However, the findings cannot suggest universal or general truths regarding all university students in Taiwan. Rather, the contribution that this research offers is a profile of specific students from a major university, and an indication of the advantages of including intercultural education in the EFL classroom in one particular educational context. The student profile and data analysis, nevertheless, present a rich case study that may guide educators and policy makers regarding the development of intercultural curricula. Taken as a whole, this thesis contributes to EFL education by offering new thinking on the intercultural dimension in the University EFL classroom in Taiwan.

#### **1. Research Questions Revisited**

This study has explored the vital role intercultural competence can play in a Taiwanese EFL educational context that has a distinctive linguistic and socio-cultural ecology (Chapter 3). It also aims at gaining a sense of how such a curriculum can help in the precise definition and subsequent achievement of the Taiwanese government's goal of internationalizing HE. One focus of this research was the perspectives of students, teachers, and administrators with respect to intercultural competence. The questionnaires were designed to explore the students' and teachers' perspectives of English learning and the potential for implementing an intercultural syllabus in



Taiwanese university EFL classrooms. What emerged quite clearly from both student questionnaires and student interviews was the strong desire and expectation to learn more about cultures and the Other in the EFL classroom. For a majority of these students, being a good English user is equated with being an intercultural speaker. These findings generally run counter to the government's current policy of orienting university EFL towards passing standardized written proficiency tests.

The study further examines whether or not a socio-cultural syllabus, with appropriate choice of materials, topics, and approaches, opens a third space for students to engage, to negotiate and to criticize Self and Other. Such a curriculum moves away from safe territory where 'standards' can be easily defined. The qualitative data demonstrated how such a curriculum enhanced students' understanding of cultural content and their willingness to engage with resources outside the classroom – in the media, via personal contacts and in their past personal and educational history. Student presentations and writings also indicated that the development of linguistic and intercultural competence is not dichotomous. Taken together, the evidence indicates that given appropriate opportunities, students are willing to deepen their socio-cultural knowledge of Self and Other and at the same time improve their language skills.

This thesis also attempts to define and develop a theoretical basis for the third space in the EFL classroom. It attempts to develop a conceptual framework for how a postcolonial view of hybridity and an 'inter' space can enable learners to reconstruct Self and Other and thus be enriched by the values revealed by differences (Chapter 2). The inevitable hybridity of global culture does not dissolve local identity and culture. Instead, the emergence of the third space that was extensively discussed in Chapter 2 should be reconsidered in light of the intercultural aspect in the EFL classroom at the tertiary level. Cultural contact in the language classroom can help open a contact zone for students, which enables them to step into an 'inter' space. In this contact zone where 'foreign' and 'local' cultures 'meet, clash and grapple' with each other (Pratt, 1991:34), students are able to interlock, interact and negotiate with the Other. In the

face of the Other, the Self is deconstructed, reconstructed, tested, and enhanced. In this space, one's cultural identity is found to be a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being' as Hall (1990: 225) points out. Data reveals that integrating a socio-cultural syllabus into the language classroom can open such a space where the students deconstruct a dominant foreign culture and re-examine their own local culture. In this process, the language classroom indeed opens a window for them, which enhances their interest in knowing more about human culture and is a genuine path leading towards a global perspective, and even a step beyond, the attainment of a critical stance.

In light of the results of this study, I postulate that an English curriculum at the tertiary level that integrates a cultural syllabus is advantageous. I argue that consideration should be given to the active inclusion of cultural dimensions in the university EFL classroom. Based on theoretical frameworks, and findings from my quantitative and qualitative data, I shall now review the implications for policy, practice, and research of intercultural education in the EFL classroom.

## **2. Intercultural Education in the EFL Classroom and University English**

### **Education: Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research**

#### **2.1. Implications for Policy - Is there a Possible Framework?**

When visiting a university in the Persian Gulf, Said (1993: 369) observed that students there took the English program for instrumental reasons. Said therefore thought that English had become a 'technical language' and students learn English only to "use computers, respond to orders, transmit telexes, decipher manifests and so forth". Similar assumptions are seen in the Taiwanese University EFL classroom in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Taiwanese welcome globalization at an ever increasing pace, and English has become a form of cultural capital that influences the habitus of Taiwanese society (Chapter 2 and 3). A review of the role of English in current Taiwanese higher education reveals that its importance in the internationalizing of Taiwan is extensively



addressed in several national policies (Chapter 3). A review of these policies further revealed that despite lip-service being paid to intercultural education, the central focus and chief priority of English language instruction remains four skills training evaluated by National exams or proficiency tests. Data from interviews with two administrators and a print interview with the minister of Education further reinforced the written policy. It is noteworthy that when any new policy is introduced, universities strive to modify the curriculum to reflect the policy. Owing to the fact that the current policy is to promote students' English proficiency by enabling them to pass the standardized proficiency tests, the direction of curriculum is inevitably oriented towards examinations that test linguistic competence. Currently, there is little evidence that intercultural education is either included or encouraged. However, complaints about the students' lack of global literacy and narrow perspectives never cease (Chapter 3). Despite such criticism, as far as the implementation of government policy is concerned, the cultural and intercultural dimension appears to be a 'forgotten' sphere in English language education at all levels.

The simplistic view that mere linguistic competence can facilitate intercultural competence is problematized and discussed (Chapter 2). Internationalization or globalization should not be crudely defined as the mere ability to use English as a medium of communication. Rather, revisiting discussions of the global spread of English language (Chapter 2) compels this researcher to promote the indispensable role that sociocultural and intercultural learning can play in the academic domain. I maintain that language learning should motivate students to cross cultural boundaries and effectively explore and interact with the outside world.

This study provides counter evidence (Chapter 5 and 7) to the government's presumption of the simplicity of the connection between internationalization of higher education and English education. Empirically, the research exploring students' perceptions of intercultural competence indicated that a majority of students have high expectations of their university EFL classroom for a more holistic learning experience.

which includes the four skills and intercultural and critical competences. From qualitative data, it is evident that when opportunities are provided, the students are able to display intercultural competence as defined by Byram's 5 *savoirs*. Also evident from both quantitative and qualitative data were differences in the interpretation of internationalization of higher education between the government's expectations and those reported by the students. The government therefore needs to seriously consider including intercultural education in the language classroom rather than rhetorically using the abstract notion of intercultural competence as a secondary goal for English education.

The research also indicates a need for the government to call upon universities and EFL educators to increase their efforts to enhance students' linguistic skills, and to collaborate on development of a Taiwanese framework for intercultural EFL. As discussed in Chapter 2, the CEF and the American Standards can be used as references for developing a framework for linguistic and cultural learning in the University classroom. The strength of both frameworks can help develop Taiwan's own framework with descriptors for linguistic and intercultural competence. An example of an intercultural EFL syllabus (Chapter 7) illustrates how an intercultural dimension can be introduced to an EFL classroom at the tertiary level in Taiwan. The development of such a curriculum should aim at enabling students to cross boundaries among countries and to further develop their intercultural competence on a global scale.

In addition to studies of classroom practices, the government should encourage and support extensive research on university level English education with respect to curriculum planning as well as the correlation between language, culture, and identity. Such studies will help teachers prepare themselves to address dimensions of deep learning, and the kind of appreciation of cultures which is referred to as a 'thick description' by Geertz (1973:24). Moreover, the lack of studies on teacher training and development as discussed in Chapter 3 appears to be a problem. In the intercultural EFL classroom, a teacher plays an important role as a facilitator. Therefore, whether



or not teachers have cultural awareness and are willing to cross boundaries is crucial. In this regard, the research also sheds light on the issues of intercultural training, and intercultural literacy in teacher training at all levels.

In Taiwan, humanistic education is often deemed an underlying aim of Higher education and whole person education. As the MOE White Paper on Higher Education indicates:

Because today's university student is the backbone of tomorrow's society, university education must be imbued with lofty ideals by which we not only seek knowledge for creative understanding, but must also nurture the whole personality. That is, we must bring into being a humanistic cultivation of our graduates, including moral ethics, and aesthetic and qualitative standards to enable them to become members of society able to enjoy and live a meaningful life

(MOE: 2000: II.3)

Many universities also regard humanistic or 'whole person' education as a key factor in university education even in 'technical' or 'scientific' disciplines such as Medicine.

The role EFL plays should be elevated above a mere linguistic level. As Byram points out, it is "only through critical cultural awareness that FLT can claim to contribute to learners' general education and development" (Byram, 1997a: 63). As such, intercultural competence can help to forward these pursuits. Findings from research data also reveal that in an intercultural classroom, cultural aspects of learning bring in learners' concern for their own society and interest in exploring others'. Students learn to question their assumptions about their own society as much as they question the assumptions of the Other. They also learn to examine and analyze socio-cultural phenomena. This process of understanding, rediscovering, relating, analyzing Self and Other and then articulating their own opinions is a process of humanistic cultivation, which is engaged with development and growth.

In several national scale guidelines the government repetitively urges universities to seek to produce more globalized and regional citizens. It is important that the students

become critically minded democratic citizens in this information age in which much of our knowledge comes from diversified media. They can approach foreign cultures critically and they analyze them, not only in order to denounce negative stereotypes, but also to understand the ways they affect us, and the way we are implicated in them.

## **2.2. Implications for Intercultural Education at the University Level**

Cultural knowledge in EFL classrooms at the tertiary level in Taiwan remains largely peripheral to language learning. It is acquired by students incidentally, and is rarely a focus for its own sake. In this regard, cultural teaching should not be limited to simple references to cultural artifacts. For example, the American culture that is as prevalent in Taiwanese language classrooms deserves careful examination. Moreover, international culture represented only by cultural artifacts merely presents fragments of world cultures and does not necessarily facilitate intercultural competence. Although materials available in the textbook market and popular culture are mostly American based, they can still serve as a basis for intercultural learning rather than merely for mimicking or memorizing. As Ebele (2002:111) points out, generally Western culture, as represented by American culture, strongly influences people's lives in Taiwan and "Western culture has made vast 'inroads' into the popular culture media of movies and music". Students in Taiwan are gradually becoming lost in a global cultural supermarket, and only through proper curriculum planning can intercultural teaching models provide opportunities for students to reflect on and to relate to the immense influence on their lives of media both inside and outside the classroom.

Cultural instruction in the classroom should not just happen incidentally or be taught spontaneously. Instead, it should be planned and integrated with a language syllabus. A well-designed course syllabus (Chapter 6) can provide a reference that includes essentials of Cultural Studies, choice of materials, topics, and approaches. Such a design not only suggests criteria for selecting socio-cultural topics but also demonstrates how an intercultural syllabus can be implemented in a university classroom. Such a classroom does not forsake linguistic learning. I provide examples (Chapter 7) of how



a reading-based class can turn a traditional learner into an intercultural speaker and writer. Data from the Generic Questionnaire reveal that students have a strong concern about their linguistic skills. Findings from qualitative data also show that linguistic and intercultural learning are not dichotomous. Evidence indicates that students can use ‘the target language’ to relate to additional cultural knowledge, to negotiate difference, to articulate their opinions and that they are able to acquire writing skills as they expand their linguistic usage. Such findings provide new thinking regarding the traditional teacher-centered/teacher-fronted reading classroom in Taiwan.

Students in Taiwan, and other Far Eastern countries such as Korea and Japan are usually criticized as passive and rote learners. However, research results show that these students can be active, creative and critical learners given opportunities for intercultural encounters. Although students do not have too many opportunities to have ‘real time’ interactions with foreigners, it appears that using the intercultural EFL classroom as a place to establish Internet based exchange programs such as intercultural e-learning projects and videoconferences for university students can be effective learning tools and should be considered. This study indicates that with appropriate texts and tasks, intercultural competence can be achieved, albeit within the limitations related to the University students in the EFL classroom. In accordance with the framework suggested in the previous section, relevant ways can be developed to enhance cultural teaching and learning in the Taiwanese educational context.

### **2.3. Implications for Future Research**

Throughout this thesis, research that deals with theories of intercultural competence, and foreign language education at different levels has been discussed. In this regard, most models and research for intercultural language education are established in Europe and the United States, but such research is rare in Taiwan. Therefore, this thesis aims to stimulate additional future research in this field. Hopefully, educators will join in the process and urge the government to draw more attention to reforming language education with regard to intercultural education.

The questionnaires developed for this thesis can be modified according to problems identified in the research critique and repeated with other groups of students in other universities in different areas of Taiwan. This can help develop a more universal profile of university students and provide a wider spectrum of student perceptions of language and culture learning in Taiwan. The informants of the qualitative study in this research are categorized as high intermediate to advanced students of their year. This qualitative study can be modified using appropriate texts and tasks for students of varying levels of linguistic ability. Thus, if the research methods used in this study were to be replicated more broadly, then it would be possible to be more confident about the general applicability of the research findings.

The teacher's survey can be elaborated and repeated with university teachers in other universities in different areas of Taiwan. There is very limited literature about cultural and intercultural teaching practices in Taiwan. Based on the researcher's experiences, currently most teachers' culture teaching practices are incidental or based on limited personal or experiential learning. Since teachers' beliefs often shape their teaching practices, future studies focusing on teacher's intercultural awareness and competence would help to move this important field forward.

### **3. Contribution**

This thesis provides a contribution toward the prospect of developing an intercultural curriculum in Taiwanese university EFL education. It offers a different perspective from the traditional four skills for future English education in higher education in Taiwan. This researcher believes that cultural learning in the language classroom should not continue to be neglected. With appropriate instruction students can cross the boundaries between the classroom and the society, move across frontiers, and be able to engage in dialogue effectively in the contact zone. Intercultural competence will further student interest not only in the Other in specific cultures, but also the Other



in cultures in general. Local and global perspectives are not conflicting nor are they developed dichotomously. Not only can the EFL class empower students who are ‘double-linguaged’ but it can also enable learners to perceive the world from different standpoints. When integrated into the broader humanities curriculum, English language learning contributes to the students’ whole person educational experience. In this regard, this thesis offers new answers to the question in the Taiwan Ministry of Education’s White Paper’: “How can universities help students engage in the international social environment, and strengthen the internationalization of Taiwan?”

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## Appendix 1

### Byram's Five *savoirs*: Definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram:1997c)

#### *Savoir être*

Attitudes, curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own

- (a) Willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality, as distinct from seeking out the exotic or the profitable.
- (b) Interest in discovering other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one's own and in other cultures and cultural practices.
- (c) Willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practices and products in one's own environment.
- (d) Readiness to experience the different stages of adaptations to and interaction with another culture during a period of residence.
- (e) Readiness to engage with the conventions and rites of verbal and non-verbal communication and interactions.

#### *Savoirs*

Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and one's interlocutor's country and the general processes of societal and individual interaction.

**Objectives** (Knowledge of /about):

- (a) Historical and contemporary relationships between one's own and one's interlocutor's countries.
- (b) The means of achieving contact with interlocutors from another country (as a distance or in proximity), of travel to and from, and the institutions which facilitate or help resolve problems.
- (c) The types of cause and process of misunderstanding between interlocutors of different cultural origins.
- (d) The national memory of one's own country and how its events are related to and seen from the perspective of other countries.
- (e) The national memory of one's interlocutor's country and perspective on them from one's own country.
- (f) The national definition of geographical space in one's own country, and how these are perceived from the perspective of other countries.
- (g) The national definitions of geographical space in one's interlocutor's country and the perspective on them from one's own.
- (h) The processes and institutions of socialization in one's own country and one's interlocutor's country.
- (i) Social distinctions and their principal markers, in one's own country and one's interlocutor's.
- (j) Institutions and perceptions of them, which impinge on daily life within one's own and one's interlocutor's country and conduct and influence relationships between them.
- (k) The process of social interaction in one's and interlocutor's country.

#### *Savoir Comprendre*

Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another

culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.

Objectives (ability to)

- (a) Identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document or event and explain their origins.
- (b) Identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunctions in an interaction and explain them in terms of each of the cultural systems present.
- (c) Mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena.

*Savoir Apprendre/Faire*

Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communications and interactions.

Objectives (ability to):

- (a) Elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values of documents or events and develop an explanatory system susceptible application to other phenomena.
- (b) Identify significant references within and across cultures and elicit their significance and connotations.
- (c) Identify similar and dissimilar processes of interaction, verbal and non-verbal, and negotiate an appropriate use of them in specific circumstances.
- (d) Use in real-time an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes to interact with interlocutors from a different country and culture taking into consideration the degree of one's existing familiarity with the country, culture and language and the extent of difference between one's own and the other.
- (e) Identify contemporary and past relationships between one's own and the other culture and society.
- (f) Identify and make use of public and private institutions which facilitate contact with other countries and cultures.
- (g) Use in real-time knowledge, skills and attitudes for mediation between interlocutors of one's own and a foreign culture.

*Savoirs S'engager*

Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate, critically on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

Objectives (ability to)

- (a) Identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one's own and other countries.
- (b) Make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events which refers to an explicit perspective and criteria.
- (c) Interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges in accordance with explicit criteria, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of those exchanges by drawing upon one's knowledge, skills and attitudes.



Appendix 2

Indicators for the Degree of a University’s Internationalization (ROC Ministry of Education , 2005)

<p>(1)吸引外籍生來校攻讀學位之相關措施與成效。 Measures that attract foreign students to study for a degree and the effects of the implementation of these measures.</p> <p>(2)提升學生外語能力之相關措施，要求學生通過中級英檢或相關考試之規定及目前學生通過情形。 Measures that promote students’ foreign language competencies and requirements for students to pass the intermediate level of standardized English proficiency tests.</p> <p>(3)近五年內交換學生人數（含來台及前往國外之學生）及辦理情形。 The number of exchange students, both exported and imported, and the related exchange programs.</p> <p>(4)推動及改善英語或外語授課相關措施與成效(含聘任外籍教授任課情形)。 Measures that promote or improve courses taught in English and their effects.</p> <p>(5)專任教師受聘赴國外講學或研究情形。 Data about full time teachers who are invited to lecture or do research in foreign countries.</p> <p>(6)外籍學者來訪情形。 Data about foreign scholars visiting Taiwan universities</p> <p>(7)與其他國家締結姐妹校的情形及互動成果。 Results of establishing sister school affiliation with other countries and the interactions between the home university and the sister schools.</p> <p>(8)博士生出席國際會議或赴國外大學實驗室做短期進修或研究情形。 PhD students who attend international conferences or go abroad to study or do research for a short term in foreign institutions.</p> <p>(9)舉辦國際學術研討會、國際中大型運動賽會、國際藝文活動等情形。 International Academic Conferences, International Sports Games, International Arts activities which are held by the institution</p> <p>(10)教師參與重要國際學術活動或擔任國際學術團體職位之情況。 Faculty Members’ participation in important international academic activities or taking important positions in international academic associations.</p> <p>(11)學校各學院系所參加或申請加入國際性學院系所組織情形。 Departments that have taken part in or applying for joining in international association of the related discipline.</p>
<p>2.其他有助於說明國際化程度之相關指標</p> <p>Other indicators which helps to explain the degree of internationalization</p>

## **Appendix 3**

### **The standards of five Cs in the National Standards for the Foreign Language Learning:**

#### **Communication:**

Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

#### **Cultures:**

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

#### **Connections:**

Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information.

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

#### **Comparisons:**

Develop insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

#### **Communities:**

Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

(ACTFL: 1996)



## Appendix 4

### **The three Assumptions Five Cs of the American Standards are based on:**

1. Competence in more than one language and culture enables people to:
  - communicate with other people in other cultures in a variety of settings.
  - look beyond their customary borders,
  - develop insight into their own language and culture,
  - act with greater awareness of self, of other cultures, and their own relationship to those cultures,
  - gain direct access to additional bodies of knowledge. and
  - participate more fully in the global community and marketplace.
2. All students can be successful language and culture learners, and they:
  - must have access to language and culture study that is integrated into the entire school experience,
  - benefit from the development and maintenance of proficiency in more than one language,
  - learn in a variety of ways and settings, and
  - acquire proficiency at varied rates.
3. Language and culture education is part of the core curriculum, and it:
  - is tied to program models that incorporate effective strategies, assessment procedures, and technologies,
  - reflects evolving standards at the national, state, and local levels, and
  - develops and enhances basic communication skills and higher order thinking skills.

(ACTFL, 1996)

## **Appendix 5**

### **Foreign Languages and Cultures as the Core Curriculum of Harvard University, U.S.A.**

(A) A one-term course listed under Foreign Cultures devoted to a culture or cultures distinct from that of the United States and the Anglophone cultures of the British Isles, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. This course may be taught in English or in the language of that particular culture, in recognition of the importance of language in cultural studies. Courses on French, German, and Spanish cultures are usually taught in the language of the culture.

(B) A two-term foreign language course listed under Foreign Cultures in which the substance of the course, in addition to language study, meets the specifications of the Foreign Cultures guidelines. Students choosing this option must complete both semesters to meet the requirement.



Appendix 6

Guidelines of English Reading Competence for Junior High School and Senior High School in Taiwan

Grade 1~ 9 Curriculum Alignment (grade 6~9, junior high school)	Senior High School
Can use a dictionary to find the meaning and pronunciation of certain words or expressions	With the assistance of dictionaries or other reference books, can read the outside reading materials in which the complexity is equivalent to that of the course textbooks
Can understand signs and charts in English	
Can recite short essays and stories	Can use reading skills and apply them to the reading
Can preview the lesson to be taught and understand its sketch	
Can understand the plots of stories, short plays and the content of letters and conversations	Can preview the lesson and understand its sketch
Can read a variety of simple articles of different genres and themes	Can understand the plot and content of course lessons
Can understand and appreciate simple poems and short plays	

(MOE, 2002)



Appendix 7

Five Goals of the E-Generation Cultivation Project.



Source: An Overview of Taiwan E generation Human Resources Development, Challenge 2008  
National Development Plan: E Generation Cultivation Project, MOE, 2002.



Appendix 8

The Survey Results of the Implementation of English Curriculum and Threshold for English Proficiency

The following data exclude universities or vocational polytechnic colleges that have been raised from the status of junior colleges to four-year technical colleges. The total number of schools is therefore 44.

Survey items	description	Survey result	Notes
The number of schools which provide compulsory English courses throughout four years.	English courses under 4 credit hours*	4	Total number is 40. 4 schools did not provide compulsory English courses while one of them provides optional courses. * One credit hour involves 16 hour course work a semester.
	English courses between 3 to 5 credit hours	0	
	English courses over 6 credit hours	36	
The number of schools which provide extensive English courses after 8 credit hours of compulsory courses	Extensive Compulsory courses under 4 credit hours	2 (NTU, NSYSU, *Yuan Chi University)	Total number is 4. Some of the schools provide General Education courses like English Fiction, Journalism English...etc, which are not indicated in the survey. *required only fail to pass the threshold.
	Extensive Compulsory courses over 4 credit hours	1	
	Extensive Optional courses under 4 hours	Cannot be told from the survey	
	Extensive Optional courses over 4 hours	1	
The number of schools which has set thresholds upon graduation for English related departments	This includes department of English Literature, Language and applied English	6	
The number of schools which has set thresholds (or has a timescale to set one) upon graduation (exclude English related departments)	For some undergraduate departments and graduate institute	22	Total number is 22, which set thresholds for some of undergraduate programs or graduate institutes. Only two out of 22 schools set the threshold for the whole school.
	For the whole school	2	
Threshold each school sets	TOFEL written test 550 and its equivalent of other standardized tests*	NSYSU, NTU	Other standard tests include GEPT, TOEIC or IELTS. From data gained from MOE. among

	TOFEL written test 500~549 and its equivalent of other standardized tests	Kaohsiung University, National Cheng Kung University	22 schools which responded to this item. 16 schools did not specify the criteria. The reason might be that different department sets different threshold.
	TOFEL written test 450~499 and its equivalent of other standardized tests	Yuan Chi University, Taipei Medical University	

Peih-ying Lu (2003)

The survey results of each school were provided by the R.O.C. Ministry Of Education



Appendix 9

Generic Questionnaire

Generic Questionnaire

作者：Peihying Lu

I fully understand that the result of this survey will be used in a doctoral research project on English Language Education and Cultural Studies and the findings may be published in the future.

1 DEPARTMENT

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Gender

\_\_\_\_\_

3 Years of studying English:  
(since elementary school)

\_\_\_\_\_

4 Language(s) you are studying other than English

\_\_\_\_\_

5 The location of the high school you went to

\_\_\_\_\_

Each of the statements below refers to the English classes required for

6 Please mark the best/primary reason you are learning English

- ☐ University requirement
- ☐ Personal interest in the English language
- ☐ For passing some standardized English Proficiency Tests, i.e. TOFEL, GEPT, OR IELTS.
- ☐ It is a lingua franca
- ☐ For future study abroad
- ☐ A help for future career

7 After completing one year of English classes, do you intend to pursue advanced study of English?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

What do you expect from your English classes in the university?

8 More linguistic training, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

- 9 More academic English related to my major
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 10 More in-depth understanding of a range of cultures
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 11 More ability to appreciate English films, songs, literature...etc.
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 12 In your opinion, which of the following can best facilitate learning English?
- ☐ Learning about foreign cultures? (IF CHOSEN, PLEASE GO TO A-1 and A-2)
  - ☐ Learning about every day English. (IF CHOSEN, PLEASE GO TO B-1 and B-2)

**A-1 The following culture based methods are used in learning English.**

---

- 13 Attending cultural activities such as film festivals, cultural festivals, exhibits.
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 14 Attending classes related to British or American Cultural Studies
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 15 Taking English classes that includes cultural topics
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 16 Joining reading groups or attending lectures or seminars
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 17 Learning from mass media in English such as watching films, reading English newspapers.



- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

18 Others. Please specify.

---

**A-2 How well do the following topics contribute to a better knowledge of society**

---

19 Learning about popular media such as music, movies, sitcoms, entertainment

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

20 Learning about education and school systems

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

21 Learning about politics and the economy

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

22 Learning about social issues such as gender, race, class

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

23 Learning about customs and traditions

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

24 Literature and history

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

25 Others. Please specify.

---

**B-1 The following methods are used to increase the practical use of English?**

---

- 26 Taking practical courses such as conversational English
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 27 Attending speech contests
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 28 Memorizing more vocabulary and idioms
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 29 Learning more grammatical rules
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 30 Attending intensive classes at the private language schools.
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 31 Joining language study groups travelling to English speaking countries
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree

**B-2 What content should be covered to aid learning practical aspects of English?**

---

- 32 English for newspapers and magazines
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 33 English for Travel
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 34 Survival English



- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

35 Daily conversations

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

36 Others. Please specify.

---

37 In your opinion, what role should culture play in English classes?

- ☐ Culture and language are related and cannot be separated from each other
- ☐ Learning language for practical reasons is more important than learning about culture.
- ☐ In the language classroom, culture is not essential
- ☐ I do not know

**How important are the following goals to you?**

---

38 To develop proficiency in listening, speaking, writing, and reading

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

39 To receive good grades in English courses

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

40 To expand my knowledge of other cultures when learning English

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

41 Developing competence in daily communication such as using the internet

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

42 Others. Please specify.

---

**How well have you achieved the following goals in your previous English studies?**

---

- 43 Having knowledge necessary for examinations
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 44 Having competence in speaking, listening, writing, and reading
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 45 Obtaining cultural knowledge
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 46 Being willing to accept cultural differences in the language classroom.
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 47 Being willing to reflect upon cultural differences in the language classroom
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 48 Others. Please specify.
- 

**8. What materials do you think will be interesting to use in English classes?**

---

- 49 Literature such as short stories, poems, short plays and prose
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 50 Mass media such as newspaper and magazine articles, TV sitcoms, films, songs, advertisements.
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree



- 51 Essays with issues of socio-cultural content such as gender, race, class and politics
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 52 Materials with topics of everyday ways of life such as leisure, social networks, housing and education
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 53 Scientific articles
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 54 Textbooks designed for grammar and vocabulary practice
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 55 Others. Please specify.

---

**What do you expect from your University humanities courses?**

---

- 56 To provide you with intellectual maturity
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 57 To provide you with independent and critical thinking ability
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 58 To satisfy your curious mind and broaden your knowledge
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Not sure              ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly disagree
- 59 To increase your personal knowledge and facilitate your life long learning ability
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree

- ☐ Not sure                      ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

60 Others. Please specify.

---

**Apart from language learning, what do you expect to learn from English classes?**

---

61 To provide you with intellectual maturity

- ☐ Strongly agree            ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure                      ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

62 To provide you with independent and critical thinking ability

- ☐ Strongly agree            ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure                      ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

63 To satisfy your curious mind and broaden your knowledge

- ☐ Strongly agree            ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure                      ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

64 To increase your personal knowledge and facilitate your life long learning ability

- ☐ Strongly agree            ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure                      ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

65 Others. Please specify.

---

66 I would rate my level of overall motivation for learning English as: (Select one)

- ☐ Extremely high            ☐ High
- ☐ Moderate                      ☐ Weak
- ☐ Extremely weak

67 What is your score on the English JCEE (Joint Collegiate Entrance Examination)? (Select one)

- ☐ Top 25 percentile
- ☐ 50 percentile
- ☐ 75 percentile
- ☐ Lower than 75 percentile
- ☐ Not applicable



68 Please indicate the reason if you choose item e.

---

**What language do you think will be very helpful to you in the future?**

---

69 Mandarin

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure            ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

70 Taiwanese

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure            ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

71 English

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure            ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

72 Japanese

- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure            ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

73 Others. Please specify.

---

74 How do you define "good" English competence? Select one. –OR- Select one or more.

- ☐ High proficiency in listening, speaking, writing and reading
- ☐ Good grades in English courses
- ☐ High scores on examinations such as: TOFEL, IELTS, or GEPT
- ☐ Good knowledge of other cultures and being an intercultural English user
- ☐ Others.

必須回答有 '\*' 記號的問題

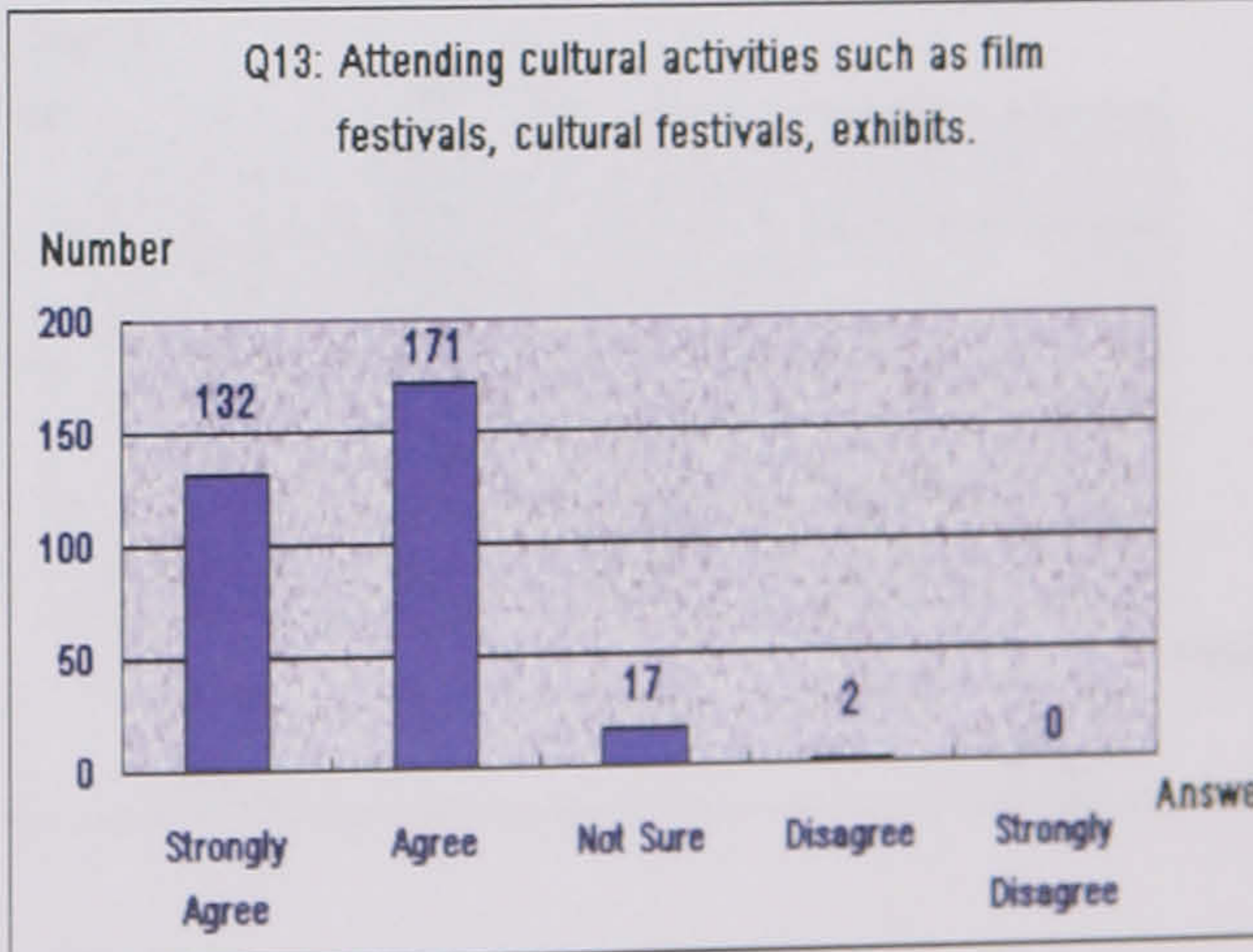
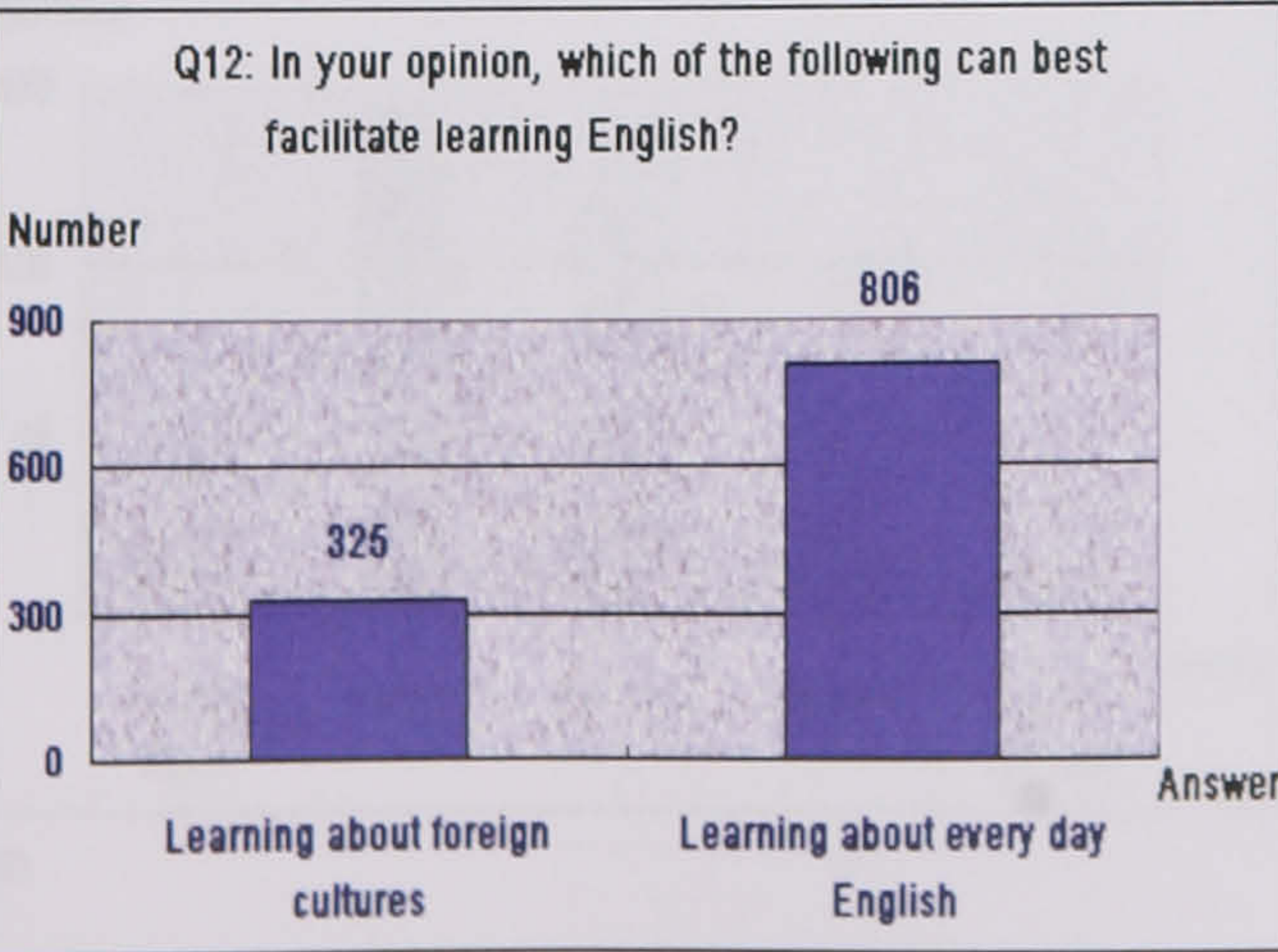
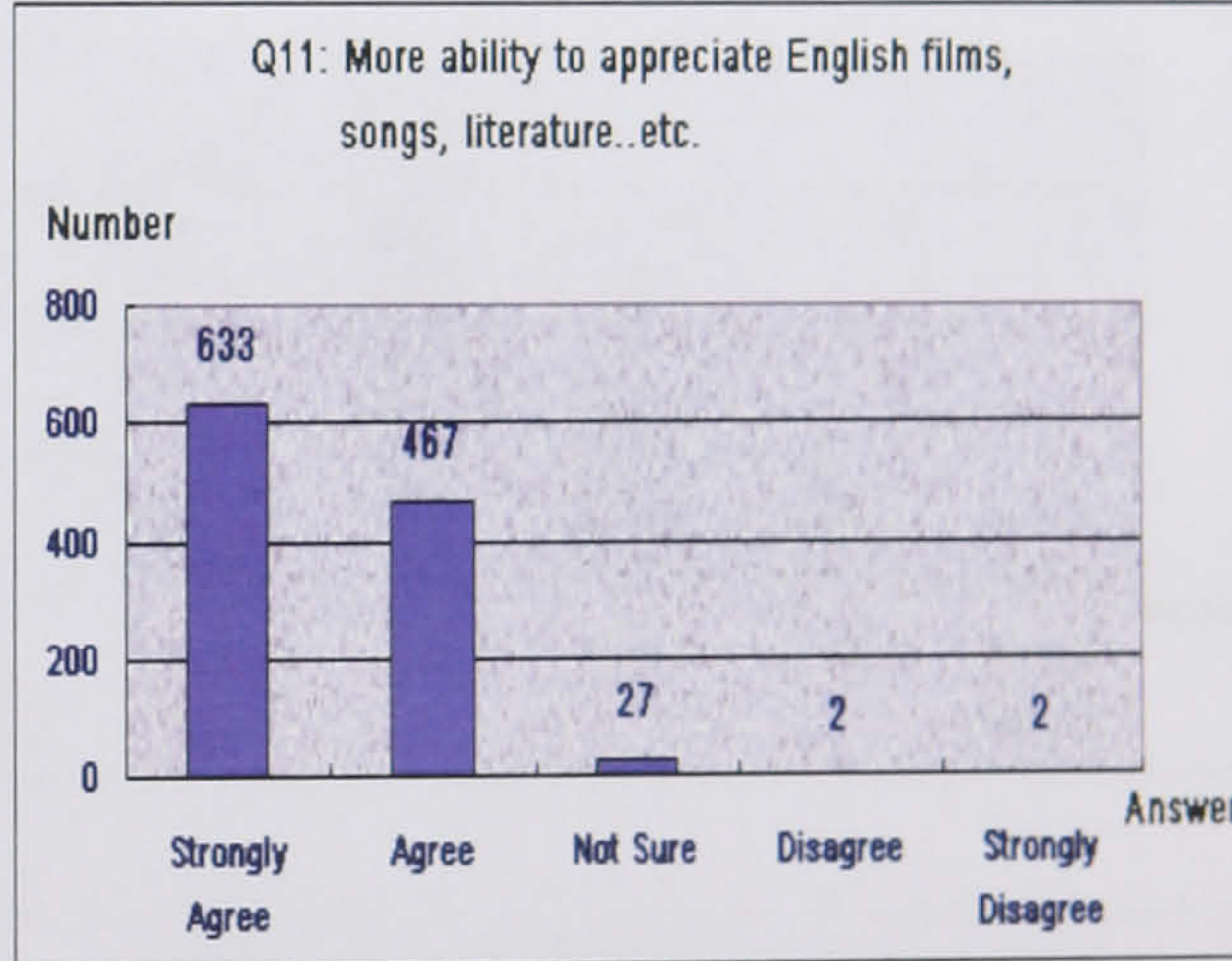
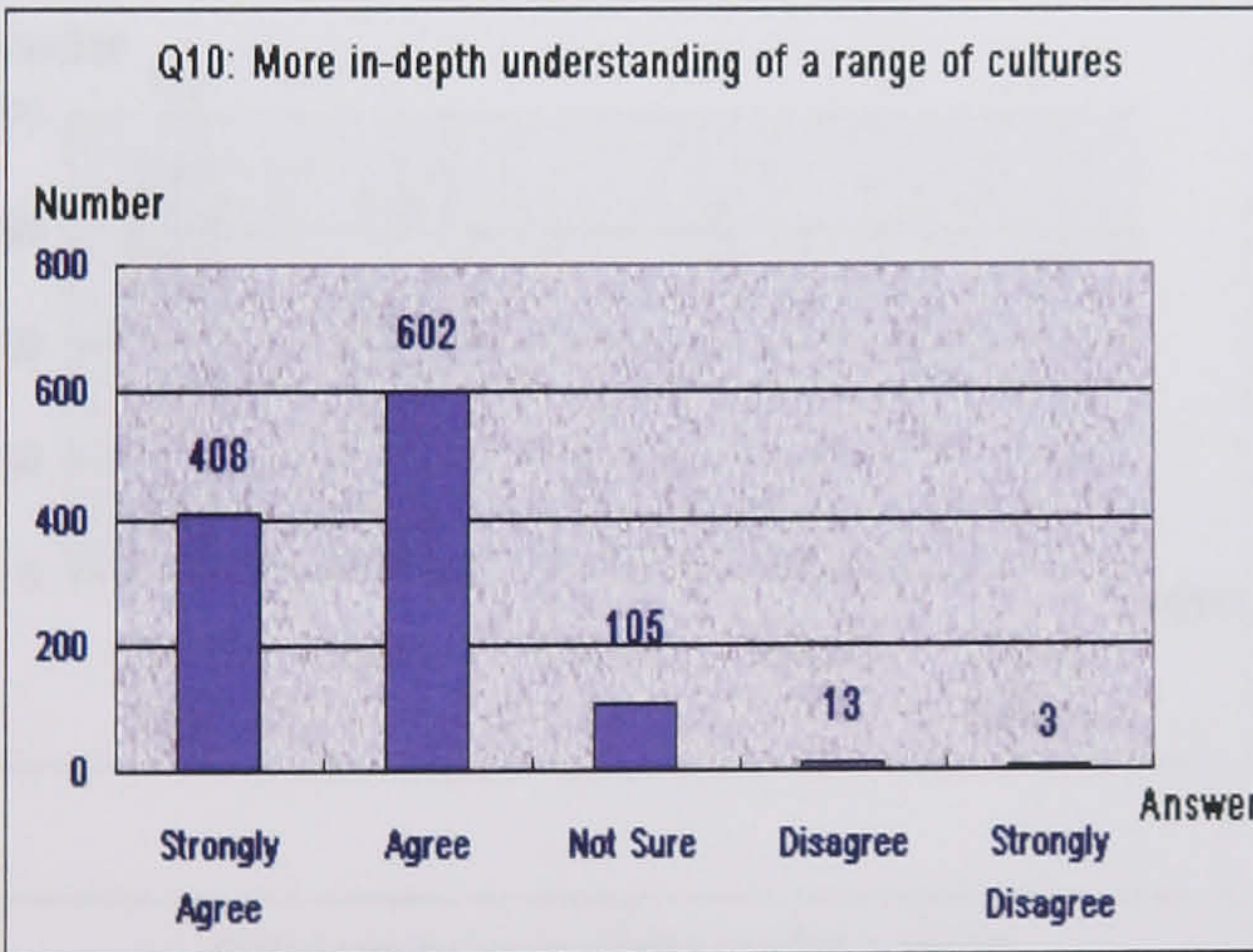
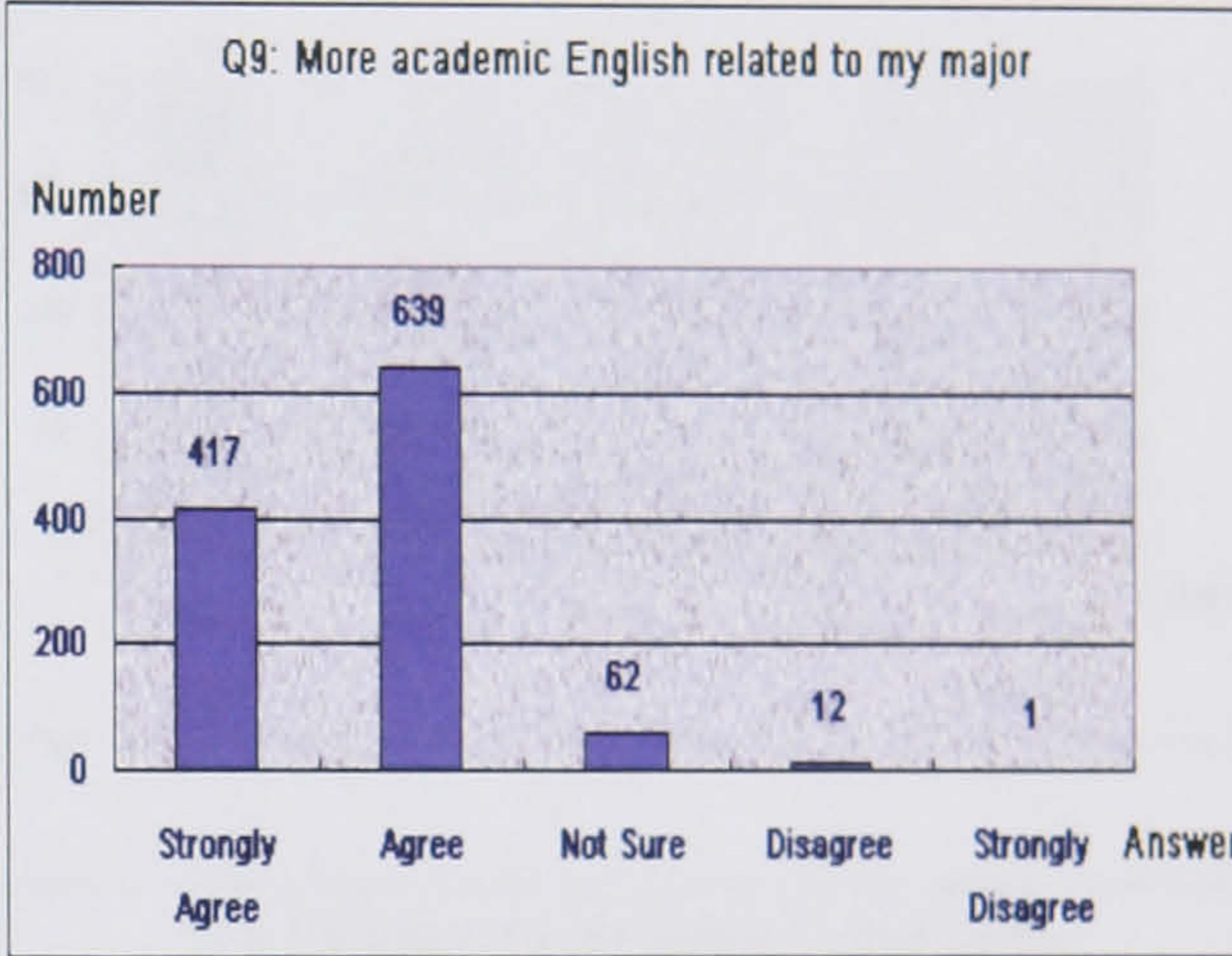
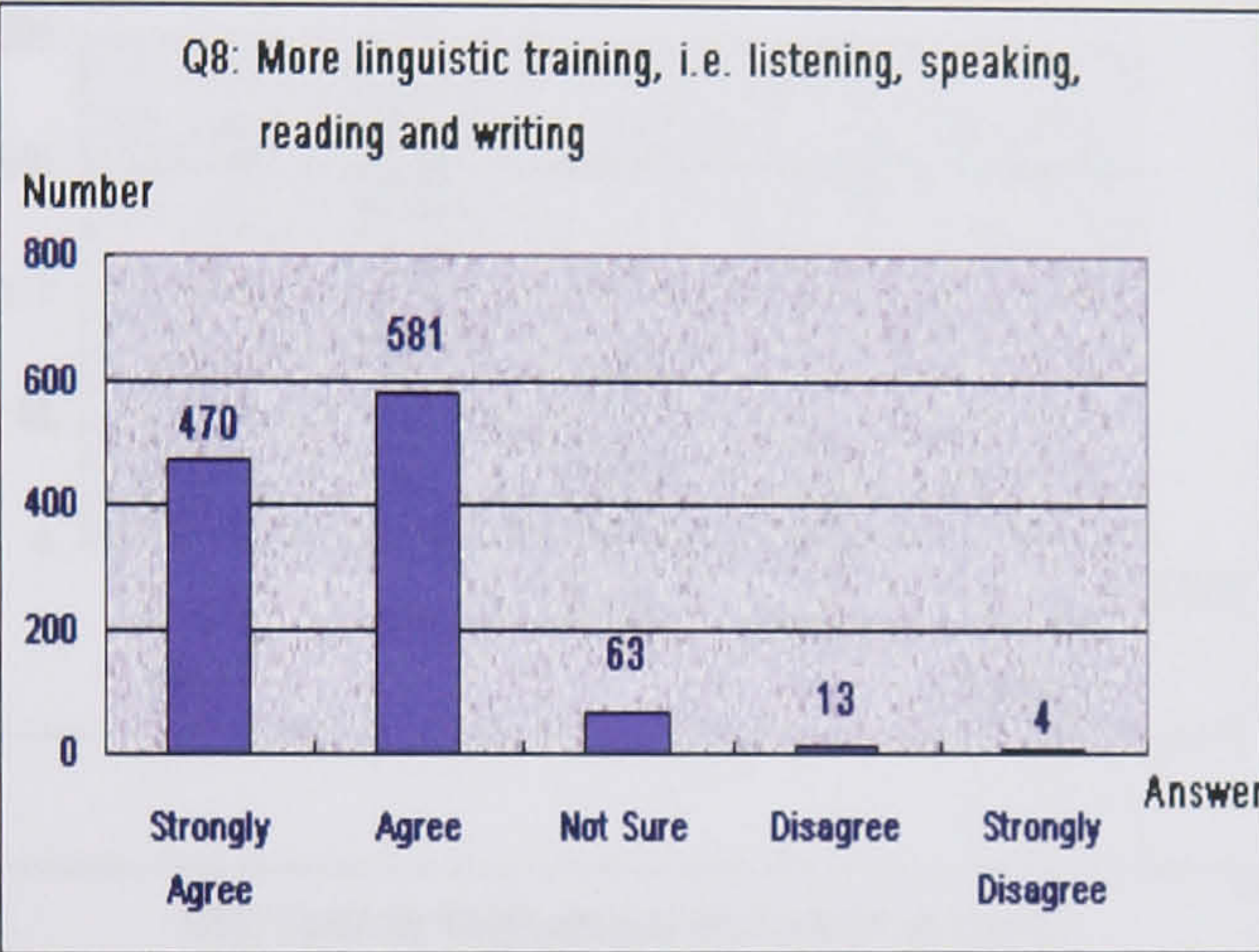
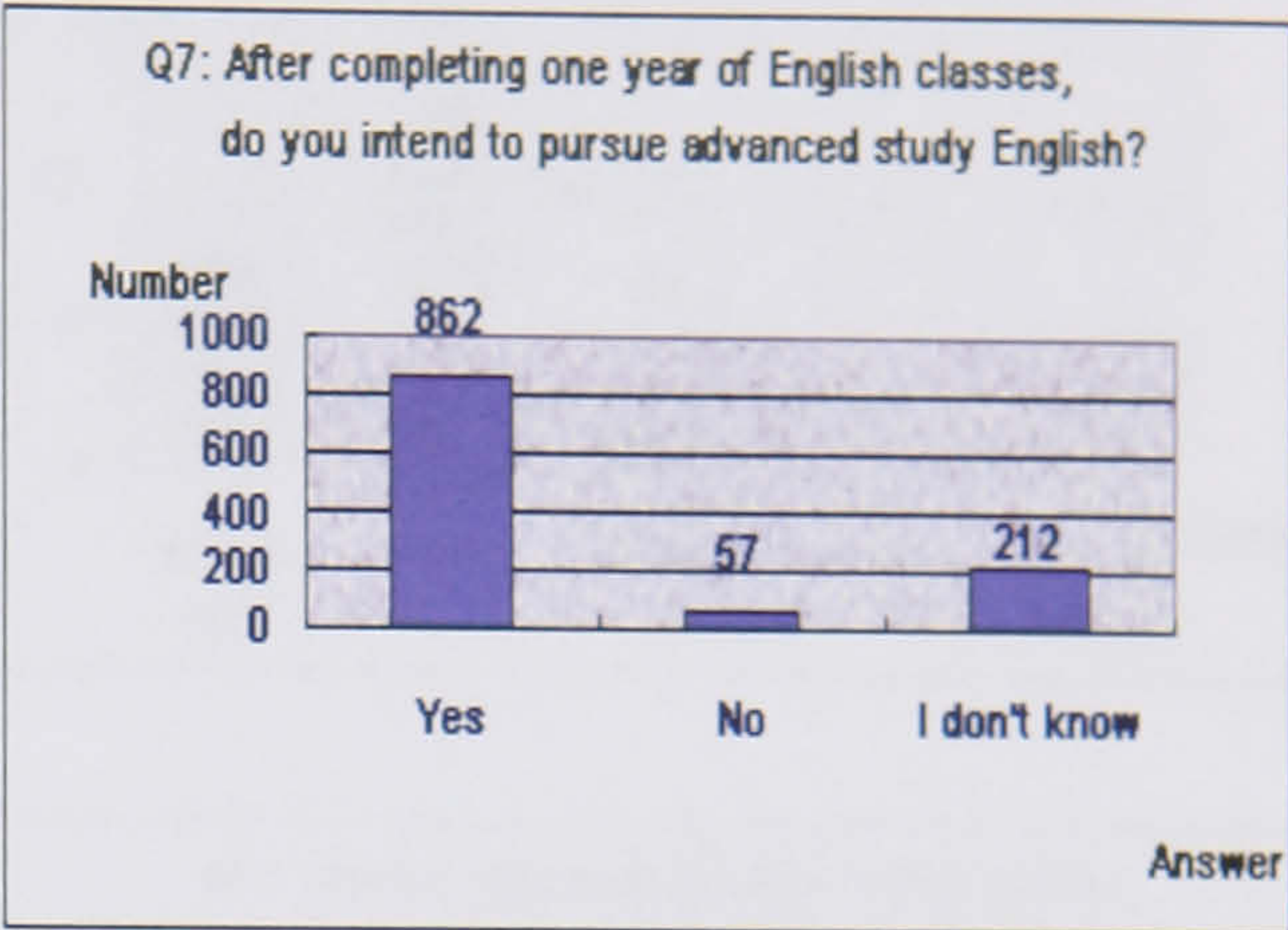
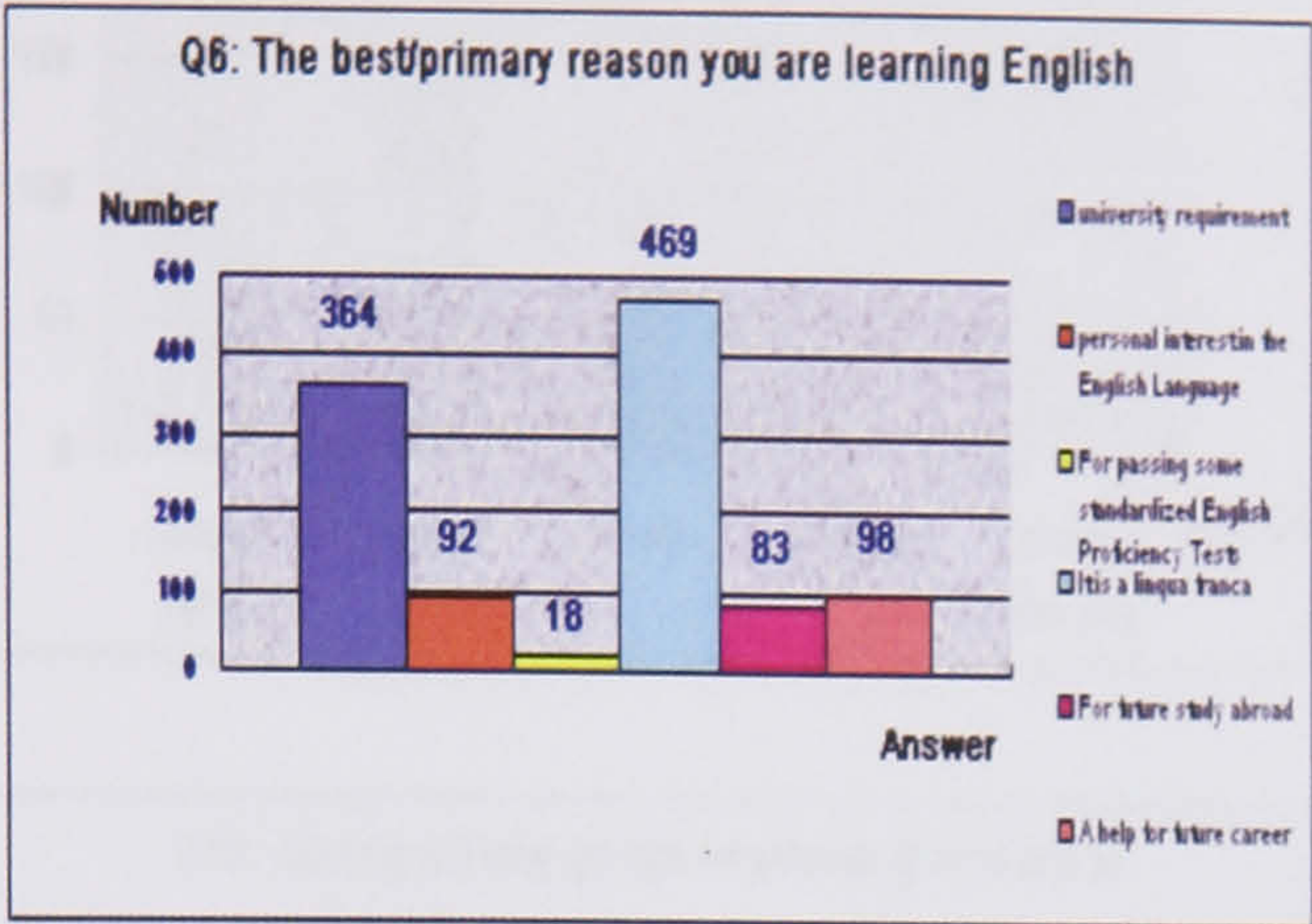
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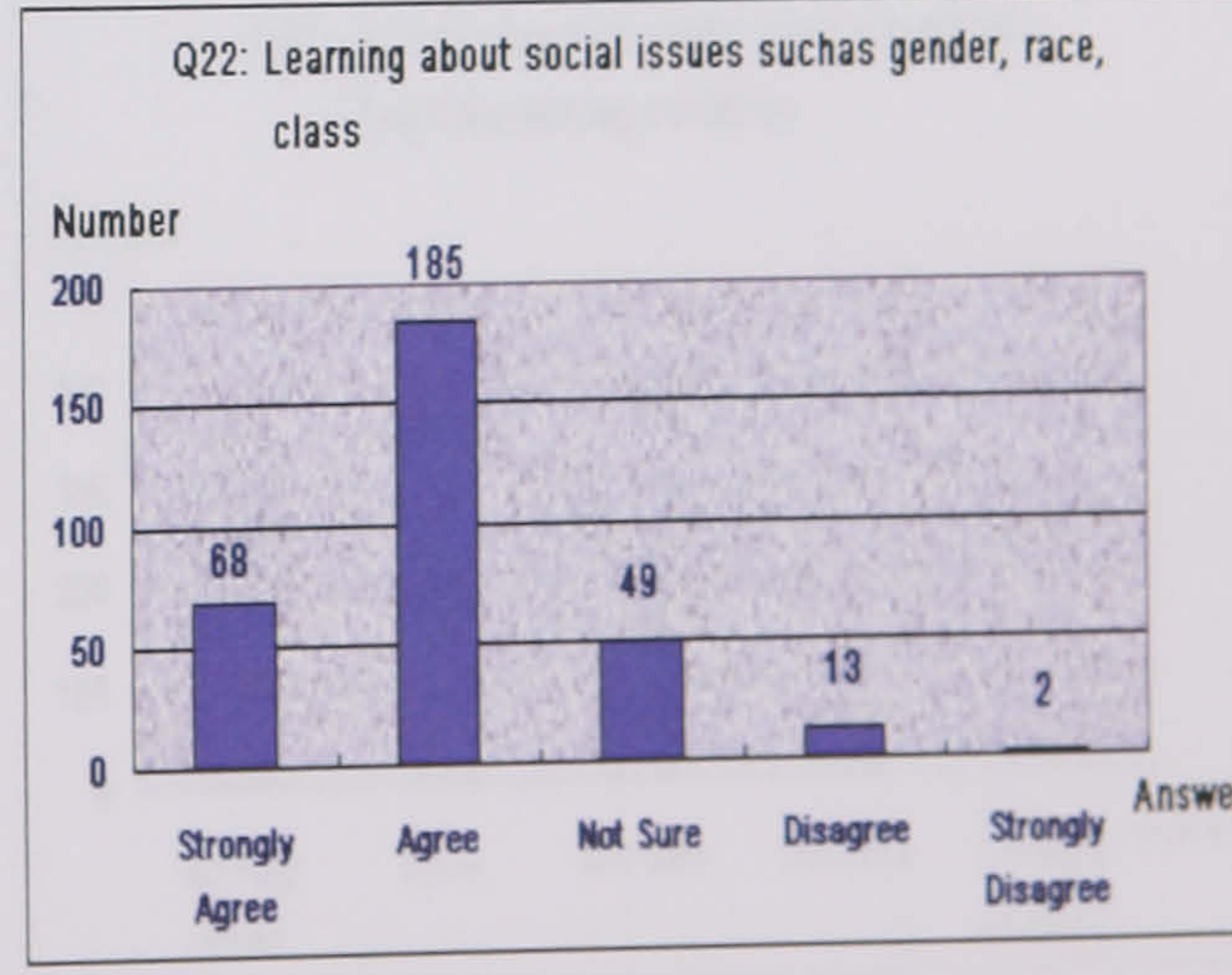
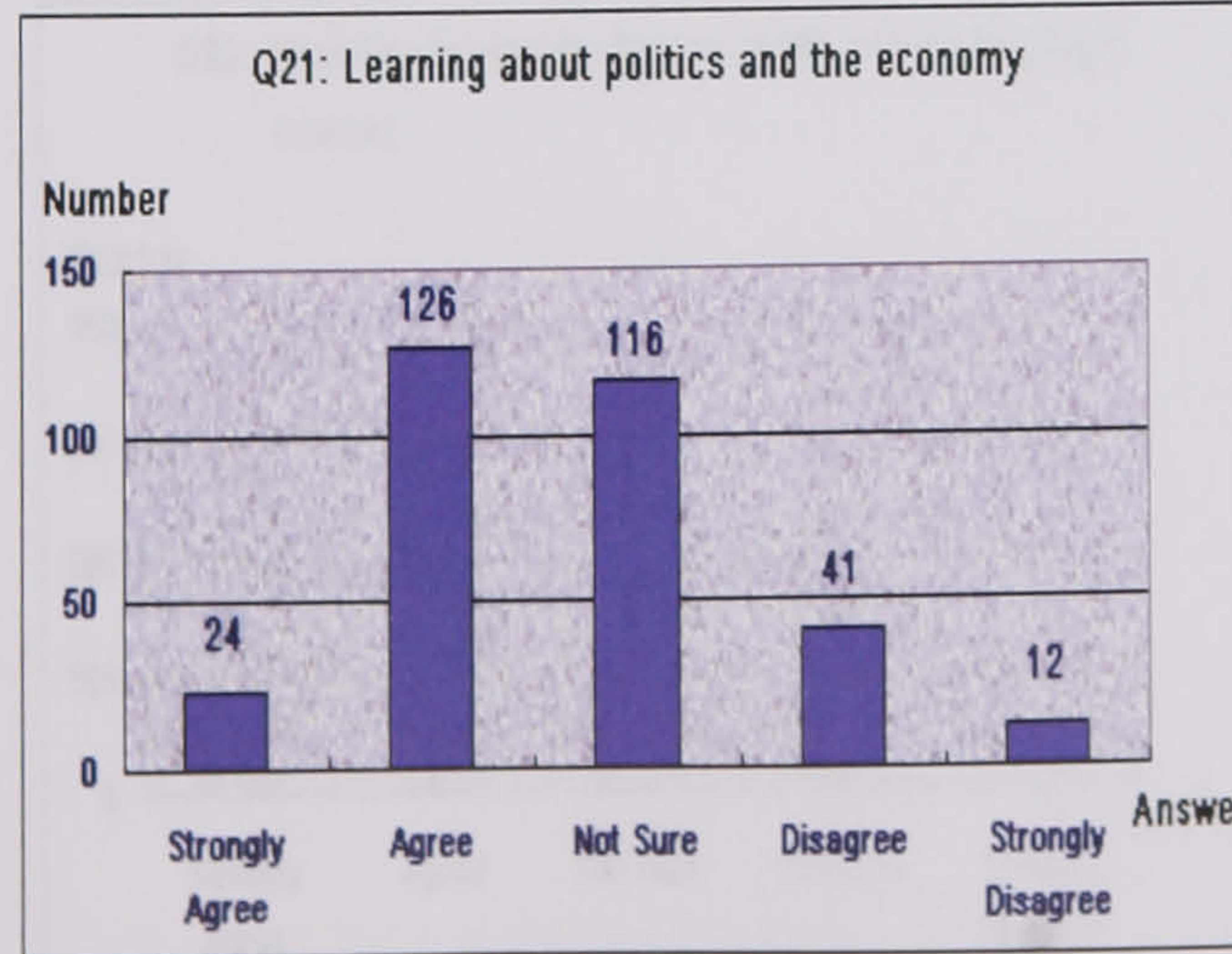
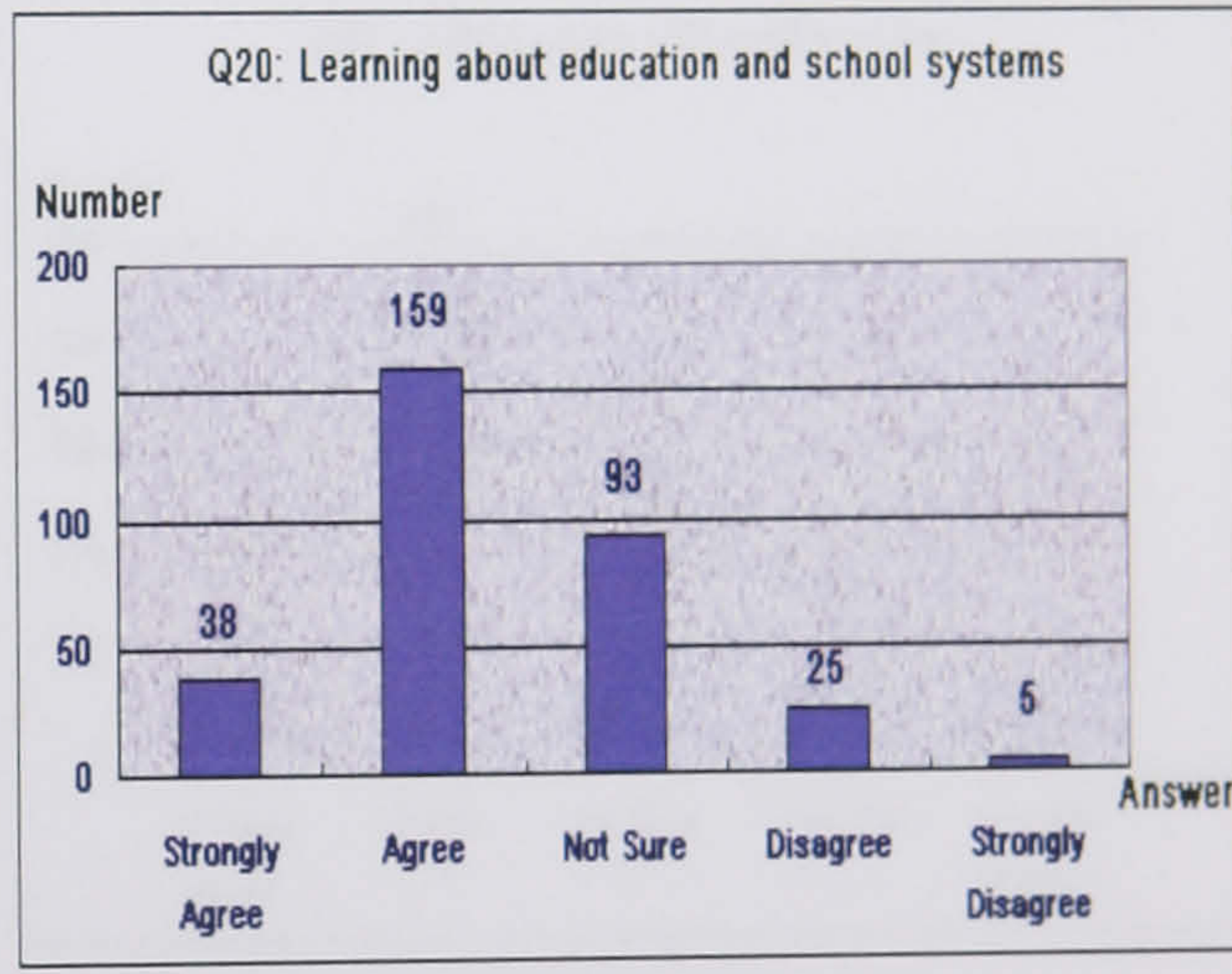
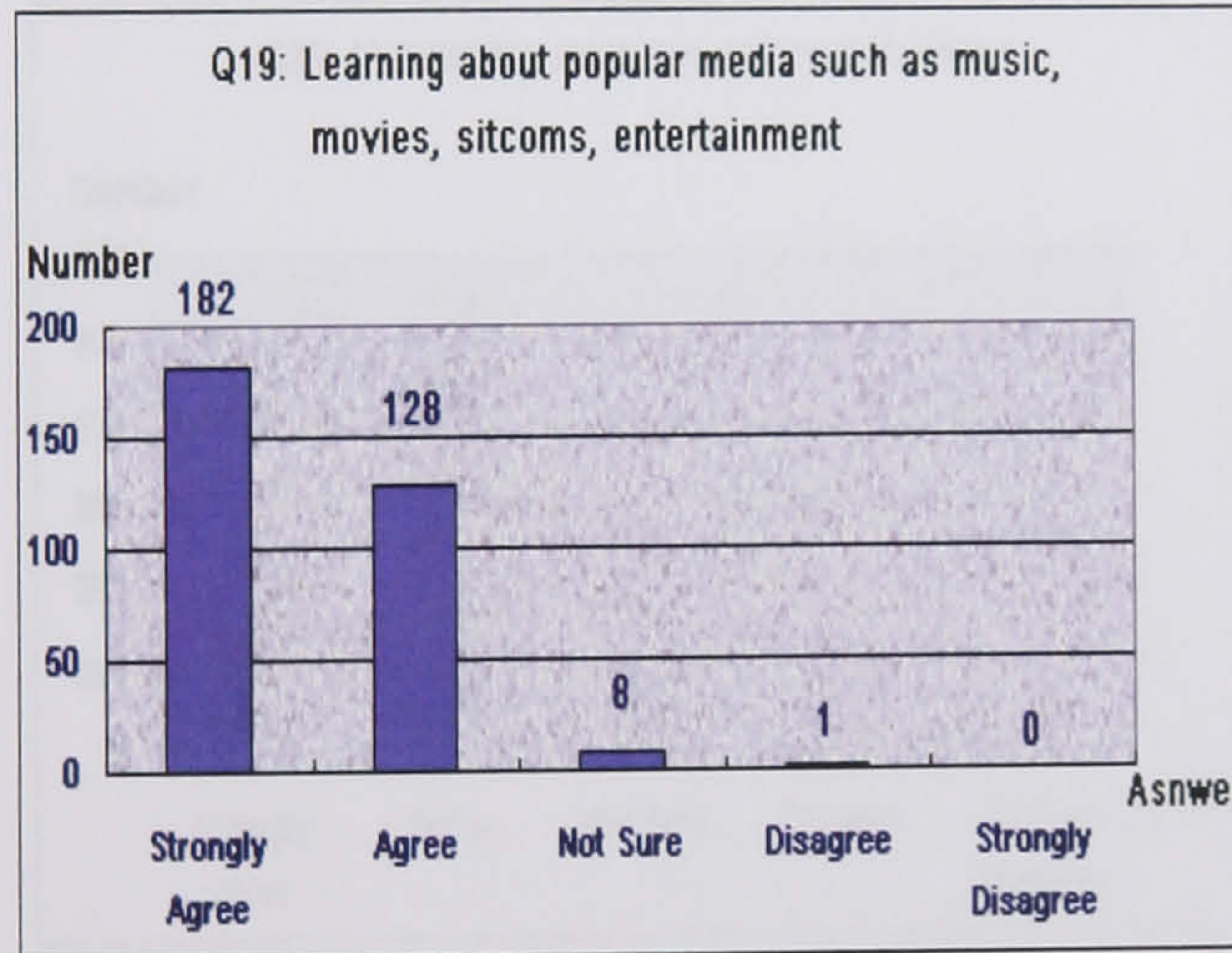
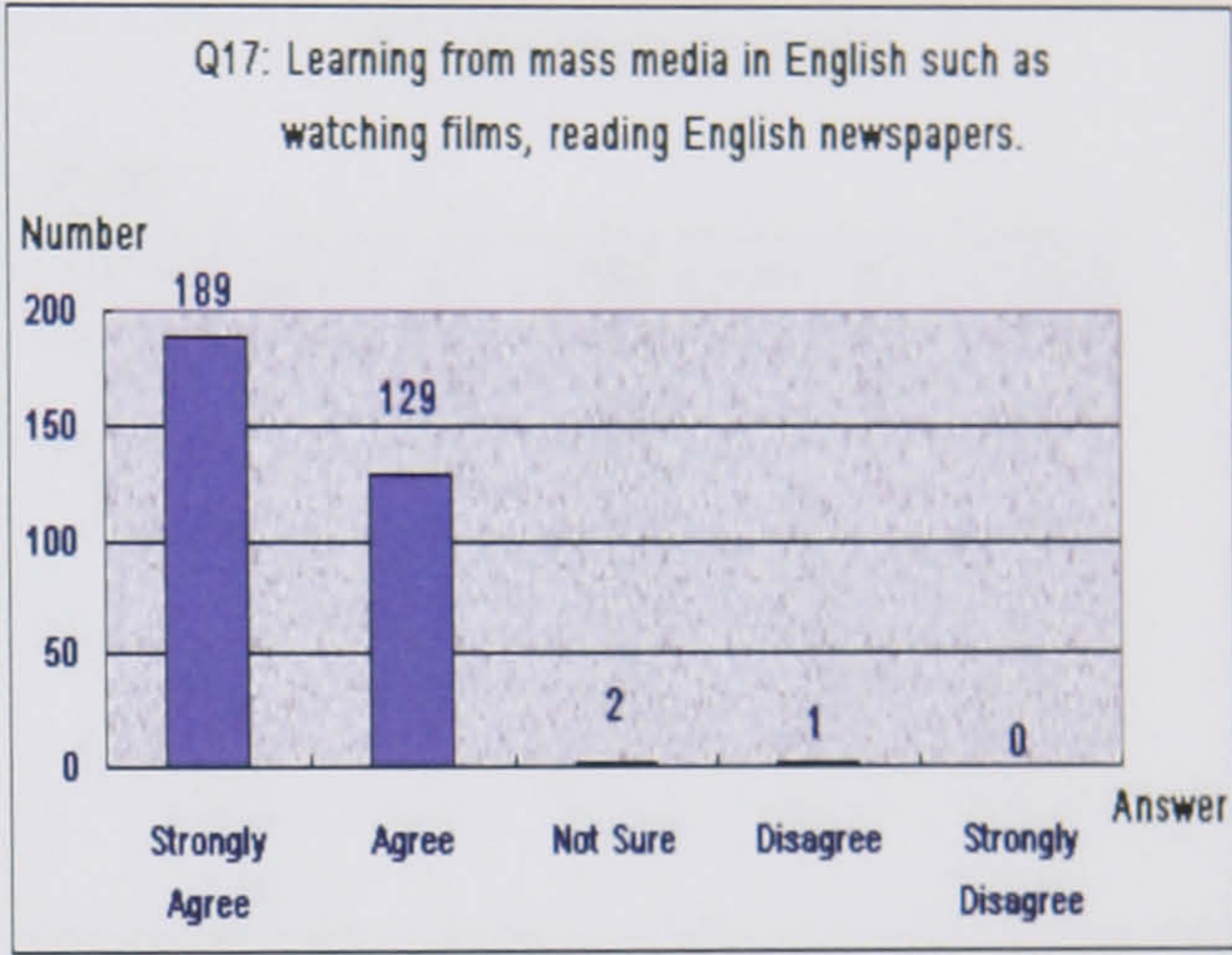
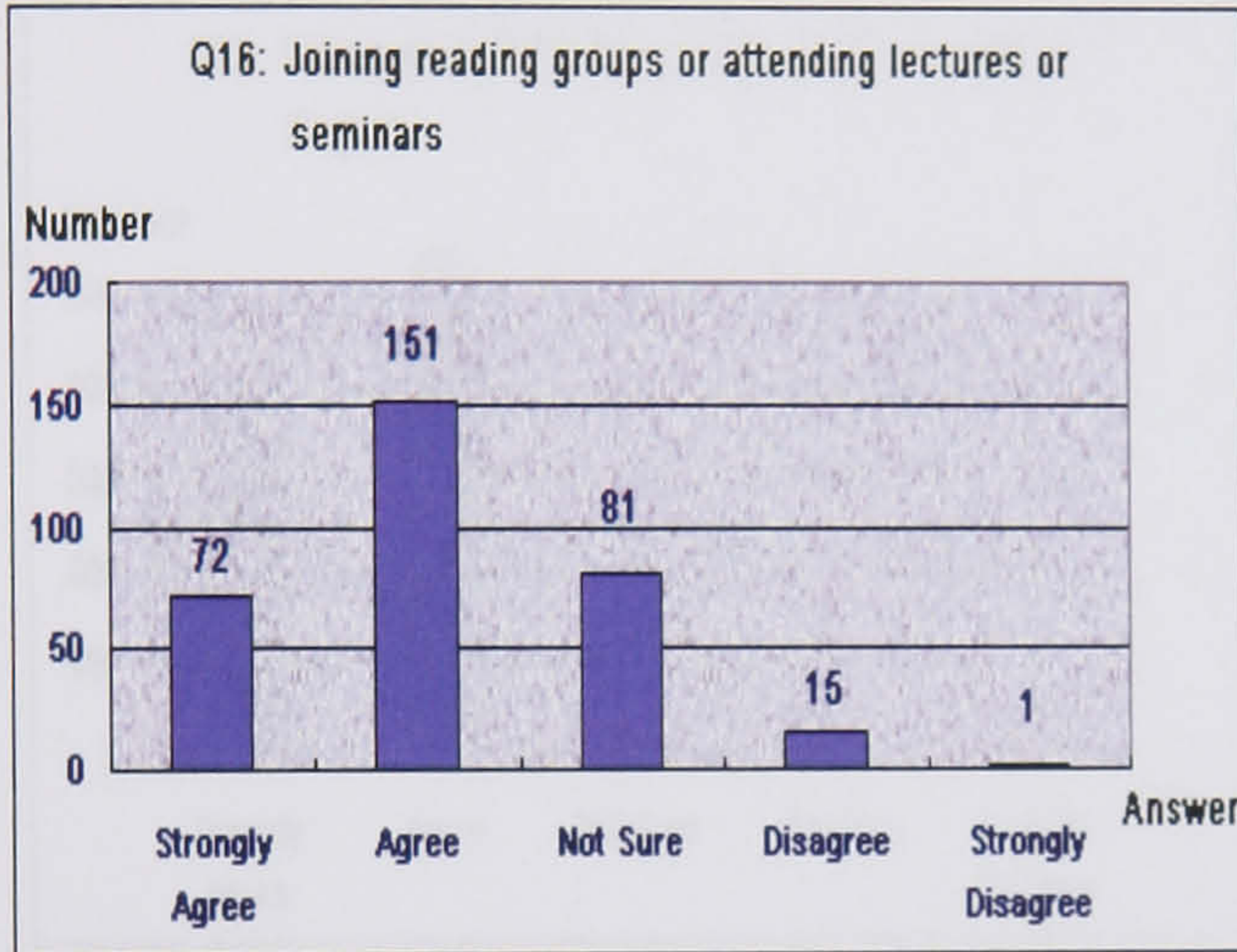
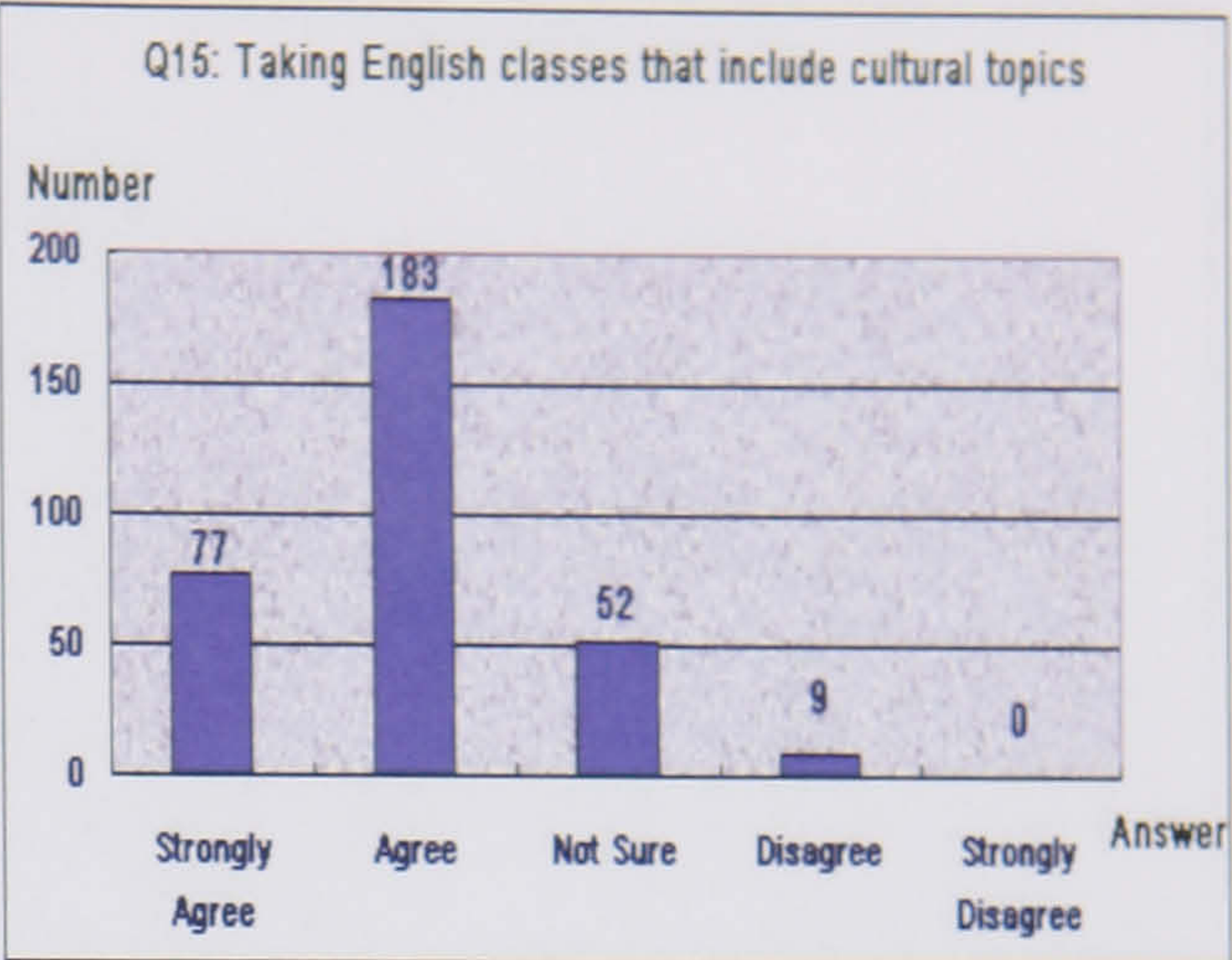
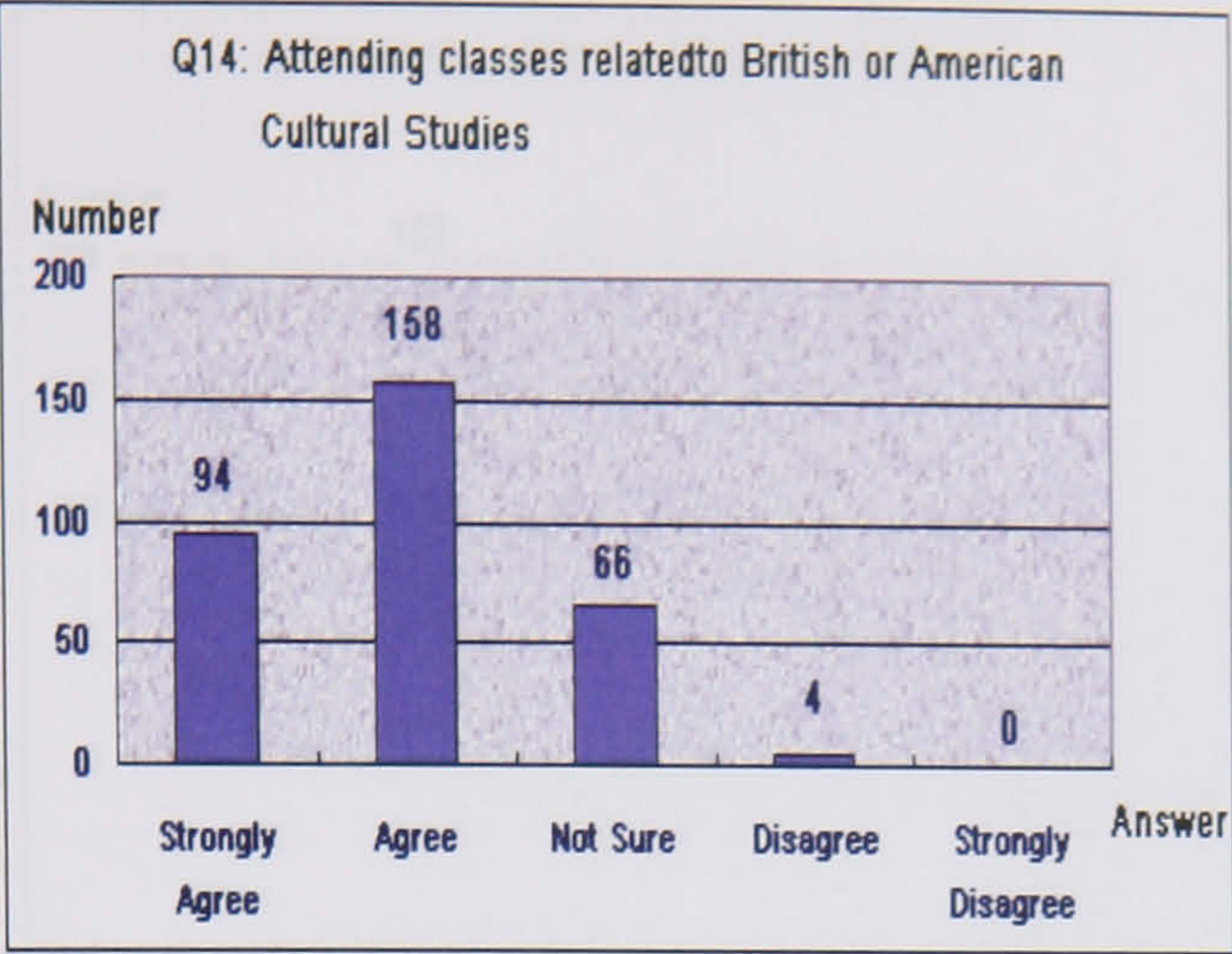


Appendix 10

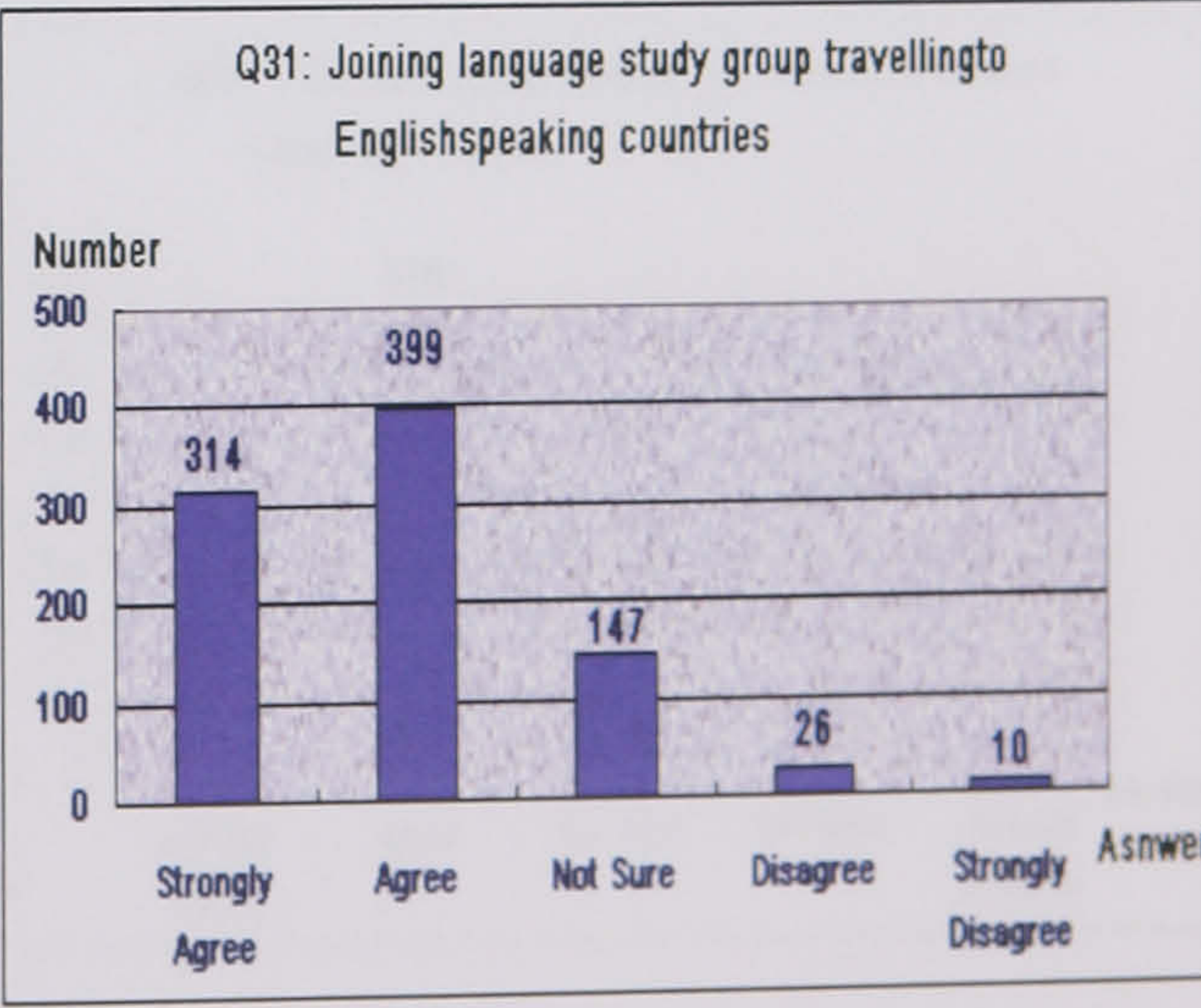
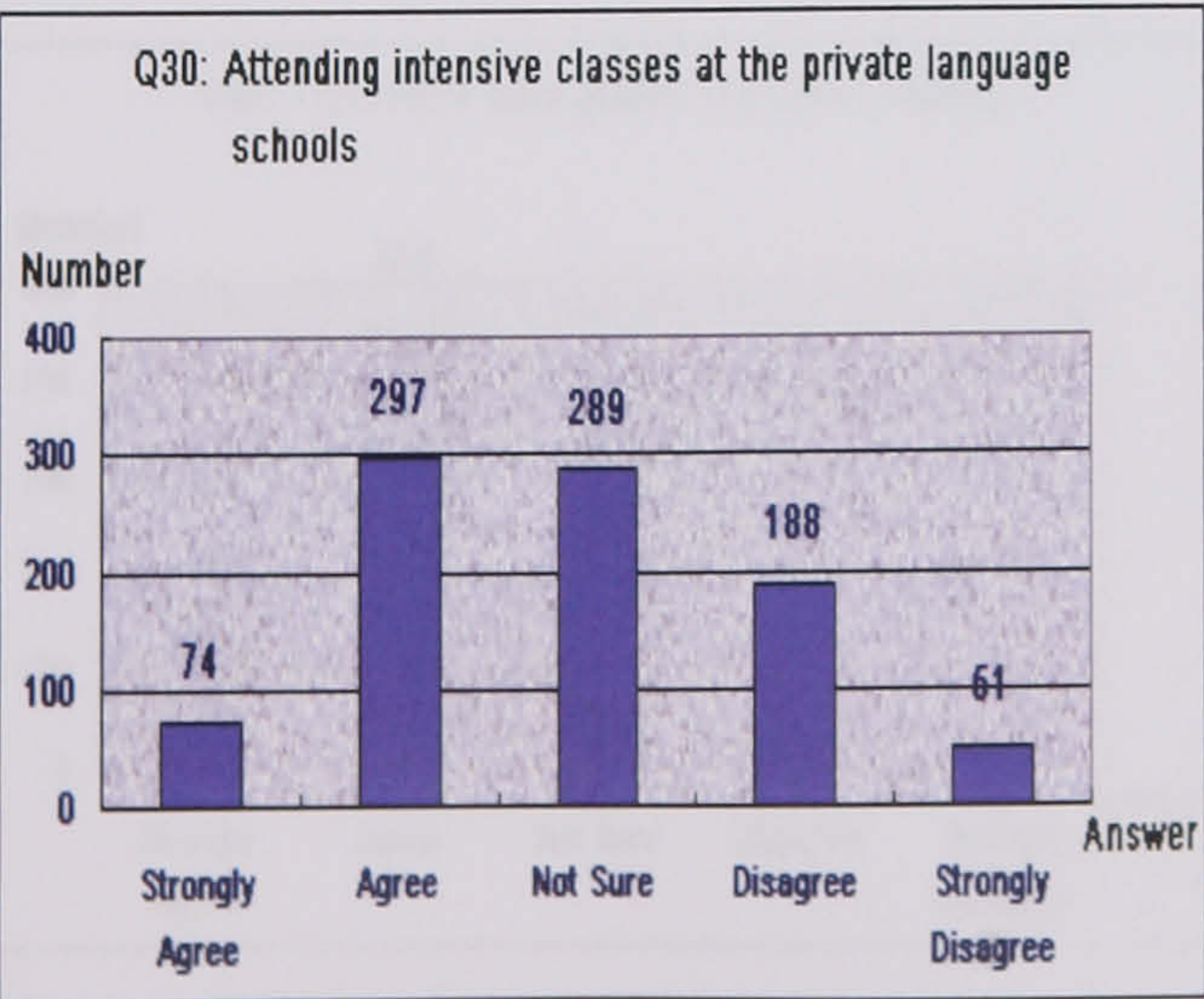
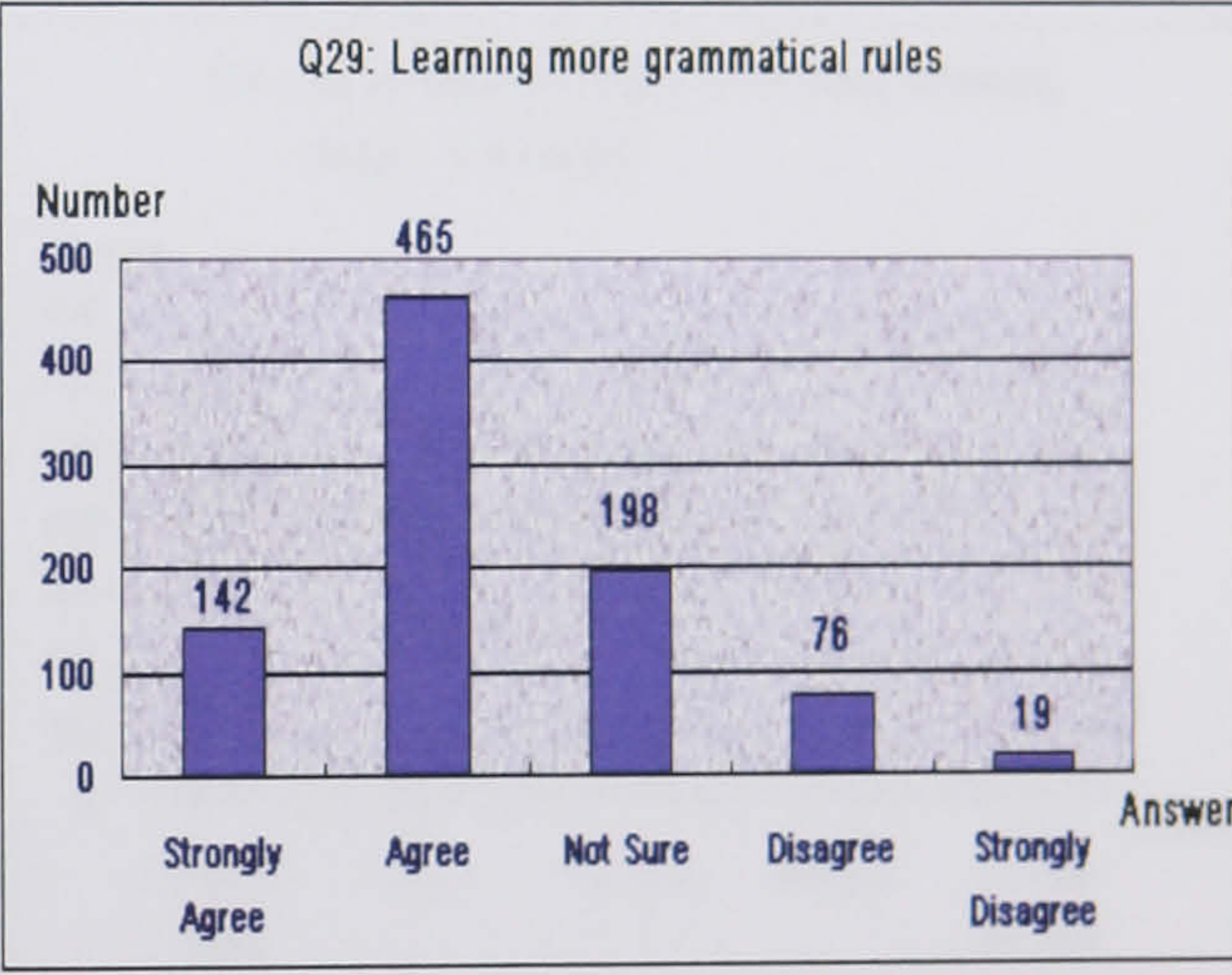
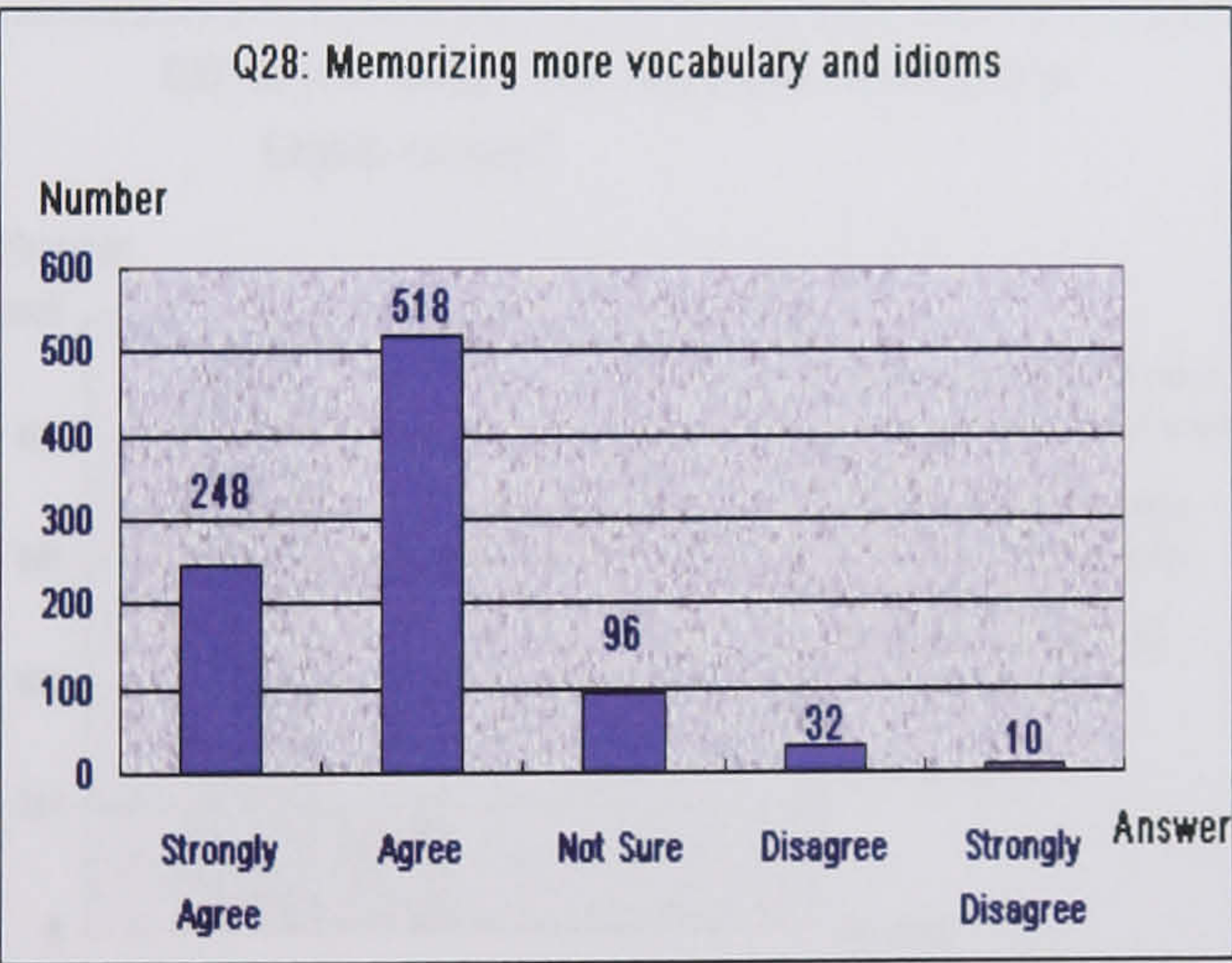
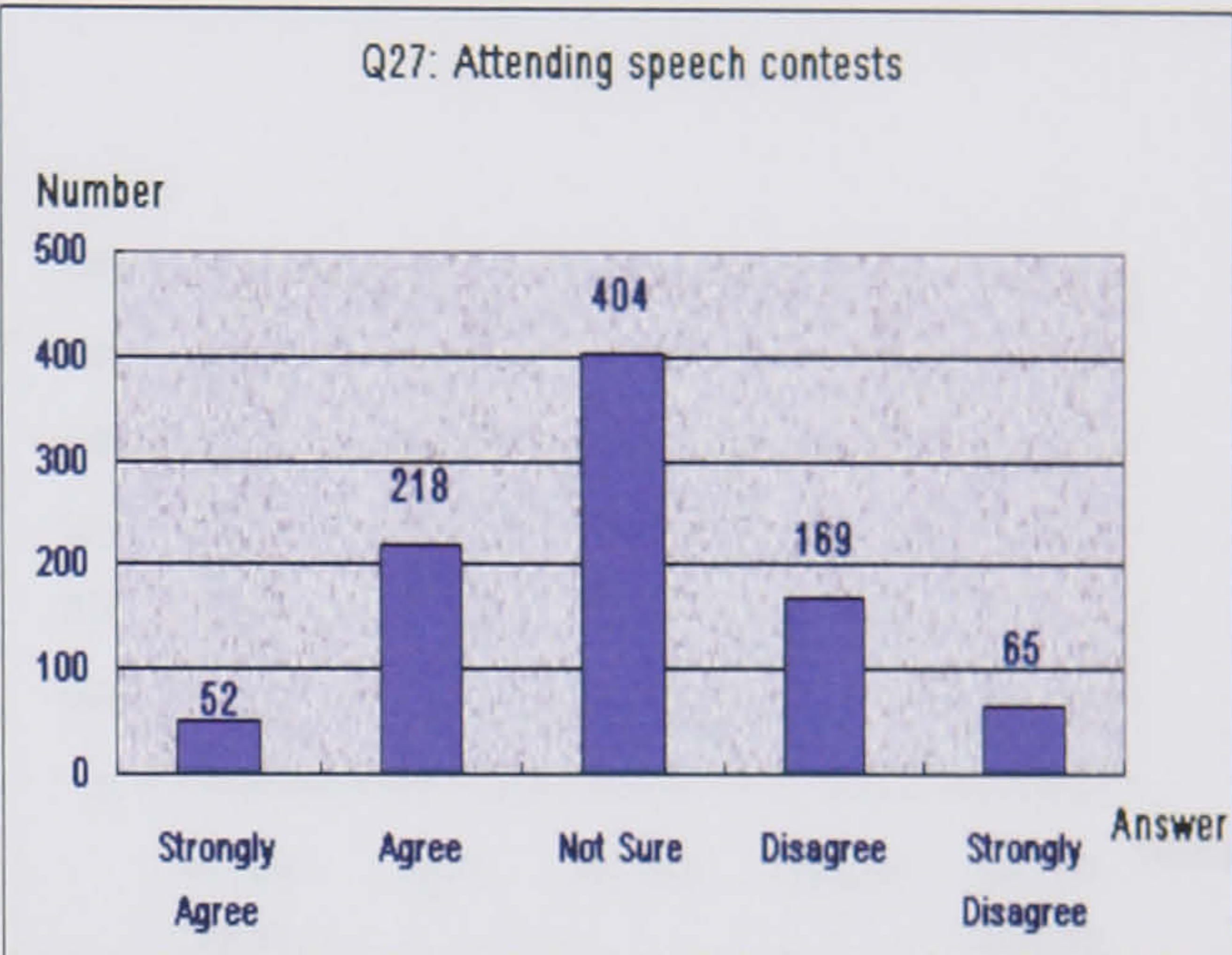
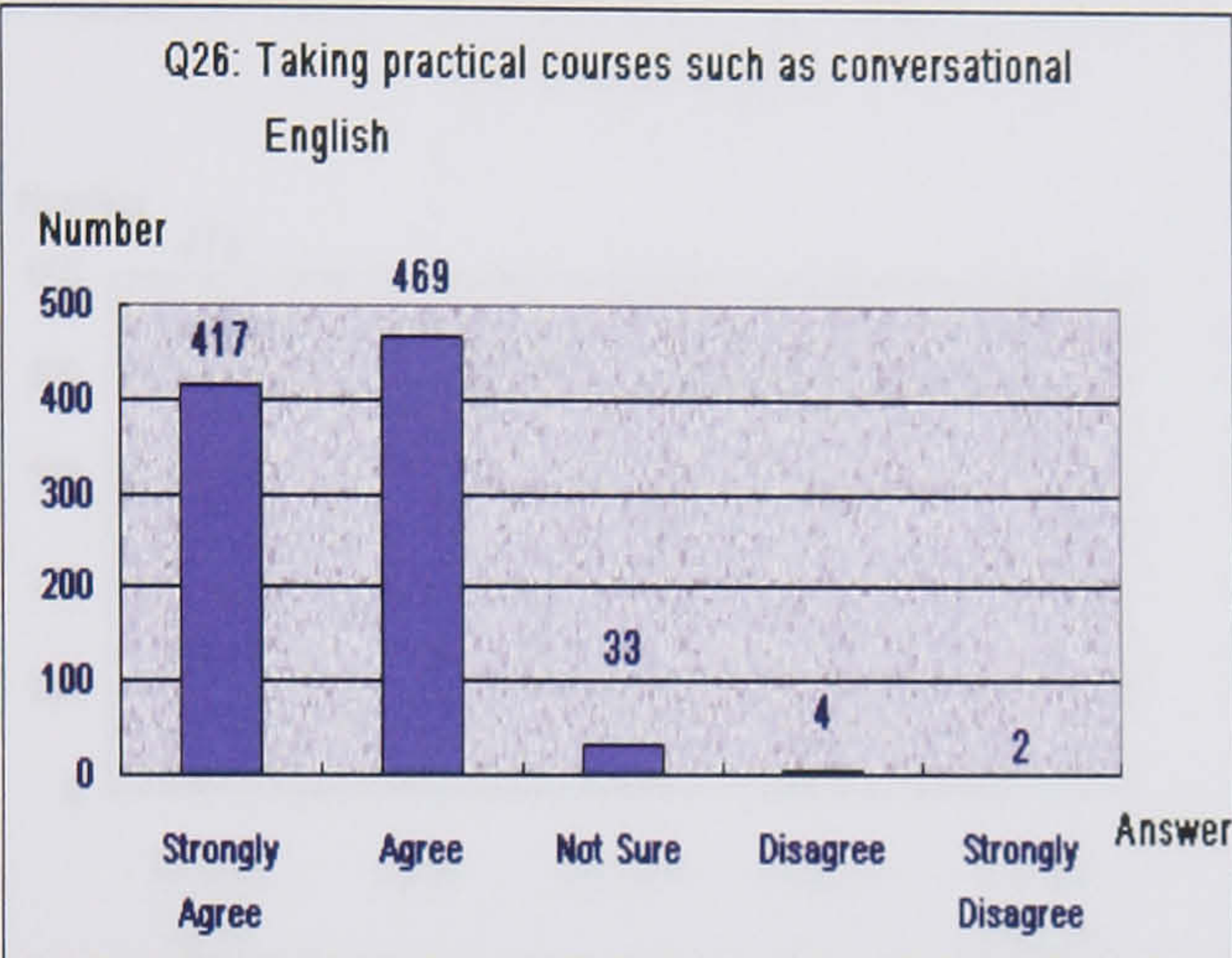
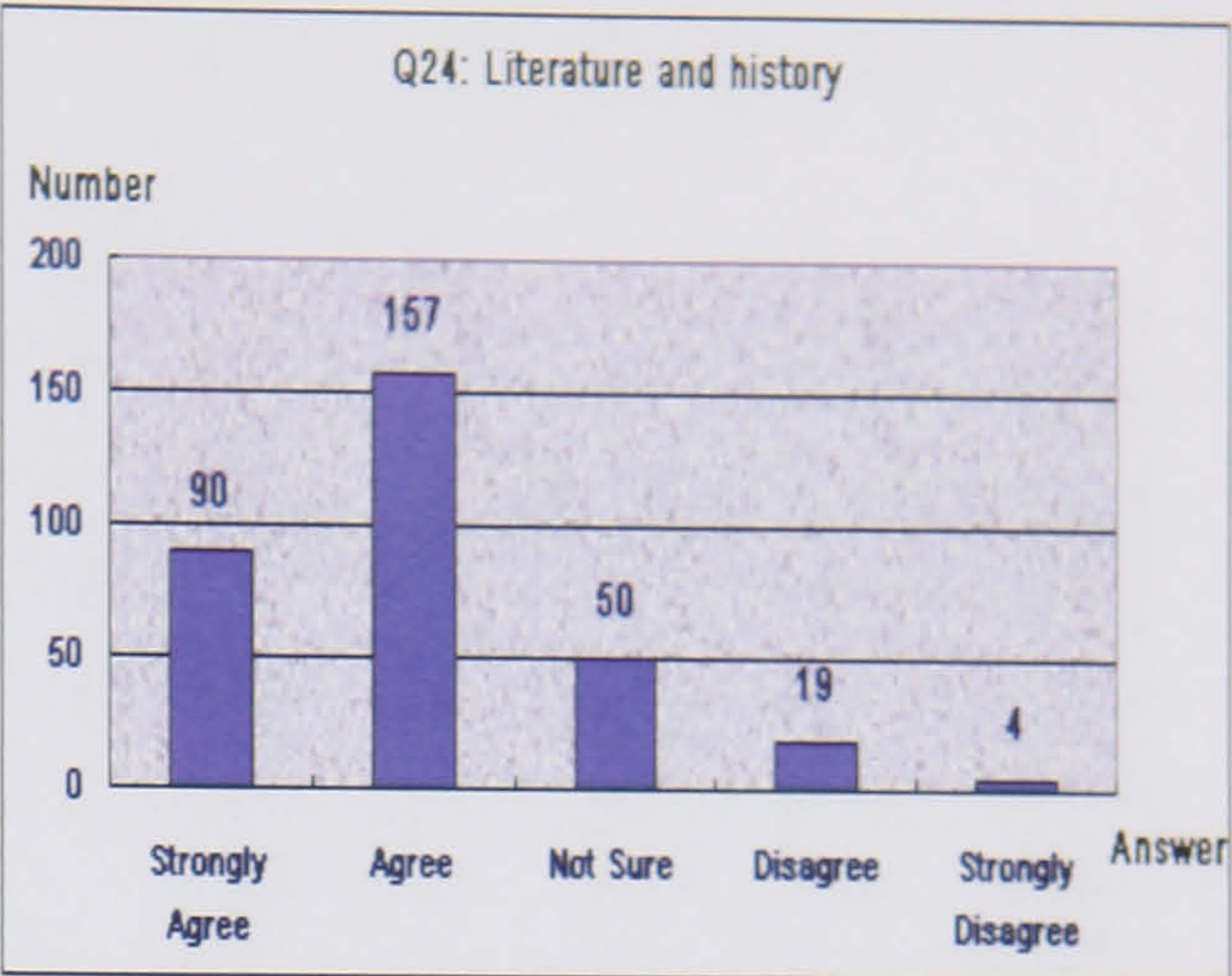
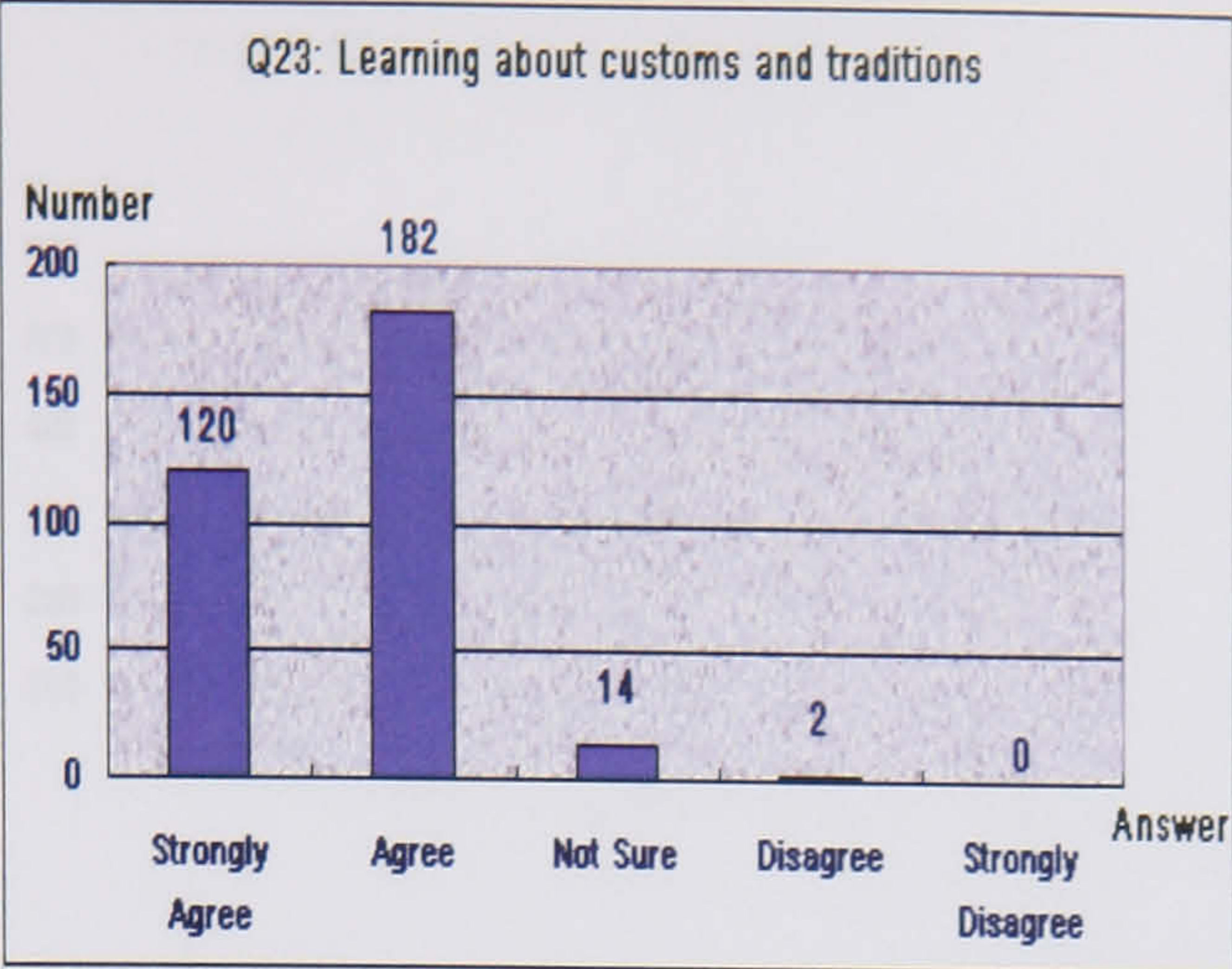
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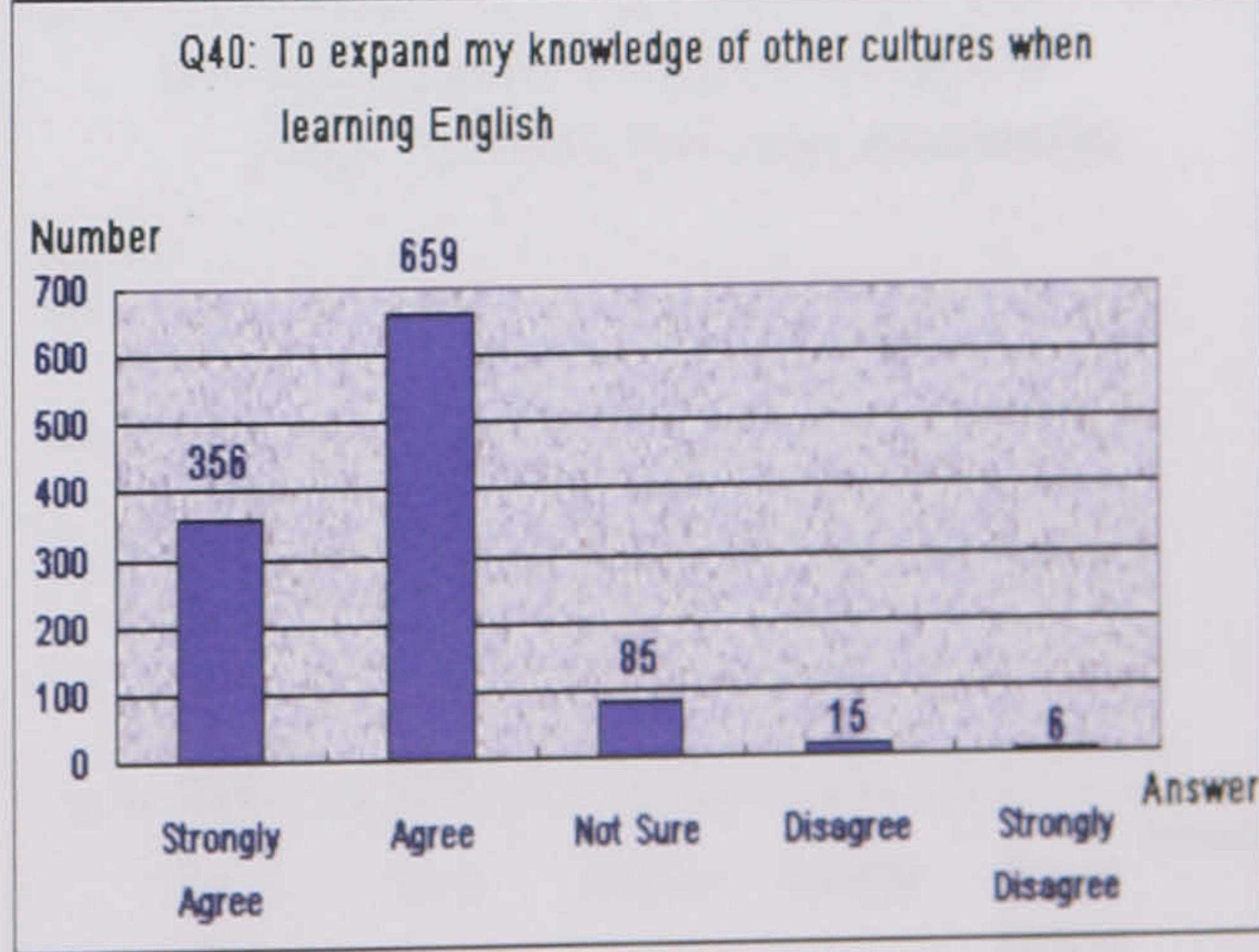
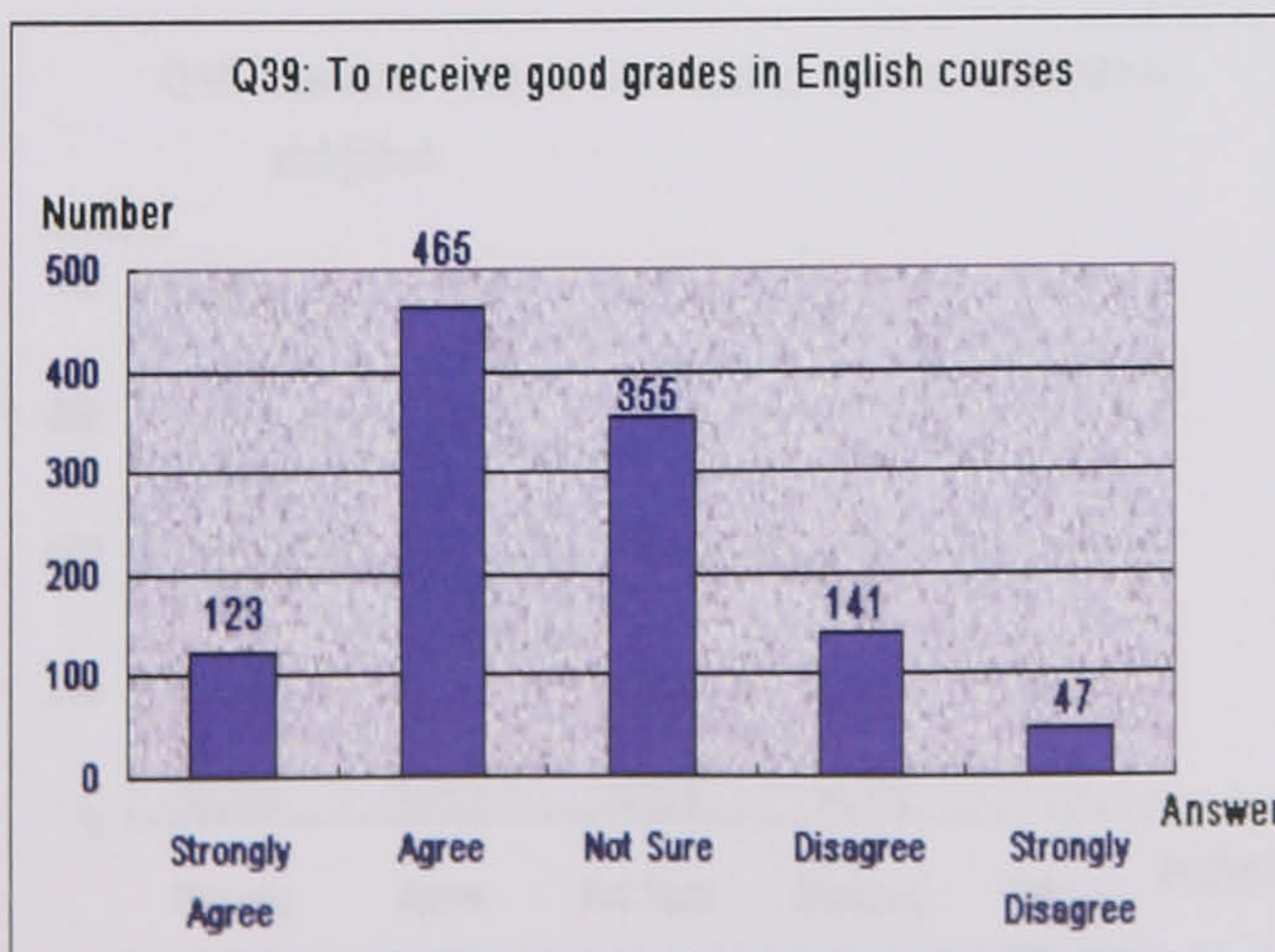
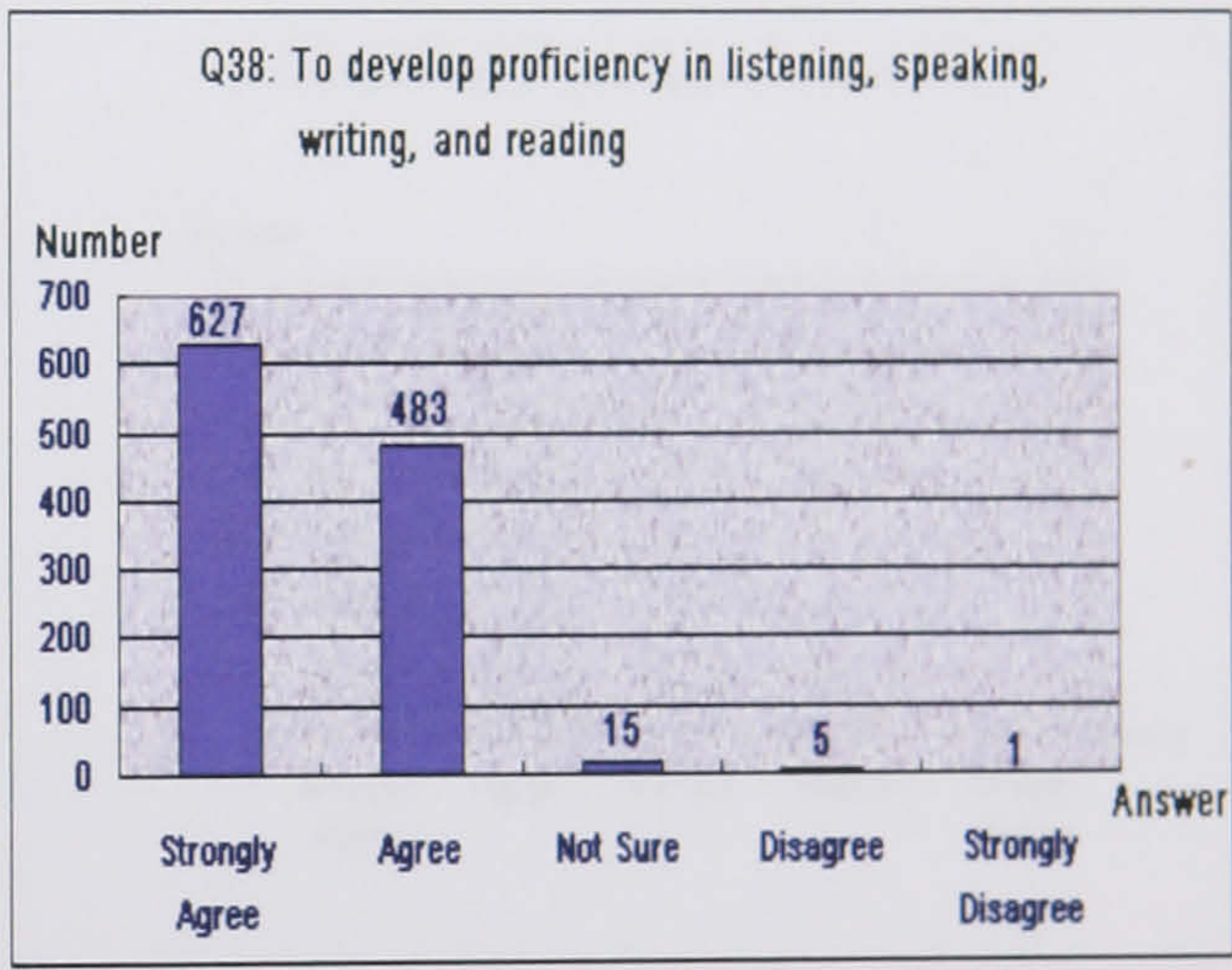
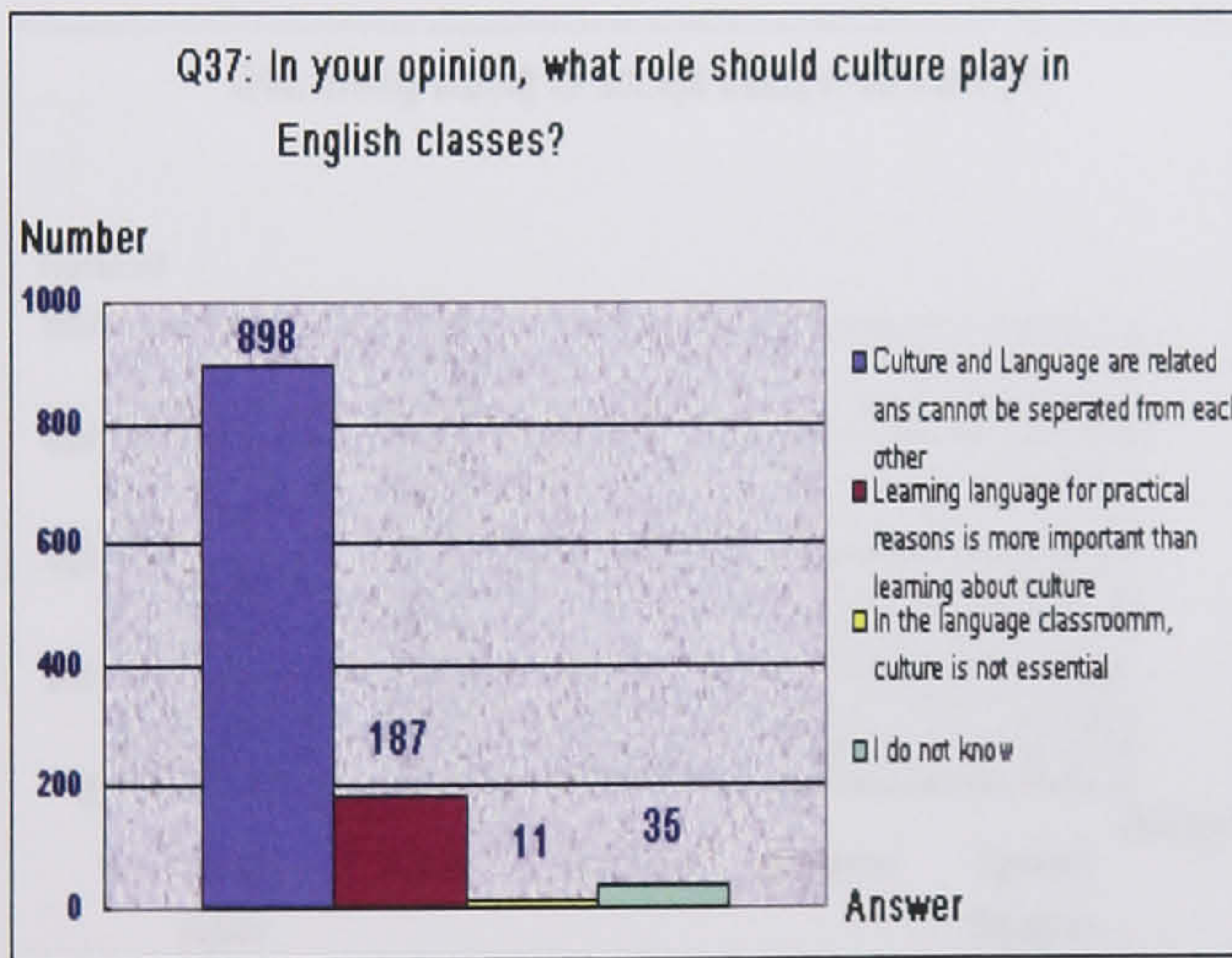
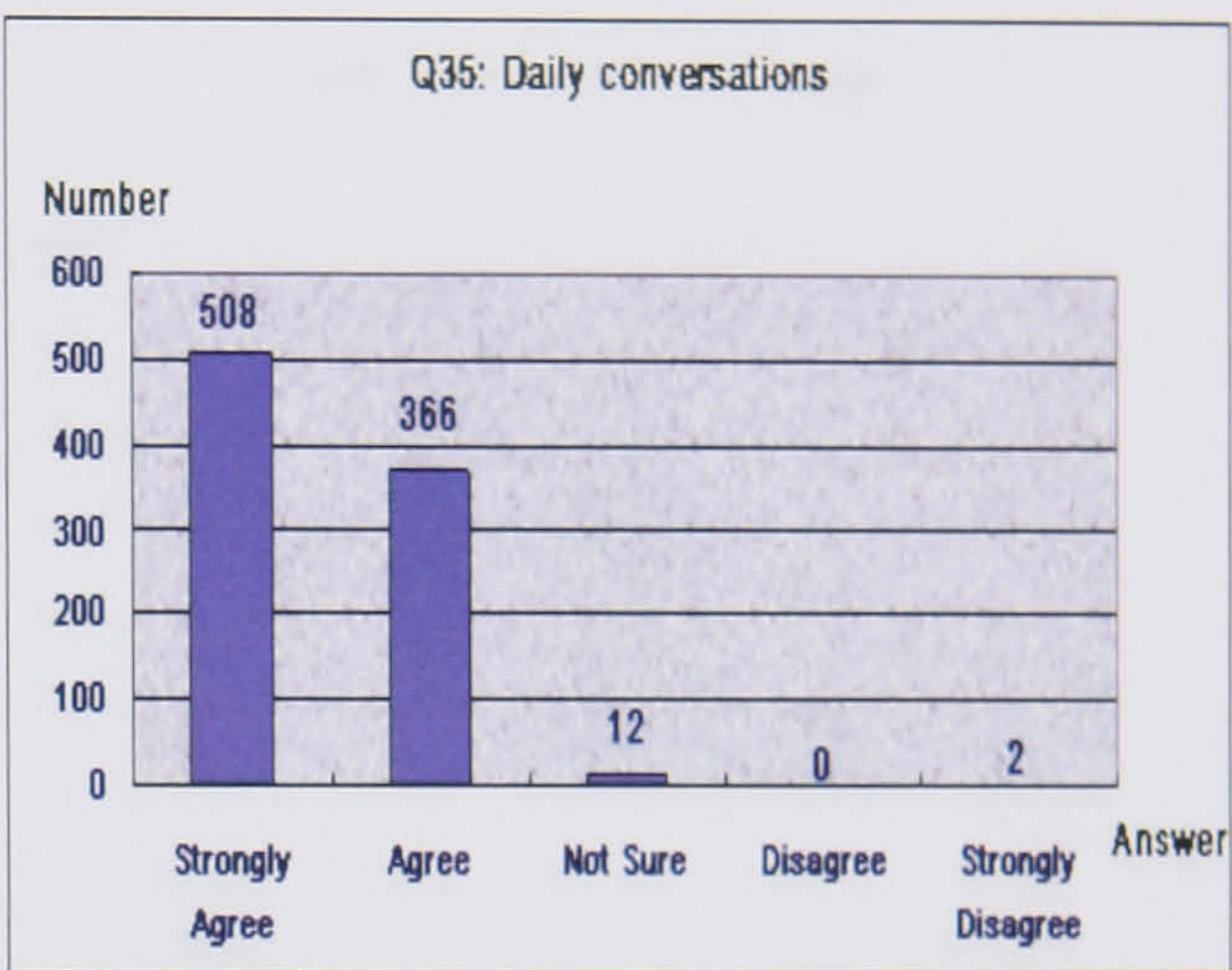
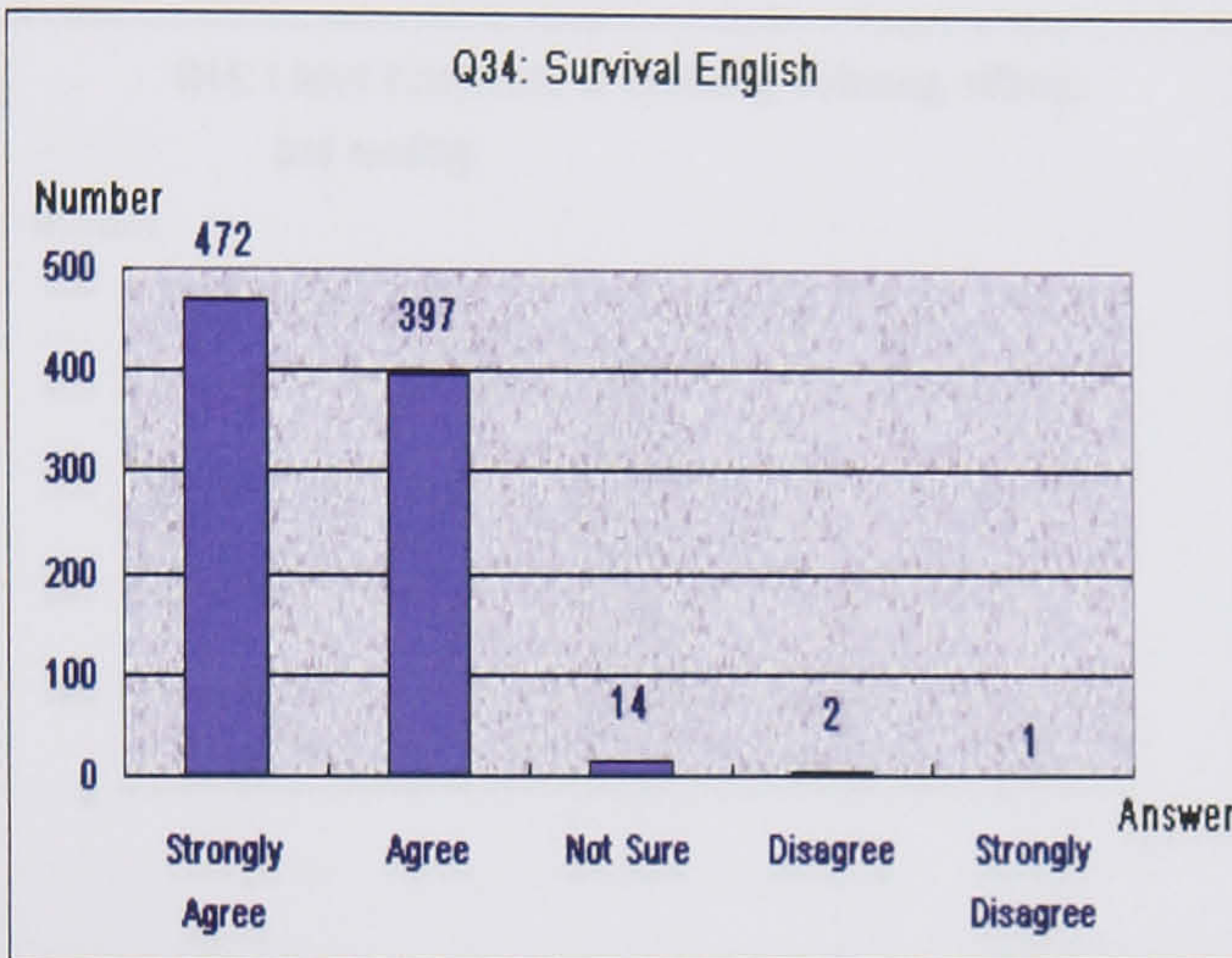
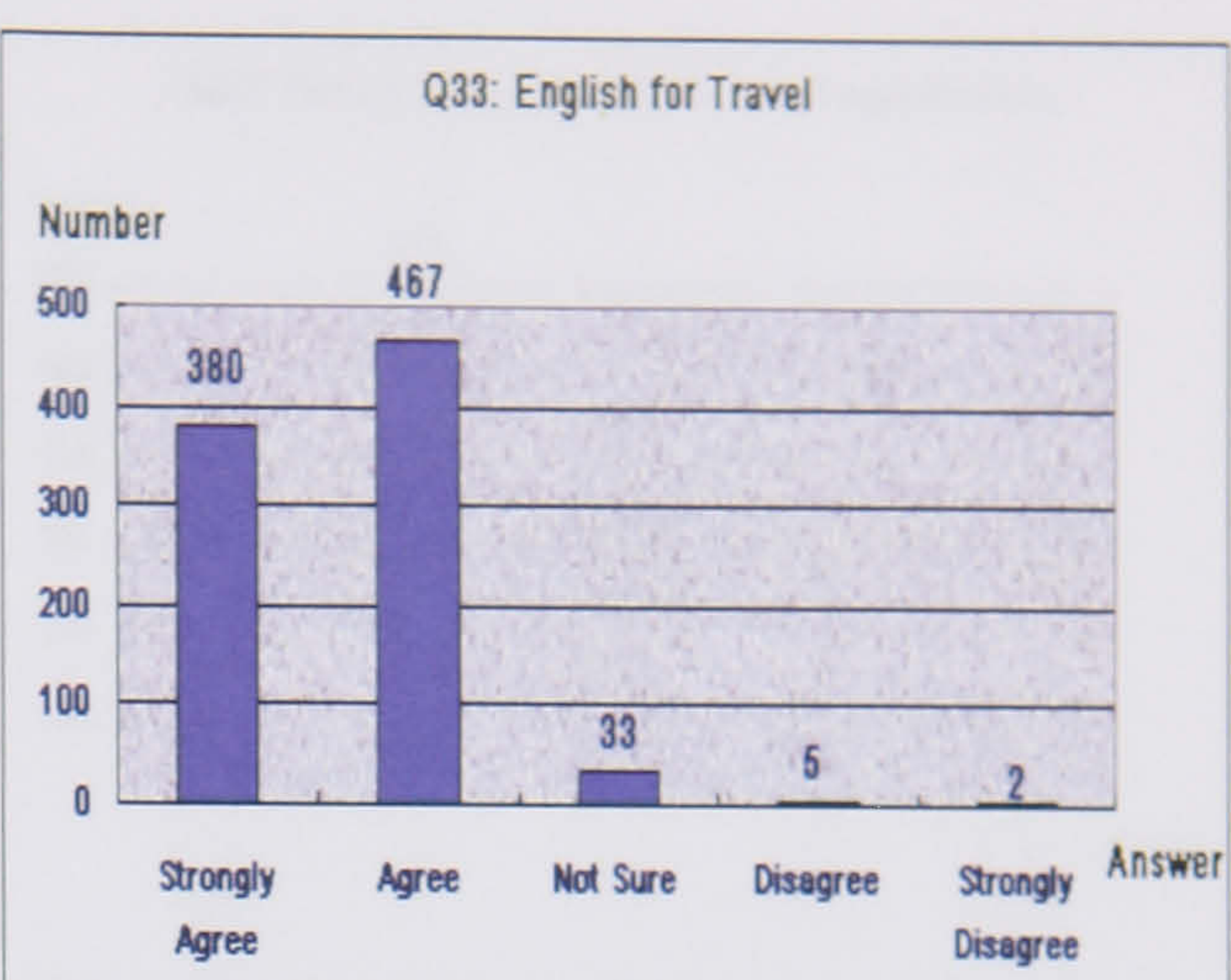
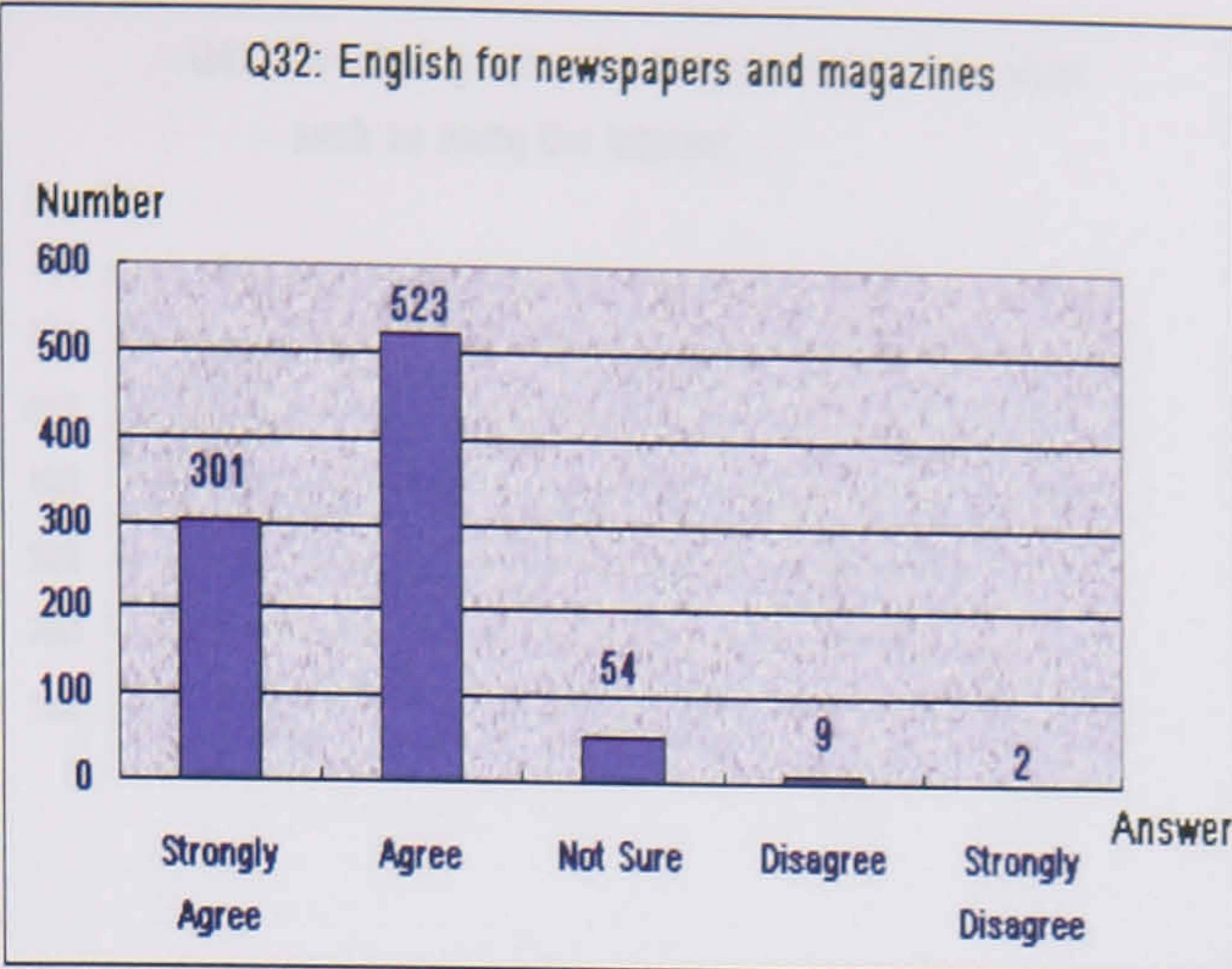




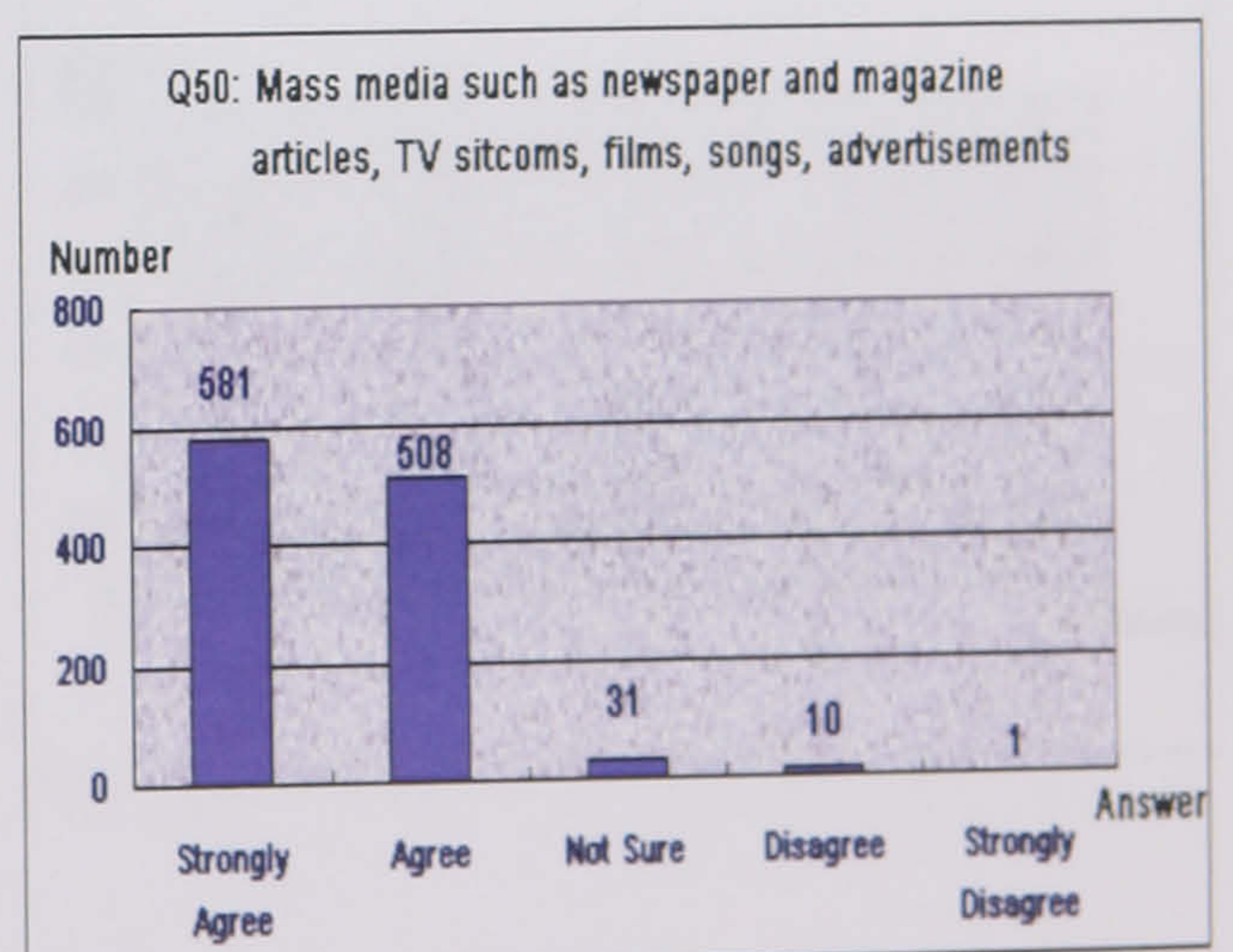
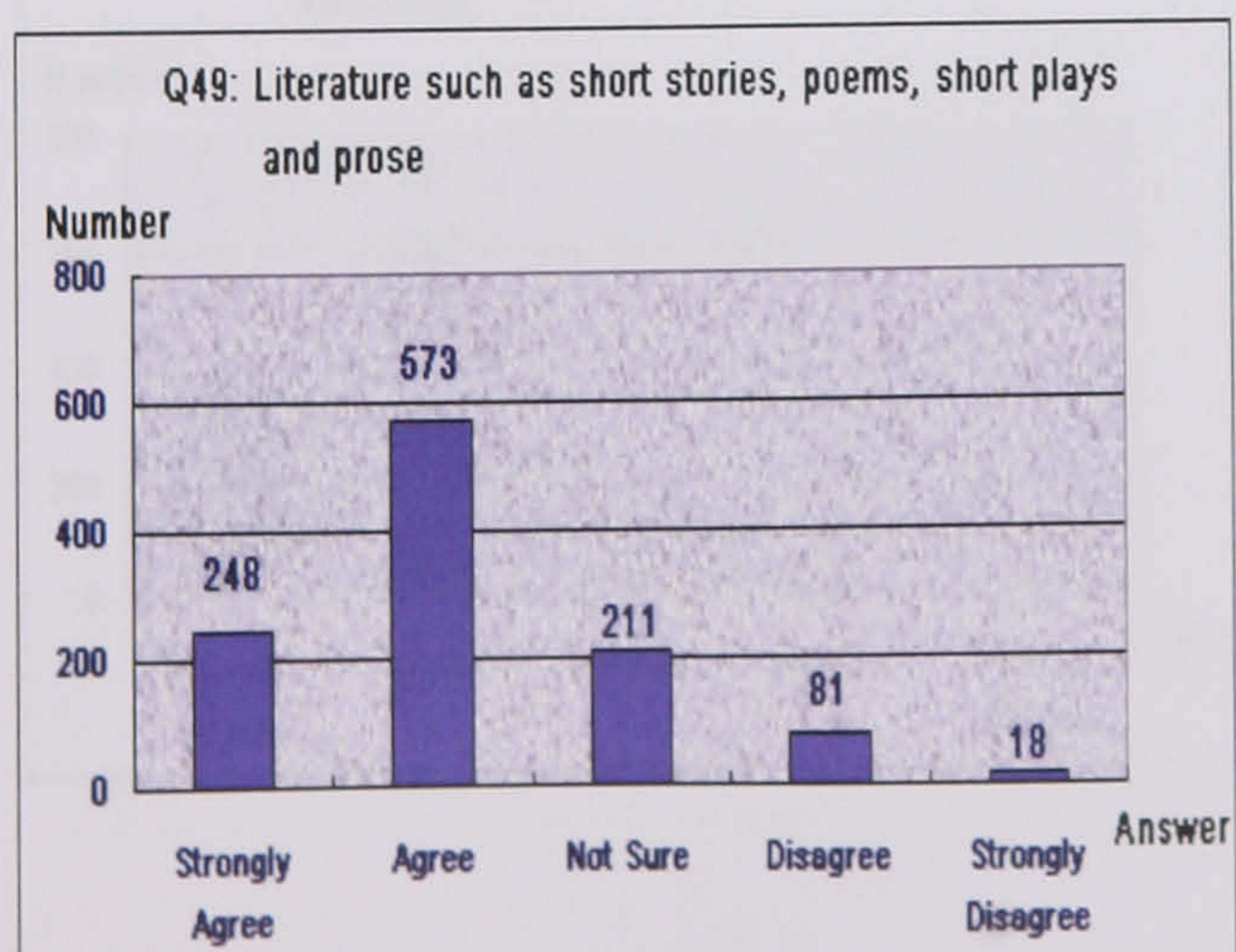
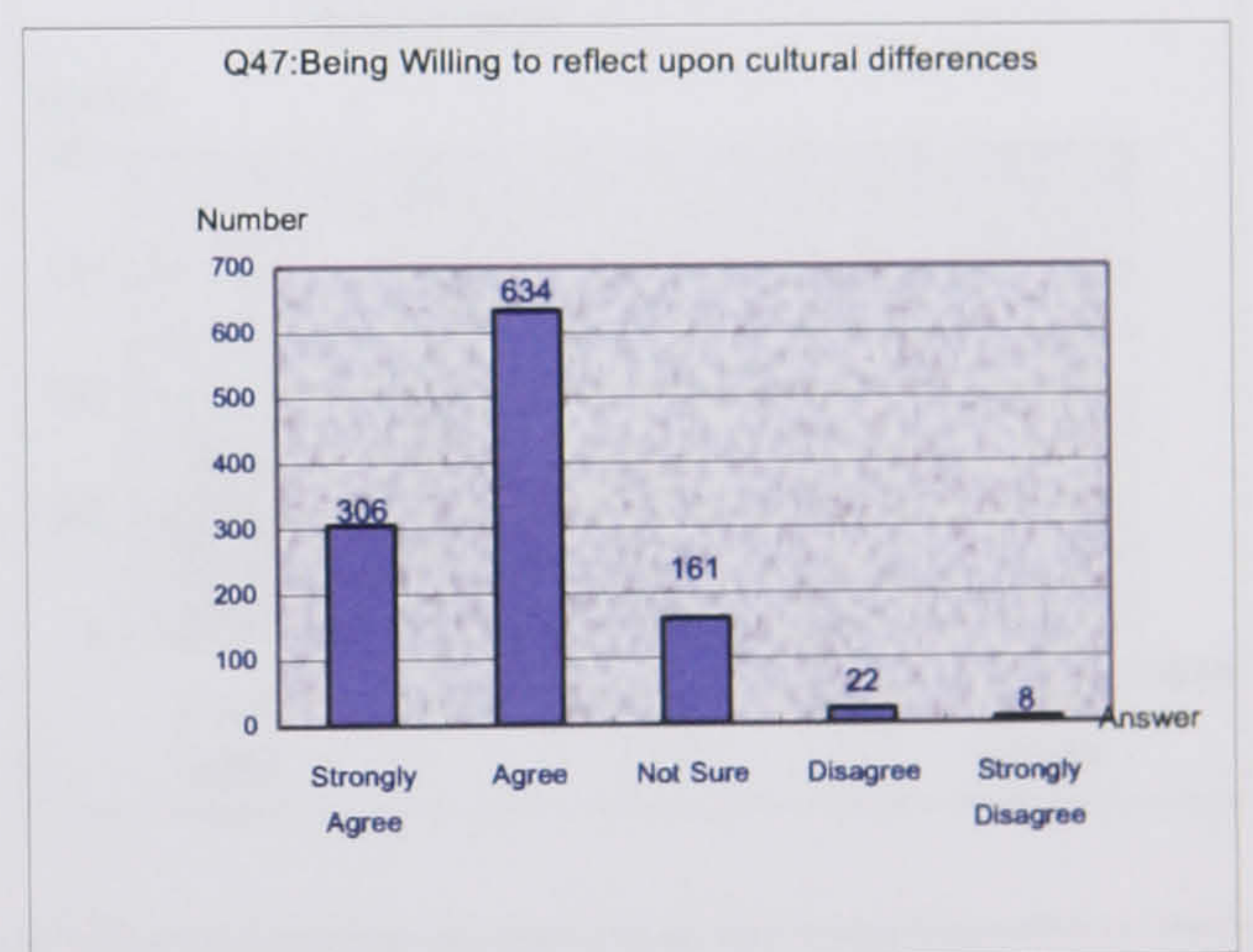
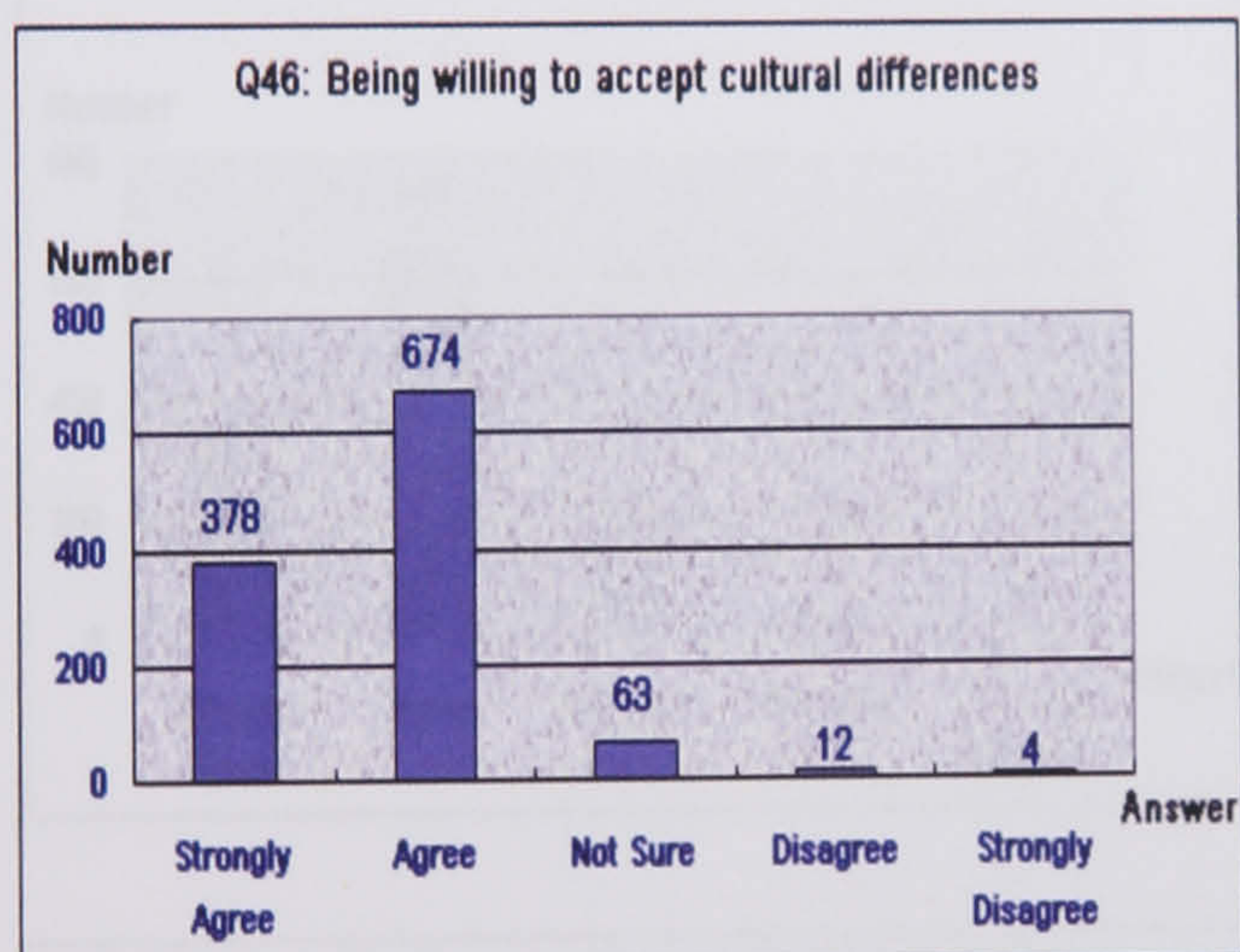
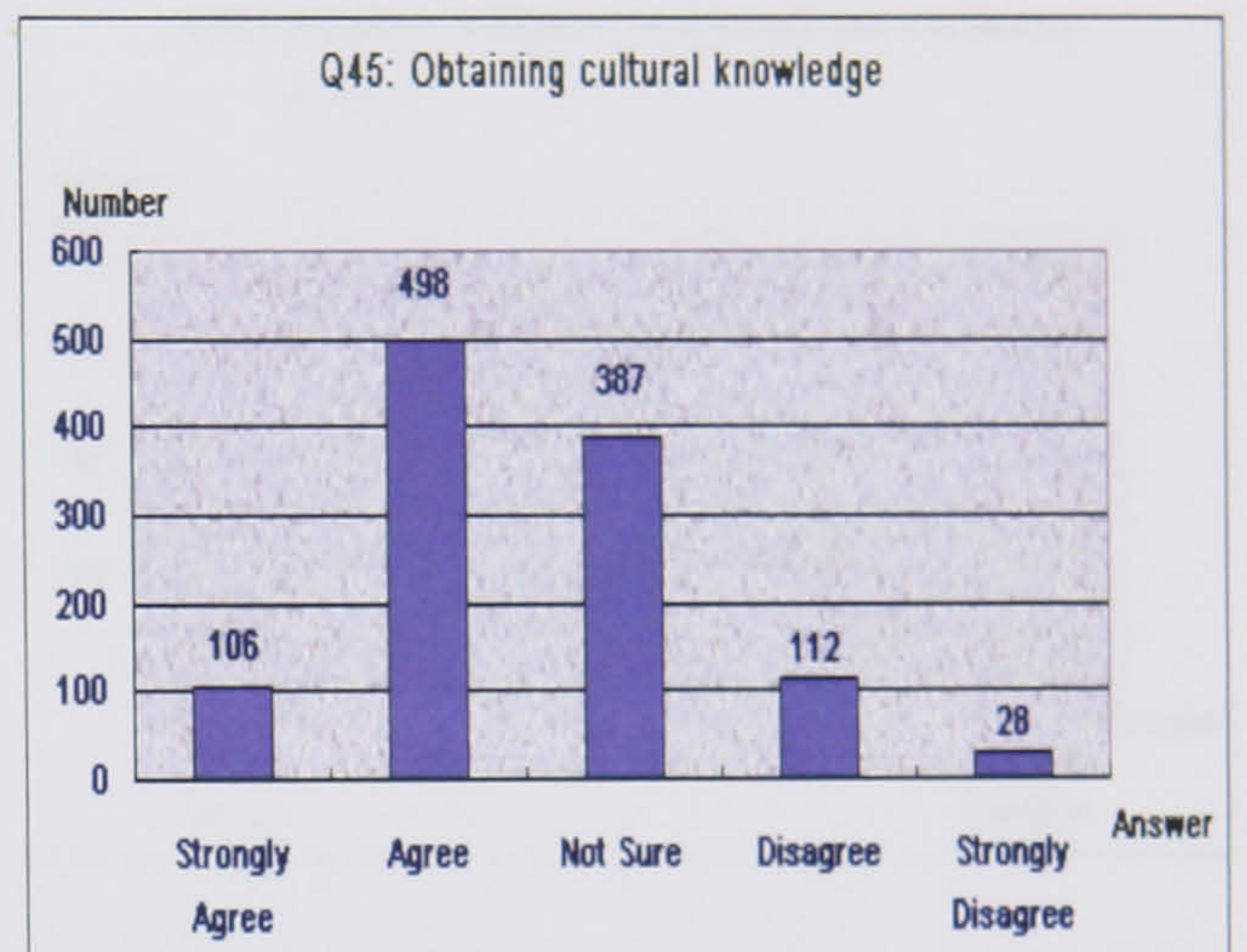
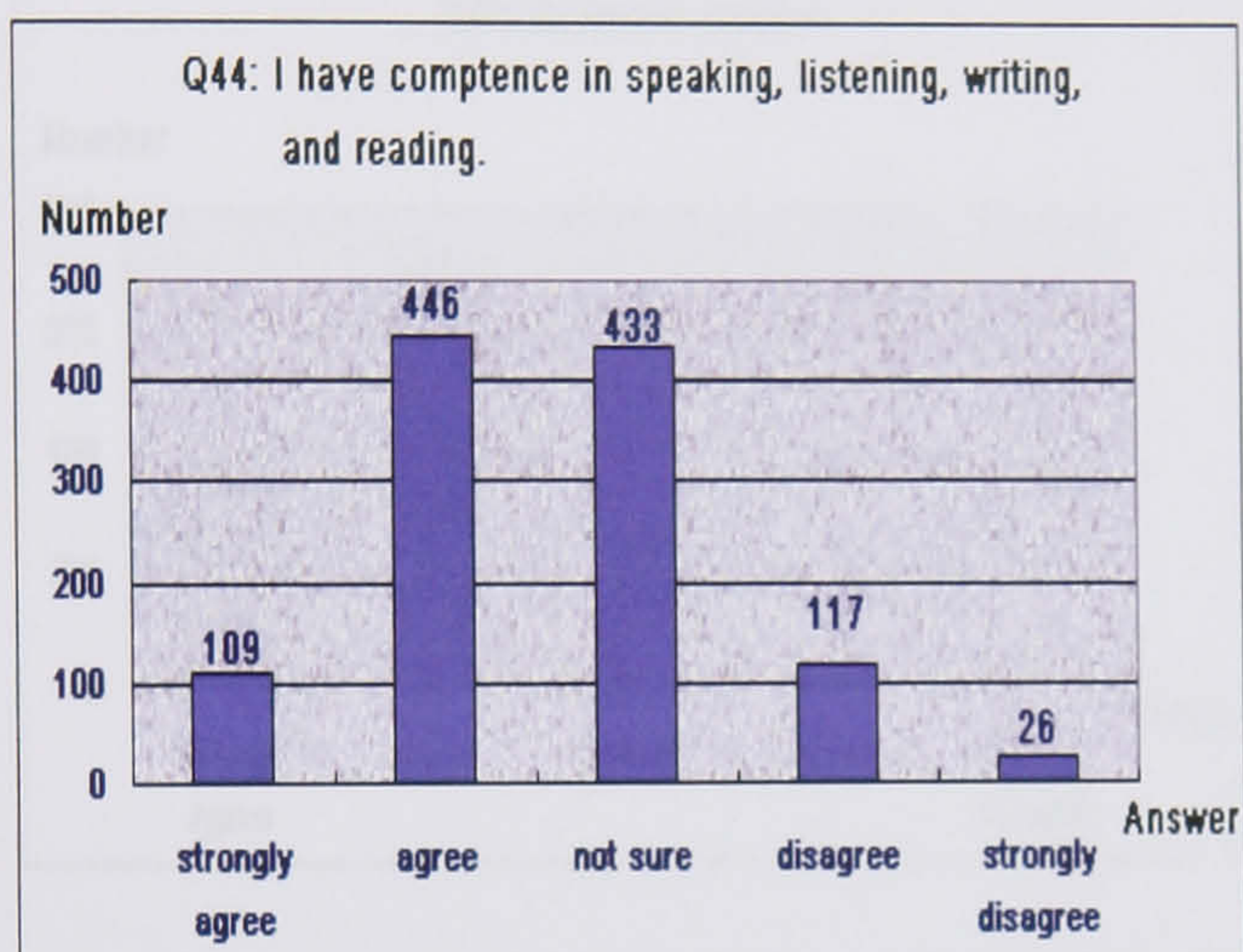
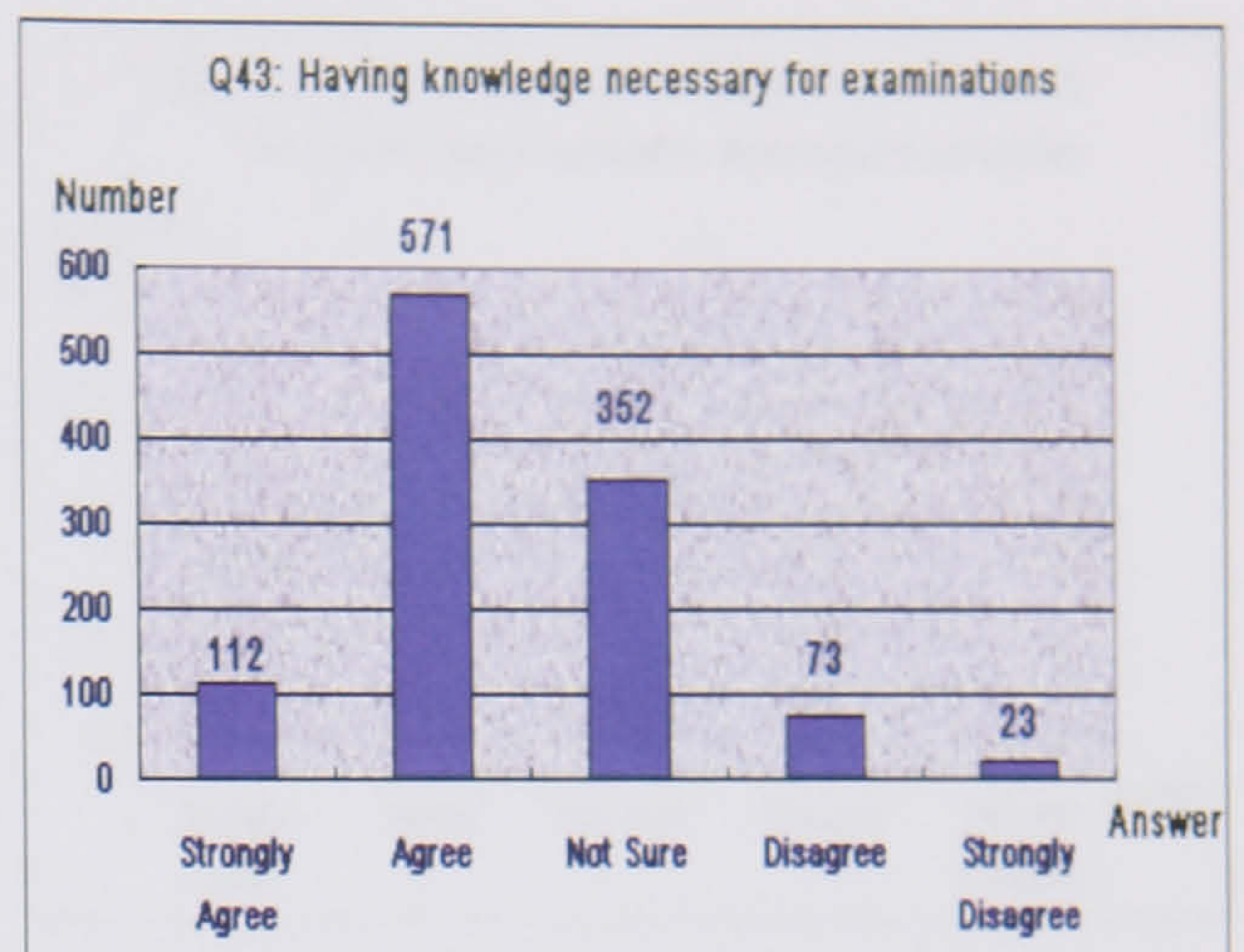
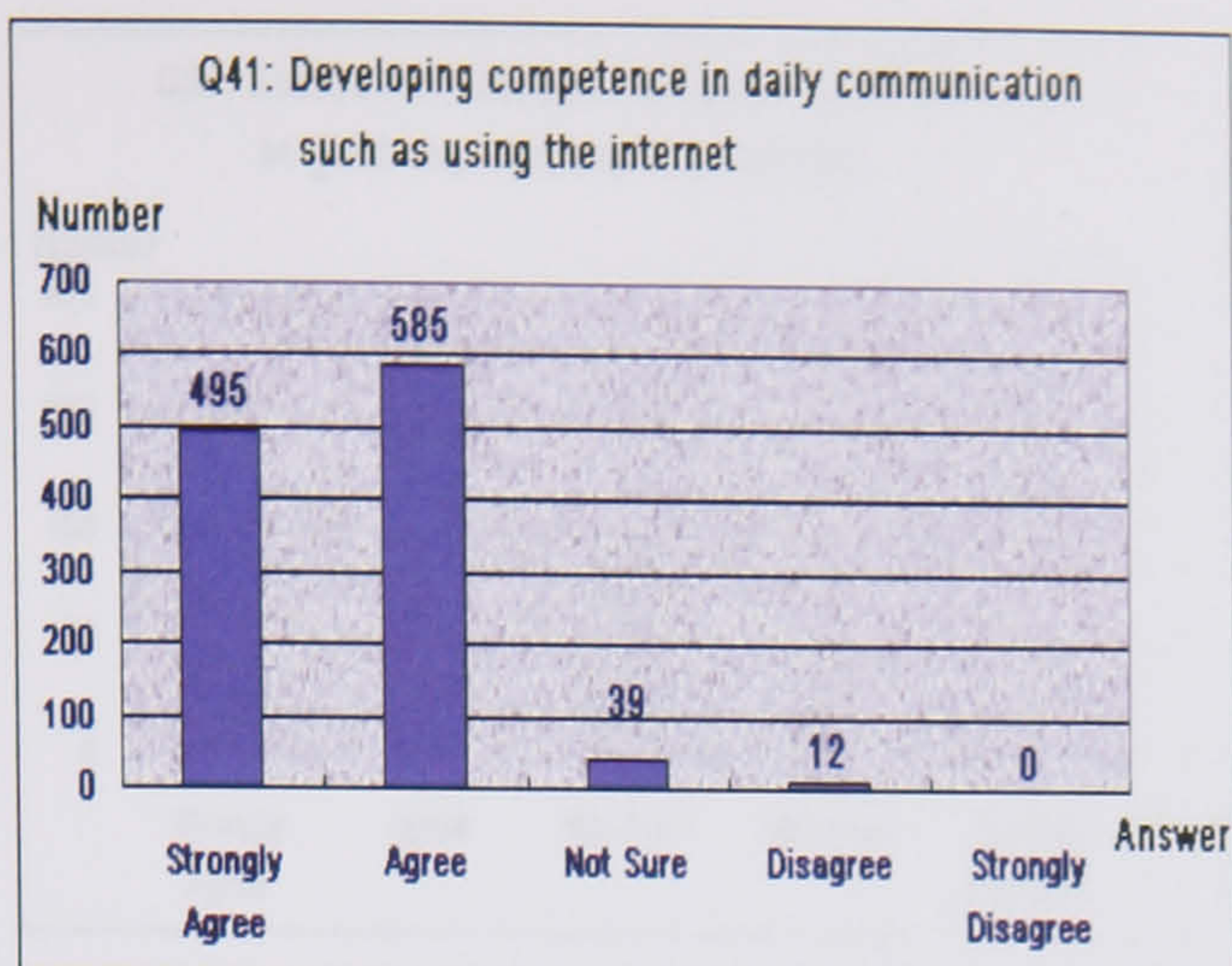




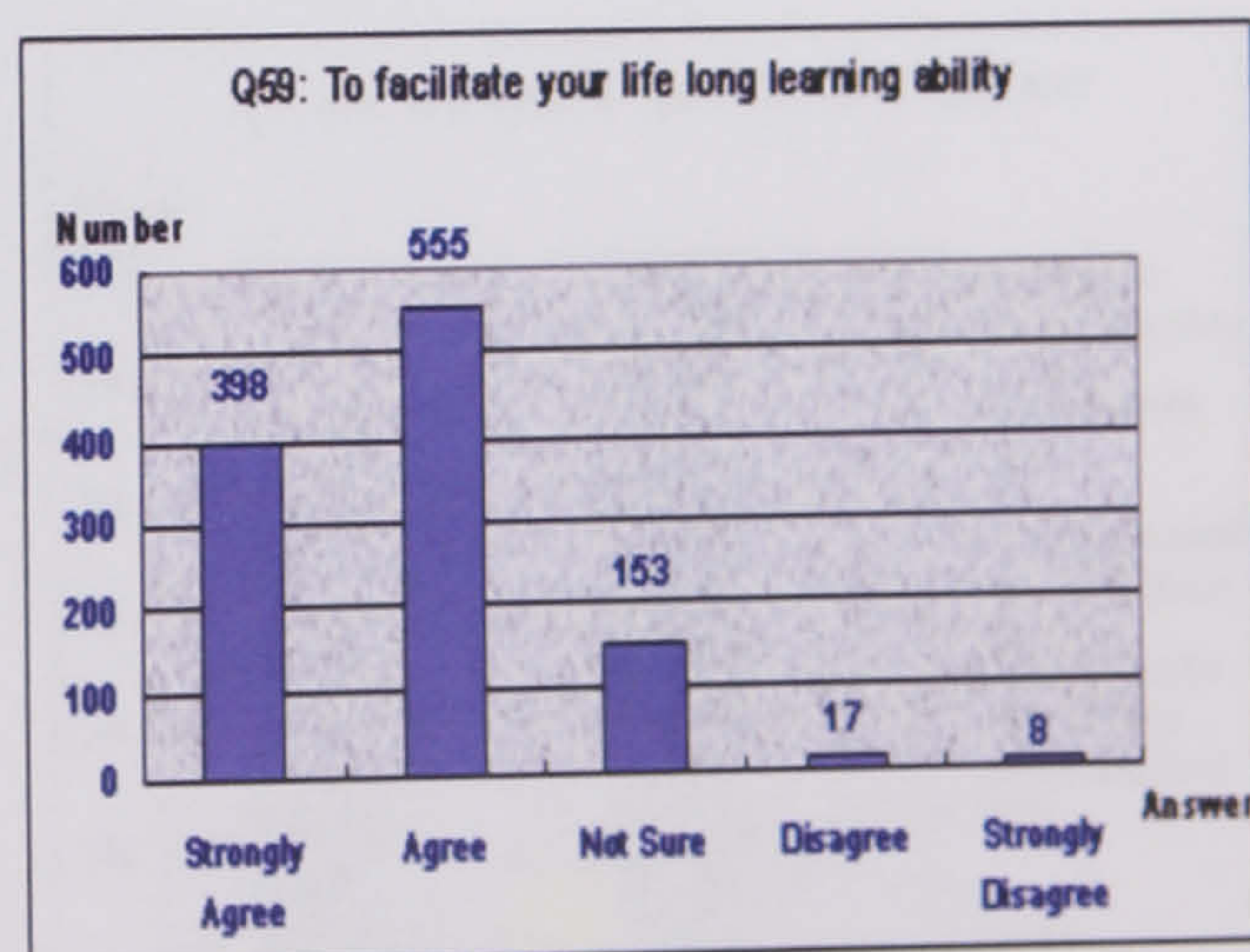
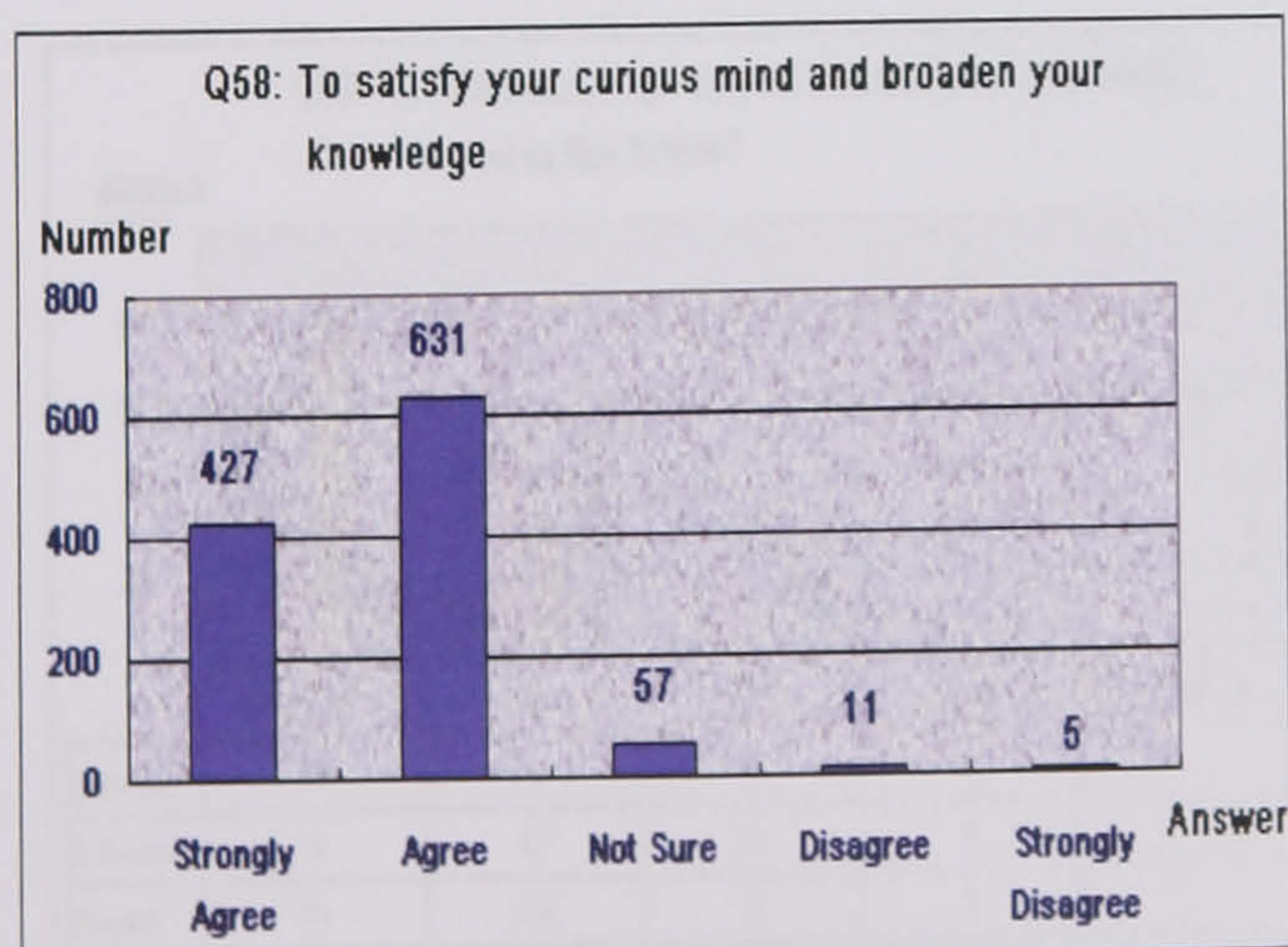
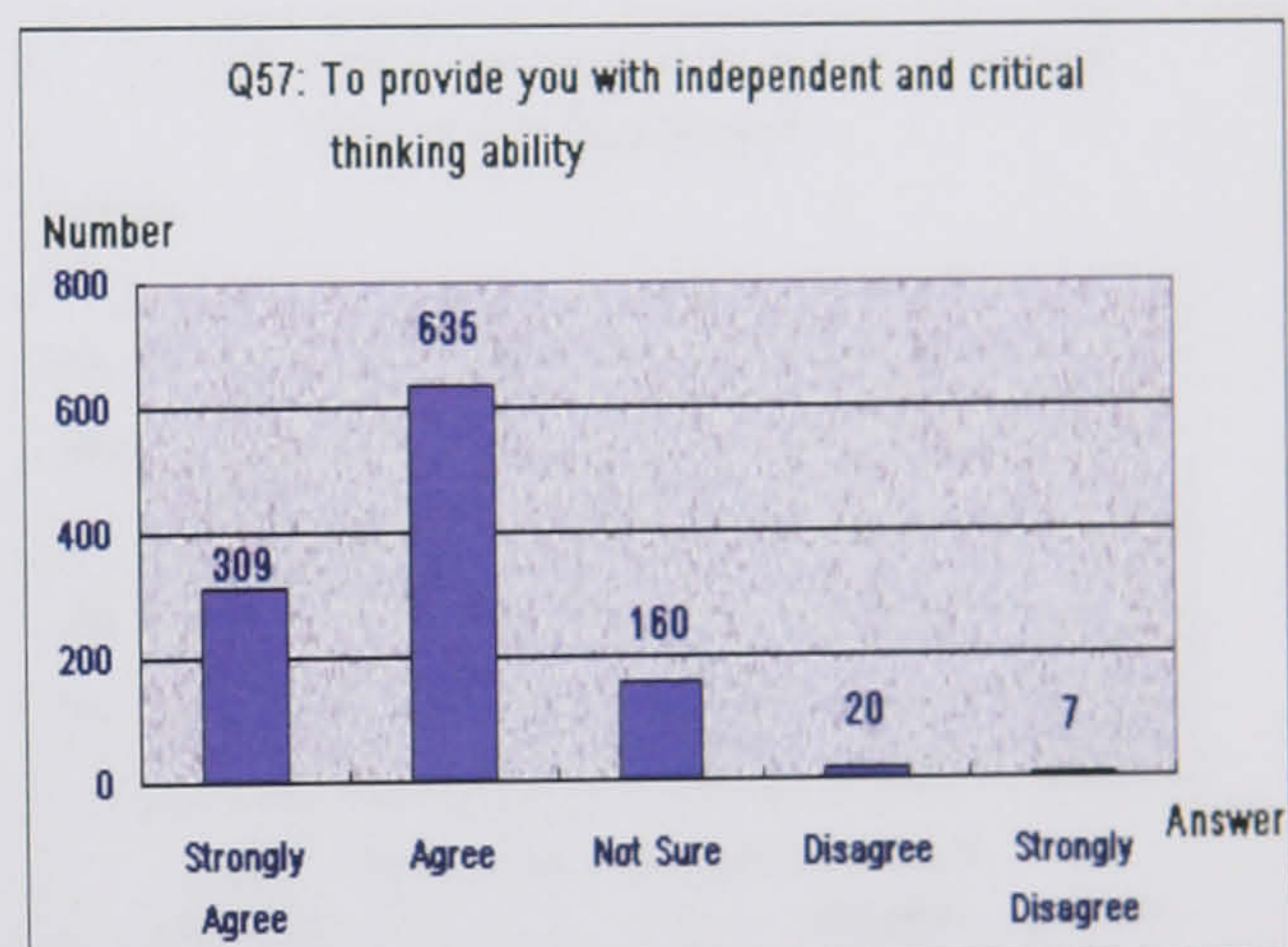
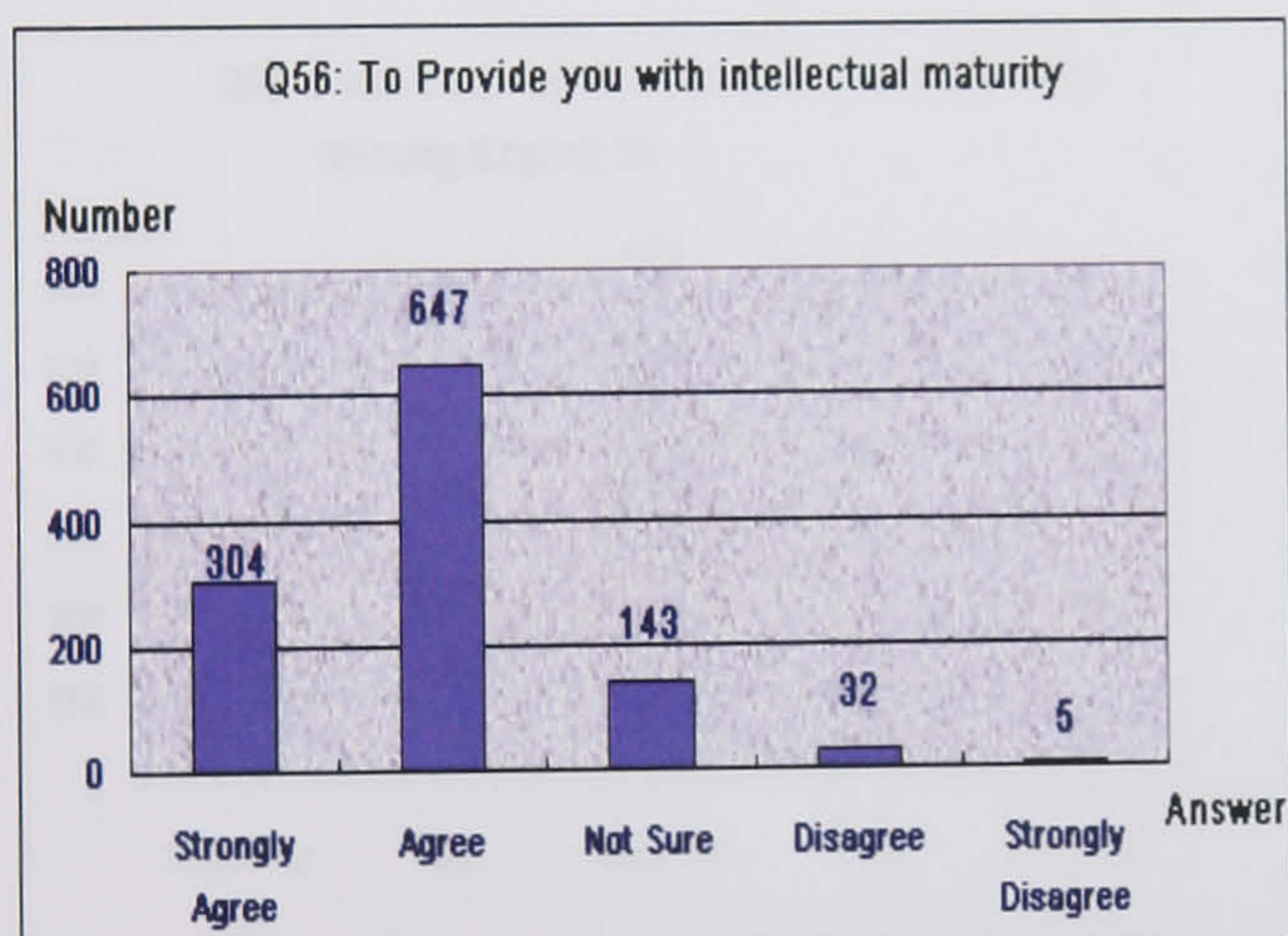
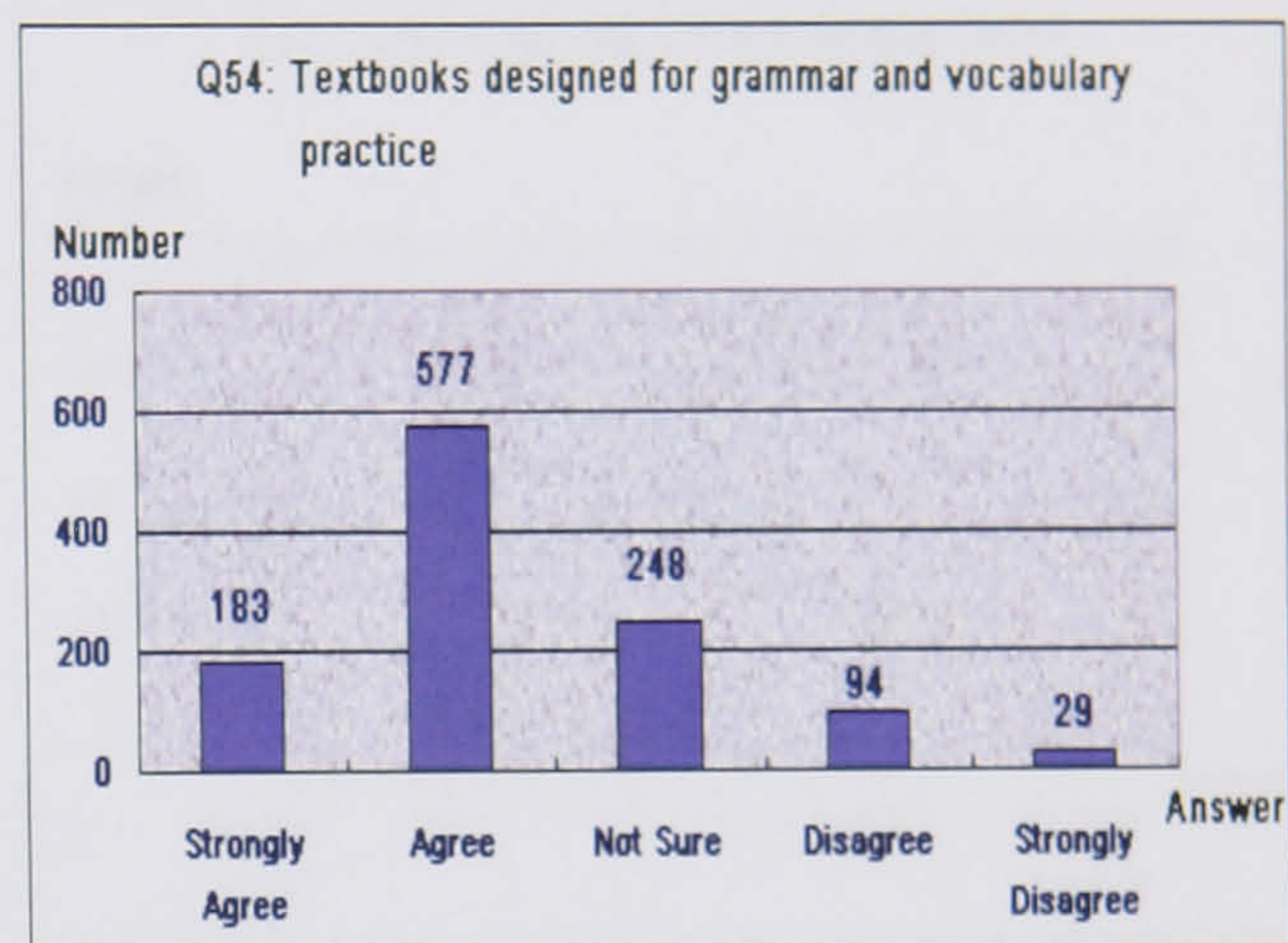
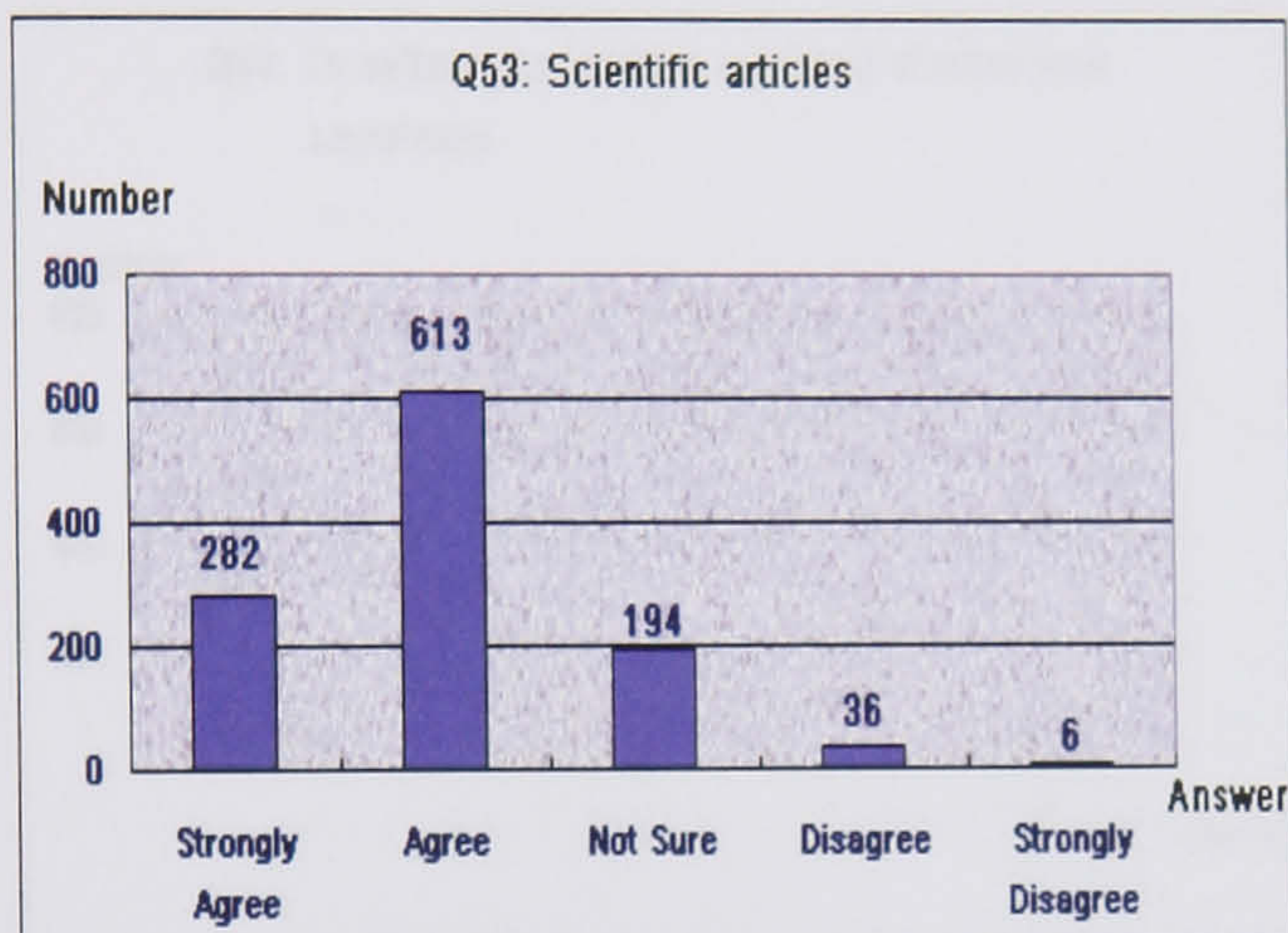
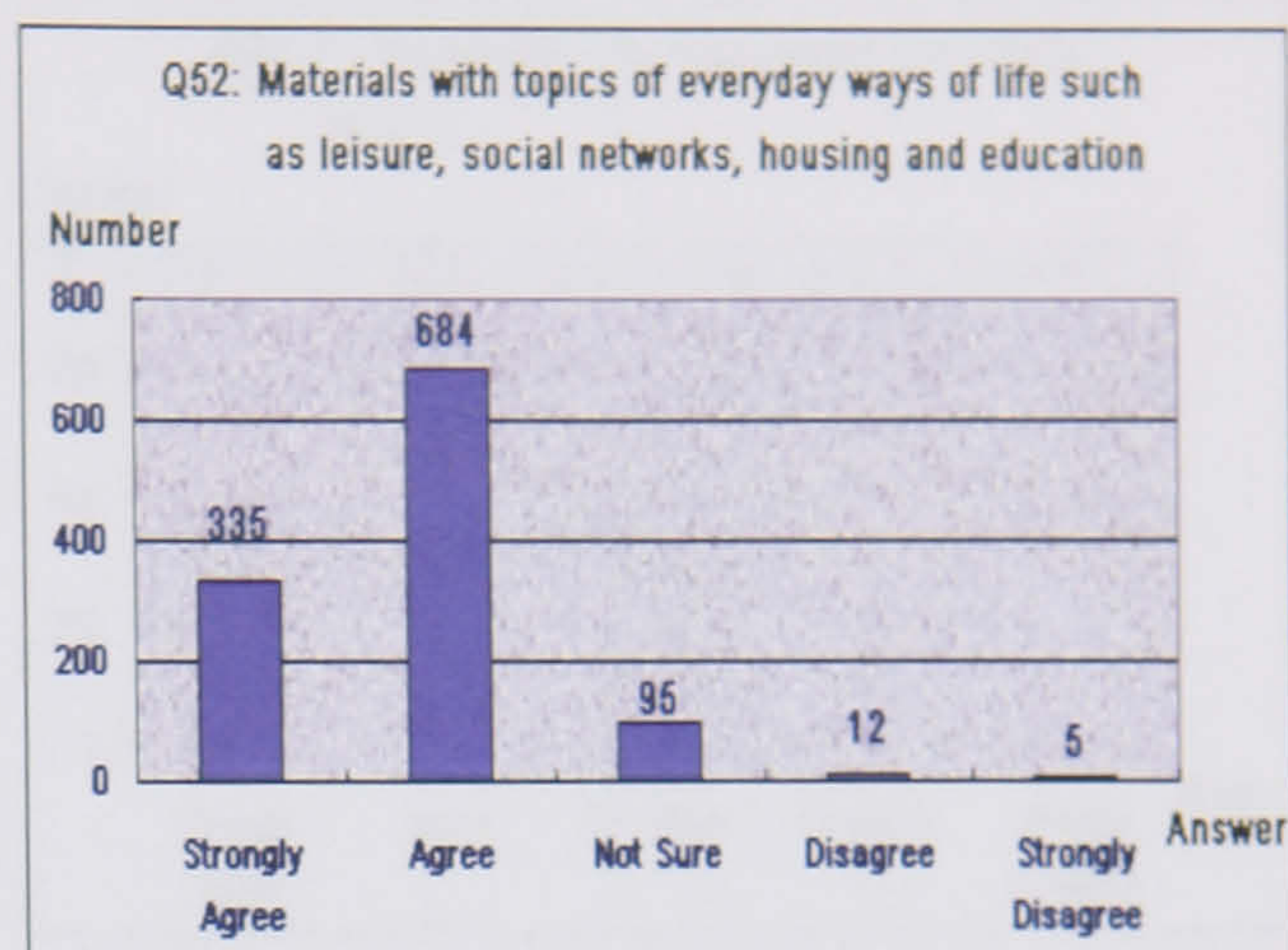
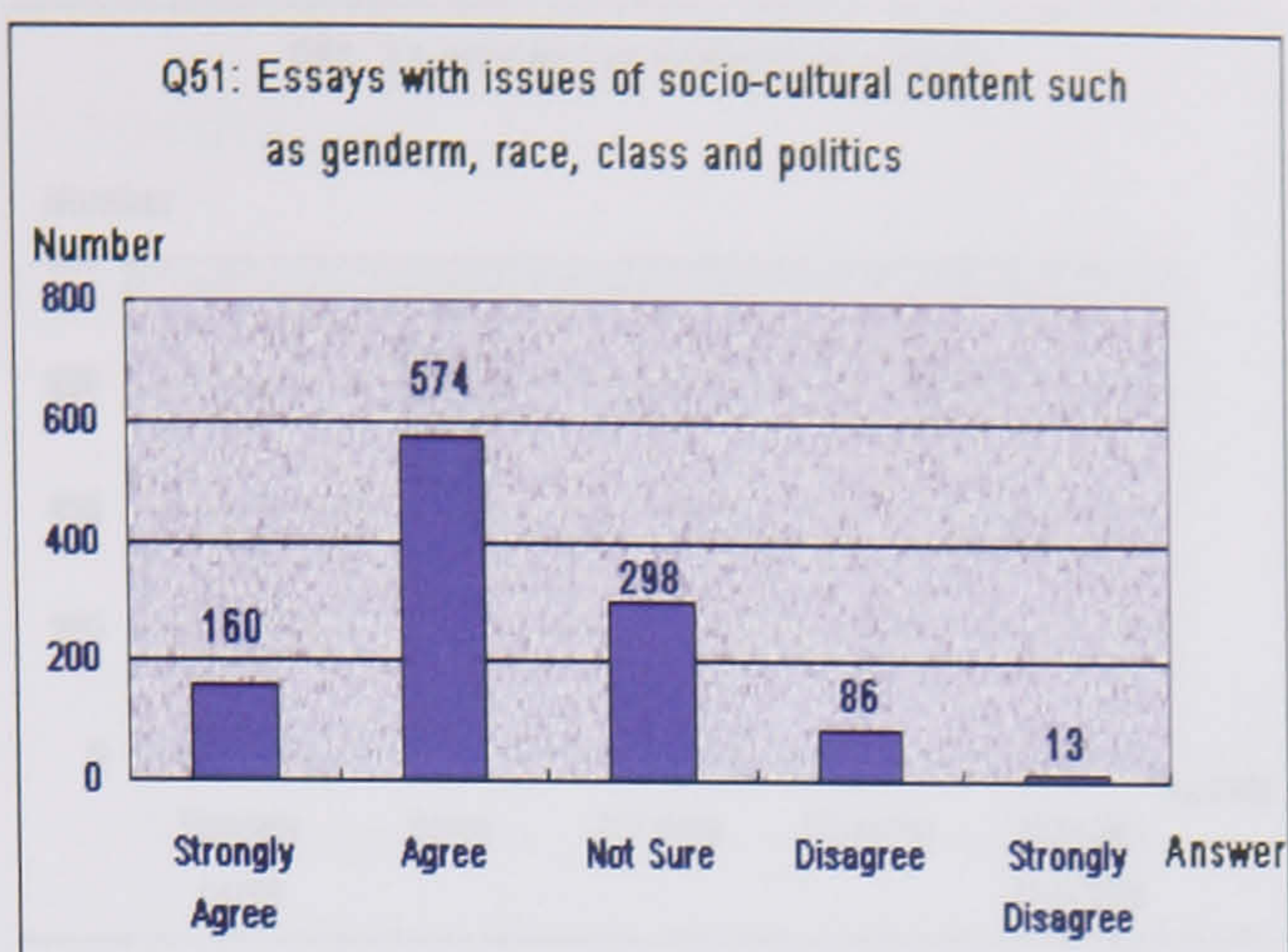




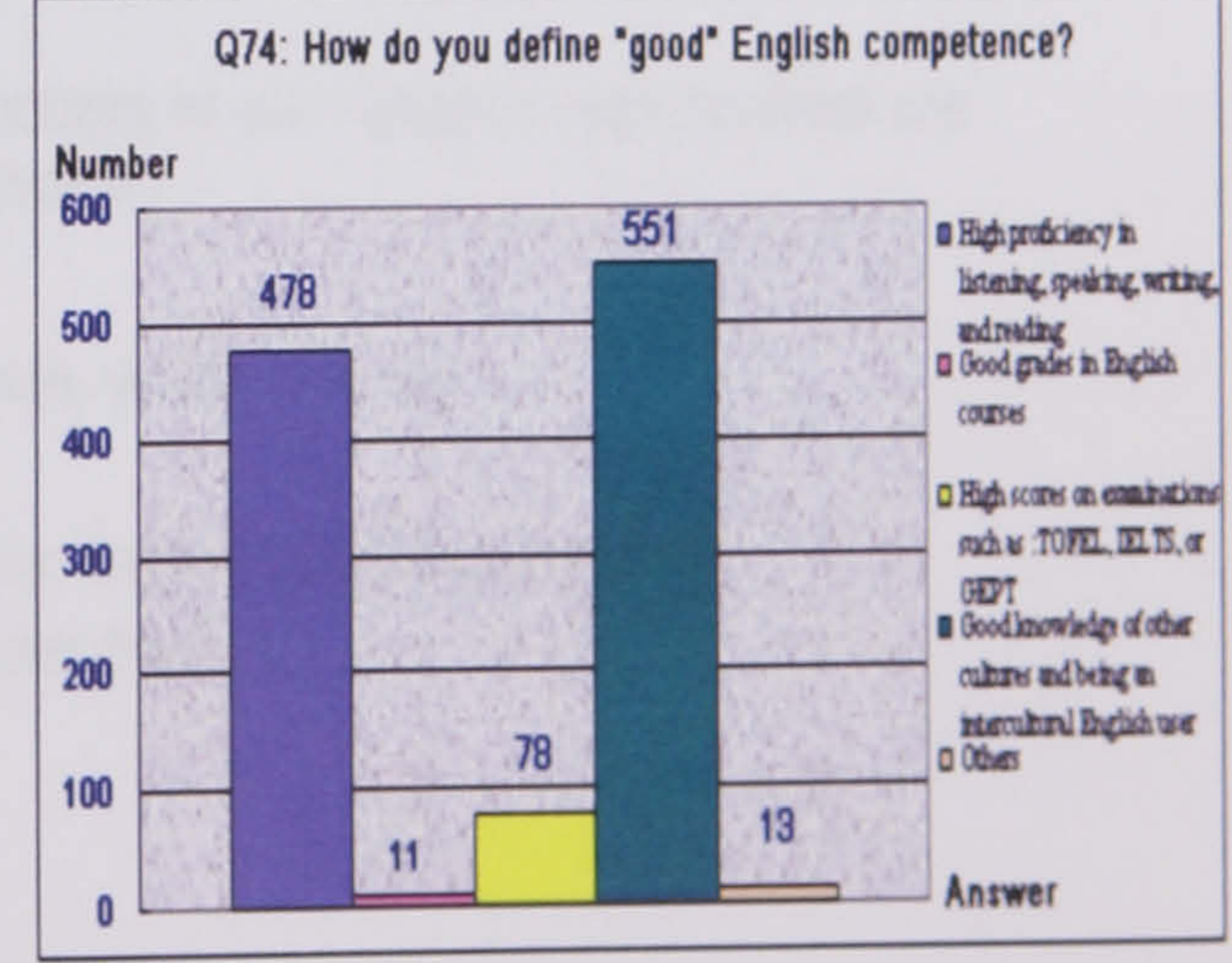
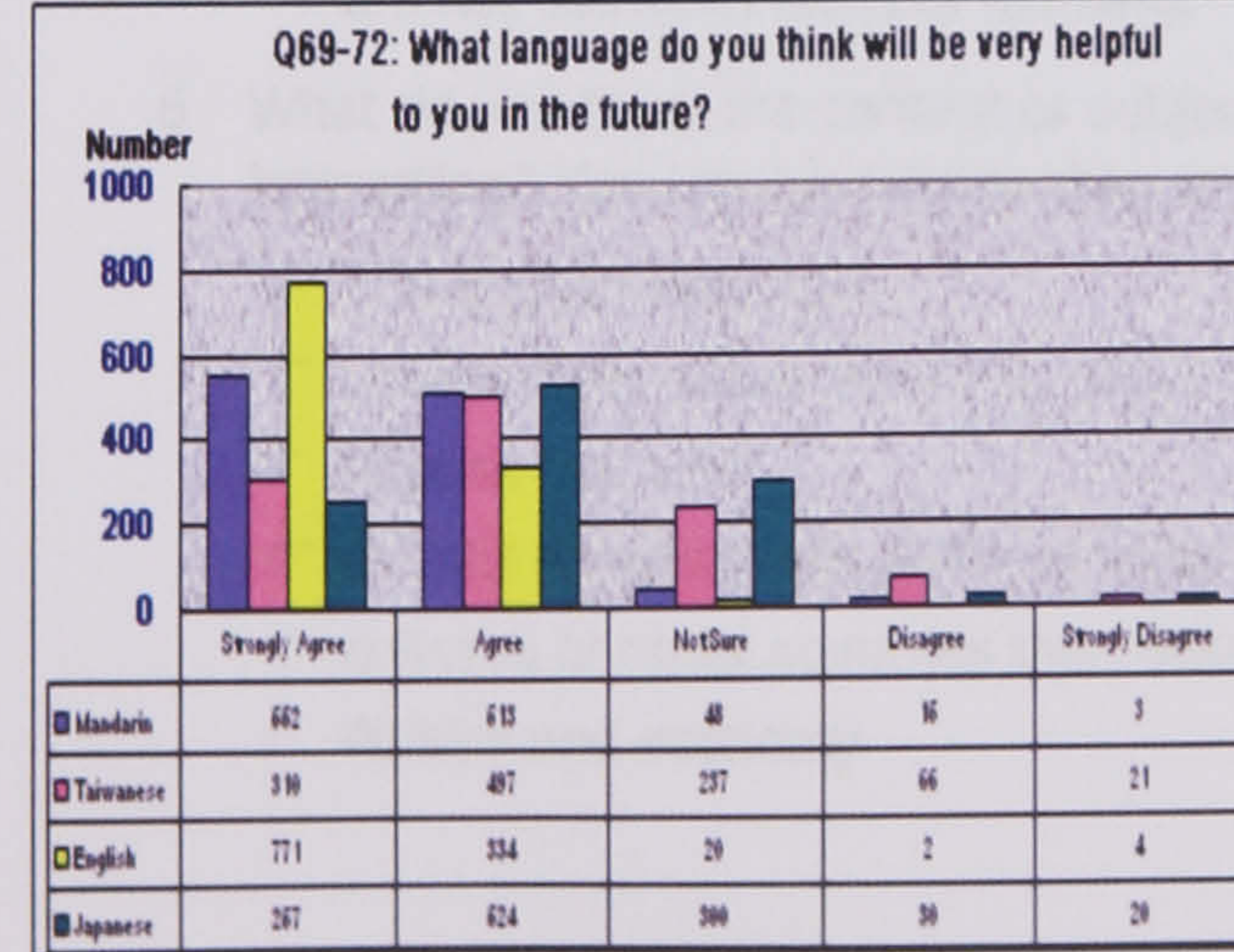
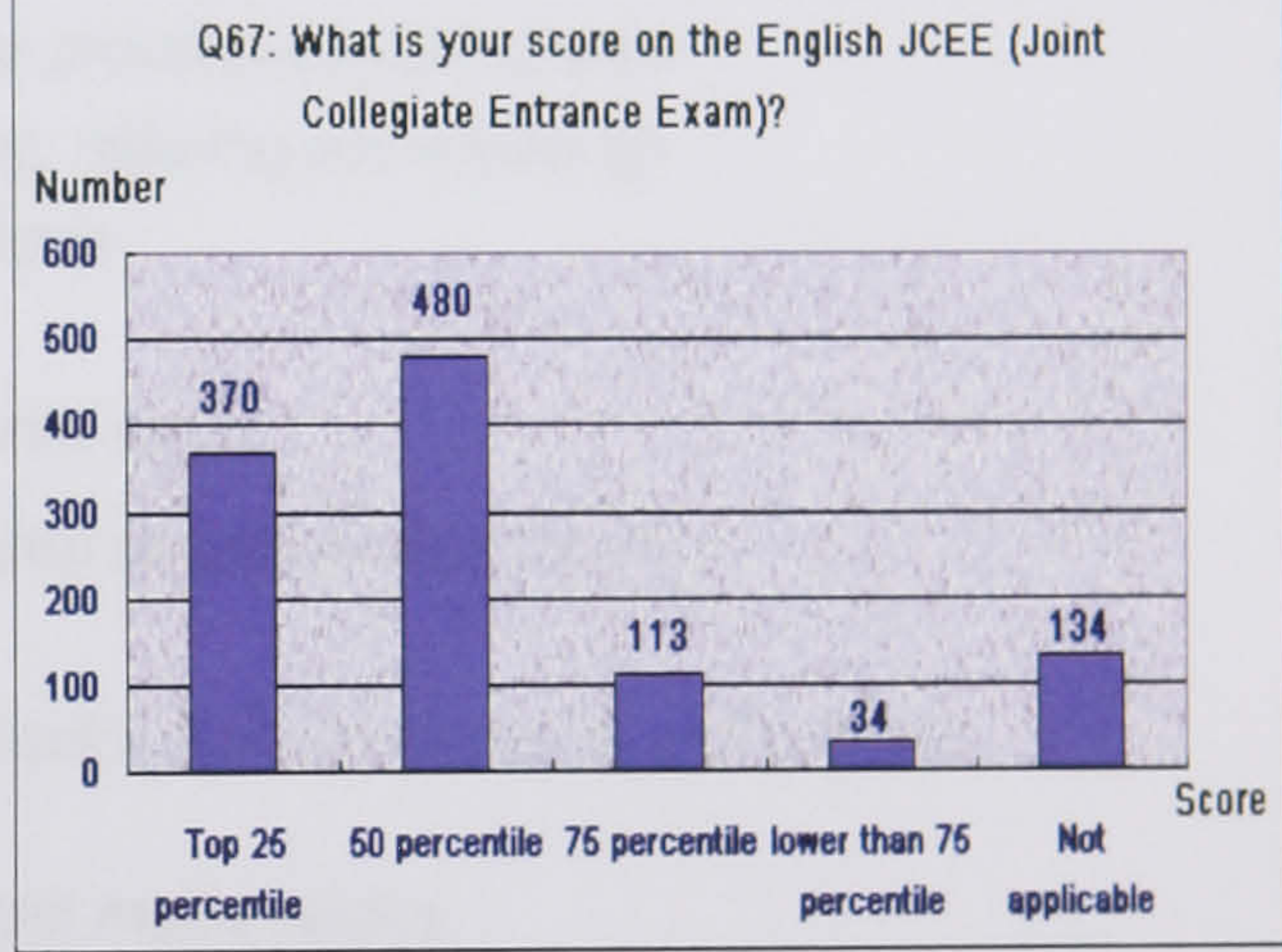
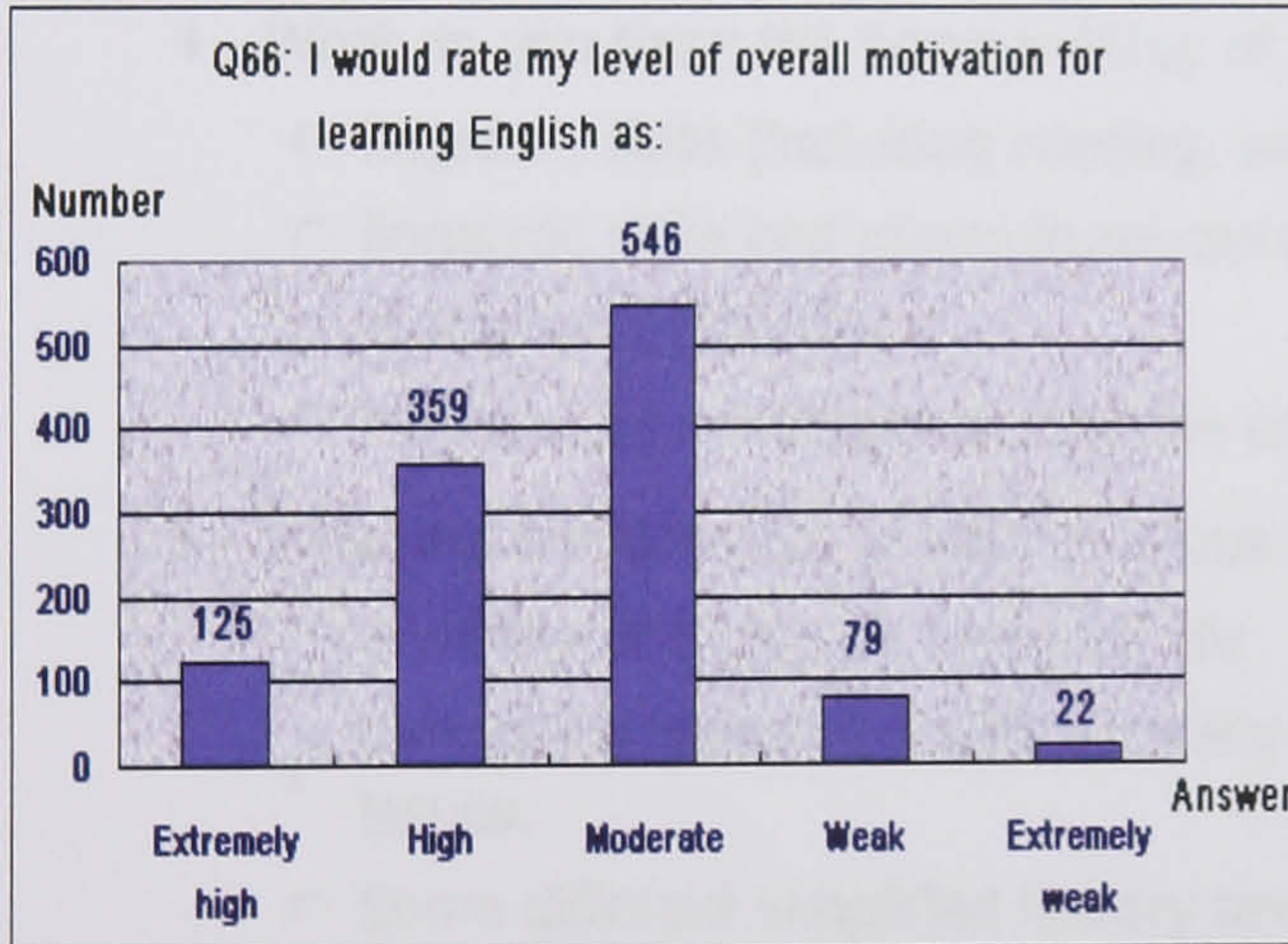
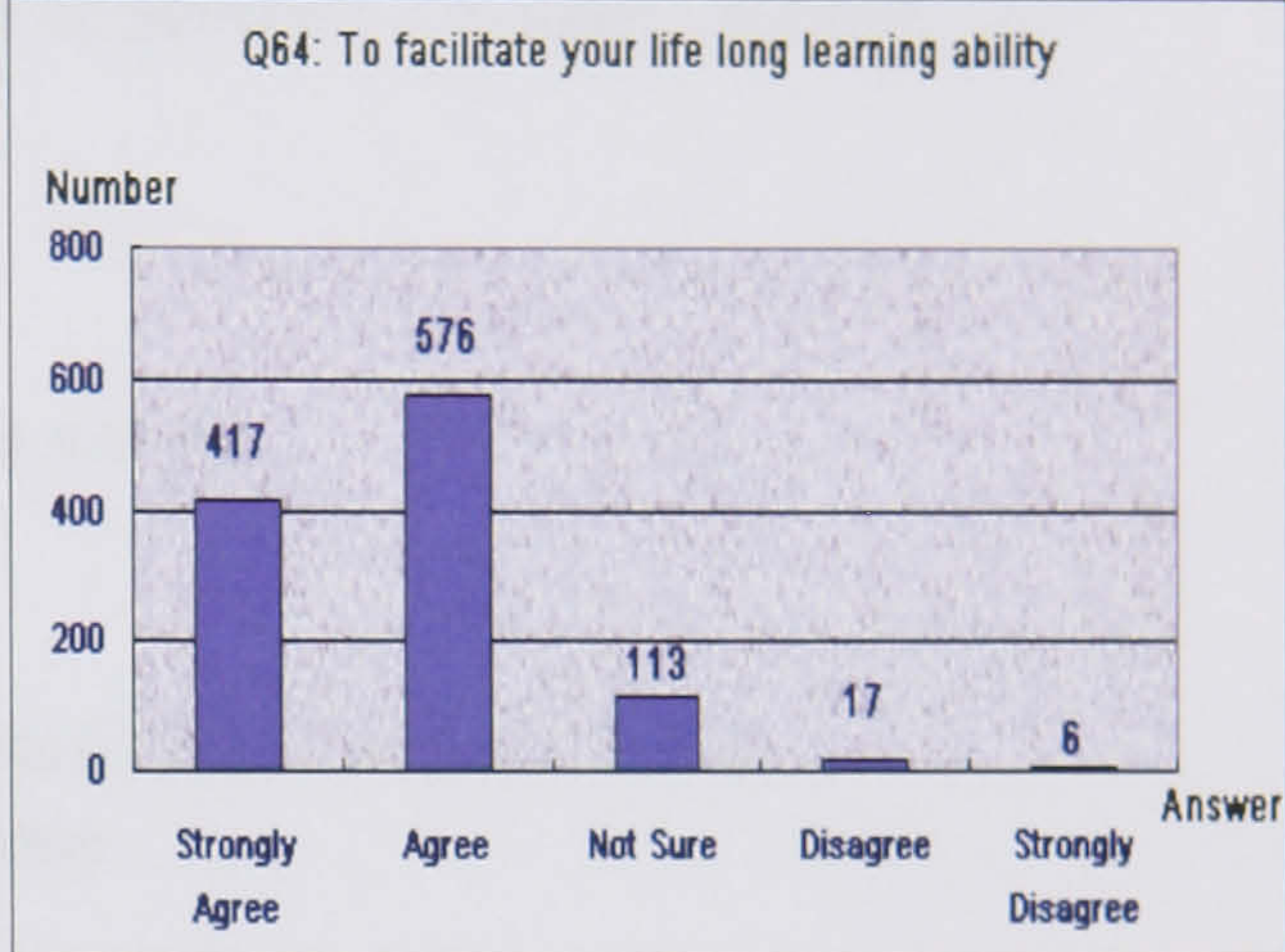
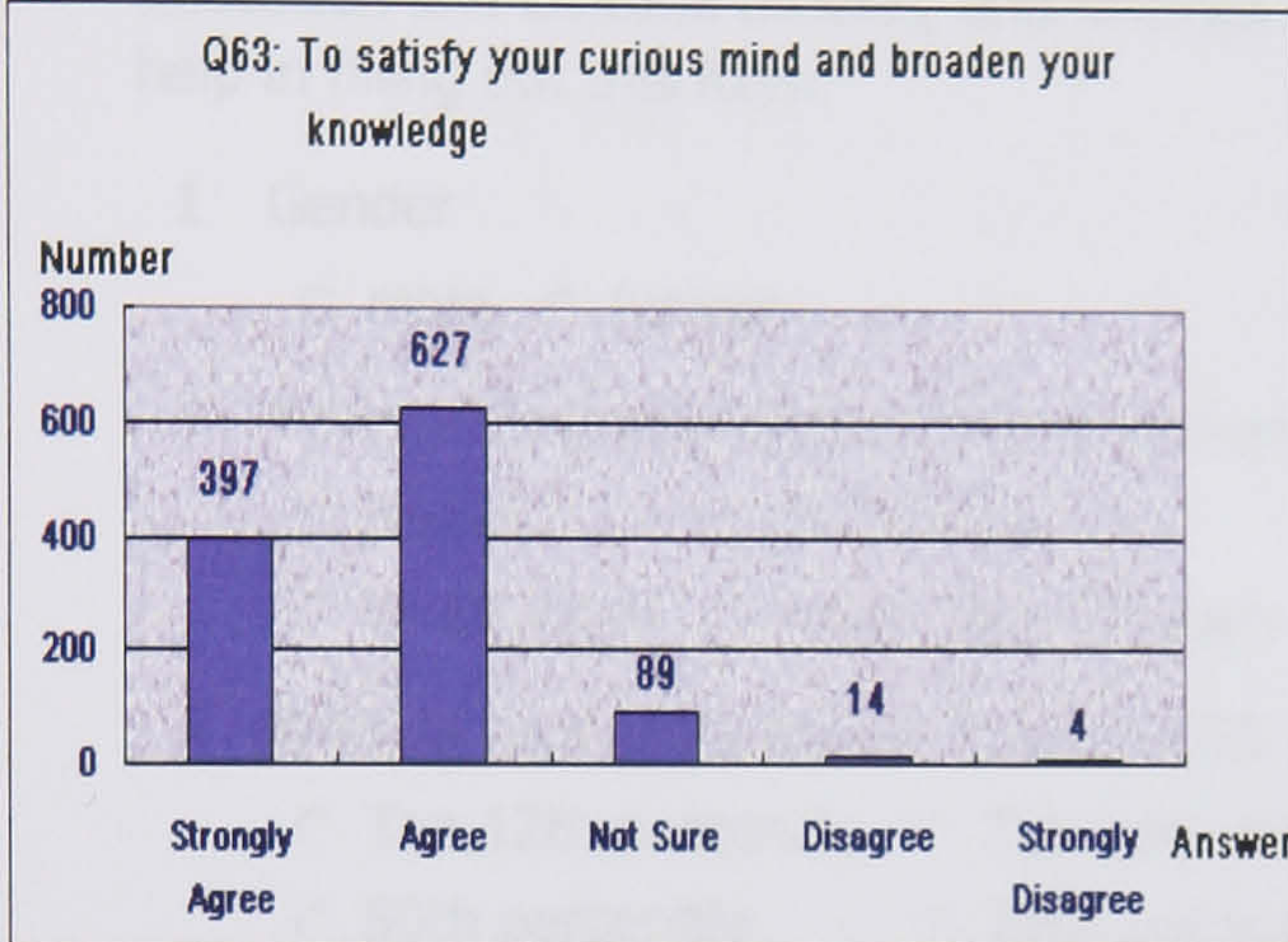
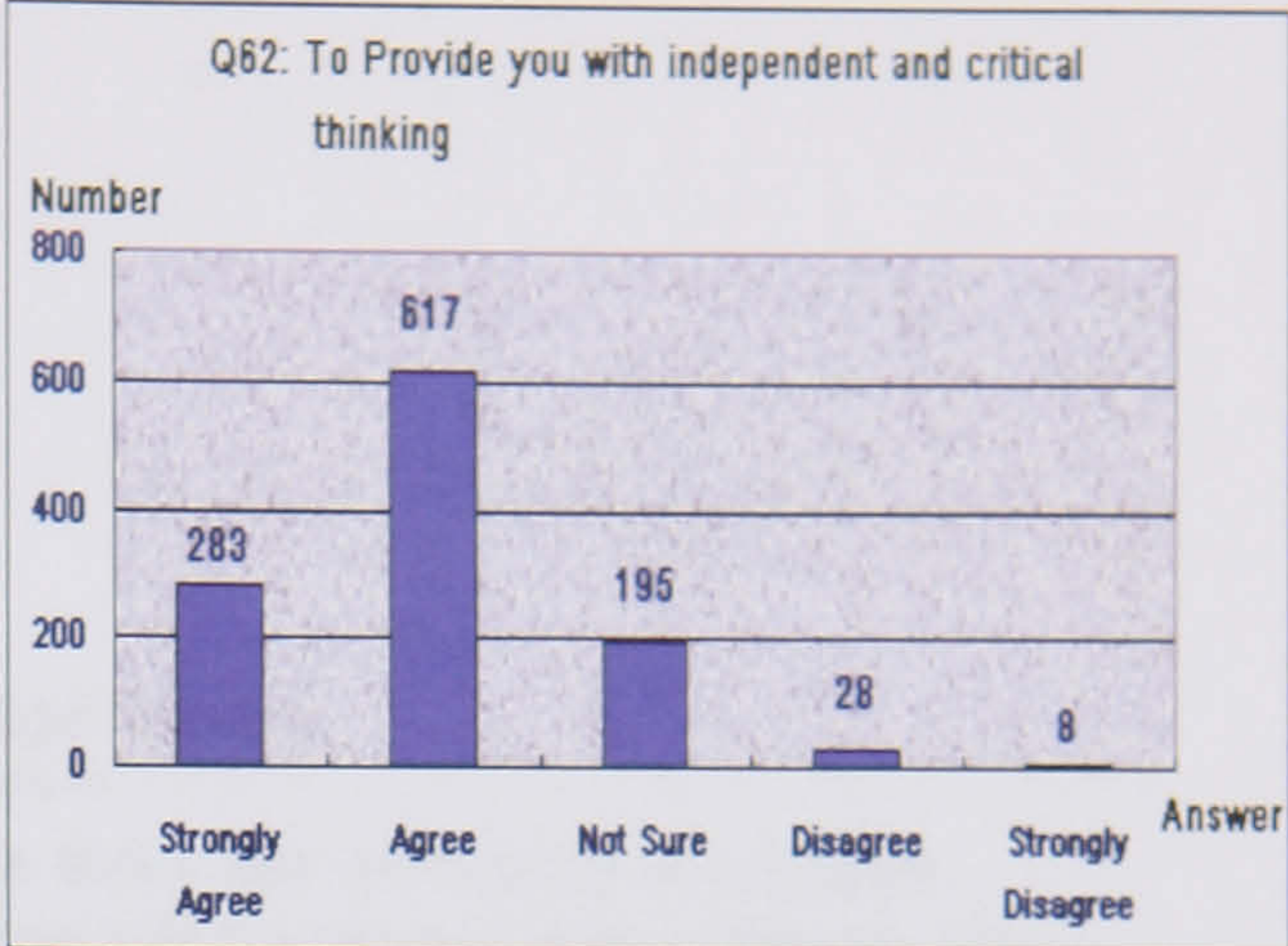
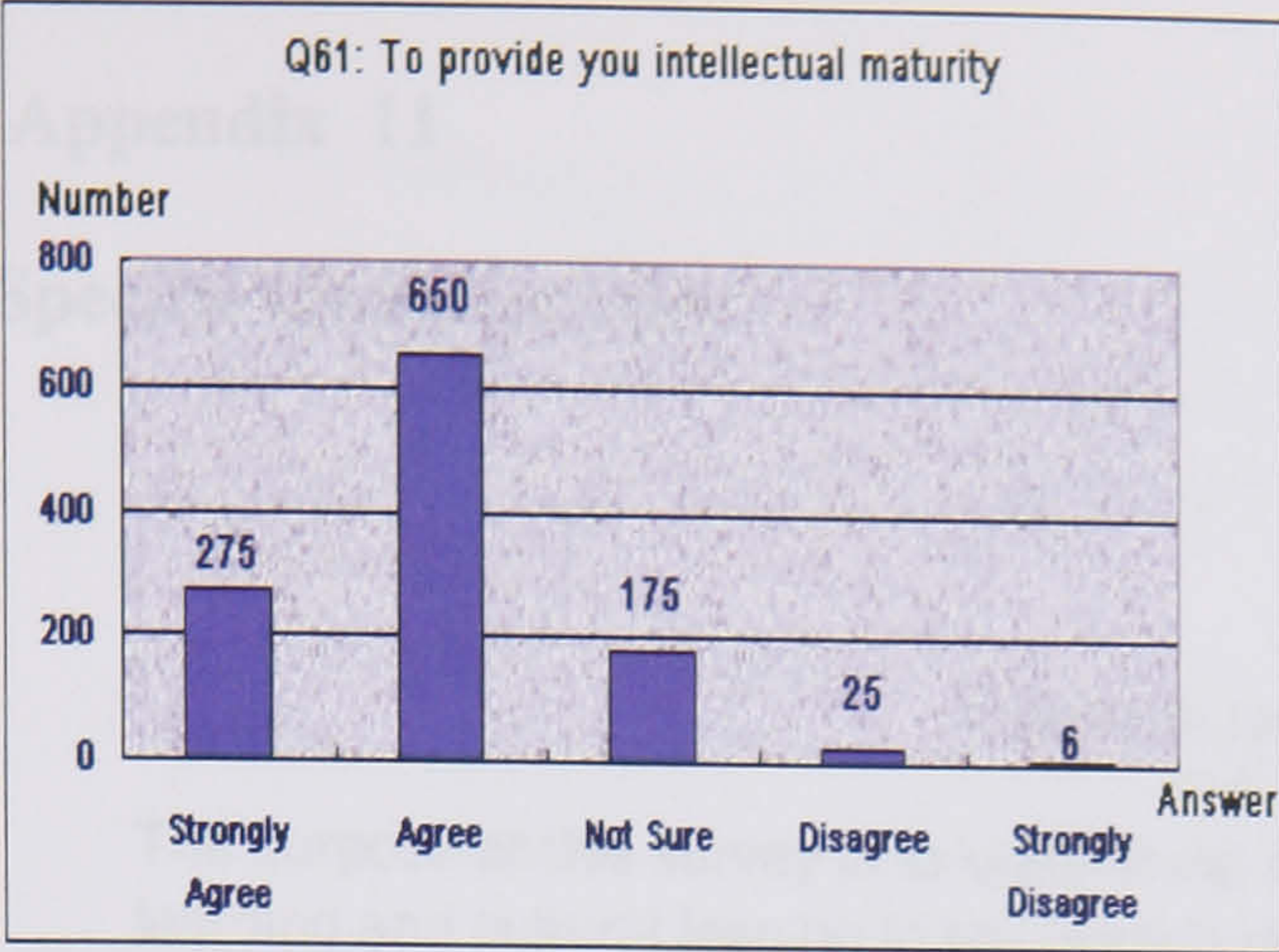














## Appendix 11

### Specific Questionnaire

#### Culture in language learning

作者: Peihying Lu

The purpose of this survey is to understand more about your perception of language learning and cultural leaning in the English classroom at the tertiary level in Taiwan. The result of this survey will be used in a doctoral research project on English Language Education and Cultural Studies, and findings may be published. I sincerely appreciate your help in filling out this form.

- 1 Gender
  - ☐ male ☐ female
- 2 Years of Studying English (Since elementary school)
  - ☐ 6 years ☐ 7~8 years
  - ☐ 9~10 years ☐ more than 10 years
- 3 What is your score on the English JCEE (Joint Collegiate Entrance Exam)
  - ☐ Top 12th percentile ☐ Top 25th percentile
  - ☐ 50th percentile ☐ 75th percentile
  - ☐ 87th percentile
- 4 What do you think the primary focus of your previous English classes?
  - ☐ linguistic skills (including reading, writing, listening and speaking)
  - ☐ linguistic skills and intercultural competence
  - ☐ grammar and idioms
  - ☐ all the skills necessary to take the entrance exam
- 5 What are the contents of your previous English classes mostly about?
  - ☐ a variety of topics on everyday life
  - ☐ thematic organization with a variety of topics dealing with social and cultural issues.
  - ☐ Some different simplified literary texts and model essays
  - ☐ I cannot remember. Basically I did not pay attention to content too much because it's not the main focus of learning.
- 6 What do you think the content or subject matters of your English reading class are interesting? You can have more than one answer.
  - ☐ The English language
  - ☐ Sociocultural issues like race, gender, class, youth cultures
  - ☐ Popular cultures
  - ☐ British/ American life or life of some other English speaking countries
  - ☐ cultures of other countries than Britain and the U.s.
  - ☐ Politics and economy

- ☐ Education
- ☐ Taiwanese (Chinese) life and cultures
- ☐ Lived experience close to your own

- 7 What kind of materials do you consider interesting in the university English classroom?
- ☐ literary texts such as poems, short stories, dramas.
  - ☐ mass media (film clips, radio broadcast, TV sitcoms, magazine/newspaper articles)
  - ☐ essays with a variety of social, cultural, and political topics
  - ☐ Four skills textbooks designed to improve English speaking, reading, writing, and listening ability.
- 8 Please estimate the hours per week you watch/read any English language media (including films, movies on Cable TV like HBO, sitcoms like Friends, or drama like CSI or Dead Zone, English newspaper/magazines, English TV news like CNN or BBC...etc)
- ☐ 2 hours      ☐ 4 hours    ☐ 6 hours
  - ☐ over 8 hours
- 9 Please give examples of the media.

- 
- 10 In your opinion, which of the following factors have best contributed to your current understanding of English speaking cultures? You can have more than one answer.
- ☐ Movies and TV sitcoms
  - ☐ English literary work or best sellers like B.J.'s Diary
  - ☐ pop songs
  - ☐ contact with English native speakers
  - ☐ English or Chinese newspaper and magazines
  - ☐ CNN or BBC News
  - ☐ Textbooks integrated with cultural content
- 11 Please indicate the hours per week you watch/ read media in any other language than Mandarin, Taiwanese, or English.
- ☐ 2 hours      ☐ 4 hours    ☐ 6 hours
  - ☐ over 8 hours
- 12 Please give examples of the media.

- 
- 13 Films you watch mostly are
- ☐ Commercial Hollywood Films
  - ☐ Foreign independence films



- ☐ Films in Chinese language (include Cantonese, Taiwanese, Chinese)
  - ☐ Japanese/ Korean films
- 14 Foreign TV dramas you watch mostly are
- ☐ American TV drama series
  - ☐ Japanese melodrama
  - ☐ Korea melodrama
  - ☐ others
- 15 How would you rate the degree of your knowledge of foreign culture influenced by the media?
- ☐ very high ☐ high ☐ moderate ☐ low
  - ☐ very low
- 16 What element of a foreign film or TV drama interests you?
- ☐ the plot
  - ☐ the socio cultural content conveyed
  - ☐ actors and actress
  - ☐ lifestyles
  - ☐ values and beliefs conveyed
- 17 How often do you reflect upon the cultural or social message in a foreign movie, TV program, songs, or magazines?
- ☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Never
- 18 In your previous learning, the literary texts you have studies mostly are
- ☐ poems
  - ☐ simplified novels
  - ☐ short stories
  - ☐ dramas or short plays
  - ☐ None of literary texts were included
- 19 What do you wish to learn if literature is included in your English reading course?
- ☐ aesthetic appreciation
  - ☐ value and belief conveyed
  - ☐ cultures through expansion of our experience with a larger human reality
  - ☐ a variety of linguistic usages and more complicated syntax
- 20 Please list at three favorite extracurricular English literary works (either in English or Chinese translation) you have read.
-

- 
- 
- 21 Apart from studying abroad, which channel do you think is the best way to understand the other cultures better?
- ☐ through cultural learning in the classroom
  - ☐ through mass media like newspapers, magazines, TV programs and movies
  - ☐ traveling
  - ☐ making foreign cyber friends
  - ☐ using internet as rich resources to locate cultural information

---

**Cultural identity**

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- 22 Define your 'cultural identity?'
- ☐ Chinese
  - ☐ Taiwanese
  - ☐ Chinese and Taiwanese
  - ☐ global citizen
- 23 Do you think materials of local context with similar topics should be included to enable you to relate (juxtapose) your own culture?
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ agree
  - ☐ not sure              ☐ disagree
  - ☐ strongly disagree
- 24 Do you think the learning of English will jeopardize the recognition of our current identity?
- ☐ Strongly agree      ☐ agree
  - ☐ not sure              ☐ disagree
  - ☐ strongly disagree

---

**Internationalization/ globalization**

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- 25 What's your perception of internationalization?
- ☐ it means globalization
  - ☐ it includes international, intercultural, and global dimensions
  - ☐ it means the prevalent usage of an international language, namely, English
  - ☐ it means keeping very good relationship with other foreign countries or institutes
  - ☐ Others
- 26 What do you think a university student should acquire in order to catch the trend or globalization and internationalization?
- ☐ Having good English competence



- ☐ Having an in depth understanding of different cultures
  - ☐ Willing to accept cultural differences and be able to speak for its own cultures
  - ☐ Being able to reflect upon differences between one's own culture and other cultures
- 27 What's your perception of globalization?
- ☐ It means standardization of the world; for Taiwan, more precisely, is the standardization of the United States
  - ☐ It means no boundaries, the whole world become one village
  - ☐ It means being able to communicate with people all over the world
  - ☐ I don't know; basically I do not care
  - ☐ Others
- 28 Which of the followings best describe your attitude towards differences?
- ☐ I accept and enjoy diversities brought by differences
  - ☐ I am willing to see different values and beliefs in relative perspectives
  - ☐ I do not favor difference because it might cause possible conflicts
  - ☐ Differences might enable me to reflect upon myself
- 29 What's your attitude towards a controversial topic?
- ☐ I identify what is right and wrong
  - ☐ I would like to exchange views with peers
  - ☐ I focus on values and interests involved in the various perspectives
  - ☐ I try to seek for agreement from others
- 30 Apart from professional knowledge, in your opinion, what university should facilitate you?
- ☐ more analytical skills
  - ☐ more critical ability
  - ☐ more humanistic dimensions
  - ☐ more aesthetic aspects of life like music, literature, and art
  - ☐ Others

必須回答有 '\*' 記號的問題

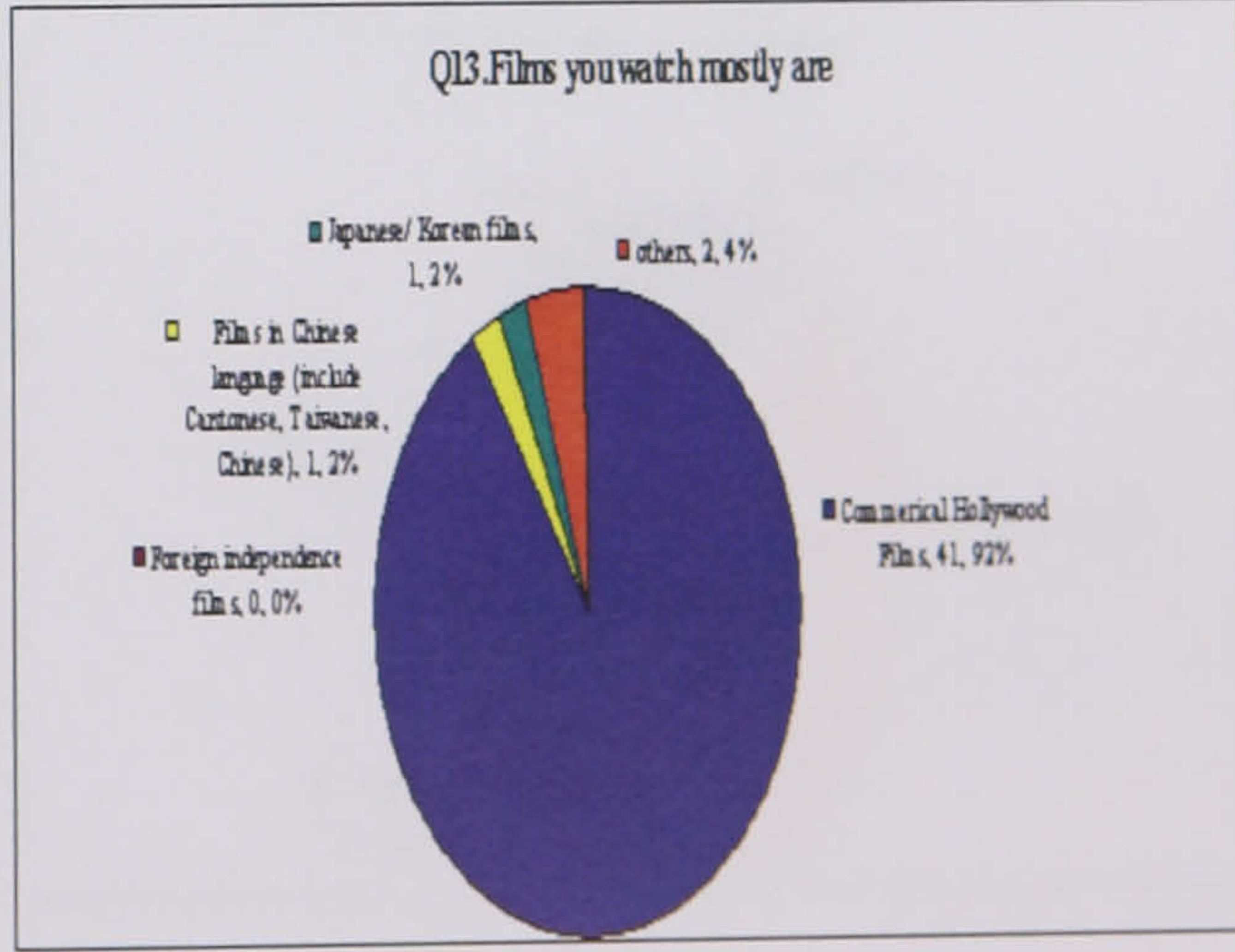
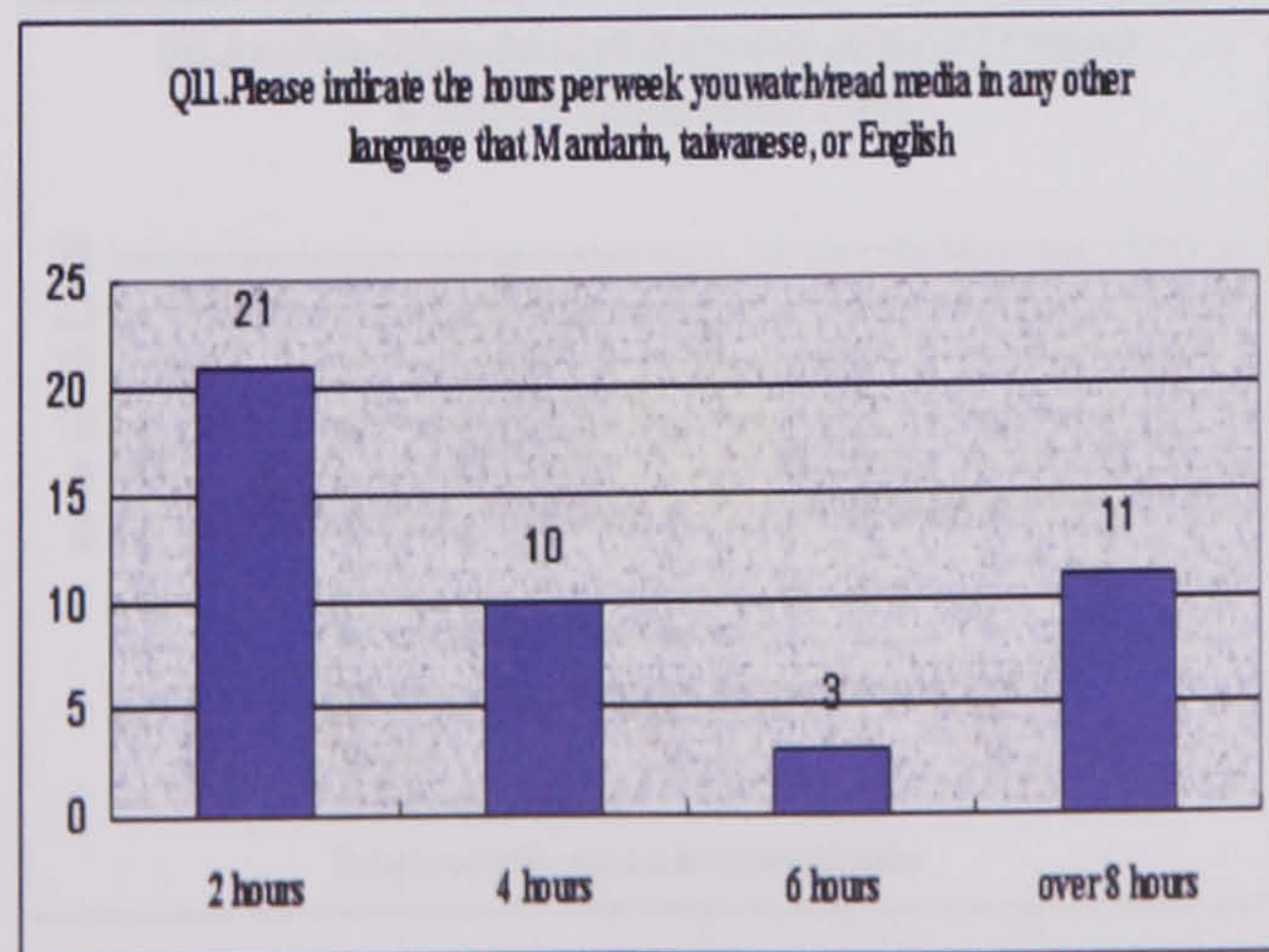
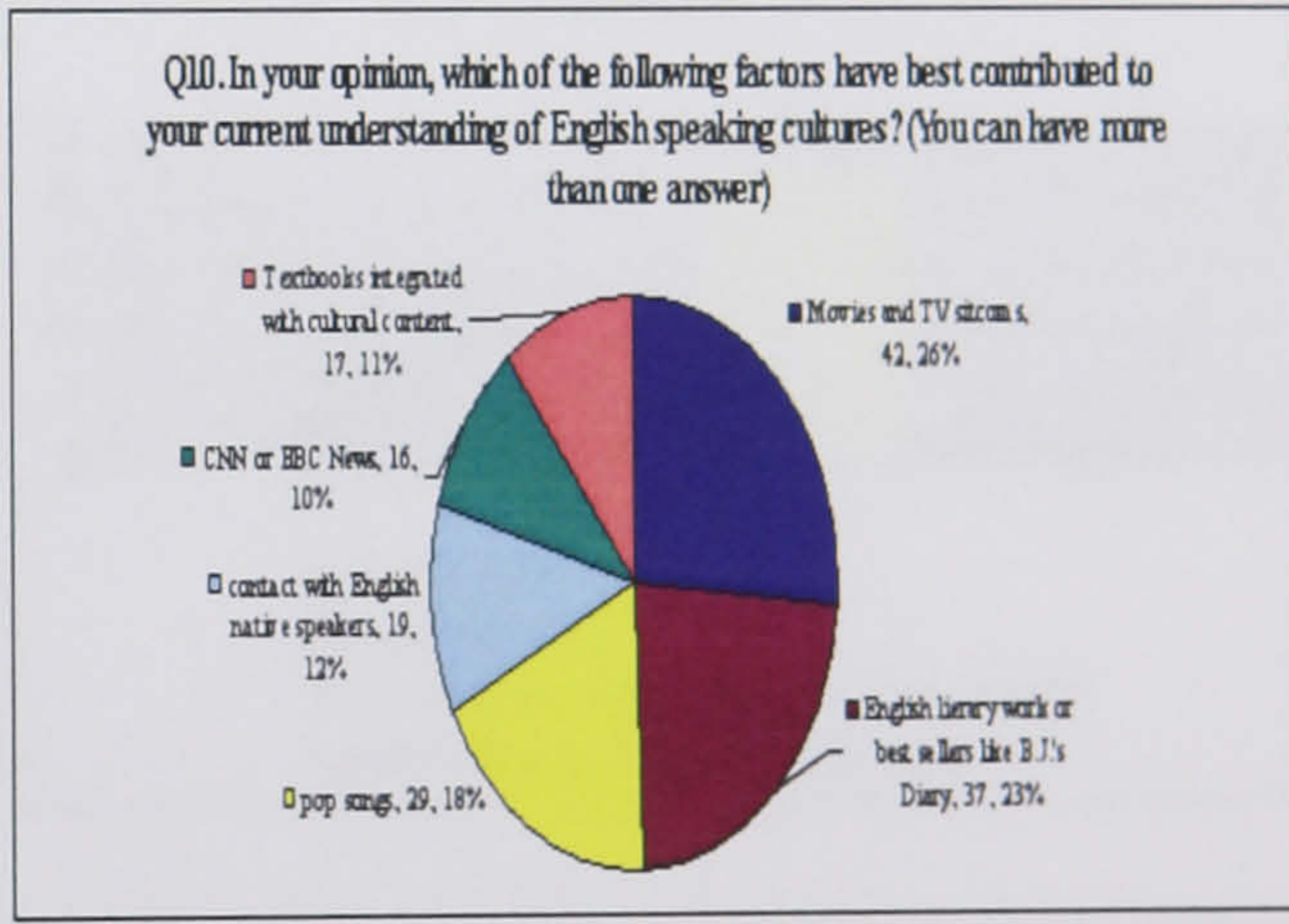
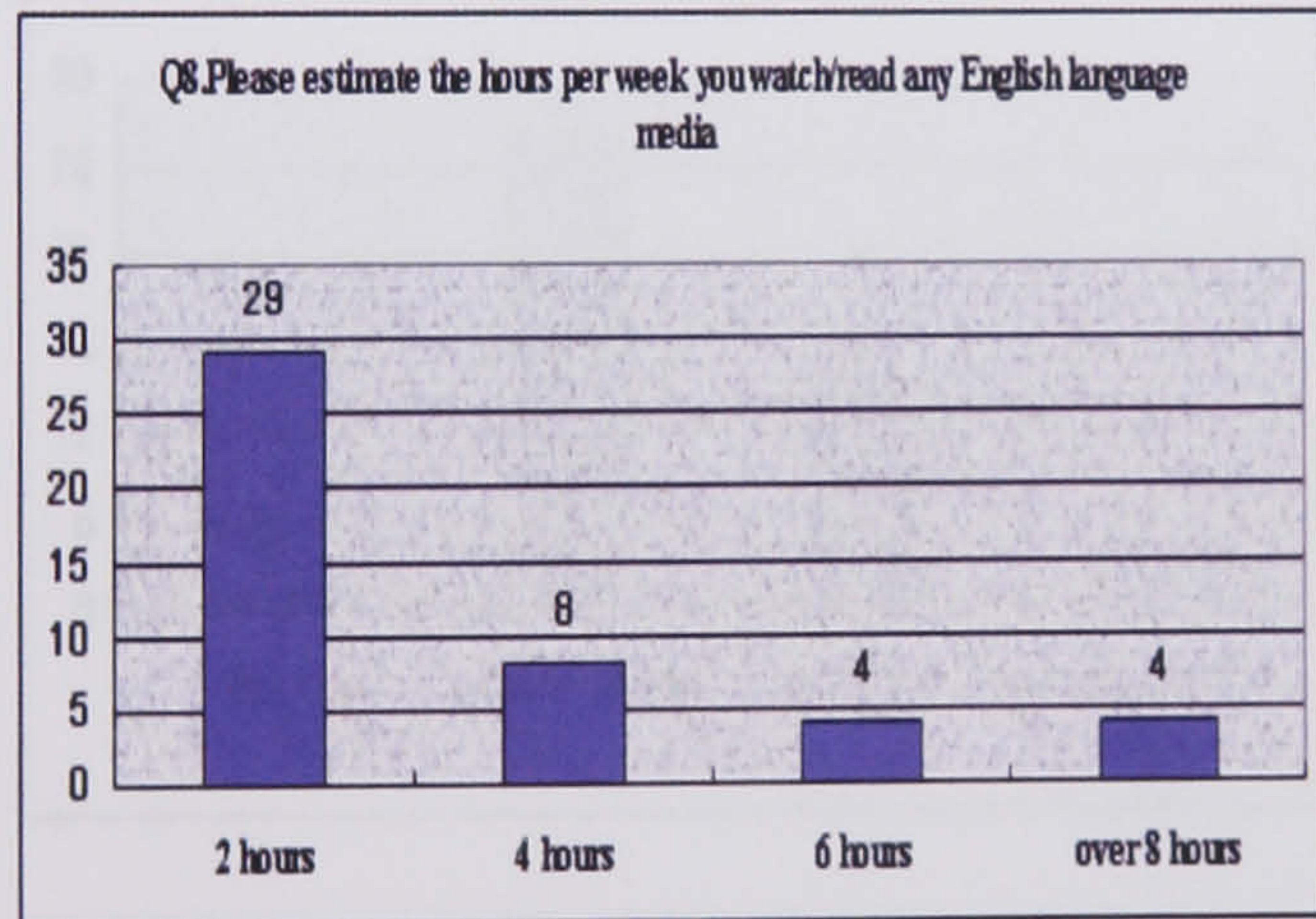
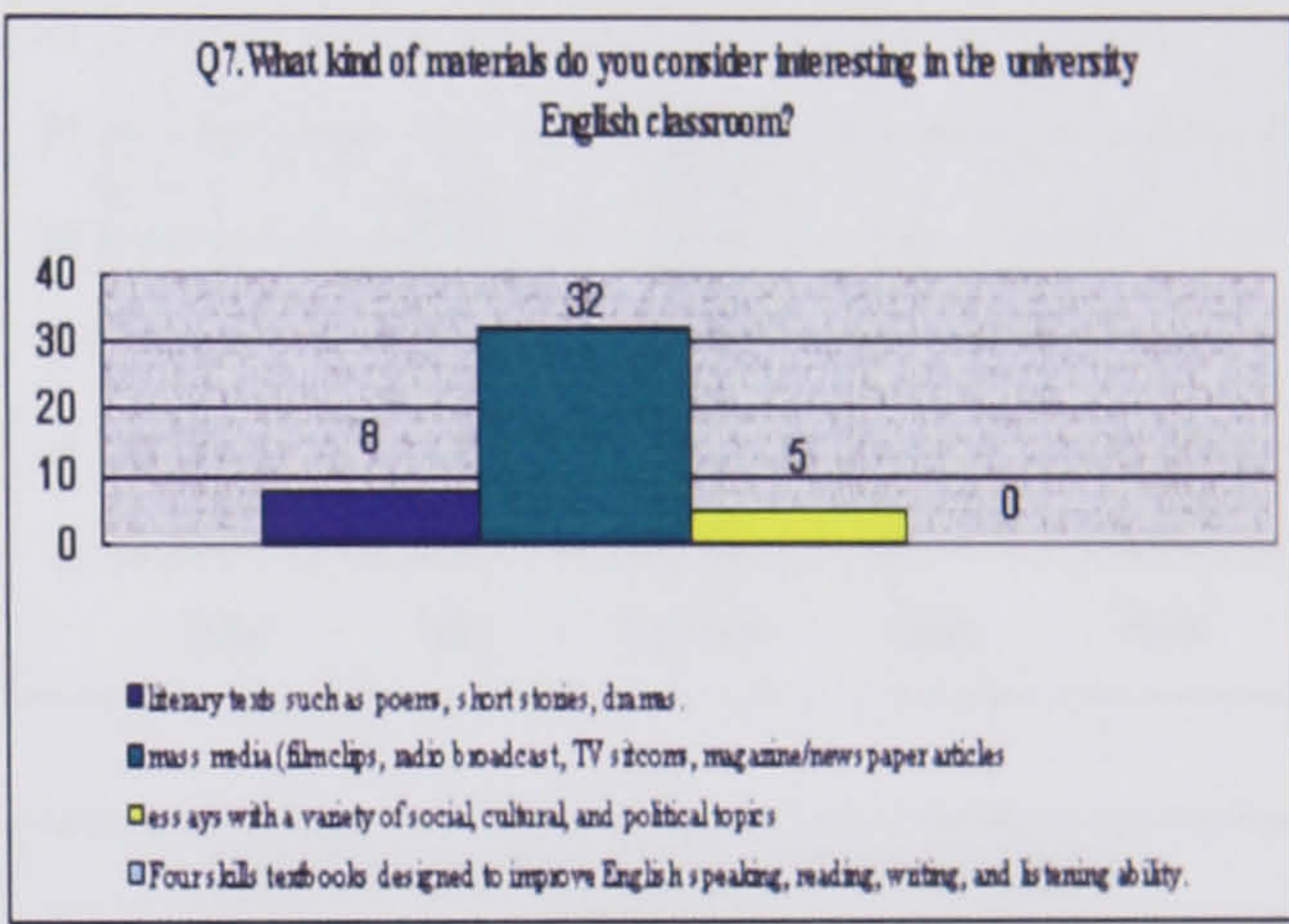
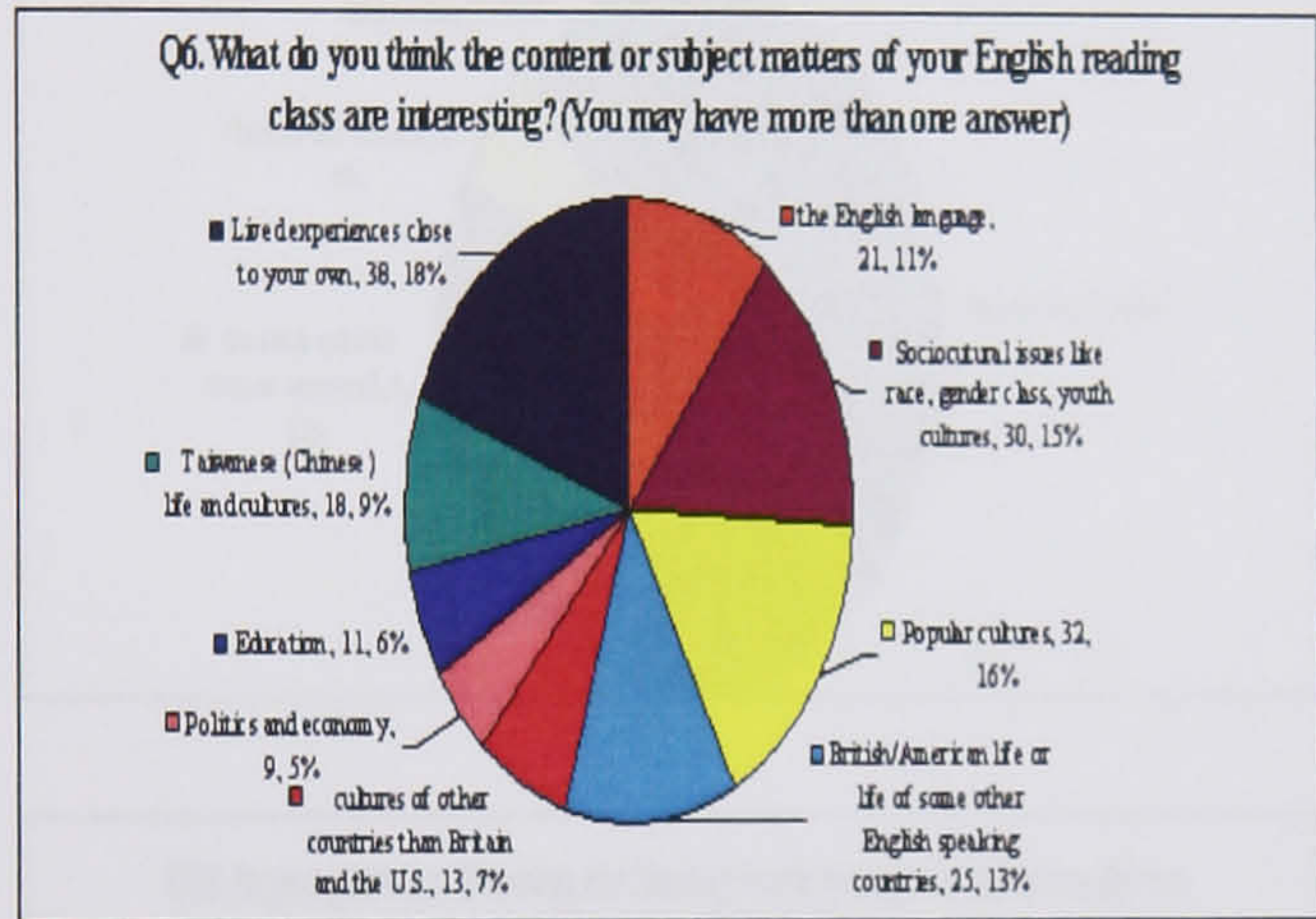
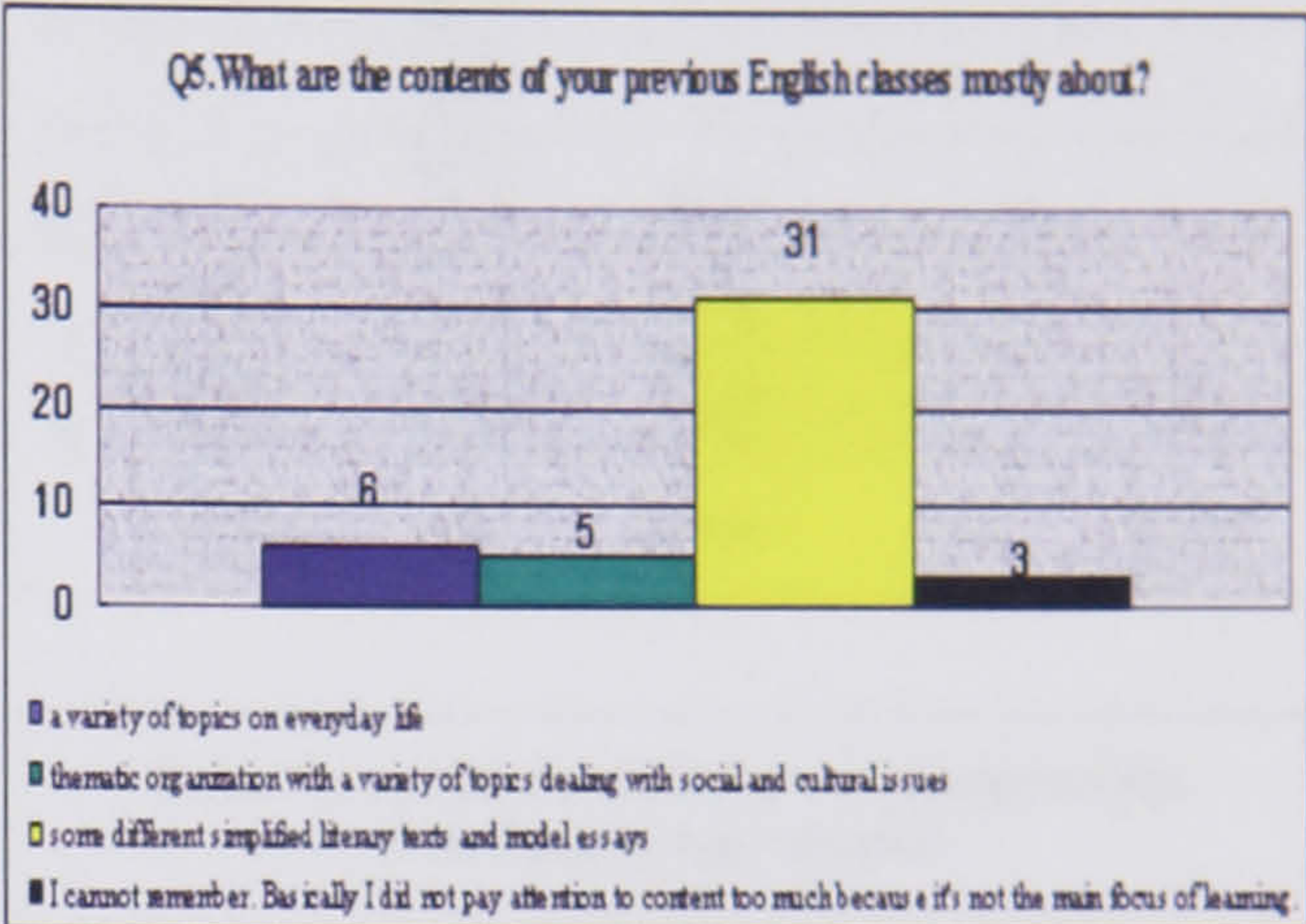
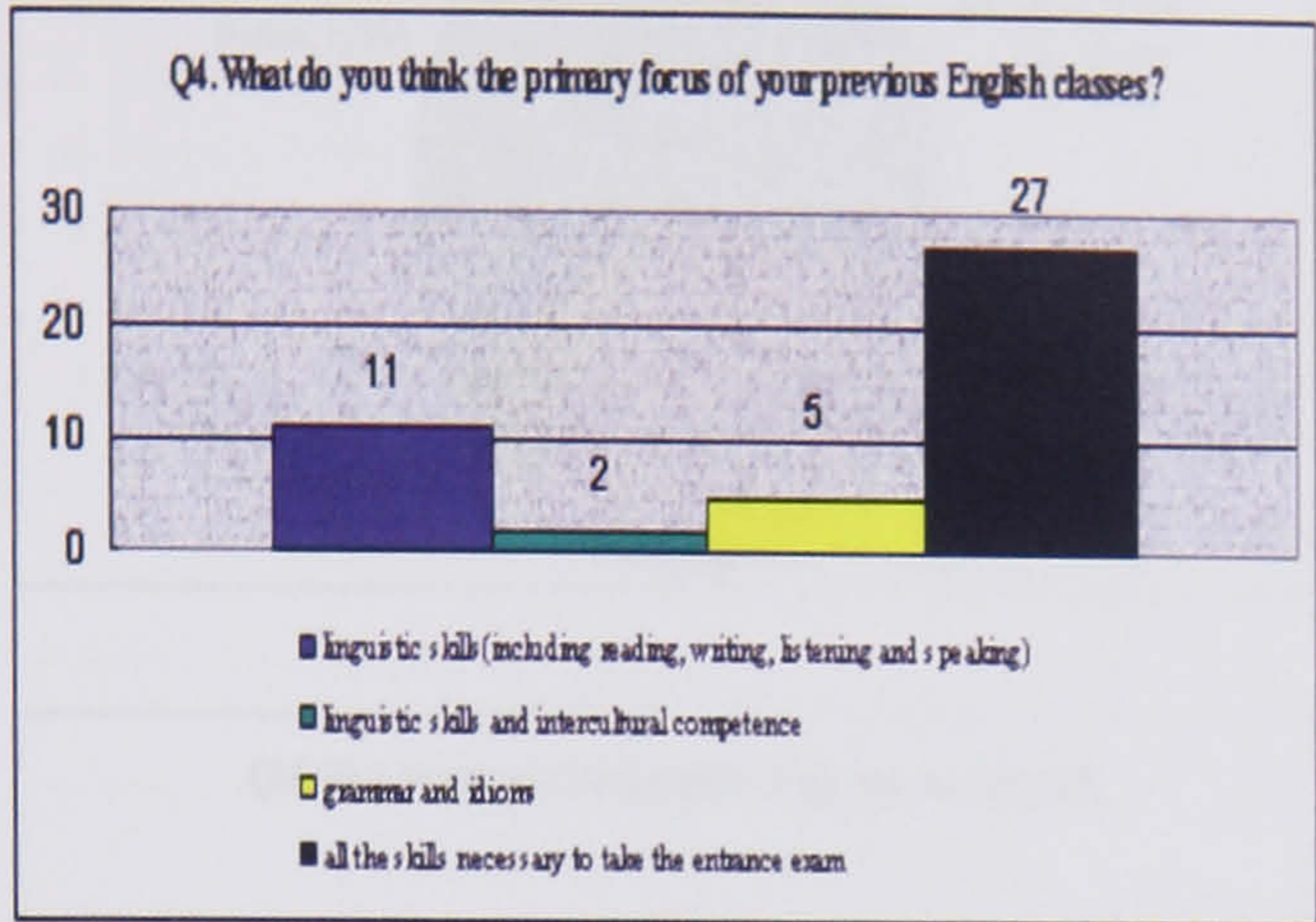
The researcher sincerely appreciates your help in filling out this questionnaire.

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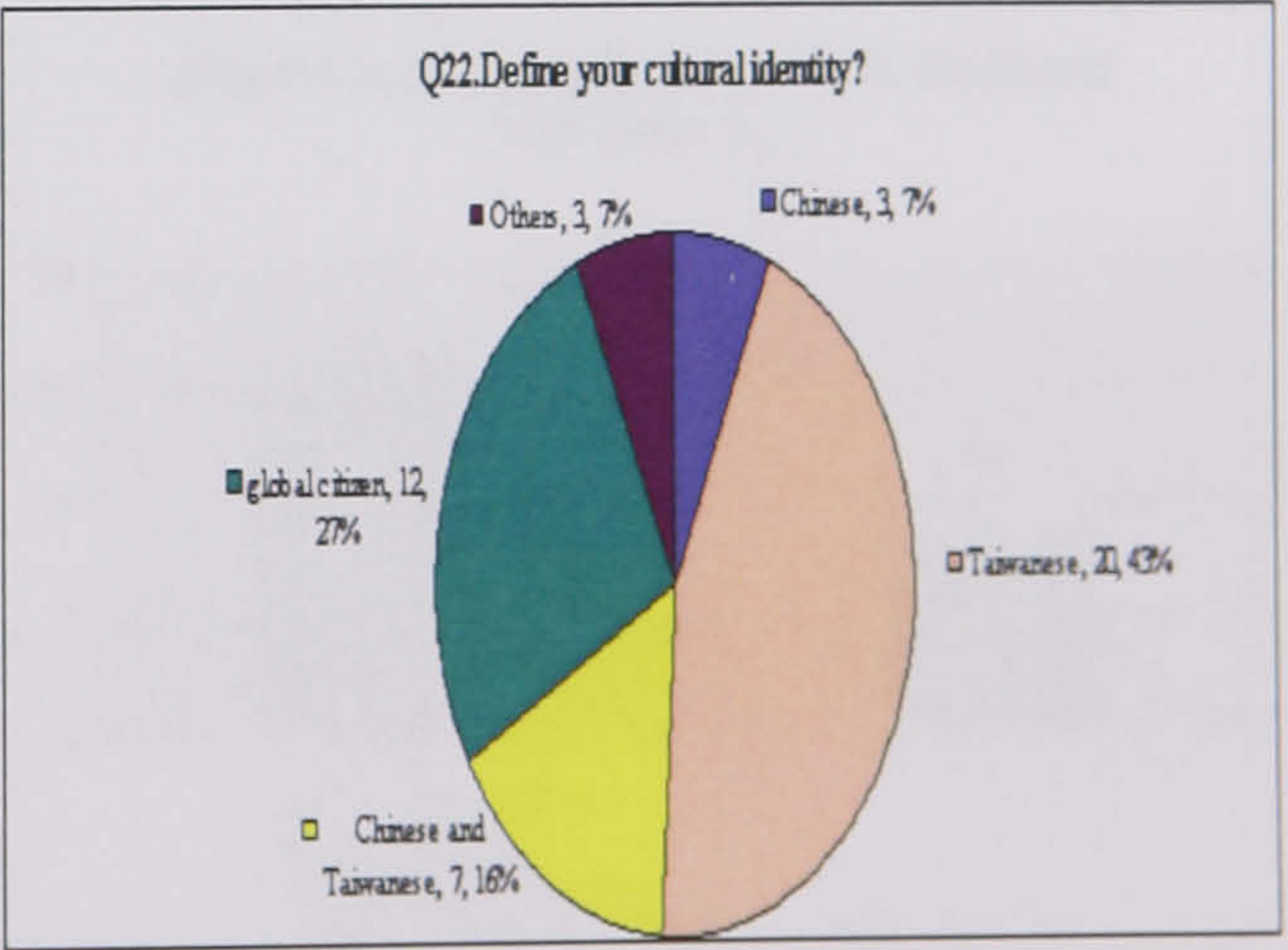
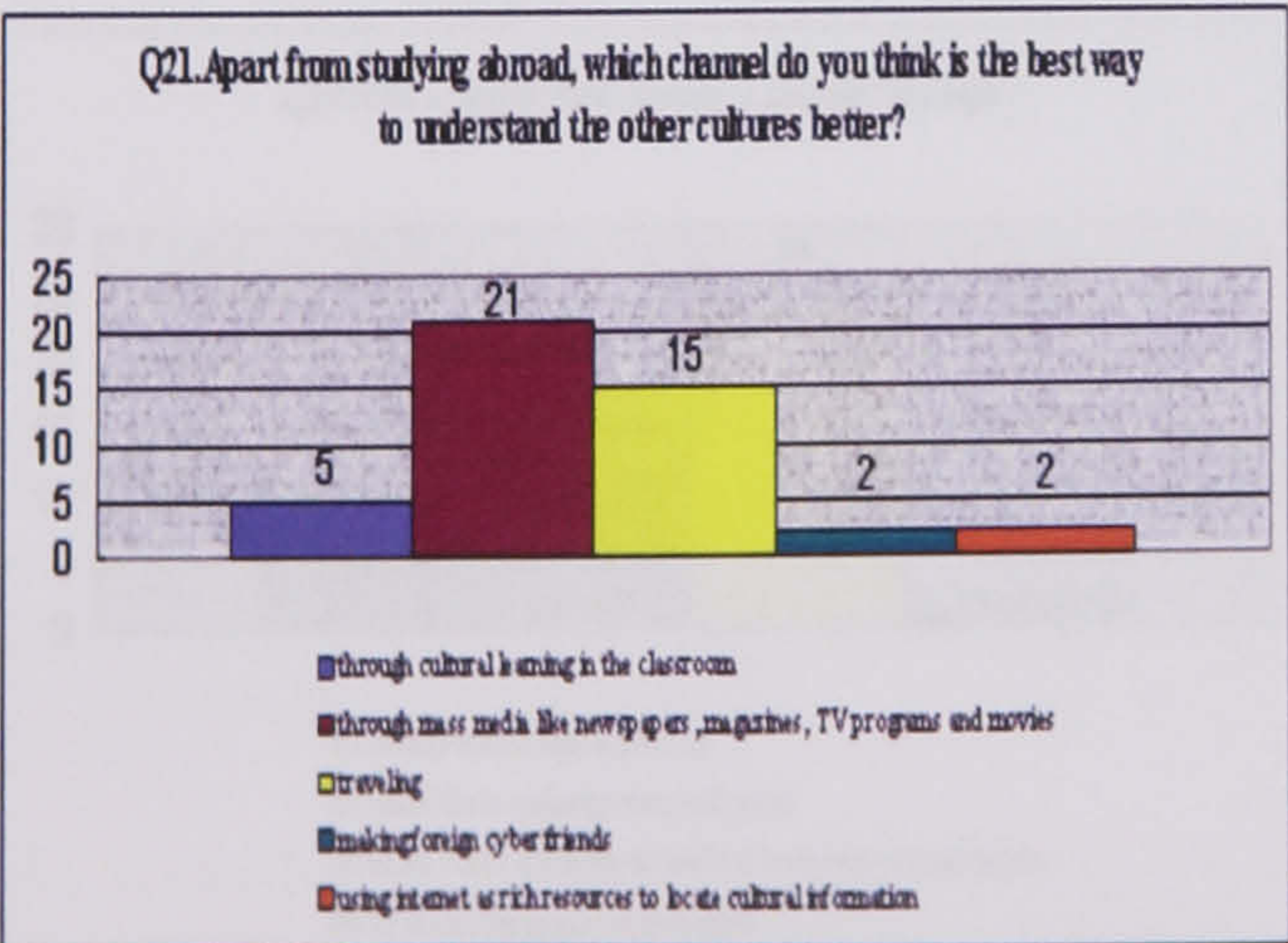
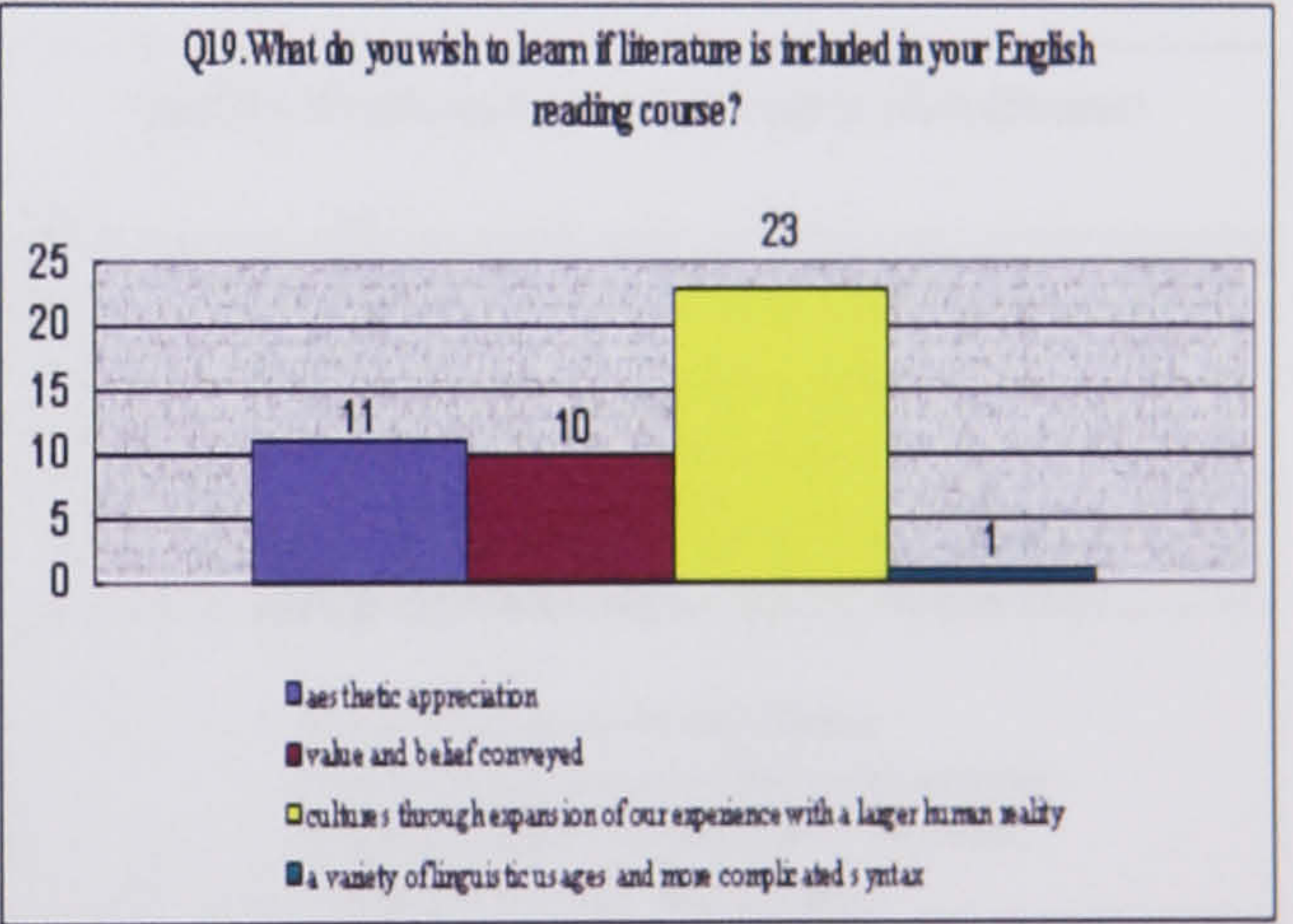
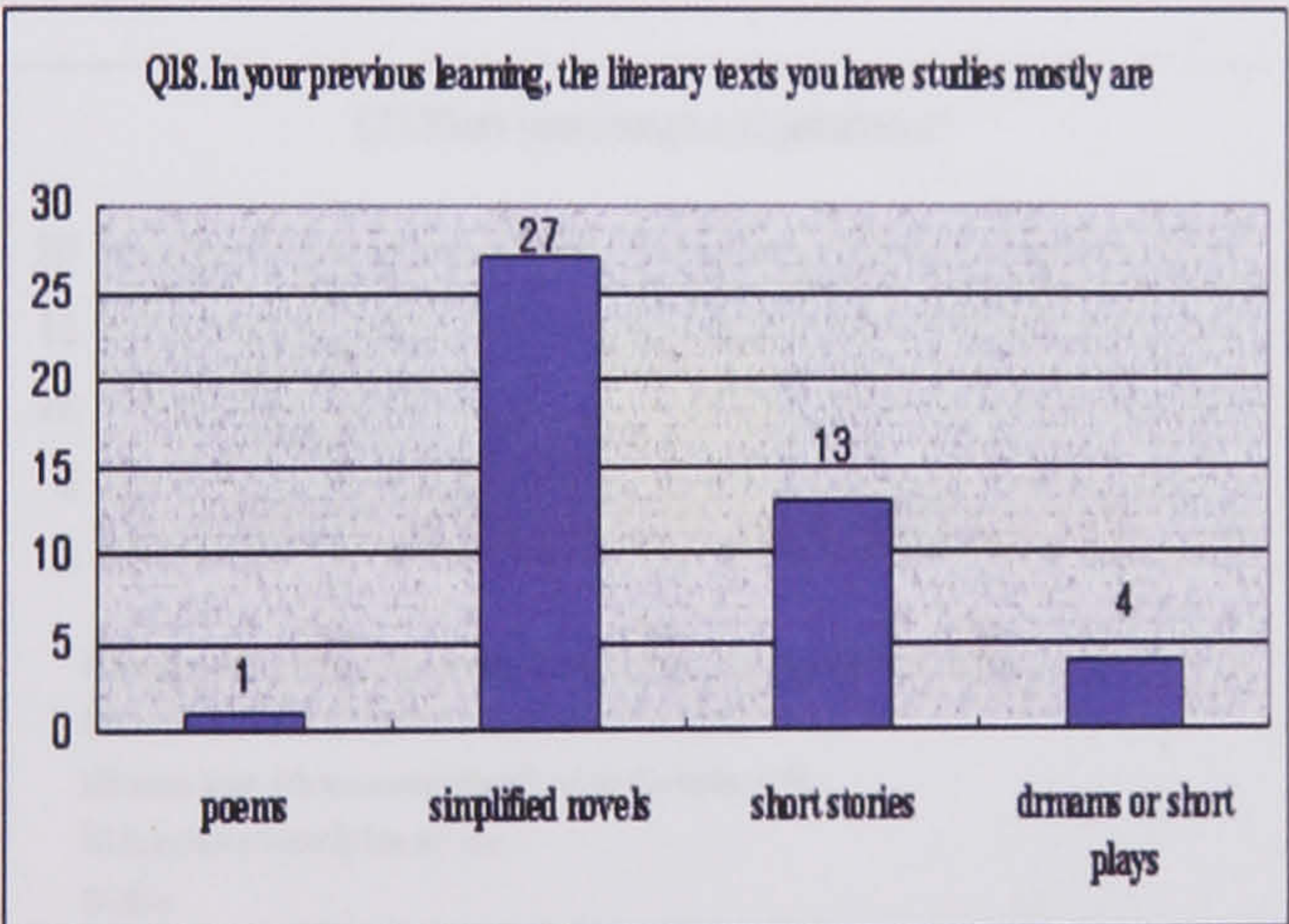
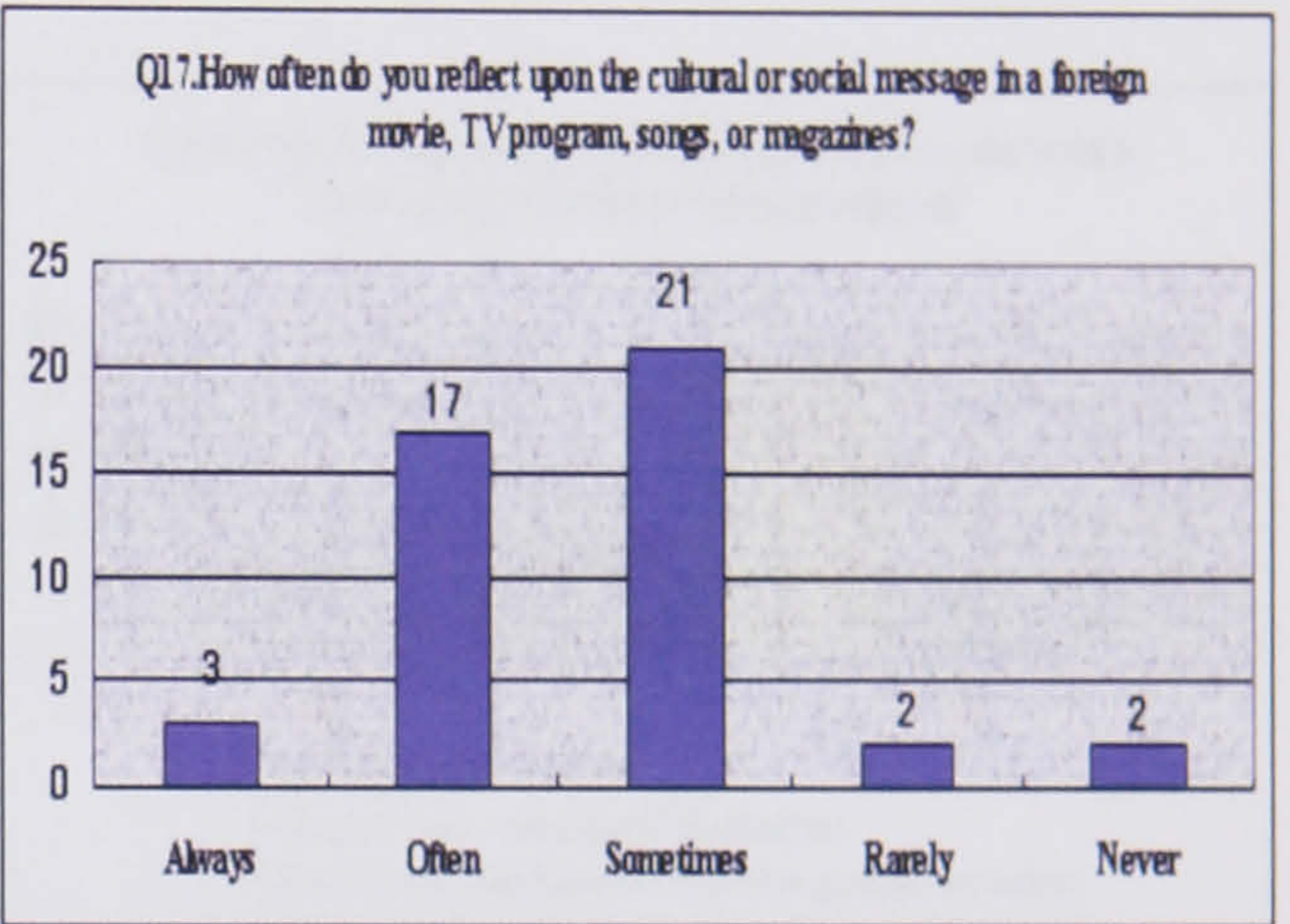
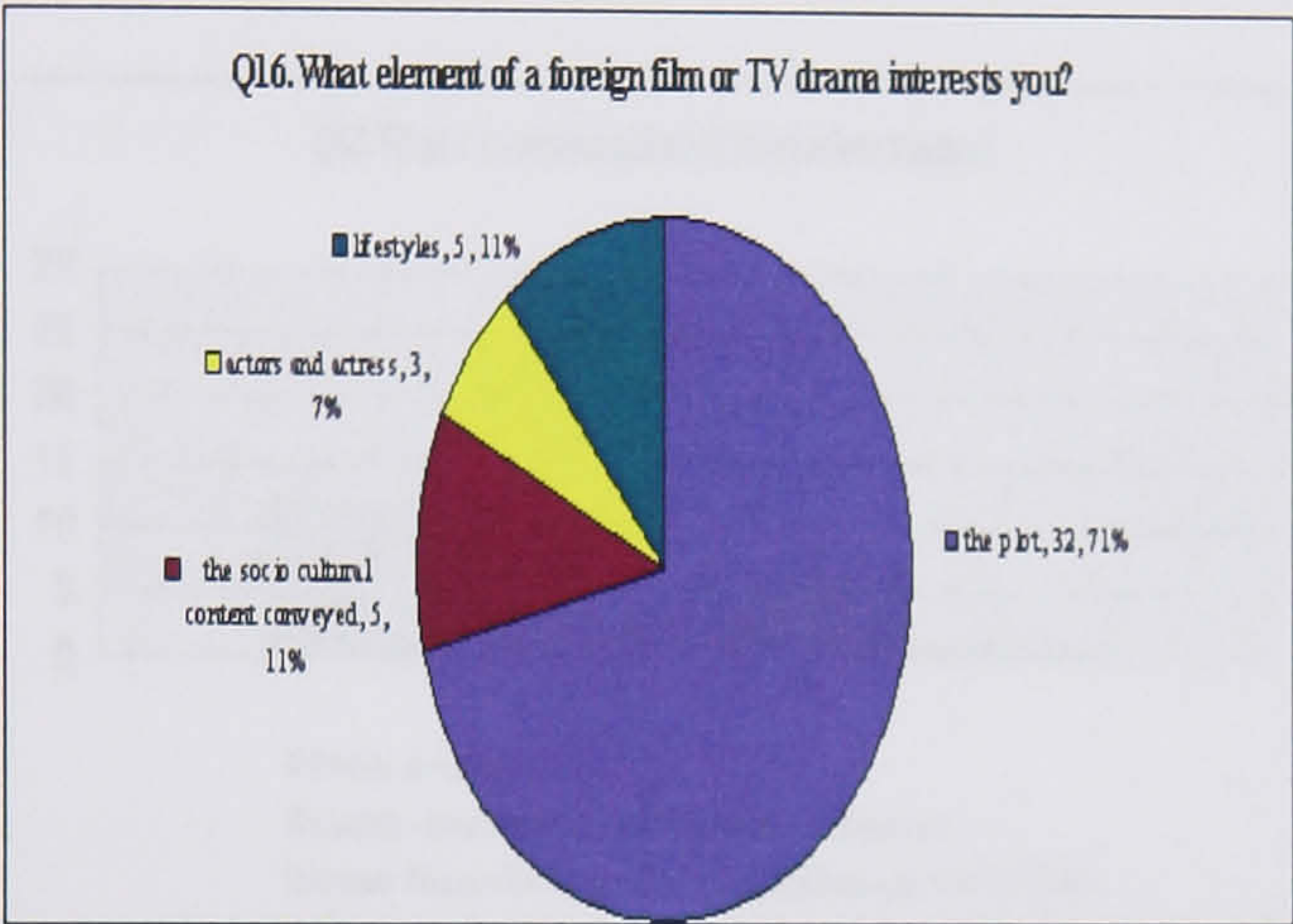
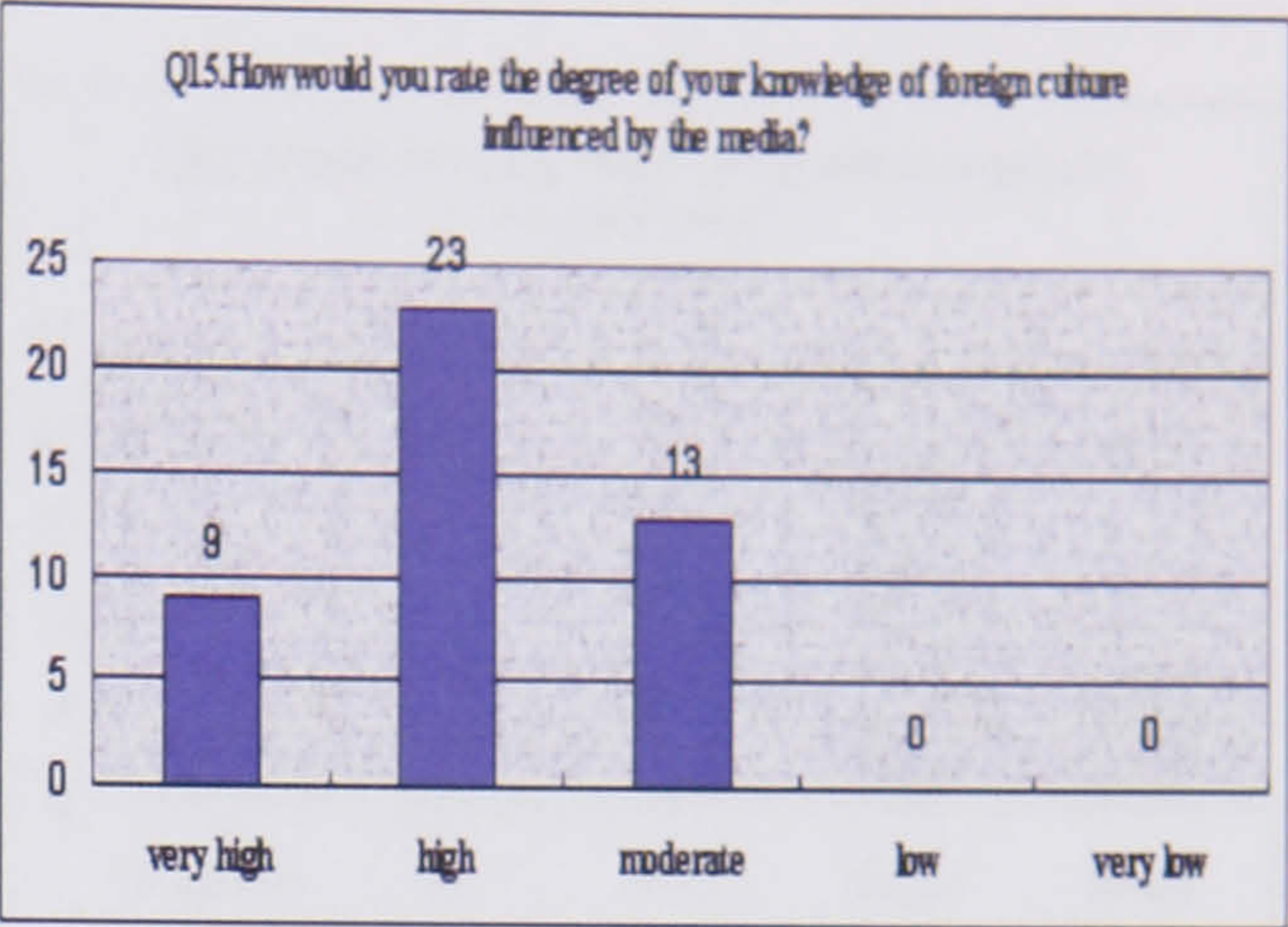
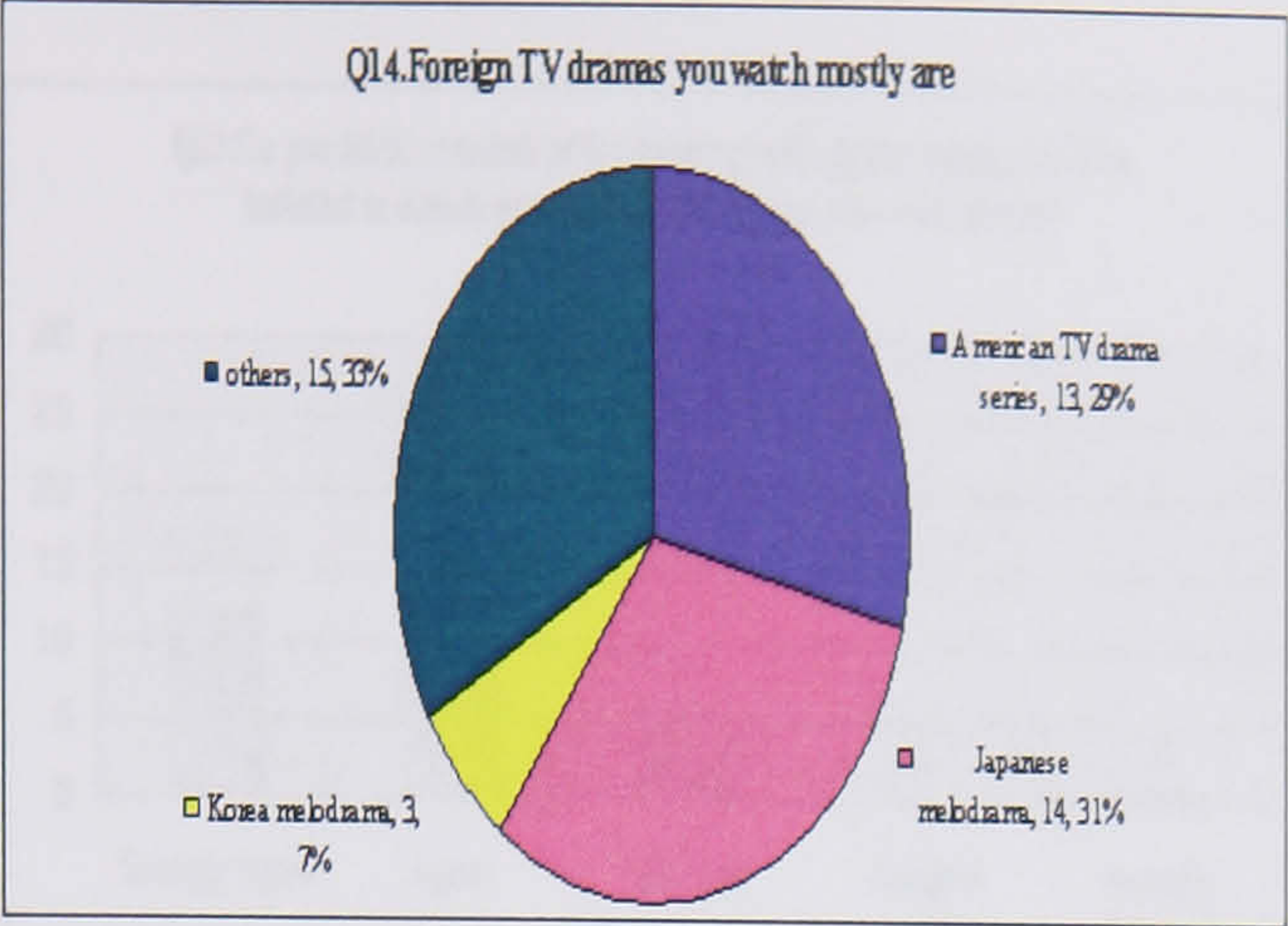


Appendix 12

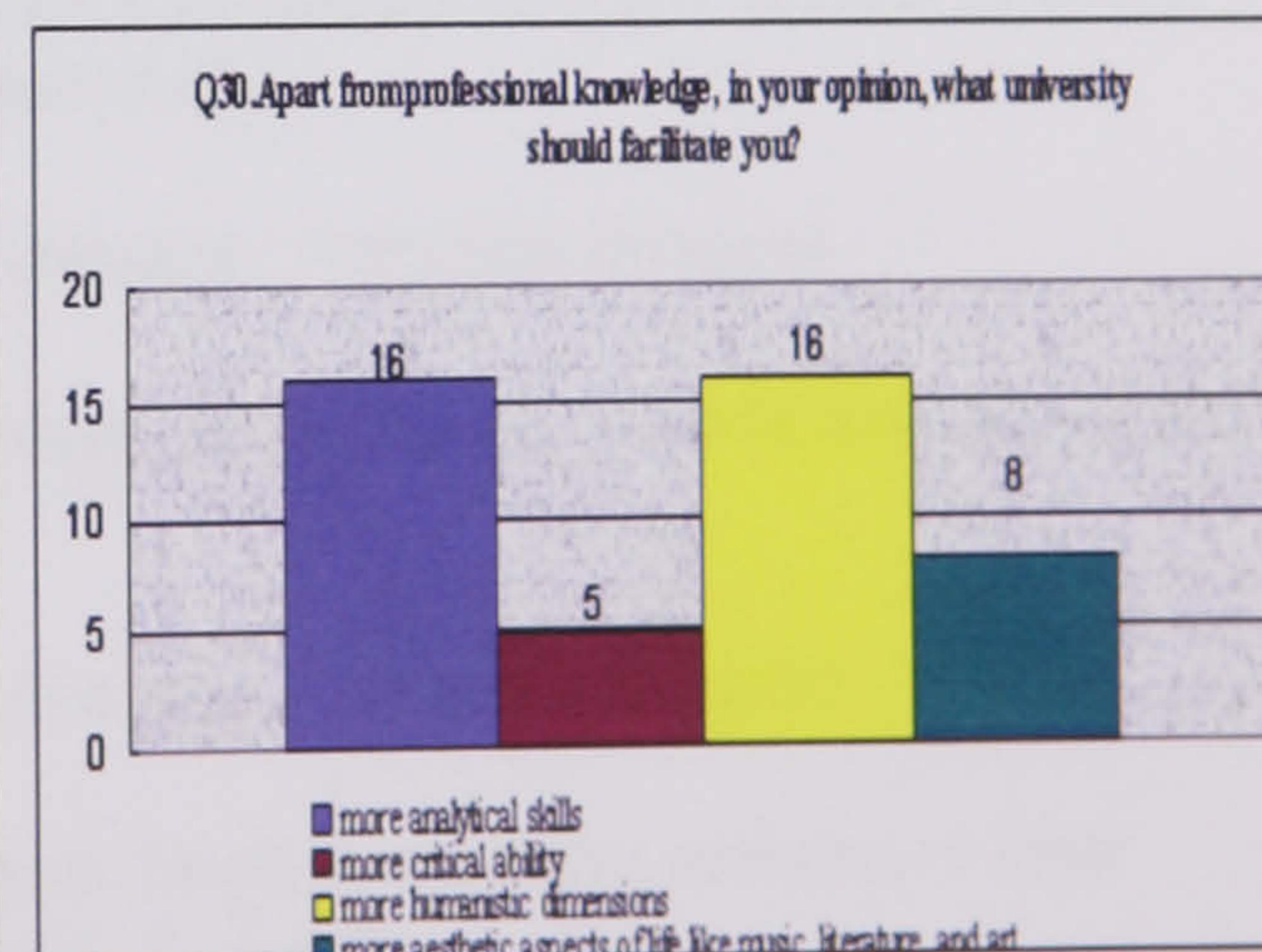
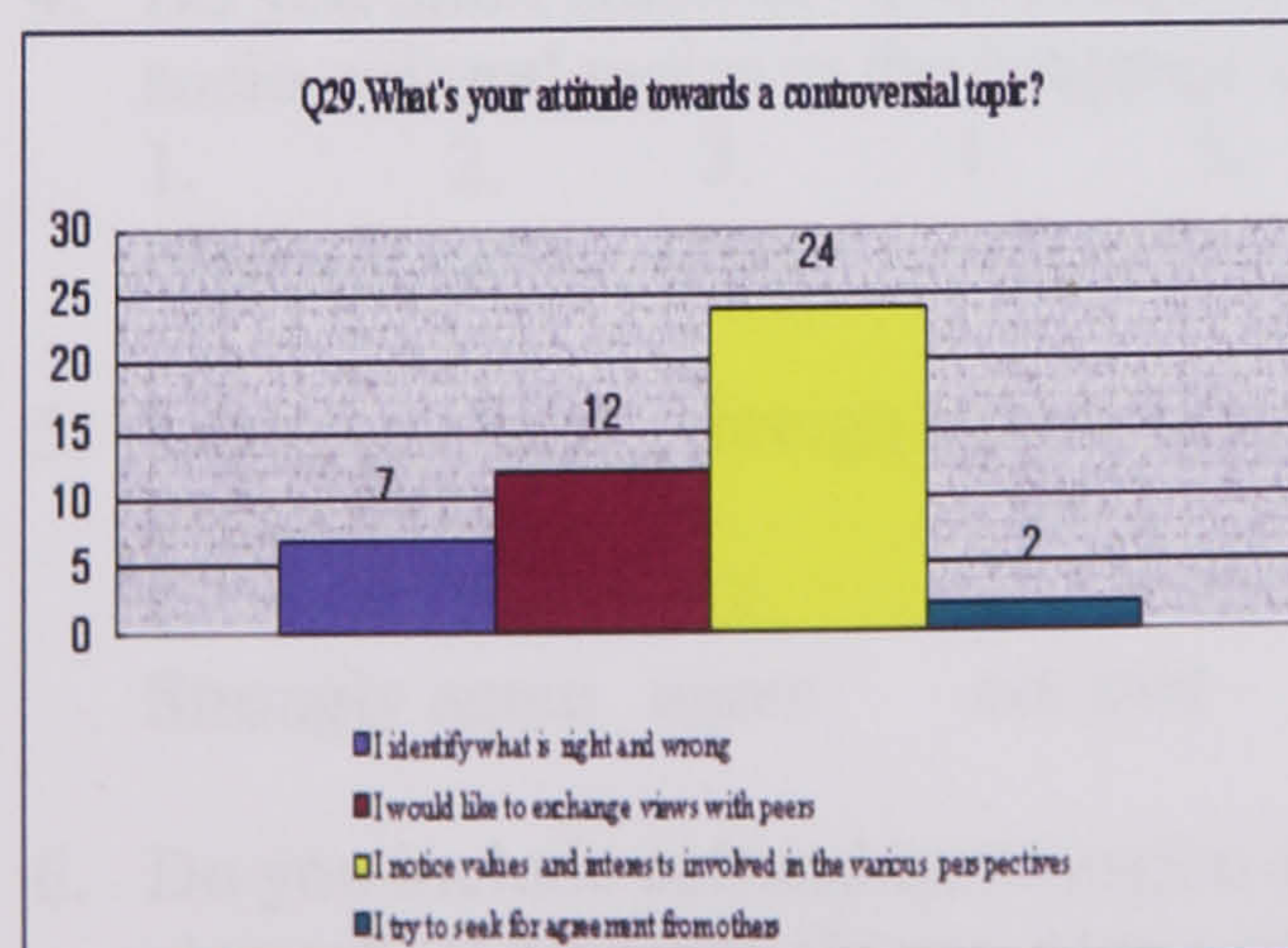
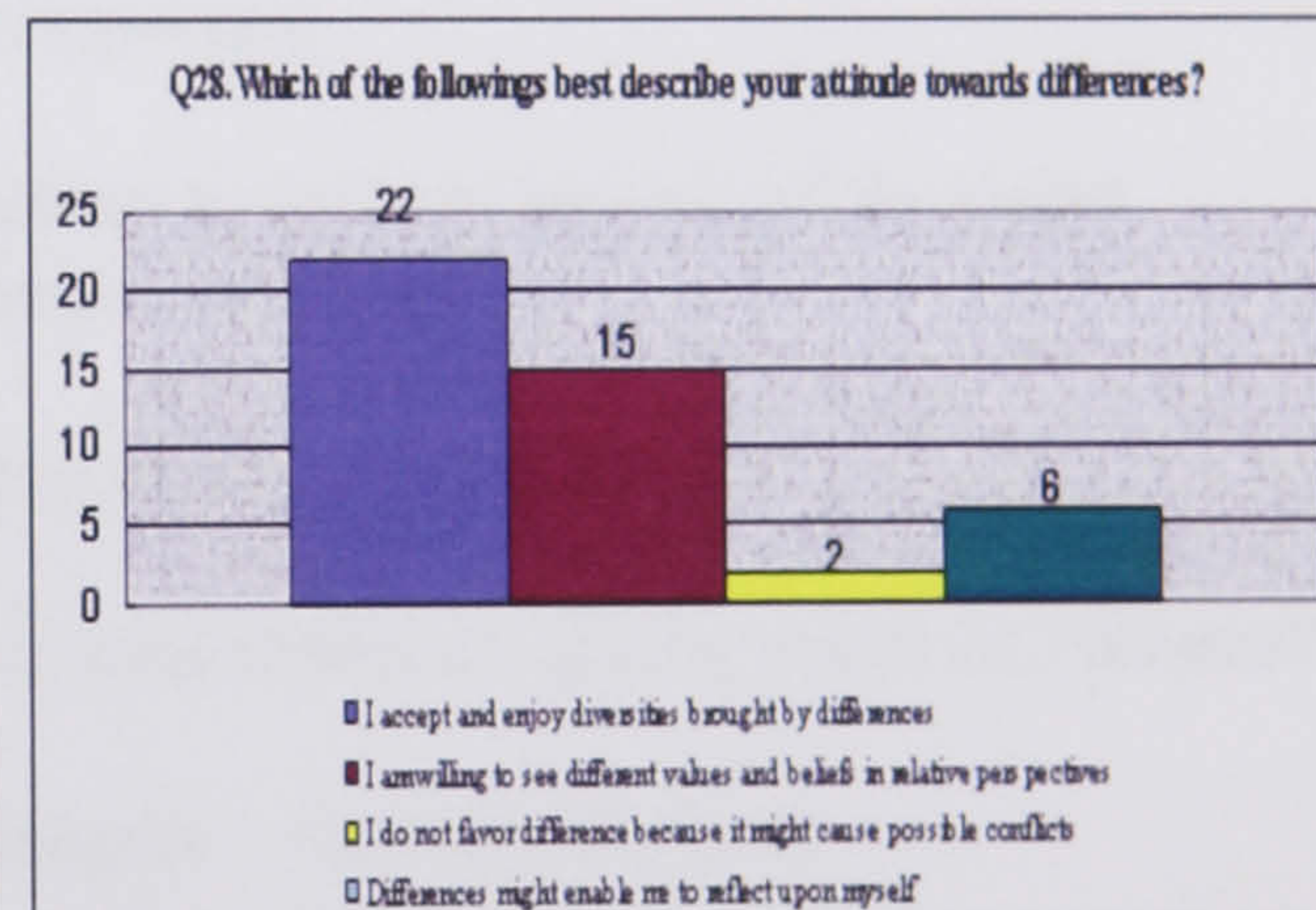
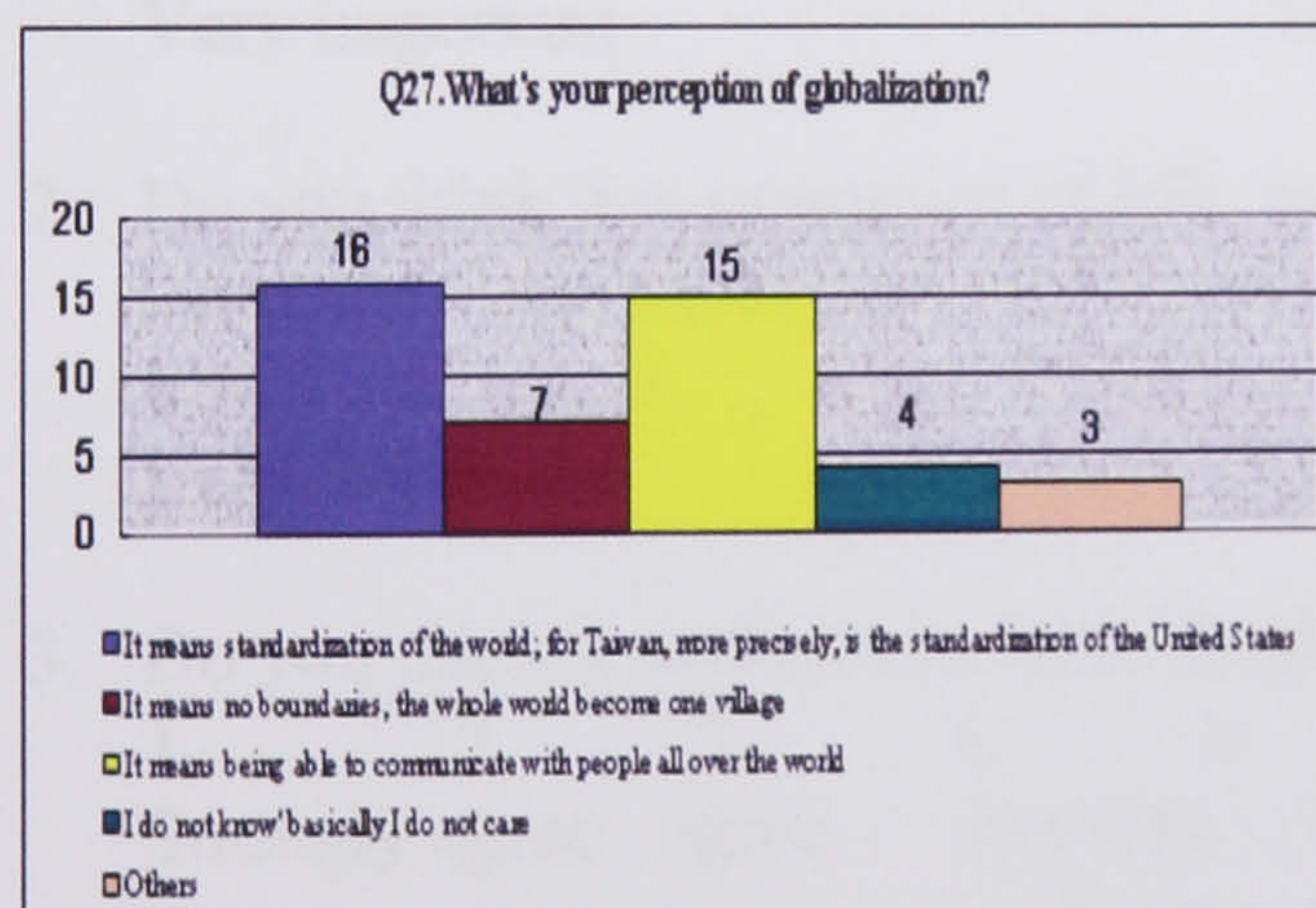
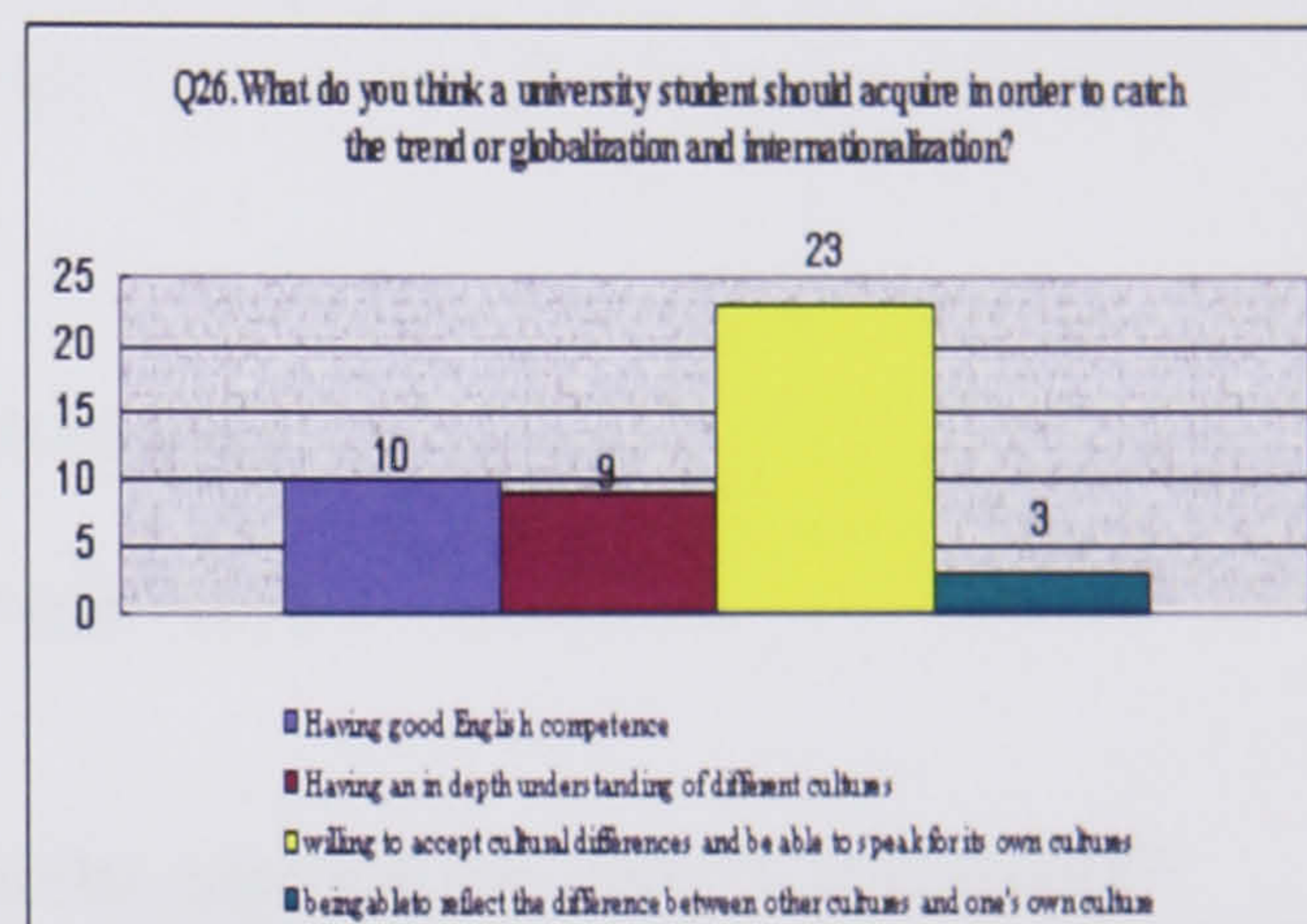
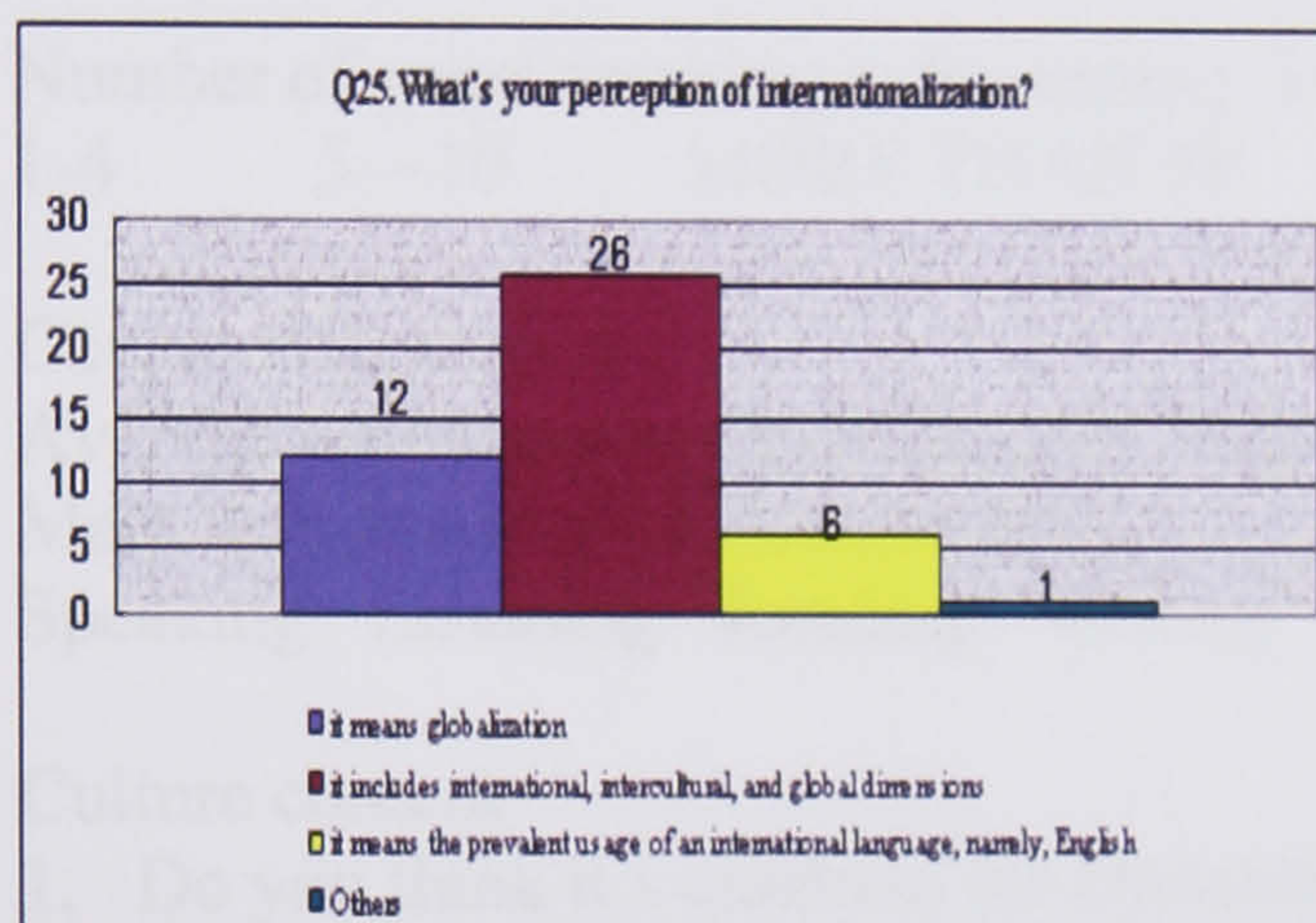
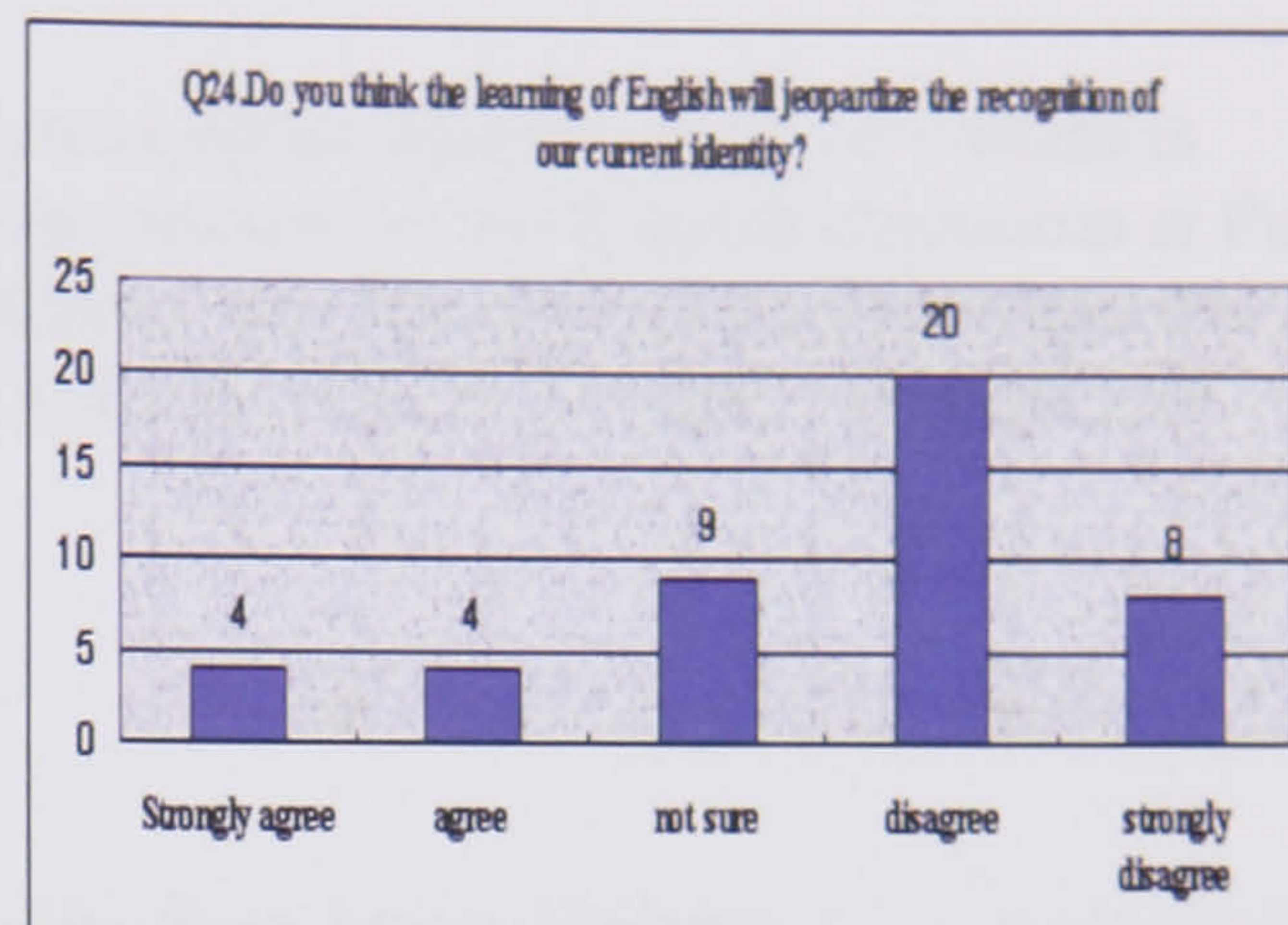
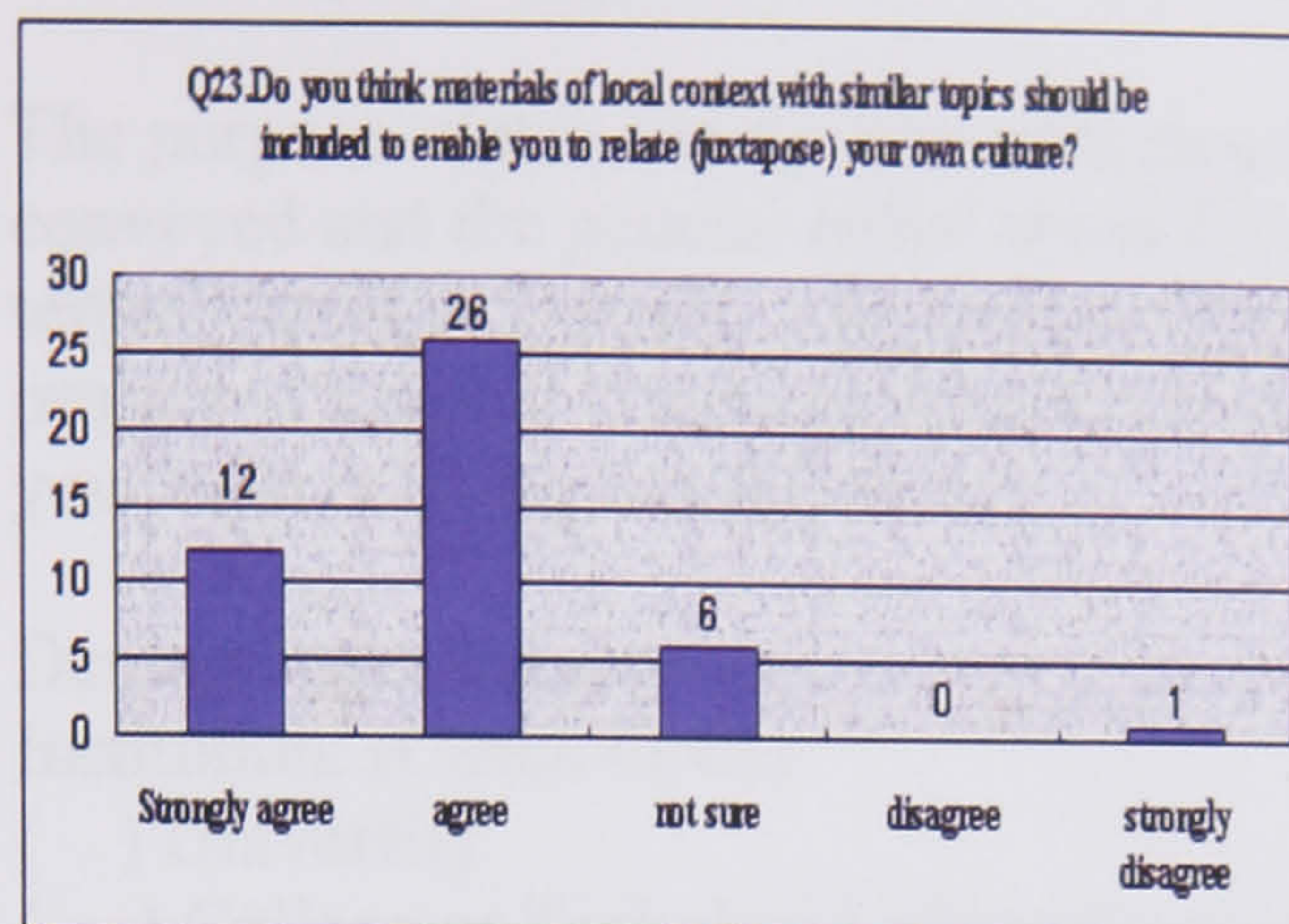
Data for the Specific Questionnaire













## Teacher Questionnaire

## Demographic information

( ) University

( ) College or Technical University upgraded from Junior College

Number of years teaching at the tertiary level

1-4      5—10      MORE THAN 10

Average number of students in your English courses \_\_\_\_\_

Speaking   Listening   Reading   Writing   Multi-skill

1. Do you think it is essential for students to be exposed to a variety of cultures?

2. Do you think it is important of EFL teachers to include aspects of the target language's culture as part of their classroom instruction?

3. Do you think a student can learn English well without learning about its cultures?

4. Do you think students' intellectual maturity has prepared them to receive more socio-cultural topics in the language classroom?

5. Learning about a foreign culture can change the students' attitude towards her/his own culture.

6. Do you include cultural information about English speaking cultures in your classes? (If NEVER chosen, please skip 6, 7, and 8)

1. Always 2. 3. 4. 5. Never

7. If you do include cultural content as per question # 5. is your cultural content planned or is it introduced spontaneously?

## Planned

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.  
Always.....Never

## Spontaneously

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.  
Always.....Never

8. If you do include cultural content as per question #5, how often is that information concerned with specific cultural aspects (cultures in form), e.g. high culture, popular culture, or cultural facts of everyday life, etc. Can you give your own examples?

1. Always 2. 3. 4. 5. Never

9. If you do include cultural content as per question #2. how often is the information focused on cultural concepts such as beliefs and values shared by a community.

1.      2.      3.      4.      5.  
Always                          Never

10. Do you use materials (texts, supplements) to present and talk about western or English speaking culture?

1. Always 2. 3. 4. 5. Never

Please provide examples:

## Language and culture

11. Do you teach cultural aspects of language where English differs from Chinese, e.g. modesty, use of first/last names, giving/responding to compliment, the sensitivity about personal questions, etc., as part of your class

1.            2.            3.            4.            5.  
Always    Never

12. Do you provide students with chances to contrast cultural examples found in the teaching materials with their own?

1.            2.            3.            4.            5.  
Always    Never

13. Do you provide students with chances to hold and defend a critical stance generated from cultural differences encountered in the materials used?

1.      2.      3.      4.      5.  
Always                  Never

14. What topics do you think are important in enhancing students' cultural understanding? (You can mark more than one)

1. Literature
2. Mass media/popular culture
3. Sociocultural issues like gender, race, class, economic and political issues
4. Everyday life



**Published materials**

15. Do you use textbooks in your classes?

\_\_\_ALWAYS/ \_\_\_NEVER

If NEVER, please skip questions 16 to 19.

If ALWAYS, Answer questions 16-19 and then skip question 20

16. Do your textbooks include any cultural information?

YES/NO

17. What kind of textbooks do you use?

A) Textbooks specifically written and designed to train the four linguistic skills.

B) Textbooks with authentic materials including a variety of literary work, newspaper/magazine articles, songs, etc.

C) Textbooks that cover topics with facts about everyday life

D) Textbooks designed for preparing for a certain type of standardized examination

E) Simplified or abridged English/American novels

Others, please specify \_\_\_\_\_.

18. How do you feel about the quality of cultural content in EFL textbooks?

1.        2.        3.        4.        5.

Adequate

Inadequate

Please state the reason: \_\_\_\_\_

19. What other materials do you use to supplement cultural content?

1. films and Filmstrips    2. Current issue magazine/newspaper articles

3. Internet resources    4. Literary works

20. If you do not use textbooks, what materials do you use in class?

Please give examples:

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**Semi structured interview**

21. What are the goals you wish to achieve in your English teaching?

22. What do you understand about the internationalization of Taiwan? What kind of role do you think English plays in the internationalization of Taiwan?

23. What do you think the role intercultural competence plays in the internationalization of Taiwan?

24. Do you think the students are more ready for cultural learning in the language classroom, in terms of their maturity and intellectual curiosity?

25. When teaching about English speaking cultures do you think it is important to use international and global context?

**Thank you very much for helping with this study.** If you would like a copy of findings, please supply your name and address below.

## Appendix 14

### Summaries of / Comparisons between Findings from Student Questionnaires, the Teacher Questionnaire and Administrator Interviews

A summary of findings regarding perceptions of English Education and Intercultural Competence from Student Questionnaires, the Teacher Questionnaire, and Administrator interviews

	<b>Student perspective</b>	<b>Teacher perspective</b>	<b>Administrator perspective</b>
<b>General English Language learning</b>	Are not sure if they have competence in four skills apart from necessary knowledge for examinations.	Tend to focus on pragmatic learning, and consider Four Skills training necessary.	Consider University student English competence to be lagging behind that of the neighboring countries, therefore, four skills training should be enhanced.
<b>Cultural learning/teaching</b>	1. Are positive about cultural learning. 2. Tend to agree that cultures close to their lives contribute most to their interest in learning English	1. Are Positive about involving culture in the language classroom. 2. Introduce cultural content either spontaneously or by plan, or both.	1. Consider knowledge of other cultures necessary but have no specific guidelines for implementation. 2. Consider student mobility one of the best ways for cultural learning.
<b>EFL and University Education</b>	1. Expect more linguistic training. 2. Reveal strong connection between expectation for humanistic education and English education such as independent and critical thinking, intellectual maturity, and facilitate life long learning ability.	English helps open the windows to the world and enable students to gain more knowledge.	1. Expect English education to help universities become internationalized. 2. Have no explicit explanation about the connection between 'whole person' education and 'English education.
<b>Internationalization/ Globalization</b>	1. The whole world has no boundaries and one is able to communicate with people all over the world. 2. Tend to support including intercultural dimensions as part of internationalization. 3. Are willing to accept cultural differences.	1. Share the government's perspective, that English education is important for internationalization of Higher Education. 2. Tend to agree that language is an instrument in the process of internationalization. 3. English education needs to be placed in a global context.	1. Taiwan must be internationalized and English plays a crucial role in that process. 2. It is necessary to create an international learning environment by increasing the number of the University curriculum taught in English, recruiting more foreign students, and encouraging academic exchanges of students and faculty members. 3. Learning English will ultimately lead to globalization.
<b>Intercultural Competence</b>	A good English user is a good intercultural speaker.	Agree that international competence is essential to the internationalization of Taiwan and for enhancing language learning as well.	1. It helps to broaden the global view. 2. No concrete ideas about how to implement intercultural learning in English education. 3. Promote student's mobility because sojourning experience is helpful to increase intercultural competence.



**A Summary of and a Comparison between Findings of Student and Teacher Perceptions of Cultural Content and Topics**

	Student perspective	Teacher perspective
<b>Cultural content</b> <b>Cultural Resources</b>	Everyday ways of life, literature, and mass media are major resources.	1. Mass media and literature 2. Always use textbooks although not very confident about if textbooks provide enough cultural messages.
<b>Sociocultural topics</b>	Gender race and class, lived experienced close to their own, popular cultures and sociocultural topics	Gender, race, class, economic and political issues, mass media, and popular culture.
<b>Mass Media</b>	The major resource to gain knowledge of foreign culture. Hollywood movies and American sitcom are popular amidst them.	Using English newspaper or magazine articles, films, or American sitcoms to supplement cultural knowledge.
<b>Perceptions of differences</b>	Attitude is generally constructive and positive. University students should acquire the attitude of being willing to accept cultural differences.	Are not very sure if they provide opportunities for students to reflect upon differences.
<b>Student's Readiness For intercultural learning</b>	1. Openness to difference 2. Being positive towards the inclusion of intercultural learning in the EFL classroom.	Tend to be hesitant over if student are ready for it.

**Similar Points between Student Generic and Specific Questionnaires**

	Generic Questionnaire	Specific Questionnaire
<b>Previous learning</b>	Have Gained knowledge necessary for exam and are not very sure about if they are equipped with four skills.	Have gained knowledge necessary for exam.
<b>Interesting Cultural Content</b>	Mainly mass media.	Cultural studies including a wide range of sociocultural topics
<b>Language and Identity</b>	English as a lingua franca. Taiwanese as a Mother tongue has received its attention	As a Taiwanese or a global citizen.
<b>Expectations for English Education</b>	Correlation found between Language learning and humanistic education that is the major component for college education as a whole person education.	More analytical ability and humanistic education.