



**An Investigation of University Students' Views about Teaching and  
Learning English through Their Own Experiences in High Schools and  
University of Mainland China**

**By**

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**Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Faculty of Education  
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## Abstract

English has become one of the most important subjects after the restoration of the College Entrance Examination in 1978 in mainland China. With the development of the Chinese economy and technology, Chinese students and graduates are provided with more opportunities to study and work collaboratively with the world community. Consequently, their English proficiency is closely related to their study and career plans. Therefore, it is important to investigate how students perceive their English learning and their teachers' teaching as this could both benefit students and teachers in an emerging discourse of English education.

The aim of this study was to investigate university students' perceptions about their teachers' teaching and their learning English through their own experiences in high schools and a university in mainland China. The investigation focused on the following key areas: the participants' perceptions of their English learning and teachers' teaching in high schools; the perceptions of their English learning and their teachers' teaching in the university; a comparative examination of these two learning discourses from the views of the students; and the participants' preferred learning and teaching models in the Chinese context.

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative research approaches for data collection and analysis. It included two phases: the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The statistical data were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) software version 21. The textual data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using the NVivo software version 10. Thematic analysis was used in the qualitative data analysis.

The results of this study indicated that huge differences of English teaching models utilized between high schools and universities existed in mainland China. This huge gap could create problems for Chinese students' learning transition and individual learning. The findings suggested that the current English assessments for both high schools students and university students should be improved, particularly, the English test in the College Entrance Examination. Meanwhile, transitional guidance was strongly suggested by university students, particularly, to take a shift from a perception of traditional classrooms in high schools to a 'student-centered' classroom in the university. Based on the findings, policy implications, implications for practice and directions for further research were also addressed.

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The research thesis was to investigate university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university in mainland China. Central China Normal University was chosen as a subject university in this study since it is located in the central part of mainland China, and it is one of the highest ranking comprehensive universities with more than 20 departments and 20,000 full time students and staff in China. Hence, the research results, to some extent, are indicative of the way English is taught in Chinese universities. The initial inspiration of this study was gained from the researcher's learning and teaching experiences in mainland China. Born in the early 1980s, the researcher first accessed English in the English class of junior secondary school. At that time, grammar explanation, memory of English words and practices were the key points in English classes. There were no advanced technological devices used to assist English teachers and students in and outside class. Most of the time, the teacher was the only resource of the whole class.

With a passionate heart in English education, after graduation from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville with a Master's degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), the researcher worked as an academic staff member in a university in Xiamen, China. It was interesting to find that the English syllabus, teaching materials, and English texts have been significantly improved in the last 20 years under the Ministry of Education in mainland China. It is recognized that students should be the central part of the learning process and the schools should cultivate their learning autonomy in order to develop individual learning in the English class. In addition, the Ministry of Education requires that English classes in high schools should focus on improving and enhancing independent learning competence and English communicative competence with the help of online learning platforms. As regard to these requirements, most universities set up English self-access learning centers and adopted computers to assist teaching and learning. The initial purpose of setting up English self-access learning centers in the university was to enhance students' motivation to learn English and further improve their English autonomous learning ability. Ideally, university students' English learning competence should have been improved with the help of the reform. However, the learning outcomes are not satisfactory (H. Hu, 2004). The following reasons were discussed as being likely to result in the failure of achieving expectations in the university English requirement (Benson, 2001; C. Li, 2012).

- Students' learning styles and learning experiences were quite different.
- University students could not adapt to the learning and teaching model of adopting English self-access learning centers in university.
- The English teaching models used by their high school English teachers were quite different from those of the university academic staff adopted.

This phenomenon from university students promoted the researcher's idea of conducting the research on an investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English with a focus on their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China.

With this idea in mind, the researcher left China and formally embarked upon this journey by pursuing her PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) in the University of Tasmania. After reviewing relevant literature on second language learning and teaching, the researcher found that there were significant gaps that could be explored. Many researchers tend to focus on either the students' learning experience in high schools or in universities (Lu, Wang, & Qing, 2011; Plakans, 2010). Few addressed the question of the comparison of different English teaching and learning experiences in high schools and in universities based on students' views in mainland China. Moreover, students' preferred learning styles and teaching models in their English class have not been explored in depth in mainland China. Thus, these gave the researcher an inspiration and motivation to undertake this research project in an attempt to fill these gaps.

As an introduction of the whole thesis, this chapter provides an overview of this research. First, it will explain the research aim and objectives together with specific research questions. Next, it will introduce the background of the study, including the discussion of English teaching models and learning theories. In particular, it will look into the development of English teaching and learning in high schools and in universities underpinned by ESL theories. Additionally, the justification and significance of the study will be presented. A framework of the research methodology, including the methods of collecting data and analyzing data will be. Lastly, it will discuss the ethical considerations, limitations of the research and the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Research background**

With the development of the economy and high technology, particularly, after the implementation of the opening-up policy and economic reform in China, English

plays an important role in culture, communication, politics, and international trade. It is reported that the number of overseas tourists was 55.98 million in 2010 and the number will lead to a stable increase annually (Xinhuanet, 2010). Meanwhile, compared with 100 foreign-owned enterprises in 1979, the number had soared to 300,000 foreign companies which had invested in China as of 2010, and it will increase every year (Hays, 2012). Also, English level has become one of the most important criteria for personal promotion and career development. Hence, improving and enhancing students' English proficiency is essential for both the national and personal purpose.

After the restoration of the College Entrance Examination in 1978, English teaching has witnessed a rapid development in mainland China. The Ministry of Education has put a top-down effort to reform English teaching and learning in secondary schools since the early 1980s (1998; Y. F. Zhang & Hu, 2010). First of all, the English course has become compulsory in a standard nationwide English syllabus, from secondary school to college. Before 1978, Russian took a dominant role as a popular foreign language in China because of its political and military reasons. At that time, students did not have access to English learning and teaching. This particularly occurred from 1966 to 1977, when the 10 years Cultural Revolution wreaked havoc on the infrastructure for English education in China (G. Hu, 2002a).

Moreover, the initial egalitarian approach to education in Mao's era has been replaced by Deng's idea of stratification and elite education since the 1980s (G. Hu, 2002a; Tsang, 2000; Y. F. Zhang & Hu, 2010). Deng Xiaoping, an influential leader in mainland China, proposed utilitarian strategies in the early 1980s and favoured stratification in education; that is, educational efficiency was dominant in developing basic English education and national economy instead of educational equality because of the unbalanced development between the rural and urban areas. Based on his view, a large number of funds were applied to re-edit English syllabus, textbooks, curriculum and assessments which were used regionally in some coastal cities in the early 1980s. After 1985, with the successful experience in these regions, the Ministry of Education unified English syllabus in secondary levels nationally.

Thirdly, the teaching force has aroused more concern than previous times. According to the State Education Committee (SEC) Department Of Planning and Construction (1991), only 30% and 26% of the junior and senior high school English teachers met the minimum requirements for professional qualifications in

1988. Consequently, policy was developed to enable, and more funds to be available, to train qualified English teachers for high school education in China. From 1981 to 1989, the English language teacher education programmes offered by tertiary institutions were increased from 161 to 226, and more in-service programmes were set up in these years (Y. Liu, 1993). Up to 2001, more than 60% of the senior high school teachers and 91% of the junior high school teachers has obtained the requisite qualifications (MOE Department of Development and Planning, 2001). Nowadays, the MOE requires English language teachers to obtain a graduate degree in English if they want to serve in high schools.

Lastly, pedagogy approaches in English teaching were also developed in these years due to the top-down reform. During the 1980s, English teachers followed a traditional English teaching method: Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) to teach in high schools. That is, the routine of the English teaching process was text revision-new text explanation-text translation from English to Chinese-grammar drills-exercise. The most frequently used tools in English teaching were English textbooks, exercise books, and tape recorders. At that time, teachers monitored the whole teaching process on the stage in the classrooms; while students just needed to take notes carefully and listened to the teachers attentively. From the 1990s, with the introduction of the diverse western pedagogies and their adoption in national curriculum documents, such as the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Task-Based Approach (TBA), the MOE gradually recognized that the function of the language was to communicate rather than train students to be ‘mute’ (Y. F. Zhang & Wang, 2011). In a five-year period, learning autonomy in English has been introduced to mainland China and developed quickly in university English courses, which was put into the English curriculum requirement in 2004.

However, although impressive progress has been made in EFL teaching in mainland China over two decades, a host of issues in English language education deserves much attention. This includes the introduction of the compulsory English course to primary schools, rapid spread of western English teaching pedagogy approaches, teacher education, and the widening gap in the quality of basic English language education between the regions in China (G. Hu, 2002a; Y. Jiang, 2003; Niu & Wolff, 2003; D. G. Tang & Absalom, 1998). Particularly, there are clear differences in English language proficiency, English teaching models, learning experiences, and language learning strategies between university students who completed secondary education in developed areas and their counterparts from undeveloped areas (G. Hu, 2002a). As Cortazzi and Jin (1996b) comment “there are significant differences in language teaching developments between the



major cities and small cities, between rural towns and countryside, between coastal and inland cities, between the North and South, between key and non-key schools and universities” (p. 61). Hence, different learning experiences in high schools impact students’ learning outcomes in university. Also, different students’ learning styles and expectations should be explored. The specific discourse where this research took place is Central China Normal University, one of the most famous and comprehensive universities of mainland China.

The participants of this study were volunteers from those students who were studying in Central China Normal University at the time of data collection. They were from eight departments within six main disciplines on the main campus. The university has 21 schools and the full time students are nearly 20,000 in two campuses, including undergraduate students, postgraduate students, doctoral programme students, and vocational level students (Central China Normal University, 2012). Within these eight departments, the majors cover Arts, Education, Science, Technology, Foreign Languages, Law, Business, and Engineering. According to the university statistical report (Central China Normal University, 2012), the undergraduate students have reached 10,000 in two campuses. All the first year and second year non-English major students are required to take English as a compulsory unit in the first two years in the university. However, the third year and last year undergraduates can choose English as a selective unit to gain credits. Additionally, English as a compulsory unit is provided for the first year non-English postgraduate students. From this point of view, English, as a second language provided in the university, plays an important role in students’ learning experiences.

This study looked into the views and evaluations of the participants from these departments on their English learning and their teachers’ teaching experiences in high schools and in the university. The Marxism Philosophy Institute and the International Cultural Exchange Center were not chosen since only research students and overseas students studied there. Hence, their views were not included in this study. Apart from these two specialized institutions, the other six main disciplines at the university were included in this research project.

### **1.3 Project aim and research objectives**

The goal of this study was to investigate university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and in the university. It examined the differences of English teaching and learning in high schools and in the university based on students’ perceptions in order to find out a

model students preferred in English teaching and learning. A questionnaire and semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to have different insights to analyze the impact and reasons behind the phenomenon. By investigating the participants' perspectives towards current English learning and teaching in high schools and the subject university, the study examined how the English learning environment of high schools and university could be enhanced. By discussing the views and evaluations of these participants, recommendations were made for developing students' preferred learning and teaching models. To achieve the six research objectives, they are explained below. Specific questions were raised to assist the objectives to be achieved (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Research objective 1: *To investigate the learning of English of university students when they were in high schools.* The following questions are focused upon:

- How do students evaluate their English learning in high schools?
- What kind of English learning methods did students use in high schools?
- What are the views of students on the English learning environment in high schools?
- What do students think of the English assessments in high schools?
- What were the problems in students' English learning in high schools?

Research objective 2: *To investigate teachers' teaching of English in high schools.* The following questions are investigated:

- What do university students think of English teachers' teaching in high schools?
- What kind of English teaching methods did teachers use in high schools?
- What were the teaching problems in high schools based on university students' views?

Research objective 3: *To investigate the learning of English of students in the university.* The following questions are examined:

- How do students evaluate their English learning in the university?
- What kind of English learning methods do students use in the university?
- What are the views of students on the English learning environment in the university?
- What do students think of the English assessments in the university?
- What are the learning problems in students' English learning in the university?

Research objective 4: *To investigate teachers' teaching of English in the university.* The following questions are asked:

- What do students think of English teachers' teaching in the university?
- What kind of English teaching methods do teachers use in the university?
- What are the teaching problems in the university based on students' views?

Research objective 5: *To examine the differences of university students' views and experiences of teaching and learning in high schools and in the university.* The following questions are focused upon:

- What are the differences of English teaching models used in high schools and in the university?
- What are the differences in teaching methods used by English teachers in high schools and in the university?
- What are the differences of the learning environment in high schools and in the university?
- What are the differences of students' learning problems in high schools and in the university?
- What are the differences of students' learning styles in high schools and in the university?

Research objective 6: *To construct a model of teaching and learning of English based on university students' views and experiences.*

- What is the learning style students prefer in English learning?
- What is the learning method students prefer in English learning?
- What is the teaching model students prefer in English learning and teaching?
- What is the learning environment students prefer in English learning and teaching?
- What kind of teacher do students think of a good English teacher?

### **1.4 Justification and significance**

The main justification of this study lies in investigating English learning and teaching experiences based on students' views, which can benefit teachers, school principals, and educators to understand how to better utilize updated English teaching materials, the English curriculum syllabus, and evaluation system, particularly, to develop quality education according to different learning styles. To develop individual learning according to students' learning styles and to know

further students' learning experiences have been discussed heatedly as an effectively instruction in ESL learning and teaching (Dunn, 1984; R. Ellis, 1989; Ministry of Education, 2007; Reid, 1987; Tsang, 2000; Y. F. Zhang & Wang, 2011). Since the different teaching models have been adopted in high schools and in the university, the learning outcomes and achievements are not highly achieved (G. Hu, 2002a; H. Liu, 2013). Students' performances in the English course are not regarded as satisfactory by schools and parents. Thus, researching on students' views provides an examination of what they think of current English teaching and learning in both high schools and university in order to find out their preferred learning and teaching styles.

Within the Chinese context, there is a constant need to investigate English teaching and learning based on students' views and their preferences in learning styles and teaching models. In the last 25 years, the English language has gained its popularity and importance at an accelerated rate, not only as a compulsory course in schools but also as an effective communicative tool in the international market in mainland China (G. Hu, 2003). With the development of China' s global economy and international influence, it has revealed that an unprecedented demand for proficiency in English is essential for both the national and individual development (Y. H. Gao, Li, & Li, 2002). Because of the social and economic prestige of English, innovations of EFL in China have received great attention since the early 1980s (Ross, 1993). It drives a top-down reform of the English course in various aspects. Developing quality education, fostering learners' autonomy, and enhancing students' communicative competence have been emphasized primarily by the Ministry of Education (2000b, 2007). Also, it requires teachers to explore advanced technological tools, such as computers, web-learning systems, to apply to English teaching and learning, particularly, to transfer a 'teacher-centered' model to a 'learner-centered' model. From this point, education institutions need to understand students' views and preferences, and accordingly to design English curriculum syllabus and adopt classroom activities to better suit their needs. Previous research has highlighted learning styles and teaching methods from western researchers' perspectives (G. Hu, 2003; Reid, 1987; Ross, 1993). However, to better cater for Chinese students' demands, it is vital to appreciate students' perspectives of differences between English learning and teaching in high schools and university within the Chinese context. There is, to date, little specific study on this field, which enables this research to contribute to bridge this gap.

This study will contribute insights into the different English learning styles and teaching models used in the high schools and in the university in mainland China.

It will compare the differences of English teaching and learning based on students' views and their English learning experience in high schools and university. Subsequently, it attempts to develop a model that students prefer in their English learning and teaching. This research will also contribute suggestions of how to improve learning environments in the subject Chinese university and high schools by aspects such as changing the role of the teachers, developing the English self-access learning centers and utilizing various teaching methods. The findings of the research will assist teachers at education institutions to develop support strategies in assisting future students in their English learning, as well as help educators develop a more effective and practical English syllabus for high school students for their transition to the university pathway.

### **1.5 Theoretical considerations**

This thesis was underpinned by theories of second language acquisition, learning and teaching theories to look into learning styles and teaching models in both high schools and the university based on students' perceptions. A main consideration of this research was that English teachers, educators and school principals should take into consideration what students think of their learning and teaching experiences, and then to apply suitable teaching methodology accordingly to satisfy students' needs. It is believed that researching into students' preferences based on reflection of their learning experience and their expectations on teachers' teaching styles could provide universities, schools and teachers with a further understanding of students' needs so as to achieve a better learning outcome (Richardson, 2005; Trigwell, Prosser, & Waterhouse, 1999). An investigation on students' views of their learning and teaching experiences in the English course could not only assist the Central China Normal University to better quality education but also give a potential recognition to other high institutions to further explore a more adaptive methodology for English learning and teaching. Subsequently, educators can plan and adjust English curriculum and syllabus according to students' preferences.

This research was supported by theories of higher education and ESL education. The students involved in this study were university students who were studying in the subject university, ranging from freshmen to seniors on campus. University students were quite different from younger learners who cannot manage their own learning and lack study discipline (Klassen & Vogel, 2003). Therefore, the research undertaken in university shows a different research context compared with that in schools and in other colleges. Moreover, this study focused on the discipline area of English to seek for students' perspectives of their experiences, which present the situation of current ESL learning and teaching in the Chinese

context. It also intended to find out students' preferred learning and teaching styles in the subject university within the Chinese context.

This thesis used both qualitative and quantitative methods in the research, which is a common mixed method approach in social science research. It was interested in exploring the multiple meanings and interpretations of learning and teaching based on students' views to provide a better understanding for educators of students' needs (Charmaz, 2006; Richardson, 2005). The theories of qualitative research, quantitative research and constructivist grounded theory were used together to gain a clear theoretical reorganization of how to apply educational methods into practice for staff. Adopting the quantitative research theory would help in drawing a detailed framework based on students' views. The researcher also believed that using the thematic analysis in the constructivist grounded theory would assist her to interpret the raw data in order to generate convincing theories (Charmaz, 2006; Neuman, 2011).

## **1.6 Research methodology**

The methodology underpinning this study lay in using a mixed method paradigm. It adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyze data, which were expected to strengthen the merits and make up for the weakness for both sides. There were 500 university students who joined in the survey and 20 of them took part in the semi-structured interviews, ranging from 18 years to 23 years old in eight major departments in Central China Normal University. Data collection methods were in the form of questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, which were designed according to the research aims and conducted in relation to the English learning and teaching experiences based on participants' views. The data collection process was divided into two stages: a quantitative stage and qualitative stage. The research tool in the quantitative stage was a 65-item questionnaire, which was first distributed to the students of each department. Data gathered in this stage was analyzed through a statistical software: PASW (formerly SPSS Statistics) version 21. At the second stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted to get a further detailed understanding. At this stage, the participants' views were analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory with three coding steps and a thematic analysis (Sarantakos, 2005). The textual data were conducted at this stage was NVivo software version 10.

### **1.6.1 The quantitative stage**

The quantitative stage was the first phase in this research and it utilized quantitative method. The data were mainly numbers collected from the questionnaire that was designed to achieve research goals. The different scores and various attributes were measured according to participants' responses, and two groups of variables were compared in relation to experiences of high schools and the university (Creswell, 2007). The quantitative stage mainly used a deductive approach to undertake research, which enabled the researcher to make hypotheses according to previous studies discussed in the literature (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). These hypotheses were later examined through the survey performed in the data collection process (Babbie, 2011). At the end of this stage, the researcher could find out the results of the participants' responses and compare them in conjunction with relevant literature.

At this stage, a questionnaire was developed and utilized to collect data to investigate the attitudes and views of university students in relation to their learning and teaching experiences of English. The questionnaire was designed adopting a five-point Likert scale (1932), which is a recognized tool for measuring attitudinal responses (Burns & Burns, 2008), and was employed to provide insight into the participants' perceptions about, and their attitudes to the English teaching and learning experience they had in both high schools and university. Therefore, a questionnaire designed in this form was considered as the most suitable data collection instrument (J. A. Hatch, 2002). The questions and statements in the questionnaire were designed based on the relevant literature and aimed to achieve research objectives. The participants invited in this study were required to indicate on a five Likert scale, from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' to freely express their feelings for each question/statement. Their responses to the questionnaire were analyzed by SPSS version 21. Within this study, descriptive analysis was firstly conducted. Within this analysis, median values are an important indicator to find out the participants' degree of agreement on the questionnaire items. And then the Kruskal-Wallis test and Mann-Whitney U Test were applied to examine whether there is significant difference between groups and where these differences occur. Lastly, the correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between variables in the questionnaire (Fan, 2011).

### **1.6.2 The qualitative stage**

A qualitative research method was adopted in the second stage, which was believed to analyze the data in a natural way (Babbie, 2011). Compared with the quantitative research method, qualitative research method is more "pragmatic,

interpretive, and grounded in people's living experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2010, p. 2). To focus on context is one of the hallmarks of qualitative research (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Thus, adopting a qualitative method in the subject university within the Chinese context was the most suitable and natural way to know the participants' ideas of their experiences through learning and teaching. Meanwhile, it is beneficial for the researcher to construct meanings according to participants' responses. In contrast to the first stage, the qualitative stage provided textual data with insights of the participants into their learning experiences and teachers' teaching experiences in the university. At this stage, an inductive approach was adopted to research that reasoning works the other way, moving from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories (Thomas, 2006). The researcher used this method to seek the raw data into categories and themes that were grounded in participants' views to generate a model and form new theories.

The semi-structured interview with 10 focus questions was used as a data collection tool in the second stage. This form of interview was chosen as it provided "in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints of a specific topic" (Turner, 2010, p. 754). In this study, these 10 focus questions were designed for university students to seek answers to achieve research goals. In the light of using the questionnaire in the first stage, the semi-structured interview adopted at this stage allowed participants more freedom to express their opinions of learning experiences and teachers' teaching in high schools and in the university. Also, this form of data collection benefits the researcher in gathering more in-depth data from the participants' responses in elaborating explicitly.

The researcher employed the constructivist grounded theory and thematic analysis to interpret the textual data at the qualitative stage. The constructivist grounded theory guided the researcher to break the data analysis into open coding, axial coding and selective coding steps. (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The main focus of this method is to extract upper-level themes from a larger number of codes and phenomenon. A thematic analysis is regarded as one of the most commonly used methods of qualitative analysis (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). The researcher could identify limited themes to adequately reflect the textual data through adopting the thematic analysis. In this research, this thematic analysis was believed to facilitate constructing and generating core categories based on the participants' responses in the semi-structured interviews (Fan, 2011). It also helped the researcher to sort out codes, find out patterns, and later develop



theories in relation to their views of learning and teaching model preferences in the data analysis process.

### 1.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues play an essential role in social research, particularly, in a cross-cultural research. An ethics awareness helped the researcher to obtain basic guidelines and principles when undertaking social research in a multicultural environment (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). As Neuman states that “the researcher should be sensitive to cultural and political issues of cross-cultural interaction. They need to learn what is considered offensive within a culture” (2011, p. 413). These issues were kept in mind when the researcher collected data in China. She kept a good relationship with the subject university and the participants and did not cause any offense in the whole data collection process.

The researcher followed the ethical guidelines to apply for a full ethics application approval. It was firstly reviewed by the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania to ensure the full ethics application has been qualified for the human research. Secondly, the full ethics application was sent to the full ethics committee of the University of Tasmania to be approved by them. Thirdly, after getting feedback from the full ethics committee of the University of Tasmania, a revision was made to respond to the queries in this research and it was resubmitted. Finally, the full ethics application was approved by the University of Tasmania to allow the research to conduct this research in mainland China. Ethical clearance (H12633) was obtained on the July, 2012 (as shown in Appendix 1). There are three main issues most frequently raised in western research ethical guidelines and by the professional associations, namely, codes and consent, confidentiality, and trust (Ryen, 2011). These three issues will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Code and consent refer to the ‘informed consent’, that is, the research subjects have the right to “know that they will be researched, the right to be informed the nature of the research, and the right to withdraw at any time” (Ryen, 2011, p. 418). The full ethics application of this research included two consent forms, one was for the survey and the other one was for the semi-structured interview. There would be no harm to the participants in these two forms. The participants recruited in the study were university students, who were considered to be both mental and physically healthy adults in the subject university. It is believed that the participants could make decisions independently to decide if they would like to take part in this research based on their own belief. There were no sensitive

topics and cultural issues addressed in the survey and the interview questions, which were designed and practiced according to the principles of the conducting researches in other countries (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007). Thus, participants were not offended during these two forms of data collection process. They were informed that finishing the questionnaires and handing in them meant that they understood the use of implicit consent in the survey. The interview was conducted after the participants signed the consent form and they could withdraw their participation anytime without any further negative effect on their learning in the subject university. Therefore, all the data that were collected in this research and that were used in the data analysis was with participants' consent.

Confidentiality means that it is obliged to protect the identity, the place and the location participants of the research (Ryen, 2011). In this study, the issues of data report and storage were explicitly described in the full ethics application. On the one hand, the participants' responses in the survey were non-identifiable data, that is, all the participants involved in the questionnaire were anonymous. On the other hand, the participants' responses to the semi-structured interview were identifiable data, but the researcher would protect their confidentiality. All the participants' names and particular information were erased in the interview transcripts; thus, only the chief investigator accessed to know the participants. The initial textual data were replaced by pseudonyms, which was recorded and labelled by students' number, such as student NO.1 and NO.2. Also, the researcher had no discussions with others about the participants in relation to their confidentiality. There will be no individual personal information used in any publication based on this research.

Trust is the third issue mentioned by Ryen (2004), which refers to "the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and to the researcher's responsibility not to 'spoil' the field for others in the sense that potential research subjects become reluctant to further study" (cited in Ryen, 2011, p. 419). When the study was conducted in Central China Normal University, the researcher kept a good relationship with the participants and the university. All the participants involved in this research were volunteers for the survey and they were informed that the responses were non-identifiable. In the semi-structured interviews, the participants who decided to take part in the interviews had known that their personal information would not be uncovered in any other publication and not exposed to anyone else. They had the right to withdraw the data which had been recorded or stopped at anytime during the interview. There would no other

negative influence on them. Therefore, it is believed that the whole process was trustworthy (Fine, 1993).

The data collection used paper instruments that were stored securely and safely. All the printed copies of questionnaires and original transcripts in the audio-taped files were carried personally by the researcher to the University of Tasmania after the data collection process. The paper files were locked in the chief investigator's cabinets with locks and the recorded files were downloaded to a password-protected file stored in a network storage area of the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania. Afterwards, all the files during the period of data analysis and the thesis writing were conducted in a password-protected server. All data will be destroyed after five years of the completion of this research and then removed and shredded by a contractor employed specifically to deal with the confidential wastes of the university.

### **1.8 Limitations of the research**

The study was restricted by three main factors: time, location and participants. Firstly, the data was gathered from November of 2012 to January of 2013 in the Central China Normal University. Due to the time restrictions, the researcher had only three months in conducting surveys and interviews in the semester 1 of 2012-2013 in the subject university in mainland China. Therefore, the research could not be undertaken for a longer time to get more comprehensive feedback from the students in the subject university. Moreover, the participants involved in this study were on the main campus of the subject university because of the transportation convenience and limited time. Although it would have been ideal to include the information from another campus in the subject university, it had a relatively small population of full-time students. However, if they would like to take part in this study, the International Office of the Central China Normal University had promised that the transportation fees could be claimed for these students on the other campus.

Secondly, it would have been preferable to have more Chinese universities involved in this research since it was about learning and teaching experiences in English based on university students' views. However, due to the factors such as transportation, location and funds, the researcher only conducted the research in the Central China Normal University. This university is a comprehensive university with more than 100 years history in mainland China and its graduates and researchers have a high profiled reputation in China. Moreover, the students on campus were of high quality in higher education. All full time students came

from different nationalities, ranging from urban areas to rural areas. In order to tackle this problem, the researcher set a related question of students' scores in the English test in the College Entrance Examination. Therefore, it is believed that the students' responses of different English levels could have generalization of the research outcome.

Thirdly, the participants in this research were grouped into six major categories: Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Computing, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Foreign Languages, and Faculty of Economics and Management. Some fourth year students who were from the Faculty of Medicine could not participate in this study since they were joining in the practices out of the university when this research was being conducted in the university. Moreover, some fourth year students were undertaking their educational practices when the research was being conducted in the university. However, the overall numbers of samples were rich enough to answer the research questions in this study. The participants' number ensured the research was valid and credible.

Admittedly, it would have been helpful if the researcher had set some questions in the survey to distinguish whether the participants graduated from high schools in rural areas or cities or what the participants' nationalities are. Although the differences of the cultural backgrounds were not the focus of this study, the increasing concerns on the cultural diversity and the huge gap between rural areas and urban areas of educational issues have aroused curiosity among scholars in the EFL field in China. Furthermore, university students from other parts of China, such as Hong Kong and Macau may have different views towards the research questions since this study was only conducted in mainland China. Therefore, the cultural influences and diversified nationalities could affect students' views on their responses will procure an opportunity for this new research gap to be explored in future studies. Lastly, this study only focused on gathering information on students' perceptions on their English learning and teachers' teaching rather than investigating both students and teachers in high schools and the university. This limitation also provides an opportunity for future researches.

### **1.9 Structure of the thesis**

This structure shows the whole process of how the research was explored and undertaken from the beginning to the end. It has nine chapters in total, they are, Introduction, Theoretical Concepts and Basis of the Research, Teaching and Learning in the Chinese Context: From Theory to Practice, Methodology, Design of Research Instruments, Quantitative Data Analysis, Qualitative Data Analysis,

Discussion and Recommendations, and Conclusion. Each chapter presents the details of the contents and an overview of it. The research procedure follows the ideas of Flick (2011), who explains that in qualitative research, interlink steps were more appropriate since they are oriented to exploring and discovering something new, however, in quantitative research, a linear process was followed by “starting from theoretical hypothesis and ending with the validation of the theory based on testing it” (p. 56). Therefore, the researcher adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods to complete this thesis by following both a linear process and interlink steps. The details of each chapter are outlined in the following paragraphs.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Concepts and Basis of the Research

Chapter 2 provides both reviews of the related previous research projects and theoretical foundations within this research area. It looks at the background knowledge of the teaching model, the English teaching model and English teaching methods. It further gives an insight towards investigating their relationships. This chapter also shows an overview of the educational philosophy that underpins students’ learning and teaching in English, such as Behaviourism, Humanism, Cognitive theory, and Constructivism. Besides these learning theories provided, the researcher reviewed different learning styles models utilized in western countries and in mainland China, as well as learning autonomy as an important theory underpinned in Chinese higher education. These theoretical concepts are related to the Chinese context in teaching English to second language learners.

## Chapter 3: Teaching and Learning in the Chinese Context: From Theory to Practice

This chapter reviews previous studies focusing upon teaching and learning in the Chinese context. It is based on the previous chapter that has provided theoretical concepts and is to discuss how these developed from theory to practice in China. First of all, this chapter introduces a significant development in English learning and teaching in high schools and in universities based on the several milestones. Secondly, it stresses the importance of Chinese culture of Confucianism that influences teaching and learning in mainland China. Thirdly, different English teaching methods utilized in high schools and in universities are compared. Lastly, issues and challenges appearing in English teaching and learning are discussed in the Chinese context.

#### Chapter 4: Methodology

Chapter 4 introduces the system of methods and principles used in this research. There is a mixed method research methodology utilized in this study, which employs both quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect and analyze data. The researcher restressed the research goal and reaffirmed the research objectives prior to detailing the research questions. Then she moved on to introduce the methodological principles in this study, including the quantitative research and qualitative research principles, the thematic analysis and the constructivist grounded theory. The researcher further explained the procedures of data analysis and data collection at both stages. Most importantly, a pilot study was performed so as to ensure the validity and credibility of the research instruments and the whole study. Finally, the perspective of the triangulations was provided as an important part in this study.

#### Chapter 5: Design of Research Instruments

This chapter explains explicitly how the research instruments have been developed. A questionnaire and one set of ten interview questions were designed for university students. Based on the theoretical framework, it is believed that the items designed in the questionnaire and questions in the interview enable the achievement of the research aim and objectives. Additionally, the initial design process and the slight adjustments made of the final version of the questionnaire and interview questions have been illustrated in detail. Afterwards, the conduction of a pilot study regarding validity tests and a factor analysis have been carried out using the SPSS software to test the research tools. Finally, it includes suggestions proposed by the academic staff in the subject university.

#### Chapter 6: Quantitative Data Analysis

This chapter provides an overview of the data analysis at the quantitative research stage. Chapter 6 gives an explanation of how the research tools and analysis methods have been utilized. Based on the pilot study, the questionnaire items have been slightly adjusted according to the statistical measurements. Thus, the numerical data have been re-grouped into five sub-dimensions. Also, this chapter provides the participants' background information in order to have a better understanding of future analysis in variables. In the data analysis process at this stage, the researcher used some techniques such as the median values, man values, analysis of Kruskal-Wallis tests and the correlation tests to analyze data. The interesting results were shown and interpreted by using the SPSS version 21 at this stage.

## Chapter 7: Qualitative Data Analysis

This chapter introduces the methods used for textual data at the qualitative stage, in particular, theories underpinned at this stage are provided to guide the qualitative data analysis. The textual data have been gained from the last section of the questionnaire and the interview transcripts. This data analysis process was underpinned by the constructivist grounded theory approach and thematic analysis. Compared with the data at the first stage, the qualitative data could provide the researcher further insights to explore beyond the numbers from the questionnaire. As a consequence, it could assist the research to generate themes that might have not yet been covered by the quantitative research. At the end of this chapter, it provides discussions of the results of the open-ended question in the questionnaire and interview questions items.

## Chapter 8: Discussion and Recommendations

Chapter 8 focuses on discussions of the findings based on the previous data analysis chapters. This chapter first presented the general findings in the order of the six research objectives. Ranking in order is to see whether the research objectives have been fully addressed or not. One of the main findings from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis shows students' preferred learning and teaching model based on their perceptions. This model is constructed according to their preferences within the study. Consequently, recommendations and suggestions are provided for the educators to develop English syllabus in mainland China.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

Chapter 9 is the last chapter of this thesis. As a conclusion chapter in the thesis, it has provided an overview of whole study in the first place. This includes revisiting the research aim and objectives and looking into the most important construction of this study - Communicative Language Community of English Learners. This chapter has also summarized the research findings. Last but not the least, the researcher has highlighted the possibilities of directions of future researches from this research findings and from the potentialities. Lastly, recommendations have been provided on the potential research in the focused areas.

### **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the whole research. As an introduction chapter, it has presented the research background and six research objectives with detailed sub-questions. Regarding the research context, it explained current situation of teaching and learning English in mainland China. Particularly, an introduction of Chinese education in both high schools and the university context in which this research took place was provided. Furthermore, it addressed the justification and significance of this study. Afterwards, the theoretical foundation of this research was discussed. Next, the research methodology used in the data collection and analysis were explained at both stages. Following this, ethical issues, limitations of the research were presented. Last, the structure of the whole thesis with a brief idea of each chapter was outlined at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 2 will provide details in the previous literature regarding these theories and discussions in relation to English teaching and learning experiences in the Chinese context. The key concepts and their role of teaching model, English teaching model, and methods for English teaching will be first discussed, and followed by exploring learning theories that are underpinned by second language teaching and learning. In particular, researches of learning styles from western and Chinese scholars will be illustrated. Lastly, a brief history of the development of learning autonomy will be introduced.



## **Chapter 2 Theoretical Concepts and Basis of the Research**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter has provided an overview of the study. First of all, it introduced the significant developments that were achieved in English learning and teaching in both high schools and universities in the past years in China. In the meantime, some issues were addressed, particularly gaps between high school English teaching practices and university English teaching. Also, it gave a brief view of the English subject and its curriculum in the current educational system, particularly, in the Central China Normal University context. Finally, it presented the structure of the whole thesis, which provides a navigation of this study.

This chapter reviews previous studies in relations to the theoretical foundations of this research. It provides theoretical concepts including models of learning and teaching and learning theories. Within these learning theories, it mainly illustrates Humanism, Behaviorism, Cognitive theory and Constructivism. Also, it discusses learning style models utilized in the West and China. Finally, it explains learning autonomy as an important theoretical concept in Chinese English language education.

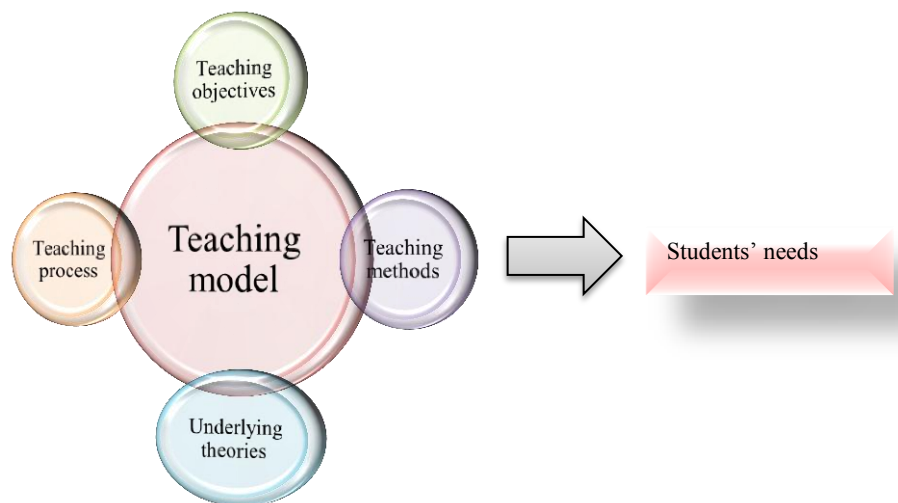
### **2.2 Key concepts and their relations**

#### **2.2.1 Teaching model**

The view of the concept of teaching model is different between researchers in China and in western countries. Joyce and Weil (2000) believe that “Models of teaching are really models of learning” (p. 7). They stress that it is important for students to obtain skills and knowledge, as well as to monitor their learning processes under teachers’ long-term instruction. In other words, teachers help students understand how to learn by means of teaching them how to acquire information, ideas, skills, values, ways of thinking, and means of expressing themselves. They emphasize that the most important outcome of long-term instruction is to improve students’ abilities of learning effectively. Joyce and Weil (2000) also point out that teachers should pay considerable attention to students’ learning experiences because of students’ individuality, which could influence the outcomes of learning and teaching. From their view, how teachers behave can influence students’ learning outcomes. More specifically, a teaching model is constructed within the process of selecting appropriate teaching materials, providing guidance in the classroom and other environmental activities in teaching, and to achieve certain learning objectives. Dewey (1916) claims that the

essential part of the teaching process is based on the environmental arrangement within which students can interact so that they can understand how to learn. Mosston (1972) argues that any teaching model needs to develop students' individuality and it should be based on the needs of learners.

However, in mainland China, the concept of teaching model is often viewed in a more restricted manner. Diao (2008) believes that a teaching model is like a teaching style, which is constructed within the teaching process based on a fixed teaching method. Furthermore, Wen (2010) argues that a teaching model in China is more like a teaching strategy based on a fixed teaching approach. The idea from the third school of scholars in China is similar to what Joyce and Weil described (Guo, 2011; Hao & Xu, 2003; B. Li, 1991). Although the definitions are diversified, researchers agree that a teaching model is how teachers use specific teaching methods to guide students to achieve a clear teaching aim, and to further enhance students' learning ability. This process is underpinned by certain theories. Generally, no matter what teaching models are chosen to use in the teaching process, the aim is to meet students' needs (Diao, 2008; Joyce et al., 2000). However, a fixed teaching model for all students cannot be suitable since they come from various learning backgrounds and their needs are various (Adamson & Morris, 1997). The following figure presents the relationship of these elements in a teaching model based on the previous discussions:



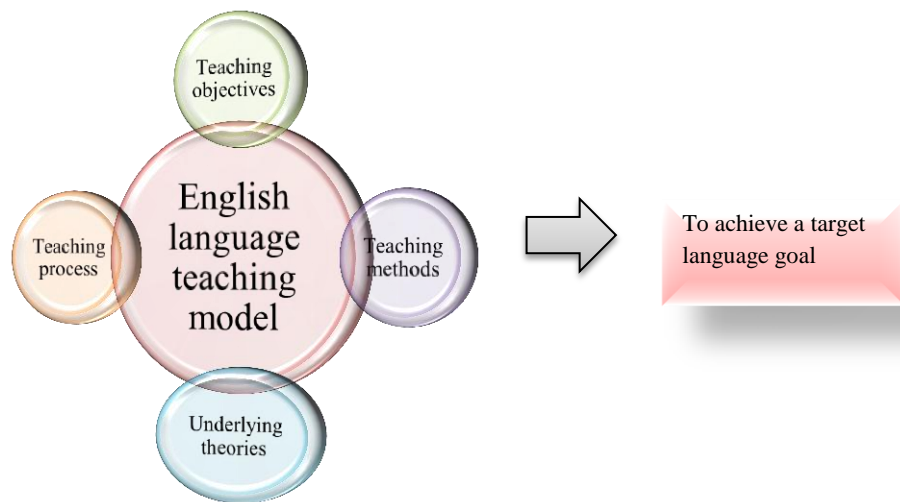
*Figure 2.1* The relationship of elements in a teaching model

In the framework above, teaching activities are underpinned by the underlying theories, thus, the theory is essential in a teaching model. Meanwhile, according to students' different educational backgrounds, the teachers could choose teaching materials and teaching methods to fulfill the tasks. Hence, teaching models should be various and specific.

### **2.2.2 Models in English language teaching**

Constructing a teaching model in English language teaching is important. As mentioned previously, any teaching model adopted seeks to improve students' abilities in achieving acquired learning outcomes. Thus, an effective teaching model is related to students' learning aims and their achievement (R. Ellis, 2008). According to Diao (2008), a teaching model in English language teaching should be underpinned by a certain theory in language acquisition and tries to achieve the target language teaching objectives. A teaching model in English language teaching includes a process of English curriculum design, preparing teaching and learning activities, classroom management, as well as planning teaching materials (R. Ellis et al., 2009). A teaching model in English assists teachers to teach explicitly to achieve chosen learning outcomes.

Although there are various models of teaching, the aim of constructing a teaching model is to satisfy students' needs (Joyce et al., 2000). When a teaching model is adopted in the English class, its aim is to assist students to achieve their target language goals. (Goodwyn, 1992). According to Cai (2006), a teaching model used in English language teaching is underpinned by a certain theory that guides teachers to adopt effective teaching methods according to students' characteristics, and finally to achieve the English teaching objectives. From this point of view, teachers need to understand different students' learning characteristics in order to satisfy learning outcomes in the language learning process. Graddol (2006) argues that English teaching models, English teaching methods, English teaching materials, and English assessments should be diversified. Hence, in the Chinese context, only after the teachers understand students' needs, could they adopt a teaching model effectively in English language teaching to achieve a target learning goal. Their relationships are presented in the following figure.



*Figure 2.2 English language teaching model*

### 2.2.3 Methods for English teaching

As teaching methods play an important role in teaching models, researching English teaching methods become essential. Language teaching concepts received emphasis in their development around the middle of the last century. Central to this process was the emergence of distinctive methods of language teaching. The concept of methods in language teaching is the notion of a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). According to Padmavat (2012), a method is a plan for presenting the language material to be learnt and focuses upon a selected approach. Although the definition differs, the consensus is that methods used in language teaching should be based on language learning theories.

When searching for general research studies related to ‘English teaching in high schools’ and ‘teaching methods’, a large number of papers and related information will be found. However, fewer scholars have focused on teaching methods in Chinese high schools as most of the research studies only emphasize western practices, in particular, on European or American secondary school teaching. Smagorinsky and Whiting (1994) argue that the lack of many publications and papers examining the methods of teaching utilized in classes confirmed their sense that researchers needed formal knowledge of this field rather than relying on knowledge passed along from colleague to colleague. This often occurs during conference meetings, perhaps through the exchange of syllabi via e-mails. Passing along knowledge during conferences is still popular for English teachers in high schools as research jobs are not their main work (MOE Department of Development and Planning, 2011). Thus, investigating current

English teaching methods adopted in the Chinese context is vital for both Chinese students and teachers. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

### **2.3 The development of theory in education**

Models of teaching have been developed systematically in response to the development of educational theory in past decades. Although the definition of a model of teaching emerged in the middle of 20th century (Howatt, 1984), the original development of theories in the area could be traced back to earlier books and journals (Garrison, 1979). Since imparting knowledge to students was the only model teachers followed in the past, the teaching process was composed of lecturing, attending, reading and repeating and practicing (Good & Brophy, 1986). The feature of this exposition model requires students to only focus on what the teacher taught in class instead of exploring the knowledge within or out of the class by students themselves. Receiving information passively and practicing repeatedly were emphasized throughout the whole teaching process. It was around the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the Direct Teaching Method (DTM) adopted by schools was developed. According to Murphy (1995), Comenius instrumented in developing formulized educational settings. That is, students should be divided into different classes according to their ages in schools. Furthermore, he explains how to doubt, question, answer and practice in classes. Comenius formulates the idea that education is according to how nature is viewed, which demonstrates the characteristic basis of the DTM. This method encourages students to practice more in grammatical usage in language classes. The significance of his education ideology is to establish the basic unity of sense-impression and speech and action in the process of cognition (Murphy, 1995).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Herbart, a German philosopher, psychologist and educator, developed not only a rationale for philosophical-psychological teaching but a teaching method as well. Herbart believes that “the mind was the total of all ideas which entered into one's conscious life. The importance of both the physical and the human environment in the development of the mind” (cited in Wu, 2006, p. 212). Wu (2006) asserts that a person's idea is central in the learning process. He notes that when new ideas group themselves into what he calls ‘Apperceptive masses’ that these ideas enter the mind through association and people could learn effectively in this learning process (Brezinka, 1995). Later, Herbart's method of instruction has been identified by his students as involving the ‘Five Formal Steps of the Recitation’ (Hilgenheger, 1993). They are preparation, presentation, association, generalization, and application. Herbart emphasizes that selecting proper curriculum materials to teach students is of importance and references items.

Despite an understanding that teaching and learning were interactive, early teaching models and instructional practices emphasized that teachers controlled the learning environment. The early theories on teaching models did not provide opportunities for input into the students' role in the learning and teaching process. According to Dewey (1916), both a social purpose and purpose for the individual student are two essential parts in teaching and learning. Also, he believes that learning experiences are essential for both the long-term and the short-term as well. Thus, educators are responsible to provide students with experiences that are immediately valuable and which also better enable students to contribute to the society.

Dewey (1916) compared traditional and progressive education occurring at that time. He criticizes traditional education that restricts students' imagination since ordinary school-rooms are full of a "pattern of organization" (p. 249). On the other hand, his views of progressive education focuses on a vision of a more pleasant and practical education. It is often said that education should be 'child-centered' rather than grounded on the authority of teachers and textbooks (Huang, 1987). Children are viewed as curious and creative by nature; yet, traditional educational teaching and curriculum designs rarely pay attention to their interests. Thus, a broader curriculum and a human pedagogy would be more likely to honour those interests. Dewey's ideas expand the scope of the school curriculum during the first half of the twentieth century. This occurred at different levels, from primary to college, from children to adults, and he emphasized that all people could have access to education. Fu (1986) claims that in lifelong learning, the 'student-centered' model is essential to develop both learning and teaching more than imparting knowledge to students directly.

Instructional methods and materials were also changed according to the practical applications and proliferation of Dewey's theory. One important change was for teachers to become facilitators of learning. Teachers as facilitators are more likely to encourage students to participate and be active through teaching strategies such as discussions and group projects. The learning process could involve enjoyable adoption of teaching methods such as games, field trips, films and role-plays. Nevertheless, teachers need to display characteristics that encourage students' involvement. For example, in the classroom, an important principle related to individuality is being respected as an individual and consequently for everyone to be allowed to have a say, and for all students to be encouraged to feel comfortable and successful. According to Ross (1993), progressive developments in teaching models mean that there are agents through which all knowledge and skills are communicated and rules are conducted. As a result, students who learn through

their increasing involvement in the learning process will feel more interested in learning rather than being enforced by teachers. Consequently, education has been moved forward into a new era.

## **2.4 Learning theories**

Learning theory plays a vital role in English teaching and learning as it provides a theoretical base. More specifically, theories provide guidelines for teachers in designing syllabus, and in constructing models in English classrooms. A clear understanding of learning theories is also essential for developing an effective learning environment. Since there can be a diversity of teaching objectives and teaching materials, researchers have examined different perspectives on learning theories for instructors to conduct their teaching processes and in monitoring students. The four most influential schools of theories in education are: Humanism, Behaviorism, Cognitive theory and Constructivism. The following sections are a discussion of these theories that underpin English teaching and learning in mainland China. The detail of how these theories are applied to the Chinese educational context will be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

### **2.4.1 Humanism**

Humanism is considered to be one of the most important learning theories, which underpins Chinese higher education. Humanistic psychology, which became one of the most popular schools in psychology, emerged in the 1950s in reaction to Humanism and psychoanalysis. It emphasizes personal and individual awareness and the learners' inner world. Humanistic approaches stress an individual's mind, will and emotion are at the forefront of human development (Shi, 1999). Two important research theorists in Humanism are Maslow and Rogers.

Maslow made a significant contribution in the field of education. According to Shi, (1999), Maslow is the pioneer who proposed that students should be placed in the central part of teaching and learning. Maslow suggests that the individuals' needs should be ranged into several hierarchical levels, and argues that lower level needs came first before attending to higher level needs (Frank, 1964; Levi, 1979). This theory emphasizes that classroom practices often follow students' hierarchical needs levels. It points out that students having difficulties in learning may be caused by failing to satisfy their basic level of needs at home or in the classroom. Hence, from this point of view, teachers should first encourage students to think more often about their unique personality in learning rather than criticizing them for not achieving the target language objective (Shi, 1999).



Another important figure in Humanism is Rogers, who suggests that significant learning only takes place when learners take part in the learning process actively and feel that the learning process is relevant to them (Shi, 1999). Rogers (2001) believes effective learning should be based on students' freedom of choosing learning materials, controlling their learning process and raising questions. Also, he suggests that the aim for learning is to learn how to develop and become free learners themselves, and all these should be based on their potential for autonomy. On the whole, humanists hold the opinion that it is critical that learners' needs, emotion and wills should be emphasized and satisfied in learning situations. From this point of view, developing university students' autonomous learning ability has a close relationship with Humanism. Compared with Humanism, Behaviorists hold different views on learning and teaching.

#### **2.4.2 Behaviorism**

The definition of Behaviorism is viewed differently among scholars. It generally emphasizes the impact of external stimulation on individuals. Behaviorism is a theory which focuses upon the acquisition of learning through responses to the teaching stimulus (Schacter, Gilbert, & Wegner, 2011; Skinner, 1972; B. G. Wilson & Myers, 2000). Good and Brophy (1986) argue that Behaviorism focuses on the study of overt behaviors that can be observed and measured. However, others believe that behavioral changes occur as a result of experience (Konza, 2005). Watson (1924) gives a vivid picture of Behaviorism:

Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors (p. 248).

Although the definitions vary, Behaviorism generally assumes that through stimulus there will be a change in behavior. Overall, it denies the significance of individual control over learning.

Behaviourist learning theory has had a profound influence on Chinese English teaching in high schools for more than 30 years. It is known that English teaching in Chinese high schools has its uniqueness (G. Hu, 2003; Hua, 2001a; Y. F. Zhang & Hu, 2010). In the past, English teaching, influenced by the Confucian dogmatism and Behaviourism, focused on modelling teachers in the teaching



process rather than providing opportunities to students for their development. Due to a large population in China, English policy-based English education has resulted in a belief that only a 'teacher-centered' class would work properly (Lu et al., 2011). Behaviourist learning theory emphasizes teaching students step by step, from simple materials to complex ones (Mergel, 1998). This is related to traditional views of educational controls in China. For example, all teachers and students used the same textbooks issued by the MOE. Students and teachers did not have the right to choose materials according to their individuality. This kind of teaching process is underpinned by Behaviourism, and as a consequence students get used to learning English based on a rote-learning process.

### **2.4.3 Cognitive theory**

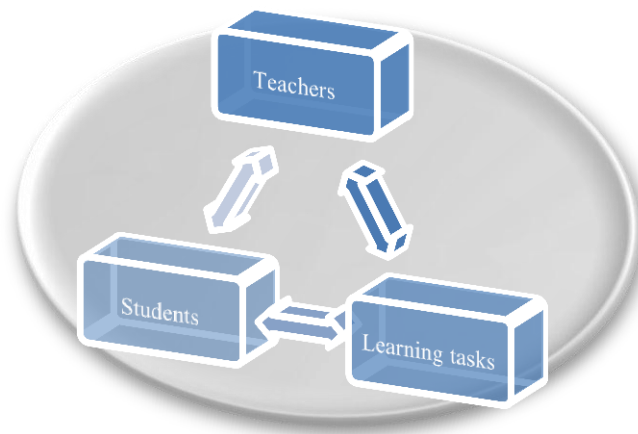
As learning theories developed, it was felt that existing Behaviorist theories and teaching based on Behaviorism had limitations. For instance, Behaviorists fail to explain certain social behaviors. An example of this is children do not imitate all behavior that has been reinforced (Mergel, 1998). In this situation, cognitive theory was initially developed through social cognitive theory (Dembo, 1994). According to Good and Brophy (1986), cognitive theorists recognize that much learning involves associations established through contiguity and repetition. They also acknowledge the importance of reinforcement, although they stress its role in providing feedback about the correctness of responses over its role as a motivator. Good and Brophy (1990) further illustrate that cognitive theories view learning as involving the acquisition or reorganization of the cognitive structures through which humans process and store information. In other words, cognitive theory is governed by an objective view of the nature of knowledge and what it means to know something. The goal of instruction is via communication to transmit knowledge to learners in the most efficient manner.

Compared with Behaviorism, cognitive theory is presently considered to be one of the most important learning theories underpinning teaching strategies used in English teaching. A cognitive theory of learning process sees second language acquisition as a conscious and reasoned thinking process, involving the use of deliberately-used learning strategies. Learning strategies are special ways of processing information that enhances and strongly contrasts comprehension, learning or retention of information (R. Ellis, 1997). This explanation of language learning process is contrary to behaviorists' account of language learning process, which sees language learning as an unconscious, automatic process. More specifically, when using this view in a classroom, the teacher needs to encourage students to focus on using learning strategies that have been observed in successful language learners and that regard the learner as an 'information-

processor' (A. D. Cohen, 2011). However, this theory notes that there are limitations as to how much new information can be retained, and suggests restrictions on the development of strategies that are able to transfer information into memory. Consequently, a further development has been made that widens views of learning.

#### 2.4.4 Constructivism

Constructivism is one of the most popular learning theories in the Chinese higher and secondary education field (Nunan, 2011; Wen, 2010). The two dominant figures are Piaget and Vygotsky. The constructivists assume that although the world objectively exists, the understanding of the world and the attachments of meanings to it are all determined by individuals (Shi, 1999). In this way, the students are brought to a central part of the teaching process. Constructivism emphasizes that learners cannot be isolated in the whole learning process. Constructivists commonly believe that individual reality is constructed based on peoples' experience. However, as personal experience is individually various, the knowledge is constructed on the basis of existing experience. (Ministry of Education, 1982). On the whole, Constructivism is a descriptive theory, which is a way people learn or develop, rather than a prescriptive theory (this is the way people should learn). According to the ideas of Williams and Burden (as cited in Shi, 1999), Figure 2.3 shows a model of how the constructivist theory works in a teaching process.



*Figure 2.3* A model of how Constructivism works in a teaching process

In Figure 2.3, the learning process is shown as a dynamic and ongoing process. The teachers, learners, tasks and contexts are integrated into a whole. The role of

the teacher is to set goals according to their theoretical belief in teaching and learning. The learners, as individuals, should understand the relationship between the meaningful tasks related to learners' objectives and themselves. The tasks therefore become a bond between the teachers and the students. In addition, in Constructivist theory, the context plays a vital role in teaching and learning process, and includes the emotional environment, the learning environment and social environment. Hence, a range of interactive factors are emphasized in Constructivist theory which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

## **2.5 Learning style**

Learning style has been investigated as an important factor related to English language teaching and learning (Dunn, 2000; R. Ellis, 1997). The research interest has been shifted from 'how to teach' to 'how to learn' since the 1980s in English education in mainland China (Littlewood, 1996). The focus was shifted because of the increasing influences of the movement of individualization and the humanistic approach of learning from the late 1960s (Littlewood, 2000). According to the ideas of humanists, they believe that second language education should focus more on a 'student-centered' rather than a 'teacher-centered' classroom because learners should take the dominant place in their own learning process. Thus, learners themselves and their own learning process have received more emphasis. In the following parts, learning style is first defined; then the relationship between learning styles, cognitive styles, and learning strategies and researches in ESL/EFL studies are discussed; followed by further discussions on learning styles and learners' preferences; finally learning style models used widely in the West and in mainland China are reviewed.

### **2.5.1 Definition of learning style**

The idea of learning style can be traced back to the early Greeks (Dunn, Beaudry, & Klavas, 1989). "As early as 400 B.C., Hippocrates classified people's personalities as either sanguine, choleric, melancholy, or phlegmatic ones" (Lemire, 2001, p. 86). Fizzell (1984) reviews that ancient Hindus regarded people as active, extrovert, introvert, emotional or thoughtful and required them to take part in religious practices in various ways. The philosopher Locke (2004) explains that humans interpret experience through their senses. Also Locke (2004) believes that individuals can learn through experiences using their five senses; thus, he describes three styles of perception: intuitive, demonstrative, and sensitive. A renewed approach to learning styles is referred to by Keefe (1982), who asserts that different elements of learning styles began to appear around the 1980s, and Jiang (1994) supports that researches related to understandings of learning styles became systematical from the 1980s to the 1990s. The characteristics of

individuals in these studies were viewed to be influential on their styles of learning.

The definition of learning style has not been consistently defined over several decades in the literature. Besides the different conceptions, there were still a range of various models, categories, and measurements based upon learning style. As Dunn (1984) states, “The essence of those models described similar phenomena observed from different vantage points-much like the blind men who were explaining an elephant by reporting only certain parts of its body” (p. 11). Thus, the definition of learning style was perceived by the information that each person observes and retains (Dunn, 1984). Similarly, Reid (1987) regards learning style as “an individual’s natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills which persist regardless of teaching approaches or content area” (p. 88). The definition of learning style of Keefe (1982) has been widely cited and is more comprehensive in some aspects. Keefe describes it as the “composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment” (1982, p. 44). Stewart and Felicetti (1992) define learning styles as those “educational conditions under which a student is most likely to learn” (p. 15). Although these researchers express different views of its definition, they reach a consensus that learning styles are concerned with how students prefer to learn instead of what they learn.

### **2.5.2 The relationships between learning style, learning strategy, and cognitive learning**

In the past years, the terms ‘learning style’, ‘learning strategy’, and ‘cognitive learning’ are frequently mixed in the way they are regarded in research studies. Learning style and cognitive learning are often used interchangeably. However, the issues and fields that these three terms focus upon are quite different. Different definitions of learning strategies have been used in the ESL field. Tarone (1983) defines learning style as the attempts to develop “linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language to incorporate these into one’s interlanguage competence” (p. 67). Later Mayer (1988) defines it more specifically as “behaviors of a learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information” (p. 11). Oxford (2002) suggests that a specific and comprehensive definition of language learning strategies are “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing second language skills. These strategies can facilitate internalization storage, retrieval, or use of the new language” (p. 125). The

definitions referred to above generally reflect that the learners can learn and be taught how to employ and choose strategies that are beneficial to them in their language learning. Tan (1995) claims that learning strategy refers to external skills that students use often consciously to improve their learning, or some skills that students can be taught to enhance their existing learning styles. Hartley (1998) illustrates that “different strategies can be selected by learners to deal with different tasks” (p. 149). Therefore, learning strategy is a technique that learners can typically acquire with a problem-orientation externally and also consciously.

Learning styles, on the contrary, might be more related to individual characteristics than learning strategies which are purposely chosen. Thus, compared with the learning strategies, learning styles are internally based on students’ individual characteristics, perceived consciously, which are the basis of acquiring new information (Tan, 1995). From this point of view, learning styles are more stable and unconscious in comparison with learning strategies. In addition, learning styles can be expanded to be multi-dimensional with teachers’ guidance (Dunn & Griggs, 2000). However, learning styles have a strong relationship with learning strategies. Although learners’ learning styles and the employment of learning strategies are viewed differently, teachers can help learners to improve their learning ability by developing their learning styles or assist them to choose effective learning strategies to deal with problems. Some educationalists (Dunn, 2000; Zhou & Tan, 2011) advocate teachers should enhance learners’ learning outcomes by adjusting their teaching styles to match learners’ learning styles.

The third term, cognitive style, is described as an individual habitual model of how a person solves, thinks, perceives, and memorizes information (Allport, 1937). Ellis (1989) claims that cognitive style is a term used to refer to the manner in which people perceive, conceptualize, organize, and recall information. From the definitions of learning style and cognitive style, we can see there are two distinctions that lie in the two different terms. The first difference is that the learning style covers a wider range than cognitive style. Learning styles can be affected by not only cognitive factors but also other factors, such as affective, physical, and psychosocial elements. The other difference is that the cognitive style is applied to various fields while the concept of learning style is usually related to the educational context (Lin, 2008).

Learning styles, cognitive styles, and learning strategies have close relationships with second language learning and teaching. Most researchers have focused on

cognitive styles and conscious learning strategies in second language learning styles over the past two decades (Reid, 1987). Many studies concern the interaction of affective variables in second language learning and teaching related to the cognitive styles (H. D. Brown, 1974; Ely, 1986; E. Hatch, 1974; Heyde, 1977; Naiman, Fröhlich, & Todesco, 1975; Tarone, Swain, & Fathman, 1976; Tucker, Hamayan, & Genesee, 1976). Other researchers have focused on the extent to which affective factors and cognitive learning styles impacted in ESL learners' academic achievements (Abraham, 1983; Bassano, 1986; Bialystok, 1985; Chapelle & Roberts, 1986; d'Anglejan, Painchaud, & Renaud, 1986; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Some scholars studied the English teaching and learning process in second language acquisition, particularly, the role of cultural factors in it (Throssell & Zhao, 2011; Wong Fillmore, 1986; Zhao & McDougall, 2008). Second language learners have also been investigated in the way they used learning strategies, such as practicing, monitoring, memorizing, and self-directed learning (Bialystok & Frohlich, 1978; Carver, 1984; Krashen, 1982; Lu et al., 2011; Wenden, 1983, 1986a). According to Wenden (1986b), the individuals vary in the learning strategies that they choose because these second language learners use different learning styles, affective styles, and cognitive styles. Additionally, other factors may influence the learning styles in second language learning, such as gender, religious affiliation, English basic level, age, and motivation, were also investigated by scholars (Chambers, 1994; Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Pritchard & Loulidi, 1994; S. Zhu & Shen, 2006). Thus, to investigate students' learning styles is a complicated issue in second language learning and teaching.

### **2.5.3 Learning style and learners' preference**

According to the definition of the learning style defined by Stewart and Felicetti (1992) mentioned previously, it is essential to study students' preferences in the English teaching process. "Evaluating students' learning styles provides knowledge about their particular preferences" (T. Brown et al., 2009, p. 525). This awareness can be used by teachers to further develop their teaching designs, formats and to stimulate students' ability to acquire knowledge and apply it in an attempt to individualize instruction. "Understanding styles can improve the planning, producing, and implementing of educational experiences, so they are more appropriately compatible with students' desires, in order to enhance their learning, retention and retrieval" (Federico, 2000, p. 367).

Learning style instruments were developed in an attempt to measure and understand students' preferences based on researches. Reid (1987) undertook a research on Asian ESL students' learning style preferences, and asked 1338 students to identify their perceptual learning style preferences. The research

outcomes showed that Korean students preferred the most to use visual methods to learn English in their learning style preferences; also, Chinese students were positive in adopting visual methods too. Similarly, Chinese and Korean students chose auditory learning as a major learning style. However, Chinese students did not prefer kinesthetic and tactile learning styles. Additionally, Chinese students enjoyed individual learning more than group learning. In 1983, Keefe researched on learning styles from cognitive, affective, and environmental aspects, the outcome is showed explicitly in his learning style profile in Table 2.1. Willing (1988) and his team members investigated students' learning preferences among 517 second language learners in Australia. They found some differences among students' features: concrete learning style, analytical learning style, communicative learning style, and authority oriented learning style. By contrasting two German learners in a case study, Ellis (1992) reports that the differences of learning styles between learners in two aspects: active learning style versus passive learning style and studial learning style (a preference for accuracy and grammatical explanation) versus experiential learning style (a tendency for fluency and engaging in real communication). In his research, the findings showed that a student who was inclined to adopt a studial learning style appeared to be a more successful learner than the student who adopted an experiential style

Although the classifications of the learning styles are different, according to Ren (2002), Willing and Ellis discussed the learning styles from cognitional and affective aspects, while the ideas from the Dunns and Keefe were similar. The detail of the classification is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 *Different classifications of learning styles*

Categories	Cognition	Affection	Environment
Dunn	Psychology	Emotion and Sociology	Environment and Physics
Keefe	Cognition	Affection	Environment
Willing	Concrete learning style and analytical learning style	Communicative learning style and authority oriented learning style	
Ellis	Studial learning style versus experiential learning style	Active learning style versus passive learning style	



### 2.5.4 The learning style models

As the classifications of the learning styles vary, the learning models are adopted differently by scholars in Chinese and western studies (Dunn, 2000; Tan, 1995). The following models are introduced that are commonly used to describe students' learning styles in both mainland China and western countries.

#### 2.5.4.1 Dunn and Dunn's model

Dunn (2000) claims that different students' academic performance and learning outcomes are influenced more by a range of factors rather than by capacity. The Dunns identify five categories (Environmental, Emotional, Sociological, Physical, and Psychological) with 21 elements, which have been used widely to measure students' learning styles throughout the world (Dunn et al., 1989; Dunn & Griggs, 2000). This model is shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 *The Dunns' learning style model (Dunn, 2000)*

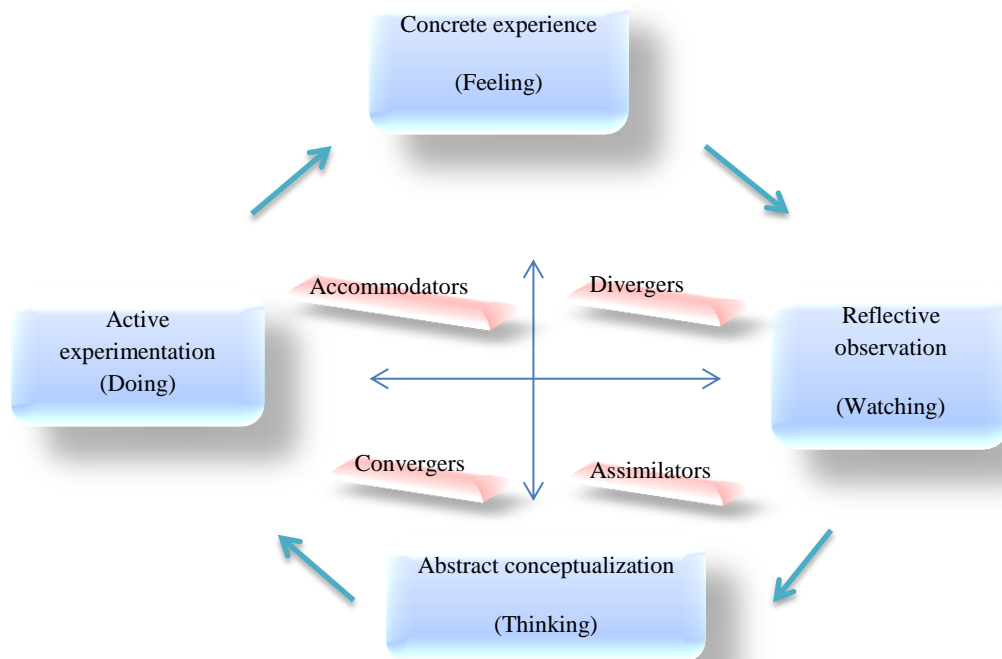
Stimuli	Elements
Environmental	Light, sound, temperature, and design
Emotional	Motivation, persistence, responsibility, and structure
Sociological	Self, pair, peers, team, authority, and routine
Physical	Perception, intake, time, and mobility
Psychological	Hemisphericity, impulsive or reflective processing, and global versus analytic process

#### 2.5.4.2 David Kolb's model

Kolb's model is based on Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory (LSI), which explains human learning behavior in relation to helping others to learn (1984). Before the development of this model, some educationalists suggest that learning should come from experience and be based on educational beliefs, such as those propounded by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget (Lemire, 2001). However, the feature of Kolb's model is that it has two bipolar dimensions: doing-watching versus feeling-thinking. Kolb (1984) suggests that the learning process is cyclical, and he further claims that the learning process is not only to obtain knowledge and impart to others, but it needs reflections to transform action of thoughts through experience to create new ideas. According to Kolb (1984), there are four stages involved in this process, which are defined as: concrete experience (feeling), reflective observation (watching), abstract conceptualization (thinking), and active experimentation (doing). In this cyclical process, experiences are obtained from feeling and learners need to



rethink these experiences through observation. Learners abstract the logical concepts and theories through thinking and observation in order that they transform and process this information to active experimentation. Learners could acquire new experiences from these activities. The details are presented in the following figure.



*Figure 2.4* Illustration of Kolb's model (1984)

According to Kolb's model, four types of learning styles were classified: divergers, assimilators, convergers, and accommodators. The divergers involve themselves in the various activities and get experience concretely through feeling and transform their learning through thoughts. For assimilators, "experience is grasped through abstract comprehension and transformed through thoughts, combining the characteristics of abstract conceptualization and reflective observation" (H. Hu, 2004, p. 8). Information, for convergers, is obtained from abstract comprehension and to process the information actively in order to complete the tasks. The last, accommodators, is to gain experience through feelings transformed by their actions. In other words, if learners utilized this learning style, they would have the ability to learn from primarily 'hand-on' experience and enjoy "carrying out plans and involving themselves in new and challenging experiences" (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2002, p. 6).

#### 2.5.4.3 Tan Dingliang's learning style model

Tan Dingliang views learning styles differently from western scholars. Tan (1995) argues that learning style models from western countries are not perfectly suitable in the Chinese context, owing to the different cultural and educational backgrounds. For example, Dunn observed students' posture-standing on feet or off feet in the class in his learning style inventory, but Chinese students were encouraged to show respect in class by keeping silent and sitting upright. Accordingly, Tan combined the western learning theories and Chinese cultural factors to construct his own learning style model (1995). In Tan's model, he classifies learning styles into physical, psychological, and social aspects as he believes that all humans possess these three items in nature. Moreover, he divides the psychological aspect into cognitive, emotional, and conation levels respectively. Tan's learning style model is represented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 *Tan's learning style model (1995)*

Characters	Elements
Physical	Sound, light, temperature, time, sensory channel
Psychological	
• Cognitive	Classification, differentiation, global vs. analytic, impulsive vs. reflective, and sharpening vs. leveling
• Emotional	Curiosity, achievement motivation, anxiety, and locus of control
• Conational	Persistence, risk taking vs. cautiousness, and verbal fluency
Social	Alone in a group, competition or cooperation

This learning model has been used widely and is popular among Chinese researchers who have studied learning styles; however, Tan did not create his own learning style instruments based on his own model (Ren, 2002). Thus, to investigate what preferred learning styles Chinese students utilize at different schooling levels is necessary. Apart from the four main theories and the interactive factors discussed previously, learning autonomy is another essential theoretical concept widely utilized in the Western and Chinese educational system.

## 2.6 A brief history of learning autonomy

Learning autonomy was imported originally from the fields of politics and moral philosophy and it is a multifaceted concept whose meaning has been discussed in an increasingly academic fashion (Holec, 1985). Briefly, learning autonomy was proposed by Henri Holec in a European language project in 1970 (Smith, 2008). One of the outcomes of this project was the establishment of Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues at the University of Nancy, France (CRAPEL). In 1976, a seminar held by Henri Holec was regarded as an important foundation in the field of autonomy. The seminar was about self-directed learning and autonomy, and it was contributed significantly to the development of learning autonomy. Also, the journal *Mélanges Pédagogiques* has played an important role within the field of autonomy from 1970 to the present. Many early important researchers in this period could be found in this journal and in the University of Cambridge (Harding-Esch, 1977). In order to promote lifelong learning, adults were offered the opportunity at CRAPEL to learn a foreign language in a resource center, where they were free from teachers' guidance. However, this practical application focusing on self-directed learning showed evidence that participants did not have full competence to take charge of making their decisions in all of the areas normally determined by an institution, teachers, or textbooks. Consequently, various kinds of support measures were put into the development of learners' abilities to work more effectively in a self-directed fashion by CRAPEL (Smith, 2008). This experiment brought education, individual freedom and social responsibility all together, and reflected the views of improving personal ability by autonomy that was prevailing in Europe and America at that time.

Generally speaking, early practices of learning autonomy focused on a total independence in learning (Dickinson, 1987; G. Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). That is, learners should be responsible for the whole decision-making process. During this process, learning autonomy was regarded as “a rejection of traditional classroom and the introduction of wholly new ways of working” (Allwright, 1988, p. 35). According to Allwright's ideas, most participants in early experiments were adults who did not have chances to attend classroom-based courses. However, Allwright and Bailey (1991) further claim that if autonomy is applied into the classroom, it needs to be re-conceptualized. Later, Dickinson (1992) argues that learners often behave independently in the classroom. With the demonstration of autonomous principles being integrated into classrooms, a shift to classroom applications is a second wave of research interest in learning autonomy in the 1990s. During this period, scholars put emphasis on the theoretical implications of learning autonomy (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b; Little, 1995). A consequence in the Chinese context was the renewed emphasis on the

concept of learning autonomy. Meanwhile, an increasing number of self-access learning centers have been set up after the 1990s, so that language teachers should come to terms with further putting Allwright's pedagogy into practice (1988). Thus, with the influence of deconstruction of the conventional classroom, many researchers have come to the third wave of research interest of learning autonomy in recent years, which has led to exploring and understanding the role of autonomy in language teaching and learning (Yao, 2000).

### 2.6.1 The concept of learning autonomy

Despite the widespread recognition on the important of autonomy, the uncertainty about its meanings and application for language learning is still being debated. Scholars have tried to define the concept of autonomy from different aspects. Over the last 30 years, a concern with the nature and benefits of learner autonomy has been well-established in the literature (Brookes & Grundy, 1988; Charge & Taylor, 1997; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b; Dickinson, 1992; G. Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; Feast, 2002; G. Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Gauntlett, 2000; Kramsch, 1995; Riley & Zoppis, 1985; Wenden, 1991; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). The concept of 'autonomy' could be traced back to ancient Greece and to a political context, which refers to the Greek city wanting to get free from outside interference (Halstead & Zhu, 2009). In the 1970s, it was addressed by many researchers. Dearden (1972) discusses autonomy in education and defines it as following:

A person is autonomous to the degree, and it is very much a matter of degree, that what he thinks and does, at least in important areas of his life, are determined by himself. That is to say, it cannot be explained why these are his beliefs and actions without referring to his own activity of mind. This determination of what one is to think and do is to make possible by the bringing to bear of relevant considerations in such activities of mind as those of choosing, deciding, deliberating, reflecting, planning and judging (p. 461).

Gibbs (1979) makes similar elaborations on autonomy, whilst also referring to influences outside of himself:

An autonomous individual must have both independence from external authority and mastery of himself and his powers. He must be free from the dictates and interference of other people, and free also from disabling conflicts or lack of coordination between the elements of his own personality. He must have the freedom to act and work as he chooses, and he must be capable of formulating

and following a rule, pattern or policy of acting and working (p. 119).

However, others, such as Lewis (1978) and Phillips (1975) think it is very difficult to be an autonomous person of the type defined by Dearden (1972). Lewis (1978) argues that:

To approve 'autonomy' as an ideal for students is one thing: to commend 'autonomous' methods of learning is another-however 'autonomy' is defined. If, for the purposes of argument, we gloss it as independence, it is not quite obvious that independent methods of learning promote independence-auxiliary casual relationships must be established (p. 152).

From the definitions above, it can be viewed that autonomy cannot be pursued without assistance from others. Anyone who is isolated from the social context could fail to be an autonomous learner (Chickering, 1969). Therefore, developing students' autonomy cannot ignore guidance and interdependence. The importance of interdependence has been demonstrated by Dressel and Thompson (1973), who emphasize that independence and autonomy are highly rated goals of students and students. However, the overwhelming research relates to the benefits of autonomy in learning. Also, autonomy has been described and defined in a number of ways in connection with language learning. Perhaps, the most often quoted definition is that of Holec (1988) who defines "autonomy" as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning", while "take charge of" is often replaced by "take responsibility for" or "take control of one's own learning" (p. 3). Learners are expected to determine the objectives, decide the contents and progressions, select learning methods and techniques, monitor the procedure of acquisition and self-evaluation (G. Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). Little and Dam (1998) regard learning autonomy as learners who could have freedom of not being controlled by teachers, not being restricted by curriculum, and even freedom to choose not to learn. In recent years, researchers (Finch, 2002; Nunan, 2011) argue that the importance is in the degrees of freedom when developing learning autonomy. However, most researchers have come to a consensus that autonomy and its degree will not be restricted (Little, 1996).

With the development of autonomy related to learning, the focus of autonomy has been shifted to the psychological aspects. The definition proposed by Little (2000), who combines Holec's definition with his own:

Autonomy in language learning depends on the development and exercise of a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action; autonomous learners assume responsibility for determining the purpose, content, rhythm and method of their learning, monitoring its progress and evaluating its outcomes (p. 69).

Although Holec's definition of autonomy is widely accepted, it has not explained how the learners are able to become autonomous. Meanwhile, Little's psychological approach does not explain the most important components of autonomy in relation to language learning. In previous studies, it can be seen that some researchers attempt to answer these two questions (Breen & Mann, 1997; Finch, 2002; Littlewood, 1996; Oxford, 2003; Pemberton, Edward, Or, & Pierson, 1996; Sinclair, 2000; Yao, 2000). In terms of differences of defining learning autonomy, the scholars have come to a consensus of "degree of autonomy" (Nunan, 1997, p. 192) and "behavior of autonomous learners" (Little, 1995, p. 175). Consequently, the focus of research related to autonomy has been shifted to the practice. This application in the Chinese context will be discussed in the following chapter.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided theoretical foundations of the whole research. It has explained explicitly key concepts and their relationships in the first place, and then secondly this chapter has explored learning theories in depth. These learning theories have been located in educational contexts by prestigious scholars through their philosophies. Furthermore, learning styles models, learning preferences, and learning strategies have been interwoven in the discussion. Finally, this chapter introduced learning autonomy as an essential theory that has been stressed by researchers for enhancing students' quality education.

A theoretical foundation has been provided in this chapter for the further development of the research study. Theories mentioned in this chapter will be considered and used in two main purposes:

- To provide methodological principles when designing the experimental tools in the study.
- To be examined and discussed in the Discussion and Recommendations Chapter.

The following chapter will emphasize teaching and learning from a theory to a practice perspective in the Chinese context. It will investigate how the theories discussed in this chapter are developed and have applications to practices in Chinese high schools and universities.

## **Chapter 3 Teaching and Learning in the Chinese Context: From Theory to Practice**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter 2 has reviewed previous literature focusing on theoretical concepts of this research. First of all, a concept of teaching model has been explained and then secondly the correlations of these key concepts in a teaching model in English have been illustrated. Thirdly, educational theories in teaching and learning as well as different learning style models utilized in the West and in China have been discussed in depth. Finally, the development of learning autonomy has been explored.

This chapter reviews literature emphasizing the discussion of the linkage from a theoretical perspective to a practical application in teaching and learning in the Chinese context. In the first place, the development of English teaching in Chinese high schools and universities is discussed in detail. The heritage of Confucianism is also introduced as it is an influential factor influencing English learning and teaching in the Chinese context. In addition, learning autonomy in the West and in China is examined. Furthermore, influential factors related to learning autonomy are explored within the Chinese context. Lastly, issues and challenges arising from theoretical and practical aspects in this study will be discussed.

### **3.2 The development of English language teaching in high schools of mainland China**

English language teaching developed according to the development of educational theories and learning theories. Those developments include the related aspects of curriculum policy, syllabus design, textbook development, the role of examinations, and ongoing research which have a profound influence on English teaching in mainland China (G. Hu, 2002c). There are several milestones in the development of English language teaching in schools. The milestones are showed in the following table:



Table 3.1 *Milestones of English language development in Chinese schools*

	1966-1977	1978-1985	1986-1997	1998-present
English teaching materials	Based on a provincial level	Based on a national level	Based on a national and a regional level	Based on a national and a regional level
English curriculums	No requirement	A compulsory course	A compulsory course	A compulsory course
English teaching aims	For political purpose	For economic purpose	For economic and technological use	Cultivating interests and fostering learning competence
English teaching methods	Grammar-Translation	Grammar-Translation Audio-Lingualism	Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingualism Communicative Language Teaching	Grammar-Translation Audio-Lingualism Communicative Language Teaching
English teaching syllabus	Nil	Based on national requirements	Based on national requirements	Based on national requirements

### 3.2.1 From 1966 to 1977

The first stage is the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which led to approximately ten years of social chaos and English language education isolation in China. At that time, foreign language broadcasts were banned, and importing original language books was forbidden. In the meantime, English subject teaching was restricted in schools, which not only restricted the economy but also had negative effects on English language teaching (S. M. Hu & Seifman, 1987). English teaching did not reappear on the curriculum in some high schools until the early 1970s, but it was still policy-driven. English books were edited by the committees at a provincial level (J. Tang & Gao, 2000). The content of these textbooks were full of political needs and were not based on any theory of teaching and learning (Adamson & Morris, 1997; Fu, 1986). English teaching at this stage was ‘teacher-centered’ and mainly concentrated upon Grammar-Translation pedagogy. As a result, the quality of English teaching was at its least effective.

The end of the Cultural Revolution brought the Chinese economy and political affairs into a new era. These changes and developments also exerted profound

influences on education in general and English teaching in particular (Huang, 1987; Ross, 1993; Shi, 1999). The aim of English language teaching at this stage was to meet the needs of national economic development thereby increasing people's living standards. Hence, English became a core subject on the school curriculum and proportionally significant in the College Entrance Examination. In order to ensure the quality of English language teaching, the Chinese central government sought to unify curriculums, syllabuses, and textbooks for all subjects in schools. However, curriculum designs, syllabus writing and teaching materials rested solely with the Ministry of Education (G. Hu, 2002c).

### **3.2.2 From 1978 to 1985**

After the restoration of the College Entrance Examination in 1978, the Ministry of Education issued a trial English Syllabus for Junior and Senior high schools for the whole nation. Although, English language teaching was paid more attention to in the early days of the 1980s, the aim of teaching was to boost the national economy and technological exchange. Therefore, school teachers just focused on how to develop students' intellectual abilities in learning English rather than to teach them how to learn. The English teaching approaches at this time were primarily a combination of the Grammar-Translation Method and Audio-Lingualism (Adamson & Morris, 1997).

In 1982, the syllabus was subsequently reformed to satisfy the needs of English language teaching in top high schools. To enable more effort to be put into improving the teaching and learning quality in schools, the time allocated for the English class was extended from 656 hours to 960 hours per year (Ministry of Education, 1982). Also, the English textbooks for Junior and Senior high schools were reformed in the same period. However, as there was a lack of academic research studies on English teaching from other countries related to China in the world, the textbook took a similar pedagogical approach to those published before the Cultural Revolution. That is, a method of Grammar-Translation was still a major method in English language teaching and learning. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education required teachers in schools to emphasize more on intonation training and oral English practice through pattern drilling at the early stage of the 1980s (G. Hu, 2002c; S. M. Hu & Seifman, 1987). Although the students could have access to oral English training, it seemed very difficult to eliminate traditional practices characterized by detailed study of sentence-level grammar, text-translation, a rote-learning of vocabularies and reading and writing skills. The other feature was that the textbooks heavily emphasized literacy together with political and moral messages, which consequently dominated English language teaching for a decade in Chinese schools.

With the introduction of the reform and opening-up policy in China, the English subject, as a compulsory course in both high schools and higher education institutions, was perceived to train students to be personnel staff for foreign enterprises. Meanwhile, dissatisfaction with English language teaching increased sharply due to a growing awareness of English teaching and learning theories and methods. According to a survey conducted by the State Education Commission in the early 1980s, the results showed that the average English level of secondary school students was deplorably low. It found that the majority of students had only some basic knowledge of English grammar and could only recognize 1800 English words, as well as lacking skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing (Diao, 2001). In this situation, the Chinese central government stressed that English curriculums, syllabuses, textbooks and tests needed a top-down reform (Feng, 1999).

### **3.2.3 From 1985 to 1997**

Within this period, English language learning and teaching experienced innovations in a range of aspects. For curriculum reform, the MOE staged a new policy about curriculum development to allow considerable regional autonomy in exploring and implementing new approaches to education (Lewin & Wang, 1991; Ross, 1993). Thus, Shanghai and Zhejiang provinces became pioneers to develop their English curriculums and provided relevant experience for curriculum reforms in other parts of China. After years of trials, both curriculums were revised and finalized by the Curriculum and Teaching Materials Reform Commission (SCTMRC), which was set up in Shanghai in 1988 (Lewin & Wang, 1991; Ministry of Education, 2001). In the new curriculums, English became the third most prominent course in Chinese schools besides Chinese and mathematics.

The second essential improvement was the development of the English syllabus. The first updated syllabuses focused more on the Chinese central government's goal of universalizing nine-year basic education (G. Hu, 2001) and readjusting teaching objectives from unrealistic ones to more practical ones (Chantal & Anthony, 1997). Consequently, the syllabuses began to adopt popular educational theories, pedagogical practices and assessments to the Chinese context (G. Hu, 2002c). For example, teachers were required to cultivate students' interest by developing their communicative competence rather than only focusing upon the grammatical aspects. The conception of communicative competence is first proposed by Hymes (1972), who argues regarding the range of language competence suggested by Chomsky. Hymes (1972) expands the range, which also contains aspects of sociocultural influences and the term of communication competence. Moreover, the central government's initial preparation to call for

scholars to undertake more research studies into the development of students' learning autonomy was also initiated at this stage.

In 1996, the first syllabus emerged that was tailored to meet regional needs instead of nationwide needs. In this syllabus, it stressed for the first time that affective development and individual learning cultivation were vital for students' learning process. This was regarded as two major goals in English language teaching at school levels (G. Hu, 2002c). With the development of second language acquisition theory, the national syllabuses for English language teaching gave prominence to ability-oriented teaching and it posed several linguistic goals (Bond, 1991; Ministry of Education, 2000a, 2000b). These goals were set up to develop students' ability to think independently and actively, enrich their minds and cultural experiences, create an environment for individual development and lay a foundation for lifelong learning (G. Hu, 2002c). To achieve these goals, teachers needed to stimulate students' learning interest, assist students to overcome study difficulties, foster advanced learning and teaching strategies and educate them to learn how to manage their individual learning plans more effectively. In the meantime, teachers needed to put more emphasis on developing students' communicative competence through daily teaching so as to acquire initial abilities in the use English to obtain information and satisfy the needs of social, economic and scientific development.

The main English teaching materials utilized in Chinese high schools have developed significantly since 1986. Several institutions were responsible for developing new issues of English textbooks, such as the People's Education Press, Beijing Normal University, Southern Normal University and Guangdong Education Commission. Among those groups, the People's Education Press is mainly in charge of developing new textbooks for Junior and Senior high schools to use in the English class. The textbooks of Junior and Senior high schools were piloted on 500,000 students in 25 provinces from 1990 to 1993 (Diao, 2001). Communicative Language Teaching has been adopted in this new edition of the English textbook, which emphasizes authentic communication and elements of Audio-Lingualism as well. To provide teaching in class efficiently and more vividly, cassette tapes, maps, videos, pictures and CD-ROMs have been applied to English teaching. Reference books were also provided for all English teachers. In reference books, teaching objectives, language key points, time allocation and assignments were explained explicitly in each unit. Generally speaking, the new edition of the English textbook tried to integrate English language communication with linguistic use between teachers and students in the class (Adamson & Morris, 1997).

### 3.2.4 From 1998 to present

English language learning and teaching developed most rapidly in the past 15 years in high schools. Firstly, Longman and the People's Education Press had a long term cooperation to edit and develop English textbooks for Chinese students (Ministry of Education, 2000b). Compared with previous teaching materials, this kind of textbook ensured that the dialogues and the articles in the book were from authentic western teaching materials. In the meantime, the textbooks had provided CDs and tapes to learners to improve students' intonation. Secondly, the MOE stressed that the aim of English language teaching was to develop quality education instead of teaching students to be a 'mute' learner. That is, enhancing students' listening and speaking ability was essential for developing their English communicative competence and future careers. Thirdly, the MOE proposed that a more all-round assessment should be applied to measure students' performance instead of measuring students' abilities only by their scores achieved in examinations (Ross, 1992). As the College Entrance Examination has been the only access to enter universities since its restoration in 1978, examination-oriented teaching methods played a dominant role in English language teaching in Chinese high schools (Feng, 1999; Lewin & Wang, 1991). The English test in the College Entrance Examination focused mainly on rigid textbook knowledge instead of students' abilities of how to use knowledge (Ross, 1992, 1993). Moreover, a majority of questions in the English test in the College Entrance Examination were multiple choices and blank-filling sections, which examined mainly grammatical points and linguistic accuracy (Lewin & Wang, 1991). Many students and teachers criticized this kind of examination design as they believed that it could not show students' English competence of the four language skills in English learning. Consequently, a conference was convened by the MOE to discuss how to reform the College Entrance Examination in early 2013.

There is no denying that these reforms definitely have brought remarkable progress in English language teaching in Chinese high schools from the past to the present, but a number of issues still exist and are needed to be addressed with circumspection (Lu et al., 2011). For example, what kind of English assessments could reflect students' English competence in four language skills; and how to reform the English test in the College Entrance Examination appropriately was not clear; and changing from exam-oriented education to quality education still had difficulties in current English classes in high schools and the university. It is likely that the influence of the unique Chinese culture of Confucianism is one of the main reasons that resulted in these issues and difficulties.

### 3.3 The culture of Confucianism learning and teaching in high schools in mainland China

With the development of educational theory and learning theory, Chinese English language education has indeed made significant achievements by reformation in areas, such as English curriculums, syllabus, textbooks and assessments. However, with a long history of more than 5000 years, Chinese students and teachers are still significantly influenced by Confucianism and this affects the English teaching model adopted in Chinese high schools. Also, this ‘rooted ideology’ causes barriers for Chinese high school students in developing their learning ability, which leads to anxiety and lack of motivation in university English learning (Dickinson, 1995). The Confucian tradition has a great influence on moral ideology, education, family unity and philosophy in China. Traditions have been influenced by Buddhism and Taoism but it is believed that Confucian values have a significant influence on social-cultural attitudes that affect learning and communication practices (Brookes & Grundy, 1988; Watkins & Biggs, 1996; Wenden & Rubin, 1987; Willing, 1989).

Traditionally, the relation between students and teachers is regarded as that of authoritative parents and obedient children, both of whose responsibility cannot be overstepped or they would be regarded as ‘out of practice’ (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a). Hence, in the Confucian heritage of learning, Jin and Cortazzi (2006) state:

A transmission model of learning is the common picture of heavy memorizing and disciplined reciting of texts, which ignores the students’ own effort, the need for reflective thinking and independent interpretation, for internalization of understanding, and putting what is learned into practice (p. 12).

There are some Chinese sayings that emphasize that diligence ultimately outweighs ability, such as ‘Enough effort can grind the iron pillar into a needle’ and ‘thirty percent talent, seventy percent study’ From these sayings, it can be seen that Chinese students believe that only hard work would bring them a good result. As a consequence, they get used to acquiring knowledge in a rote-learning process without reflection and the likelihood of real understanding.

Confucian ideology also influences profoundly on students’ learning motivation and learning outcomes. Generally, the learning motivation has two types: intrinsic and extrinsic (Dickinson, 1995). With the influence of Confucianism, Chinese

students study hard and are extrinsically motivated to achieve high scores in examinations which as a consequence are thought to lead to a bright future after graduation. Furthermore, the teachers in classrooms impart knowledge to students by a rote learning process, which requires students to mime, repeat, memorize and practice. The models they follow emphasize imitation and memorization. Compared with extrinsic outcomes, intrinsic motivation is related to learners' activity for their own sake rather than from external stimulation which results in the learning outcome as being through self-cultivation and moral principle (Dickinson, 1995; Gardner, 1985). Under these circumstances, the learners reflect by pondering, raising questions and answering through reading textbooks and attending class. Consequently, these in-depth reflections assist them to understand and internalize in action. According to Zhu Xi (1130-1200), "learning should be both individual and social; ideas were developed through participating in social discussion and not simply through memorizing received thinking" (cited in Cortazzi & Jin, 2006, p. 13). Thus, it is believed that individual focus on thinking plays an important role in the learning process.

Under its theory, Chinese education authorities have put 'English quality education' into the education agenda since 2001 (Ministry of Education). This emphasizes reforming and simplifying the curriculum, lessening the homework burden and aiming to develop rounded education. The central government requires English teachers to put efforts into developing students' initial competence skills by using communicative and 'student-centered' approaches (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b). Therefore, from a secondary school level to a university level, the target of classroom activities and learning materials focus upon cultivating students' critical and evaluative thinking, through which students could develop their motivation, interest, confidence and positive attitudes towards English learning.

### **3.4 The development of English teaching and learning in universities of mainland China**

In order to satisfy the needs of social and economic development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a College English Course Requirement (CECR) was issued by the Ministry of Education (2007). College English course, as an important part of higher education, is underpinned by the second language acquisition theories. Its aim is to provide students with multicultural and practical skills by adopting various teaching methods in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in China. According to the CECR, reforms were carried out in the following parts:

- College English teaching objectives;



- College English teaching requirement;
- College English curriculum;
- English teaching models;
- Assessments in English (CET-4 and CET-6); and
- Research on ELT.

The following sections are the illustrations of this CECR and present a clear framework of current English teaching and learning in Chinese universities.

First, the major goal of the CECR is to cultivate students' communicative competence in English, to foster their autonomous learning ability and to develop various intellectual abilities to meet social demands of internationalization. It advocates that students' English communicative competence should be emphasized in future English classrooms so that students are able to speak English efficiently as a communicative tool in a future working context. Improving students' autonomous learning ability is another objective in the CECR. This ability is essential for changing the role of teachers as well as students in the reform.

Second, the CECR stresses that it is essential for different universities to develop individual teaching according to the development of educational theories and second language acquisition theories. Specifically, an increasing unbalanced socioeconomic development of regions and the influences on the English teaching in universities have been recognized, and thus different requirements are set for diverse students (Guo, 2011). It requires that three levels should be set for different students according to their English levels when entering the university. The basic requirement is for those who only need a minimum English skill in the university; however, the intermediate and advanced requirements are prepared for those who want to be employed as professional specialists in future. It explains the requirements in detail of each level in the following table, which includes six subfields. This approach is instrumental for individual universities to put forward quality education and autonomous learning.

Table 3.2 *Three English levels required in the CECR*

Items	Basic requirements	Intermediate requirements	Advanced requirements
Listening comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to understand lectures in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to understand lectures in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to understand English programs and</li> </ul>



Oral English	English	English	grasp the main idea
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to understand English programs with a speed of 130-150 words/min</li> <li>● Able to master basic listening skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to understand English programs with a speed of 150-180 words/min</li> <li>● Able to understand professional lectures in English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to understand English native speakers' lectures at a normal speed</li> </ul>
Reading comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to communicate with peers in English classes</li> <li>● Able to talk and discuss in English with a specific topic</li> <li>● Able to express general ideas in English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to communicate with peers in English classes</li> <li>● Able to talk and discuss in English with a broad topic</li> <li>● Able to express ideas in English fluently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to discuss a specific topic in English fluently</li> <li>● Able to speak English fluently in an international forum or conference</li> </ul>
English writing ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to understand simple English articles with an average speed of 70-100 words/min</li> <li>● Able to know general ideas of English articles and papers with assistance of dictionaries</li> <li>● Able to use English reading skills in practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to understand simple English articles with an average speed of 90-120 words/min</li> <li>● Able to read the popular English articles in newspapers without dictionaries</li> <li>● Able to read English literature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to comprehensively read English articles</li> <li>● Able to read English literature</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to use 120 words to write a simple essay in half an hour</li> <li>● Able to master basic English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to use 160 words to write a short essay with clear main ideas and arguments</li> <li>● Able to use English to describe figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to use 200 words to write an essay with clear main ideas and arguments</li> <li>● Able to write English reports in relation to</li> </ul>

	writing skills	and tables	their majors
Translation competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to translate both English and Chinese with an average speed of 250-300 words/hour, and express main ideas clearly without major errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to translate both English and Chinese with an average speed of 300-350 words/hour, and express ideas clearly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to translate English articles in newspapers and literature into Chinese</li> <li>● Able to translate both English and Chinese with an average speed of 350-400 words/hour explicitly</li> </ul>
The amount of vocabularies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to master 4795 English words and 700 English phrases</li> <li>● Able to use 2000 basic English words in speaking and writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to master 6395 English words and 1200 English phrases</li> <li>● Able to use 2200 basic English words in speaking and writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to master 7675 English words and 1870 English phrases</li> <li>● Able to use 2360 basic English words in speaking and writing</li> </ul>

Thirdly, according to the regional development and resources in different universities, the college English curriculum and syllabus could be planned and designed by the university committee (Ministry of Education, 2007). Moreover, the MOE states that some faculties, such as faculties of Fine Arts and Outdoor Education could lower the English requirement to the students compared with other majors due to their different English basic levels in high schools. Meanwhile, a broad range of selective and compulsory courses should be constructed for students to foster their integrated language skills. Under this circumstance, to improve students' English competence at different levels is a focus in the CECR.

Computer-assisted teaching and learning has been an emerging progressive ideology that has been stressed in the CECR since 2004 (Ministry of Education). The cultivation of English speaking and listening competence are the most important aspects in the CECR; thus, adopting computer-based teaching can assist teachers to explore ESL/EFL teaching more efficiently in classrooms, and stimulate students' interest to learn (Jahromi & Salimi, 2013). Furthermore, applying computer-based teaching to the English class can assist to develop individual learning ability. Some students with a lower English level need extra time and more resources to learn English because the regular class is limited in

time and place. Last, computer-assisted teaching can enhance students' integrated skills in the future employment market as it helps students from various majors to exchange ideas in their English classes via online learning.

The fourth change is the requirement of changing the current English teaching model, from 'teacher-centered' to 'student-centered' (Ministry of Education, 2004). This change has brought a significant influence on the current English teaching and learning in Chinese universities. The MOE emphasizes that information technologies should be applied to English teaching as an effective teaching method instead of traditional English teaching methods developed and used in the past, and which only focused on traditional methods, such as grammatical practice and linguistic drills. Additionally, modern technological devices, such as computers and online learning systems are to be utilized to enhance students' English competence without the limitation of learning environment and time. Meanwhile, universities are encouraged to set up English self-access learning centers to develop learners' autonomy as enhancing students' learning autonomy is regarded as being beneficial to improve individual learning (Ministry of Education, 2004). The merits of the traditional English teaching methods could be combined with the current English teaching model, but the principle of current English teaching is to stimulate both English teachers and students' interest in English teaching and learning.

Exploring the web-based learning environment is of paramount importance in its application in the current English teaching model in the CECR. According to Fan (2011), as students' English levels vary, web-based learning and teaching can strengthen students' English speaking and listening competence since it can provide more resources related to English teaching and learning online than traditional classrooms. Also, it is beneficial for students to improve reading and writing with the assistance of a web-based learning system (C. Wang, 2009). In the traditional English teaching model, students are passive recipients to receive writing and reading skills. However, compared with the traditional English teaching model, students who learn through web-based learning systems are active learners as they can access a large number of audio-lingual resources and can receive effective feedback online. With this online assistance, students would feel more interested in attending English lectures than that in traditional classrooms (Lu et al., 2011).

Fifthly, to support curriculum, syllabus, and teaching model development, a reform of English assessment has been required. Lu (2011) believes that an

evaluation of teachers is not only beneficial for teachers but also for students. The requirement stresses that uncovering problems and feedback from the students do help to improve the quality of English teaching in the process (Ministry of Education, 2004). Meanwhile, students need to reflect and adapt their learning strategies to be more effective in English learning through this evaluation. Thus, the evaluation process plays a vital role in English teaching and learning in universities.

The suggested evaluation process in the CECR has been divided into two parts: an evaluation of English learning progress and English assessments. The former one focuses on the evaluation of how students monitor their own learning process, how they evaluate their English learning progress, and what feedback they get from their teachers (Ministry of Education, 2004). This evaluation can be adopted in a form of online learning records, English extracurricular records, and English learning files. The latter one is set for assessing students' English competence as part of four skills in the final examination for each semester, and it consists of listening, speaking, reading, and writing parts. The major form of English assessment is adopted by examination papers in universities.

Besides the emphasis of the importance of English evaluation on both teachers and students, a strong demand of reforming English assessments, such as College English Test Band Four and Band Six (CET-4 and CET-6) has been put forwarded in this CECR. It requires that the CET-4 and CET-6 should be more innovative and communicative-oriented. These changes, including the overall scores, sets of test formats, ratios of each part of the tests, and the lengths of the tests have been an initiative of the CECR. Significant progress made in the latest CET-4 and CET-6 examination has increased the ratio for the listening part, which is consistent with the CECR. Another prominent progress achieved in the latest CET-4 and CET-6 has been the reduction of the ration in examining mainly grammar and rigid textual knowledge so as to largely focus upon the application of practical use of knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2004). Knowledge related to the culture and practical use will be examined as a trend in the CET-4 and CET-6 in future. Meanwhile, formats of the two examinations have been shifted from multiple choices to blank-filling items. Details of the differences in traditional and latest CET-4 and CET-6 assessments are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 *Differences of traditional and latest CET-4 and CET-6 assessments*

Different items	Traditional CET-4 and CET-6	Latest CET-4 and CET-6
Formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listening comprehension (Short conversation dialogues)</li> <li>● Reading comprehension (Passages)</li> <li>● Vocabulary and structure (Multiple choices)</li> <li>● Cloze (Multiple choices)</li> <li>● Writing (a 120-word essay)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listening comprehension (Short conversation dialogues and Long conversation dialogues)</li> <li>● Reading comprehension (Passages, Vocabulary choices, and Fast reading)</li> <li>● Comprehension (Cloze and Sentence translation)</li> <li>● Writing (a150-word essay)</li> </ul>
Ratio of each part of the examinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listening comprehension (20%)</li> <li>● Reading comprehension (40%)</li> <li>● Vocabulary and structure (15%)</li> <li>● Cloze (10%)</li> <li>● Writing (15%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listening comprehension (35%)</li> <li>● Reading comprehension (35%)</li> <li>● Comprehension skills (15%)</li> <li>● Writing (15%)</li> </ul>
Overall scores	100	710
Length of the examinations	2 hours	2.5 hours

Lastly, the CECR stresses that researching on ELT is also essential for the improvement of English teaching and learning. In the past 35 years, most researches in China were mainly focused on introducing and translating linguistic theories and ESL research papers from western countries (Y. H. Gao, Li, & Lu, 2001). Most Chinese researchers generated westerners' achievements and suggestions in their papers instead of conducting empirical research on ELT and applied linguistics in the Chinese context. Thus, lack of experiments and data analysis has resulted in a low quantity and quality of research studies and consequently an inadequacy of development of applied linguistics in China. Since the early stage of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been a rising awareness of the inadequacy of research on English teaching and learning in the Chinese context. Therefore, it calls for a shift from "work-reportism to rigorous, data-based research that is more in keeping with the international research convention" (G. Hu, 2001, p. 61). In the CECR, it states that both the quality and quantity of research papers will strengthen and improve the theoretical foundation for researchers, as well as academic staff in universities.

### **3.5 Methods of English teaching and learning in high schools and universities**

Although the practice-based requirements in relation to English teaching and learning have developed slightly differently in schools and universities, the overall goal of English teaching of enhancing Chinese students' English language communicative competence has been reached in Chinese quality education. With the development of these requirements, English teaching methods utilized in schools and universities have also accordingly been developed in these years. The following sections explore the developments in detail.

#### **3.5.1 Different English teaching methods**

English teaching methods play a vital role in the English teaching model. No matter what the teaching methods teachers use, they need to take seriously consideration of what theory is underpinned and what the teaching objective is since the two items are key aspects for teaching and learning outcomes (Joyce et al., 2000). Thus, it is necessary to look into three prominent English teaching methods used in Chinese high schools. They are: the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). They will be explained explicitly according to their theoretical background, teaching process, and advantages and disadvantages.

##### ***3.5.1.1 The Grammar-Translation Method***

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) has been one of the most common and dominant English teaching methods adopted in Chinese high schools since the 1950s. Its historical background comes from the Greek and Latin teaching methodology (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the development of modern languages and learning theories, more schools have required students to learn English as a second language or a foreign language. However, the aim for English learning at that time was to train students to read original English materials because Latin was prevailing. By using the GTM, students could translate Latin to English (R. Ellis, 2008). The theory of this method is taken from traditional linguistics. Ellis (2008) claims that traditional linguists believe that the written form of a language is superior to the speaking form. The teaching process begins with reading, then comes to grammar explanations and text translation, followed by grammar exercises and translation exercises, leading to expected memorization. This method is based on a belief that a foreign language can be most effectively learnt by first mastering the grammar rules and then applying this learnt grammar rules in grammar-translation exercises (Stern, 1983). Numerous descriptions of the application of this method can be found in previous studies in the West and China (Cowan, Light, Mathews,

& Tucker, 1979; Kohn, 1992; X. J. Li, 1984; Parry, 1996; Rao, 1996; Scovel, 1983; G. Y. Sun & Sun, 1989; Y. Q. Wang, 1999). The teaching model and its advantages and disadvantages are presented in the following figures:

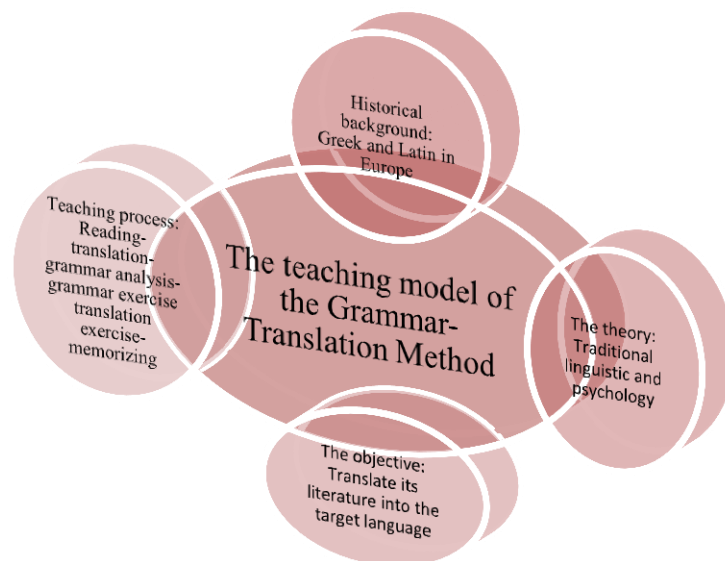


Figure 3.1 The teaching model adopting the GTM

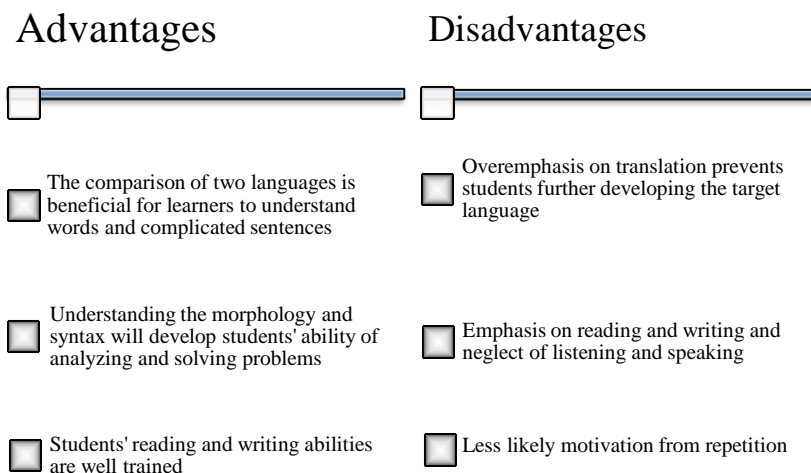


Figure 3.2 Advantages and disadvantages of using the GTM

### 3.5.1.2 The Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) is another popular English teaching method used in Chinese high schools. Its origins were from the Second World War when the method was adopted for military purposes, and then developed as a reaction to the GTM (Barker, 2001). Compared with the GTM, this teaching method aims to develop learners' communicative skills by emphasizing listening and speaking before reading and writing. The theory of the ALM comes from structural

linguistics and behaviorism (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009). Structural linguistics views language as a structural system of different related elements, such as phonemes, morphemes, words, structure, and sentence types for the expression of meaning (Brinton & Brinton, 2010). The grammatical system consists of a list of grammatical elements and focuses on how these rules combine together into words, phrases and sentences. According to behaviorists, behaviors of humans and animals can and should be learnt in a physical process (Skinner, 1972). That is to say, students should only learn a language from a native-speaking environment in terms of speaking and listening first. The teaching process goes with listening to the teachers' explanation, and then comes to the teachers' presentation and students' imitation, followed by practice with pattern drills and the last step is application. Its model is shown in Figure 3.3.

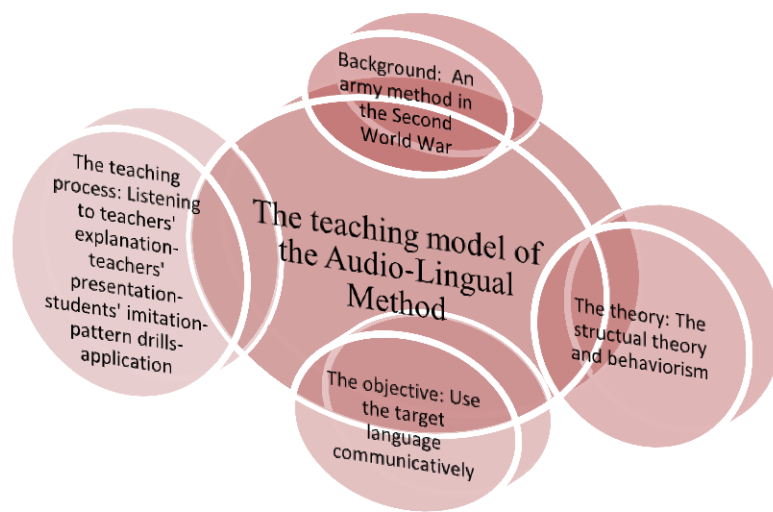


Figure 3.3 The teaching model adopting the ALM

The advantages and disadvantages of the ALM are illustrated in the following figure:

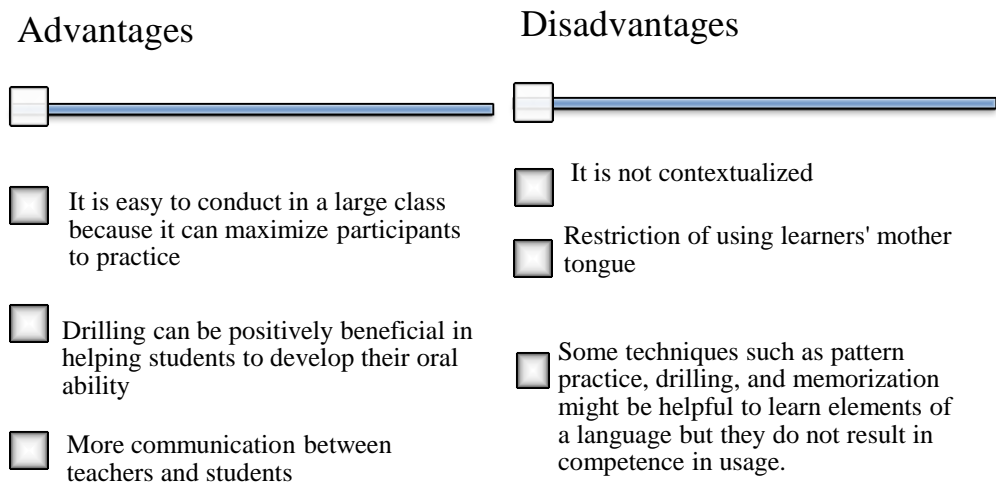


Figure 3.4 Advantages and disadvantages of using the ALM



### 3.5.1.3 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), also known as the Communicative Approach, has gained its popularity since the 1990s in mainland China. The characteristic of CLT is that it focuses upon students' communicative competence rather than on emphasizing the sentence structure, memorizing grammar patterns and extensive exercise of vocabularies (Hymes, 1972). Thus, when CLT was introduced to China, it took root in, and drew support from English teachers (G. Hu, 2002b). Historically, CLT has been seen as a response to the ALM since it emphasizes the function of language communication instead of grammar drills and on obtaining native-speaker-like fluency and pronunciation (Amber, 2010). The ALM places development of communicative competence as the first goal of language teaching and the procedures of improving the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication as the second goal (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It has become a dominant teaching method in the past three decades in Chinese high schools.

The theories underlying CLT are sociolinguistics and are humanistic in nature. The linguists believe that the function of language is not restricted in learning the grammar patterns (Nunan, 2011). As Richard and Rodgers (1986) state, "the primary units of language are not merely its grammar and structure features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse" (p. 72). Hence, for second language learners in China, the initial aim for English teaching is to teach them how to use English language properly instead of how to learn systematic grammatical structures. The humanistic psychologists believe that Communicative Language Teaching emphasizes "self-direction for learners" (Oxford, 1990, p. 10). Advantages and disadvantages of using CLT are shown in Figure 3.5.

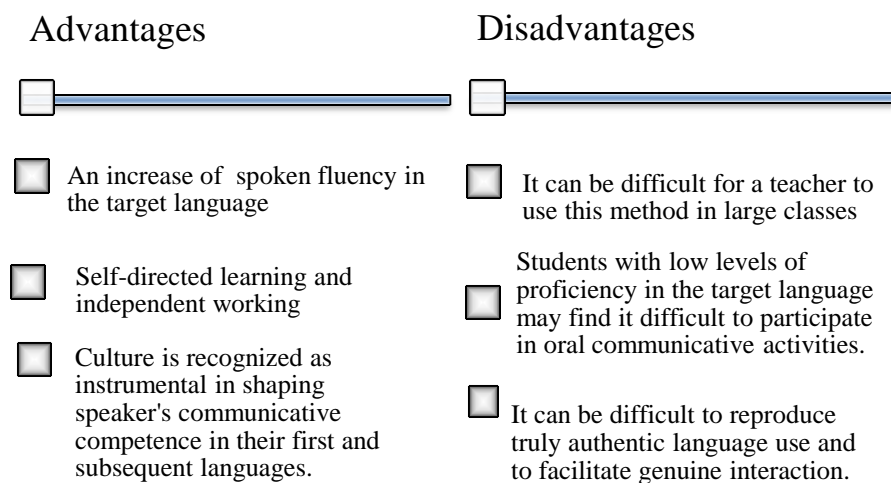


Figure 3.5 Advantages and disadvantages of using CLT

### **3.5.2 The development of students' learning autonomy in China**

Compared with the previous three teaching methods used widely in Chinese high schools within Chinese educational context, the MOE (2010) stresses that enhancing students' learning autonomy is essential for developing their all-round development. In this recent document, a concern was expressed that "Our concept of education and our teaching contents and methodology are relatively outdated, students relied too much on their teachers" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 6). Peng et. al (2014) states that to promote Chinese students' quality is so necessary that they are weak in their "adaptability to society, and innovative, practical and versatile professionals in acute shortage" (p. 80). Under this situation, developing students' autonomous learning is the most important task in English language education in Chinese universities.

#### ***3.5.2.1 The development of students' learning autonomy in Chinese universities***

In response to the development of CLT and the perceived benefits of learning autonomy, the concept of constructing self-access learning centers was developed in China. Accordingly the CECR directed a requirement for setting up self-access learning centers in Chinese high ranking universities. Self-access learning centers are educational facilities designed for promoting and facilitating autonomous learning (McMurry, Tanner, & Anderson, 2009). The first self-access language learning center was set up in Chongqing University in 2005 in mainland China. The center of Chongqing University was first opened on a trial basis to twenty percent of all students on campus (Ministry of Education, 2004). The MOE emphasizes that computer-based high technology should be applied to the college and university English course. Particularly, a language center is regarded as a medium for improving students' speaking and listening skills. In this period, the aim of the language center was only for facilitating students' English communicative competence, which could not, in itself, develop students' learning autonomy (Ministry of Education, 2004). In 2005, due to significant learning outcomes achieved in the trial within Chongqing University; all the students on campus had access to self-access learning centers on campus. Compared with the facilities used in 2004, various online English courses based on Web 2.0 tools in the language learning center were developed to meet students' and staff's needs. For example, the College English course online system, the Intensive English course online system and the English online resource system. Moreover, some software for enhancing students' communicative skills, such as Lange online software and Moodle were installed in language centers.

From 2006 to 2009, these language centers were extensively developed and they were provided with as many as 4000 different types of audio resources and more

than 1000 video resources. Meanwhile, technicians developed an online English examination system and an online self-evaluation system (Ministry of Education, 2007). University students could have access to take part in online examinations instead of traditional use of examination papers. With the development of technology, the university had adopted a new teaching model in the English classrooms since 2009 in two departments of Business and Law and in Hongshen College attached to Chongqing University. Compared with the students from other departments, the students coming from these two departments and Hongshen College had an English teaching model of ‘Lecture + Seminar + Workshop + Tutorial’. This teaching model was very common in western universities, but it was a totally new English teaching model for Chinese university students. In the two years’ experiment, the results showed that most students and staff were enthusiastic with this teaching model, thus it had been advocated and expanded to more than 180 universities in mainland China. The framework of this model is shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 *English teaching model in Chongqing University*

Types	Teaching time	objectives	Instruments	Faculty
Lecture	Two hours/week	Cultural introduction; Lead-in; Discussion	Lecture rooms; White-board; Multimedia resources	English native speakers
Lecture/discussion	Two hours/week	Academic reading and writing	Lecture rooms; White-board; Multimedia resources	Chinese lecturers
Seminar/tutorial	Two hours/week	Exchanging ideas; Research discussion	Lecture rooms; White-board; Multimedia resources	Chinese instructors
Workshop	Flexible	Developing skills and learning autonomy	Multimedia labs and self-access learning centers	Students
Online-learning Center	Flexible	Developing skills and learning autonomy	Self-access learning centers	Students

The CECR (Ministry of Education, 2007) stresses that computer-assisted teaching and learning needs to be utilized as a useful teaching approach in English self-access learning centers. The MOE emphasizes that multiple forms of teaching methods could be adopted in English classes at universities, such as self-access learning centers, face-to-face lectures and online tutorials. The students could

choose the most suitable methods according to their time, plans, English levels, and learning styles. However, generally, English teachers needed to give at least one hour guidance if the students took 16 to 20 hours English learning in self-accessing learning centers.

### *3.5.2.2 The development of students' learning autonomy in Chinese high schools*

The MOE (2007) stresses that it is important to develop university students' learning autonomy in the CECR. As an increasing number of studies focus on researching into learners' autonomy in China, the MOE also emphasizes developing students' independent learning in high schools. The following requirements are examples of the principles for high schools from the MOE (2003):

- Lay a solid language foundation for students' future development, for example, for their pursuit of receiving higher education, hunting jobs and enjoying lifelong learning;
- Provide various choices for the students to meet their needs for individual development;
- Improve students' learning approaches and promote their capabilities for autonomous learning;
- Understand students' affection so as to help them to develop their abilities for independent learning and decision-making, communication, co-operation and cross-cultural understanding; to educate them to have a good moral value; to enhance social responsibility and to cultivate humanity through English learning; and
- Construct a variety of systems to assess students' performance in order to promote their all-round development and to stress the assessment of the students' capacity in language usage and their emotions, attitudes and values in learning.

Although the MOE requires that it is important to develop students' independent learning in high schools, there are few researches focusing upon investigating students' learning autonomy in high schools. As it is a concept developed originally in western countries, few English teachers in Chinese high schools understand its definition and the elements of its application. (J. L. Gao, 2005; Hobman, Bordia, Irmer, & Chang, 2002; Hollingshead, Mcgrath, & O'Connor, 1993; Pang, 2000; Wright, 2000). Even if some papers address its concept, Chinese researchers have taken the theory uncritically in their papers (Pang, 2000; Shen, 2004; X. Sun, 2008; J. Xu & Zhan, 2004; Y. Zhu, 2007; Y. Zhu & Wang, 2002). Without empirical research in Chinese high schools, it is difficult to find

out the practices of these requirements, as well as students' perspectives on these requirements.

### 3.6 Different perspectives of research on 'Learning Autonomy'

With the proliferation of learning autonomy in western countries, Chinese researchers and higher education institutions consider it as an important goal for education (Ministry of Education, 2007). Most universities in mainland China have set up English self-access learning centers to facilitate university students' learning autonomy. In addition, developing students' learning autonomy has been regarded as one of the most important objectives in university English curriculum. Generally speaking, learners who are more capable to learn autonomously are more self-independent and better in self-development (Nunan, 2011). Hence, the MOE (2007) emphasizes that one of the most initial tasks in the English class is to foster students' learning autonomy capacity so as to become independent learners. Consequently, the role of both students and teachers should be changed from 'teacher-centered' to 'student-centered' (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a). Based on the previous theories and research studies, there continues to be a heated discussion on learning autonomy in mainland China in the 21st Century.

Compared with the research studies on learning autonomy from western countries, most papers on learning autonomy in mainland China focused on the introduction of its definition and literacy reviews (J. L. Gao, 2005). Liu (1991) points out that self-directed learning is a part of lifelong learning, which is explored in four aspects in the paper. That is, the definition of self-directed learning, the learners' identification, the learning theory and the practice on the development of self-directed learning. Liu's paper has been regarded as the first research study to advocate developing self-directed learning in mainland China (J. L. Gao, 2005). Li (1998) further explains the importance of cultivating communicative competence in an intercultural environment in the Chinese context. The discussion in his paper is based on others' reviews (Allwright, 1988; Walther & Boyd, 2002; Wood & Smith, 2001). It is discussed as to what extent learners should have freedom in the Chinese context and investigated the important factors impacting on the development of learning autonomy in Chinese universities. Also, it is suggested that setting up self-access learning centers in universities was essential for improving language learning efficiency in China.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Zheng (2000) argues that different cultural and social backgrounds between western countries and China could result in the development of learning autonomy in the Chinese context. He stresses that

Chinese educators could not totally accept it without critical thinking. Hua (2001a) elaborates that the role of teachers and students in the language classrooms should be shifted from ‘teacher-centered’ to ‘student-centered’, which is beneficial for learners to develop autonomy. In the same year, Hua (2001b) introduces the rationale for self-access learning centers as a means of developing learning autonomy and discusses the roles of self-access centers in students’ language learning. She analyzes the practical need for setting up self-access learning centers in Chinese universities and colleges. Also, experiences from other countries in managing self-access learning centers are introduced in her paper. Gao (2005) gives an explicit analysis on the development of learning autonomy in mainland China from 1991 to 2003. He categorizes the previous reviews on learning autonomy in the last 13 years in China according to the publication of journals, the sample of participants, the content of published journals and research methodologies used in papers. The findings show: There is a steady increase in the number of research articles on learning autonomy; researches’ emphasizes are on Non-English major students; main focuses of the studies are on introducing definitions of autonomous learning in western countries and descriptions of ways to develop learning autonomy in the Chinese context; and research methods used are non-empirical. Meanwhile, Gao (2005) points out that there is a gap in researching of learning autonomy in high schools and universities in China.

Overall, these researchers hold a positive view on developing learning autonomy in the Chinese context. However, as the original concept of learning autonomy is from western countries, these papers do not provide explicit details in regard to methods on how to cultivate students’ learning interest by adopting the self-access learning centers, and on how to make them adapt to current English curriculum designs. Additionally, these Chinese researchers are still at the stage of introducing theories on the development of learning autonomy, as few experimental researches have been undertaken to discover its practical effectiveness within the Chinese context.

### **3.7 Influential factors on learning autonomy**

In the last two decades, motivation, learning strategies and learning environment were regarded as three vital factors that impact Chinese learners’ autonomy capacity (Q. Xu, 2008). Although there are various factors that would influence students’ English language learning, it can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors include motivation, learning strategies and attitudes. The extrinsic factors include teaching models, social and political environment, and cultural environment (R. Ellis, 2008).

### 3.7.1 Learners' attitude and motivation

Learners' attitude and motivation play an important role in English language learning. They are closely related to language learning outcomes as motivation is essential for all learners to have a positive attitude to achieve a target language (R. Ellis, 1997). Motivation generally refers to a desire to achieve a goal with a combination of energy to work towards the goal. It is suggested that motivated students have a desire to undertake their study and to accomplish the requirements of their courses (H. D. Brown, 2001; Gardner, 1985; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Ellis (1997) claims that motivation is often related to aptitude. Aptitude is illustrated as "cognitive abilities that underline successful second language acquisition, motivation involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn a second language" (R. Ellis, 1997, p. 75). From this point of view, motivated students are more likely to spend time in finishing assignments, tasks and tests.

Brown (2001) regards instrumental and integrative motivation as two basic types of motivation in language learning. He claims that learners with an instrumental motivation view the foreign language as a tool of finding a good job or of only passing examinations. On the other hand, learners with an integrative motivation are interested in learning a foreign language as well as the culture of the target language. The learners with an integrative motivation want to be integrated into the target community (Nie, Hillygus, & Erbring, 2002). Researchers (Campbell & Storch, 2011; Lamb, 2009; Yashima, 2009) have demonstrated that these two kinds of orientations influence learning ability and the persons with an integrative motivation have a higher capacity in second language learning than those with an instrumental motivation.

### 3.7.2 Learning strategy

Learning strategy is also regarded as an important factor impacting on language learning. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), learning strategies are defined as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1). Wenden (1991) researches the relationship between learning strategies and autonomy and believes that learners who have acquired the "learning strategies, the knowledge about learning, and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher, are autonomous" (p. 15).

Due to different perspectives of learning strategy, different classifications have been proposed. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), learning strategies



were divided into metacognitive, cognitive, and social parts . This classification has been widely adopted by other researchers, such as Oxford (1990) and Cohen (1998). Metacognitive strategies require learners to have a capacity of how to learn, such as choosing proper learning materials, making learning plans and deciding the methods to learn. Compared with metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies are adopted by learners to deal with specific learning activities. For example, guessing the meaning of words according to the reading context. Affective strategies help people to communicate with others as its aim in learning a language is to communicate effectively in the social activities. Hence, it is suggested that learners could learn a language by using body language and gestures to manage the relationship with other learners, teachers and native speakers (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

### **3.7.3 Learning environment**

Learning environment is also essential in language learning. According to Krashen (1982), a non-anxious learning environment is the first core element in second language learning. He believes that learners who learn a language in a comfortable learning environment will have a low threshold for anxiety. Similarly, Cheng (2009) argues that a positive learning environment plays a pivotal role in Asian children's future academic and life success. Yang and Chen (2007) claim that the web-based applications could enhance students' language learning in a technological environment in a senior high school in Taiwan. As the participants have different perspectives towards this approach, they suggest that students need to be aware that learning English through multimedia technology demands new learning strategies and self-access learning is a crucial step. However, this study does not address that how to guide passive learners to learn English in this technological environment. In mainland China, most studies focus on how to construct an effective learning environment in universities, and researchers often use a descriptive analysis. Few studies address the learning environment in high schools and research into students' perspectives on an effective learning environment.

Learning motivation, learning attitude and learning environment have been widely discussed in both Western and Chinese research studies. However, there are few researches to compare Chinese students' learning motivation, learning attitude and learning environment in high schools and in the university context. This gap in the research also provides an opportunity to undertake this research study.



### 3.8 Issues and challenges

There are some issues and challenges that educators, students and academic institutions need to face when developing students' communicative competence and learning autonomy in the Chinese context. The three major issues facing teachers, students and academic institutions are how to develop teaching methods to be more compatible with the requirement of the MOE in mainland China, how to provide a better learning environment in both high schools and universities, and how to narrow the perceived gap between high schools and universities in English teaching models utilized.

Firstly, English teachers are allowed to use different teaching methods in the English class; however, previous studies revealed that Chinese students have been influenced by Confucianism for many years (Throssell & Zhao, 2011; C. Wang, 2009). That is to say, some English teaching methods, such as communicative methods and online learning in self-access centers could encounter difficulties in English classes in high schools. These methods need considerable amounts of time for group discussions, role-plays and self-learning preparation, which could challenge the traditional teaching structure within classrooms. Moreover, students' learning experiences are different, for example, it is difficult for those who are shy to share their opinions in front of others. Therefore, how to adopt an effective English teaching method for students in the same class has not come to a consensus.

Moreover, how to provide an optimum learning environment needs to be taken into consideration by both universities and high schools. Although the MOE stresses that it is important to develop students' learning autonomy, teachers and students have to face significant challenges in a web-learning environment. On the one hand, universities and schools encourage students to monitor their own learning process via online systems; however, students might use technological tools for entertainment instead of learning. On the other hand, for English teachers, they are increasingly asked to play a role as a facilitator. However, how to guide students to develop their learning autonomy is not clear. Lastly, how to bridge the gap between high school students and freshmen in universities is a significant challenge. If the freshmen cannot adapt to the new English learning environment and teaching methods in transitions to universities, they are likely to have learning difficulties that result from aspects, such as a loss of interest and confidence with subsequent reduction in developing their autonomous learning.

Lastly, issues regarding English assessments in high schools and universities are also necessary to be investigated. Having discussed previously, that in the current MOE requirements, evaluating a Chinese student's overall English competence totally depends on the scores they have gained rather than being based on their communicative competence in the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). Consequently, teachers may continue to teach students in a 'duck-feed' process. Schools and higher institutions would also be influenced by this evaluation to choose talented students. As is more likely that students who obtain a higher score in English examinations will have more opportunities to be accepted into universities than those who have lower scores, in the long term, this process is not likely to be beneficial for students to promote their all-round development.

### 3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the literature detailing the development of English teaching in Chinese high schools and universities at different stages. The influence of Confucianism has been discussed as an important and continuing factor that highly influences students' experiences of teaching and learning in China. With the development of different perspectives from western and Chinese scholars regarding learning autonomy, the practical applications of self-access learning centers have also been introduced and illustrated in the Chinese context. Particularly, the importance and need for fostering learners' autonomous learning in the Chinese context has been emphasized. In this respect, several major factors arising from recent literature and their impacts on language learning have been analyzed. A gap of teaching methods utilized in schools and universities has been identified. Also, potential conflicts have arisen between the policy needs related to learning autonomy differences in the teaching model utilized, the increasing use of educational techniques in English language learning and the influence of Confucianism.

The next chapter will focus on explaining the research methodology employed in this study. After re-addressing the research aim and objectives, it will introduce the quantitative and qualitative methods in detail. Also, research instruments for data analysis, such as SPSS software and NVivo, will be introduced as well. Finally, the following chapter will discuss the grounded theory and the research validity, reliability and credibility.

## Chapter 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has examined the relevant literature of the learning theories that underpin the development of English teaching and learning in mainland China, as well as factors influencing language learning in the Chinese context. Investigations were designed based on these theories and conducted in one particular Chinese university, Central China Normal University. The purpose of this research is to investigate university students' perceptions about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and in the university. The aim of this research is to find out university students' preferences in English teaching and learning models so that it could guide teachers, schools and universities to improve in the future. The discussions and recommendations provided in this study will enable a further development of effective English teaching models in high schools as well as helping university students to adapt to a new English teaching and learning environment when they enter universities. Meanwhile, the recommendations provided in this thesis will assist researchers to develop and reform English curriculum syllabus in the future.

An overview of the research approach and a discussion of the two stages of data collection are firstly provided in this chapter. The methodology principles of this study are underpinned by a mixed qualitative and quantitative methods approach. Moreover, the instruments designed for this research and the data analysis tools and methods utilized in the study are both introduced and outlined in this chapter. At the first stage, the SPSS software version 21 was used to analyze the data gained in the questionnaire items. At the qualitative stage, the NVivo software version 10 is used to deal with the data from the interview transcripts. This chapter finally looks into key issues such as validity, reliability, credibility and triangulation.

### 4.2 Research aim and objectives

The dominant aim of this study is to investigate the views of university students about their teachers' teaching and their learning English through their own experiences in high schools and in the university. It examines the perceptions of university students towards the different English learning experience they had in high schools. Meanwhile, it identifies the teaching models used in high schools in mainland China. Moreover, it intends to explore English teaching and learning in the university from students' views. A model is to be generated from their views in the survey and interviews. The research also seeks ways to improve the English

teaching and learning in both high schools and universities to enhance students' ESL learning, as well as to provide suggestions and recommendations to the researchers who will contribute more on ESL learning and teaching in future. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), the main aim of a research is viewed as an axis of the whole study and they believe the sub-questions followed by the research objectives could provide a clear and more explicit framework for researchers. These research objectives are re-visited and provided in the following part:

Research objective 1: *To investigate the learning of English of university students when they were in high schools.* English learning in high schools plays an important role in the whole learning process, in particular, the learning styles they formed. This objective is to examine what the university students thought of their English learning experience in high schools and how they evaluated their English learning in high schools.

Research objective 2: *To investigate teachers' teaching of English in high schools in mainland China.* Different English teaching models utilized in high schools also has impact on students' ESL learning outcomes. Therefore, this objective is to investigate the university students' opinions towards their teachers' teaching in English when they were in high schools.

Research objective 3: *To investigate the learning of English of students in the university.* When students entered the university, they found that their English learning was different from their experiences in high schools. Thus, this objective is to examine what the students thought of their English learning experience in the university and how they evaluated their English learning in the university.

Research objective 4: *To investigate teachers' teaching of English in the university.* Besides the investigation of English teaching in high schools, English teaching in the university should also be focused upon. It aims to find out the teaching models used in the university based on students' perceptions.

Research objective 5: *To examine the differences of students' perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning in high schools and in the university.* Based on the investigation of the university students' perceptions from their English

teaching and learning experience in both high schools and in the university, this objective is to compare the differences of their views according to their experiences.

Research objective 6: *To construct a model of teaching and learning of English based on university students' perceptions and experiences.* The last research objective of this study is to generate a model based on students' views according to their English learning and their teachers' teaching experiences in high schools and in the university.

In this study, the researcher used a range of skills, techniques and strategies to analyze data. Also, different research tools were utilized at both stages according to the research aim. The process of re-visiting these research objectives could benefit the researcher to keep the question in mind and as a consequence, it assists the whole process of the theories generated.

### 4.3 Research approach

This study used a mixed method to collect and analyze data at both quantitative and qualitative stages. Quantitative and qualitative research methods can be used separately in different stages in a study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Using both quantitative and qualitative methods in a research are very important and helpful (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Traditionally, researchers believe that research studies are either quantitative or qualitative (Buchanan, 1992; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). However, there are increases in methodological work undertaken by a mixed method research paradigm in recent years (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Now, mixed methods research is seen as the third research paradigm that can help bridge the schism between the qualitative and quantitative research (Onwuegbuzie, Slate, Leech, & Collins, 2009). A mixed method research has been chosen to work out solutions that utilize the benefits of both the quantitative research and qualitative research while also seeking a solution in the middle of the two (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Using a mixed method to conduct a research will provide researchers comprehensive insights into the research findings (Johnson & Turner, 2002). Thus, qualitative and quantitative methods can draw strengths and minimize the weakness of both in single studies and across studies rather than be regarded as the two extreme poles in the research paradigm.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to gather and analyze data in this study. A questionnaire was used and a semi-structured interview was designed at two different stages. According to Warwick and Lininger (1975), the survey is highly valuable for studying some problems in a specific situation, such as public opinions, and educated individuals. Thus, in this study, in order to identify the relationship between different variables, the questionnaire is designed to examine a smaller number of variables across a larger number of subjects; while the semi-structured interviews are to examine a smaller number of participants over a larger number of variables (Huxley, 1995). Adopting mixed research methods allows researchers to have a broader view on the data collection and analysis. Also, during this process, the researcher could gain deeper insights into the views of the participants within the research area (Fan, 2011). Therefore, the findings of the study are believed to be more likely to have utilized the strengths of mixed methods and offset the weakness of using only one of them (Johnson & Turner, 2002). Thus, compared with using one method in the research, the overall strength of this research is potentially greater (Creswell, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The following figure gives an illustration of the framework of this study.

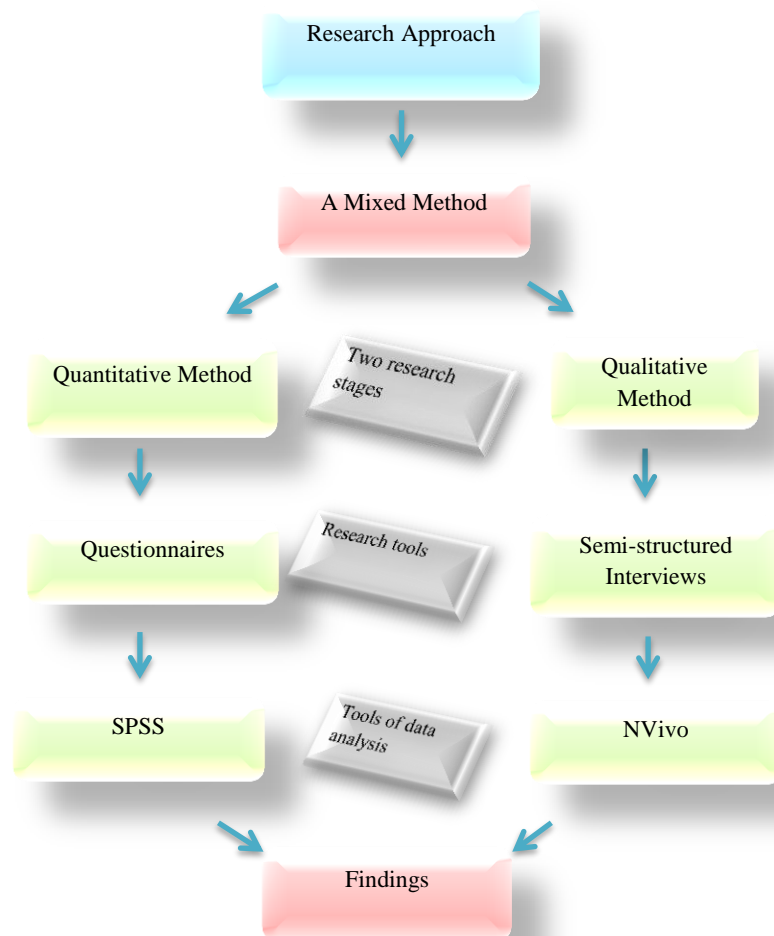


Figure 4.1 The framework of this study

#### 4.4 Data collection

The research involved 500 university students from different departments in Central China Normal University in China. The researcher used the survey (questionnaires) and semi-structured interviews to collect data (Burns, 2000), and these instrumental tools were applied to those who had been taught English by using different English teaching models in high schools and the university. All the university students (Year 1 to Year 4) were involved in the first phase. Afterwards, at the second stage, semi-structured interviews were organized with a group of 20 participants chosen from those participants who volunteered to join in the interviews after completing the questionnaire. The process of recruiting participants, the sampling and the pilot study will be discussed in the following sections.

##### 4.4.1 Participants and sampling

The participants involved in this study were 500 university students, who volunteered to take part in the survey from six main faculties/disciplines. These faculties were Arts, Education, Science, Computing, Management and Economics, and Foreign Languages. All of the participants were full-time students on the same campus in the subject university. Using surveys to collect information is more convenient and common from some of the individuals, groups, or organizations rather than all of them (Berends, 2006; Chromy, 2006). According to Gay and Airasian (2003), when the population size of a target group has 5000 or more, it is better for the researchers to sample approximately one tenth of the total number of participants. There were about 6000 full-time students (Year 1 to Year 4) on the main campus in the subject university (Central China Normal University, 2012). The sample size of 500 full-time students was thus seen as appropriate. The detail of the participant recruitment process is in Appendix 2.

The quantitative and qualitative stages used different sampling skills and methods. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) claim that the methods of sampling are important since it is related to the data collection and research goals. The purposive, opportunistic, and homogenous samplings were used in quantitative stage. The researcher adopted these three sampling strategies because the examples and definitions were discussed by previous scholars (Burns, 2000; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). “The type of purposive sample chosen is based on the particular research questions as well as consideration of the resources available to the researcher” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 45). In this study, the 500 university students from Central China Normal University were chosen randomly. Also, these students were available to the researcher in China. The reasons why the opportunistic, and homogenous samplings were adopted in this research was that

the university students were from the same university. Also, those students were volunteers to take part in the questionnaires on campus, which was in correspondence with the opportunistic sampling example suggested by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011).

Compared with the sampling strategies used at the quantitative stage, homogenous, and stratified samplings were chosen at the qualitative stage. Many researchers used stratified sampling strategy since it could ensure certain characteristics within the same groups to be investigated, such as gender, ethnics, and common interests (L. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Moreover, it could provide a better coverage of the population than simple random sampling. In this study, the participants at this stage were chosen from the university students in Central China Normal University who had finished the questionnaires at the first stage and then signed and returned the consent forms provided. 20 interview participants were chosen from 40 volunteers of different departments within the campus of Central China Normal University. Thus, responses were obtained from different disciplines within the same university.

#### 4.4.2 The questionnaire

As discussed previously, the survey (Questionnaire) was utilized as a research tool at this stage. The researcher used questionnaires to gather the participants' feelings, thoughts and perceptions towards their learning experiences and their teachers' teaching in high schools and in the university (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Wolf, 1997). A reflective method was adopted in the questionnaire to ask university students' perceptions on their English learning and English teachers' teaching when they were in high schools, which is essential for both teachers and students. This approach could find out explicitly the weakness of students in their English learning process so as to enhance students' critical thinking (Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshall, 2009). As mentioned in Chapter 2, Kolb (1984) illustrates that a reflective process is vital for students to improve as reflection involves a dialogue between students and their peers, teachers and friends, all of whom could provide feedback to students. Also, teachers could have a further insight on students' understandings so as to transform their actions more effectively (Yoon & Kim, 2010). Thus, students' views play an important role in the questionnaire as an instrumental tool in this study.

The questionnaire items were composed of four major parts. The first part was about the participants' background information, which aimed to provide nominal



data for further analysis. The second part focused on investigating the university students' English learning experiences and their teachers' teaching in high schools and in the subject university respectively. The third part was designed to investigate students' preferences in English learning and teaching. The last part was composed of an open-ended question in order to gather more information of students' views on learning and their teachers' teaching. The first three parts adopted multiple choices and the last part allowed students freedom to express their opinions and suggestions. Their responses appeared as variables which could be organized and analyzed using statistical methods and tools. The researcher used the questionnaires at this stage to investigate the different views of participants and to gain concrete evidence within the research area, which allowed her to explore further into emerging research issues at a later stage. Details of the questionnaire contents and its development process will be introduced in Chapter 5.

As some Chinese university students could not access the online surveys in their dormitories, the completed questionnaires were collected manually in Central China Normal University. The students were first informed about this study via emails by the International Office in Central China Normal University. Next, the students who were interested in this study could go to the reception desk of the International Office to pick up the paper questionnaires, information sheets, and a pre-addressed envelope as well. Once they finished the questionnaire, they only needed to put the questionnaires into the pre-addressed envelopes and sent them back to the researcher's mailbox in the subject university. The whole process would take participants about 20 minutes.

#### 4.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Although new forms of data collection have emerged continually in the literature for qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2003), all forms have been generated into "four basic types of information: observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials" (Creswell, 2007, p. 129). This study used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions in face-to-face and telephone forms. According to Seidman (2013), though there are various methods for a researcher to approach, however, "if the researcher's goal is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience, then interviewing provides a necessary...avenue of inquiry" (p. 10). In this study, interviewing is an appropriate method since the researcher wanted to investigate the university students' views on their learning experience and their teacher's teaching in high schools and in the university. Moreover, Creswell and Brown (1992) regard

interviews as playing an important role in a grounded theory study, which will be examined in this chapter as well.

Embedded in a continuum of the interview structure, from ‘unstructured’ to ‘highly structured’, the key idea is how much ‘control’ the interviewer will take in the interaction (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Compared with the unstructured interviews and highly structured interviews, semi-structured interviews provide guidance for both the researchers and the participants in order that the interviewers could prepare in advance and the participants could have freedom to express their views in their own terms (D. Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In this study, the most important reason why the researcher adopted a semi-structured interview was “it is best used when you won’t get more than one chance to interview someone” (Bernard, 1988, p. 11). Therefore, a semi-structured interview was the most suitable approach utilized at this stage.

Both face-to-face and telephone forms were adopted in the semi-structured interviews at this stage. The higher response rates through face-to-face interviews is a key reason the researcher adopted it in this study. The point is that face-to-face interviews can allow the researcher to observe the “surroundings and use nonverbal communication and visual aids” (Neuman, 2011, p. 339). Telephone interviews were prepared for those participants who could not take part in the face-to-face semi-structured interviews due to some factors that may affect responses to the interviews. Hence, it is used for those who were sensitive to social settings where the interviews took place, or felt nervous or worried about researcher’s personality (Babbie, 2011). Some interview techniques were also taken into consideration in the interview. For example, the researcher should ensure that the data collection procedures are confidential in order to make participants feel secure and relaxed (Neuman, 2004). When conducting the interviews, the interviewer could not interrupt participants’ talk during their thinking because the concrete details could not be gained with reinforcement (Babbie, 2011).

The ten interview questions were designed in advance for university students. These questions were used to investigate the participants’ perceptions on their English learning and their teachers’ teaching that the participants experienced in high schools and in the university, such as their attitudes on English teaching materials, English syllabus, English teaching methods and self-access learning centers in the university. The answers to these questions provided solid data for the researcher to discover the factors which were important to the participants

(Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The details of these questions and the development of the instrumental tools will be introduced in Chapter 5.

#### 4.4.4 Pilot study

Although a pilot study has been defined in different ways in the literature, it is recognized that a pilot study is a method of test to be used before the final study (Thabane et al., 2010; Van Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley, & Graham, 2001). Conducting a pilot study in the research has lots of advantages, such as ensuring the clarity of questions, testing the hypotheses, providing the research with unforeseen ideas, methods, and clues, reducing the anticipated problems before the major study. In other words, a pilot study can assist the researcher to find out the weakness of preliminary design and avoid failures in the final study. Also, the pilot study increased the likelihood of the success of the study if the proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated (Van Teijlingen et al., 2001).

The pilot study was constructed prior to the implementation of the final study. It was divided into two parts at the preliminary stage: pilot study of the questionnaire and construction of interview questions. The first draft of the questionnaire was tested with 100 students in Central China Normal University to ask for their responses and comments, and then discussed with six academics in the same university to seek their suggestions. The initial interview questions were tested with five students and discussed with the academics in the same meeting. After the pilot study, few changes were made to the two research instruments. These slight adjustments will be introduced in the next chapter. Figure 4.2 provides the model of the pilot study.

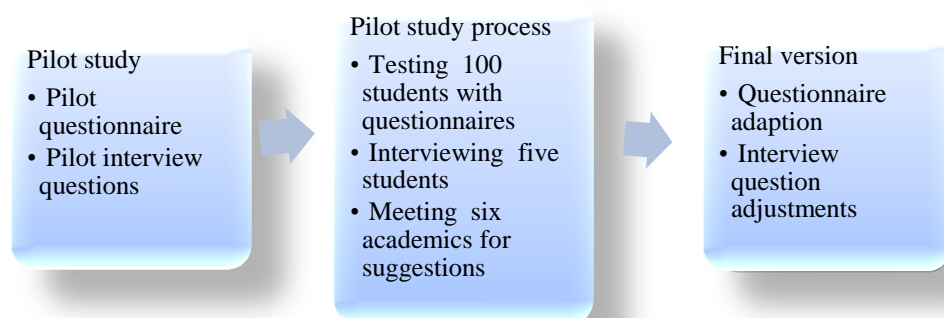


Figure 4.2 The pilot study model

## 4.5 Data analysis

The data analysis process was performed after the final implementation of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. This process included both the analysis of quantitative data and qualitative data. As the nature of these two forms of data is different, the researchers utilized the SPSS software version 21 and the NVivo software version 10 to analyse numerical data and textual data respectively.

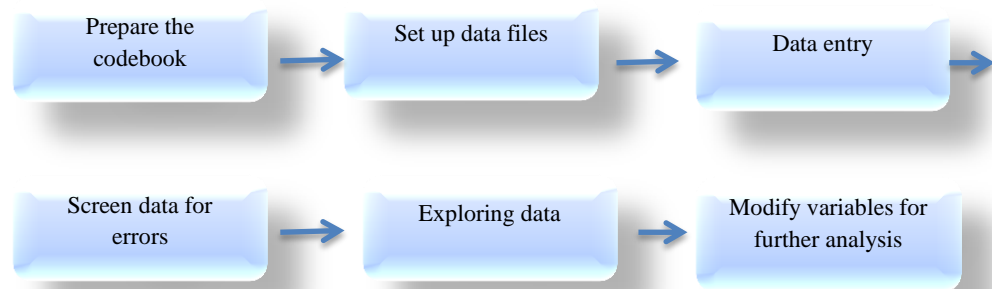
### 4.5.1 Quantitative data analysis

The data obtained at this stage were from questionnaires. Using questionnaires enabled the researcher to have an understanding of the characteristics of this particular set of data when the data was performed in certain ways (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Statistical data in this study provided an opportunity for the researcher to access the numerical data in a form of scales. Consequently, she could understand the participants' views and opinions in the questionnaire items. Also, it could address the specific research questions (Pallant, 2007). At this stage, the SPSS software package was performed to interpret the relationships between participants' views and scaled numbers. As the SPSS software has various techniques for analyzing data, such as t-tests, frequency tables, and non-parametric tests, to show the relationships between the variables (Bryman, 2008; Huizingh, 2007), using this software package to analyze the quantitative data was considered as the most appropriate tool at this stage.

Within this study, the SPSS software was adopted to analyze the participants' responses to the questionnaire items in order to find out the differences between English learning and teaching in high schools and in the university. Several analysis tests were utilized, including descriptive analysis, Non-parametric tests, Kruskal-Wallis test, Mann-Whitney U Test and Spearman's Rank Order Correlation ( $\rho$ ). How these tests were performed will be discussed and presented in the next chapter

There are several stages in the process of setting up data and analyzing the data (Pallant, 2007). Firstly, the researcher needed to prepare the data file, which can be also imported from other spread sheet-type programs, such as Excels. And then the coded data was entered into the SPSS (Pallant, 2007). Meanwhile, the researcher should screen the data file for errors in case there were data errors as they would influence the validity and credibility of the research (Neuman, 2004). Furthermore, the data was explored by using descriptive statistics and graphs. Finally, the variables were modified for further analysis. A flowchart of this data

analysis process is shown in Figure 4.3. Details of the quantitative data analysis using SPSS will be further explained in Chapter 5.



*Figure 4.3* Flow chart of data analysis process

#### 4.5.2 Qualitative data analysis

Compared with the numerical data collected at the quantitative stage, qualitative data analysis is based mainly on analyzing textual formats, such as documents and texts. Many scholars believe that the qualitative data analysis process is full of art (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Mills, 1959; Tesch, 1990). However, it also requires “a great amount of methodological knowledge and intellectual competence” (Tesch, 1990, p. 97). Thus, the researcher needed to break down the data analysis and interpretation process into a series of steps.

The first step that was followed was a data preparation phase. In this phase, the researcher needed to consider what kind of data she would use to provide an understanding of the research questions. Due to some data being collected from interviews, the researcher needed to transcribe the data. The data transcription process was more interactive rather than passive, as the research engaged herself in the process of deep listening, analysis and interpretation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). During this process, the researcher gained an opportunity to engage in the initial data collected and connected with her data in “a grounded manner that provides for the possibility of enhancing the trustworthiness and validity of their data-gathering techniques” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 304). The next two steps were data exploration and data reduction, which was worked hand in hand. In these two phases, the researcher began to read the data collected in forms of text and audio and then to mark up and write down the important textual words. In order to keep those important lines in mind, memo and diagrams were used. The researcher’s opinions and ideas were essential in the interview after she gained more familiarity of the data collected by reading and writing up in a memo. When finishing this, the researcher was able to code the data. The coding process

can be flexible, either simultaneous with the data collection process or after data collection.

In this research, the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using NVivo software as a tool and the data coding process was adopted a constructivist grounded theory approach. The NVivo software is widely used by researchers to import and work with documents, PDFs, spread sheets, audio, video and pictures. Adopting this software to organize qualitative data is efficient and convenient. Moreover, the NVivo software ensures that the work is systematically categorized and makes it unlikely that anything is missing in the data. Therefore, this software was utilized to organize transcriptions, and to interpret participants' answers recoded in the interviews at this stage.

Grounded theory is a research method developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). This method is a general methodology for developing theory that is 'grounded' in data systematically gathered and analyzed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory uses an inductive method to code and analyze observational data to obtain research findings. In other words, grounded theory is a theory that could be tested comparatively in further data collection using systematically data collection so as to create refined conceptual categories (Strauss, 1987). Glaser and Strauss (1967) provide a clear description of the method of grounded theory generation and they believe that data collection should not be influenced by preconceived theories. Rather, "systematic data gathering and analysis can lead to a theory" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 7). Grounded theory was developed as a reaction to the deductive model of theory generation that dominated in the United States in the 1960s.

Up until now, there have been at least three types of grounded theory in the methodology literature: the original version by Glaser and Strauss (1967); the systematic version by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994, 1998a); and the constructivist approach of Charmaz (2003, 2006). According to Creswell (2007), the systematic and the constructivist approaches are popular among the scholars. Compared with the original version by Glaser and Strauss and the systematic use of it by Strauss and Corbin, Charmaz provides a more flexible and scientific approach (Neuman, 2004).

Apart from its emerging prominence, there are several other reasons to use constructivist grounded theory approach as the most appropriate strategy at the

qualitative stage in the study. First, it consists of “systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 509). Secondly, the researcher gathers and analyzes the data, which is ‘grounded’ systematically (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). Thirdly, the theory is generated and emerged from the raw data, which avoids the researcher’s presumptions and perceptions. The theories was able to generated in the process of analyzing comparatively among patterns, themes, and categories from participants’ responses within this research (Babbie, 2011). Therefore, this constructivist grounded theory was appropriately utilized at the qualitative stage.

There steps of using constructivist grounded theory to analyze the data were open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. After studying carefully the initial data, the researcher grouped various codes into upper-level themes and finally synthesized them into core categories (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The coding process assisted the researcher to generate the theory from the various categories (Sarantakos, 2005). Also, it provided the researcher with an opportunity to re-examine the data (Fan, 2011).

The open coding was the first step within the data analysis. At this stage, the first-order concepts and substantive codes were identified, developed as well as analyzed and compared constantly before being delimited into upper-level categories (Creswell, 2009; Fan, 2011; Fei, 2007). The researcher remained open to the raw data without any perceived codes (Glaser, 1992). Due to the nature of grounded theory, the researcher needed to keep these questions in her mind and asked continually at this stage: “what is the study from this data? What category does this data indicate? What is actually happening in this data? What does the incident mean in people’s social life? What accounts for this problem and process?” (Glaser, 1978, p. 57). With these questions in mind, the researcher named each segment of the raw data, and moved quickly through it to construct meanings of the questions in the interviews and questionnaire. Then the researcher generated the codes related to the participants’ English learning experiences and their teachers’ teaching in high schools and in the university. These codes from the textual data and labelled into 98 codes of the third and the fourth levels in this process. The participants’ responses were recorded and grouped according to the frequency of their occurrences emerged in the transcripts (Appendix 6).

Compared with open coding, axial coding was putting an ‘axis’ through the data to connect between the concepts, which allowed the researcher to make interconnections with the substantive codes (Sarantakos, 2005). Thus, the researcher needed to make detailed comparisons between the concepts in this stage in order to construct higher-order concepts (Sarantakos, 2005). The constant comparisons between the concepts ensured the researcher to make visible links between open codes and to group them into higher-order themes (Fan, 2011). These constant comparisons and visible links helped the research to understand the codes and phenomenon better. 46 codes were generated in this step (as shown in Appendix 6).

The last step was the selective coding process. It means “the analyst delimits coding to only those variables that relate to the core variable in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory. The core variable becomes a guide to further data collection and theoretical sampling” (Glaser, 1978, p. 61). At this stage, the researcher may write a “story line” by working through the axial codes and connect them together into higher levels of abstraction (Creswell, 2007, p. 67). Finishing this step, the six key categories that emerged in the perceptions of the participants on their English learning experiences and their teachers’ teaching in high schools and in the university. Table 4.1 below provides a schematic overview of the procedures of how the grounded theory approach was utilized in this research. Detailed elaboration of the qualitative data analysis will be in Chapter 7.

Table 4.1 *An overview of using GT approach in the research*

Process	Main activity	Explanation of these activities
1	Identify and develop substantive data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open to the data</li> <li>• Name the codes of the raw data</li> <li>• Construct meaning</li> </ul>
2	Generate codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The codes that were generated related closely to the research questions in the interviews</li> </ul>
3	Connect the concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare codes and phenomenon constantly</li> </ul>
4	Higher levels of abstraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search for the key phenomenon, codes, elements and categories</li> <li>• Need to further refine and develop those categories</li> </ul>



#### 4.6 Reliability, validity and credibility

The use of reliability and validity is common in both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. Also, the use of them has been seen as central issues in all scientific measurements (Golafshani, 2003; Neuman, 2004). Reliability and validity are important in social research as constructing social research is abstract and unobservable. Thus, “Reliability and validity are ideas that help to establish the truthfulness, credibility, or believability of findings” (Neuman, 2011, p. 208). Reliability means that “the information provided by indicators (e.g., a questionnaire) does not vary as a result of characteristics of the indicator, instrument, or measurement device itself” (Neuman, 1997, p. 138). It suggests that the research result should not change when the research project is repeated or recurs under similar situations (Neuman, 2003). Validity addresses “the question of how well the social reality being measured through research matches with the constructs researchers use to understand it” (Neuman, 2003, p. 179). Compared with reliability, validity is more difficult to achieve, as the researcher “cannot have absolute confidence about validity” (Neuman, 2011, p. 211). The reason the researcher cannot achieve absolute validity is that constructing in social theory is abstract while indicators refer to concrete observation. According to Bohrnstedt (2002), the validity is part of a dynamic process and as it grows, the evidence will be accumulated over time. Without it, the measurement becomes meaningless. Thus, validity is difficult to obtain but it is essential while undertaking a research. This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze data, so the following section discusses how reliability and validity were achieved at two stages.

This study was considered as both reliable and valid. According to Neuman (2011), there are few chances of obtaining perfect reliability. Thus, some principles are provided by him for the researchers to follow to increase the credibility in the research. This research adopted these principles to increase the credibility, which will be introduced later in this chapter. Meanwhile, the researcher reviewed literature and found similar measures that had been used in the previous studies. In this way, the research measurement was more credible although it took more time and effort (Neuman, 2011). Moreover, it is proposed that one of the most important measurements to test validity is “Statistic Validity” (Neuman, 2011, p. 217) , which suggests the researcher choose a correct statistical procedure to fully meet the assumptions. This method will be explained in detail in the following chapter.

This research is also regarded as credible. Credibility has been examined across various fields, ranging from communication, psychology, and science to

interdisciplinary efforts in human-computer interaction (Rieh & Danielson, 2007). This research focuses on the information source (text) in the questionnaire and communication in the semi-structured interview. All the participants involved in the research were volunteers and felt comfortable to participate in it. They had been informed of the whole process of the research before they took part in this research as all the information sheets related to the research had been in the reception desk of the International Office of the subject university. Therefore, their opinions were regarded as credible when they expressed what they thought and believed in the questionnaire and in the interviews.

#### **4.6.1 Reliability and validity at the quantitative stage**

The researcher adopted a questionnaire as a tool for collecting data at the quantitative stage. At this stage, the researcher made efforts to ensure the result is replicable with regards to reliability, and the means of measurement are accurate with regards to validity (Golafshani, 2003). Thus, a clear instrument design, appropriate analysis strategies, and pilot tests are essential principles to increase reliability followed by the researcher (Neuman, 2004).

Firstly, the questionnaire items were made clearly and briefly to the point in order to avoid ambiguousness of the result. The questionnaire was designed according to the pre-designed outline that addressed four parts clearly: background information, English learning and teaching in high schools and in the university, students' preferred English learning and teaching, and an open-ended question, which was coordinated with the research aim. Also, the scale of each variable was designed appropriately with numbers so that the participants could understand these indicators.

Secondly, the multiple sources of responses were gained to ensure its validity and reliability. The outline and the draft of the questionnaire were first viewed by the chief investigator and colleagues in the department. Later, they were passed to the academic staff and peers to review. Also, the students shared their opinions towards them. Opinions from these diverse perspectives were tested and compared, which could avoid bias and prejudice. In this way, the reliability and validity were ensured in the study.

Thirdly, the pilot study was regarded as an essential process to ensure the reliability and validity at this stage. The initial version of the questionnaire was tested with 100 university students. Then a meeting was arranged by the

researcher and six other researchers to discuss the questions that emerged in the pilot study. As it gained valuable recommendations and suggestions from the six researchers, the questionnaire items and interview questions were adjusted in the final version.

#### **4.6.2 Reliability and validity at the qualitative stage**

Viewing the literature, it provides different perceptions and definitions of reliability and validity in correspondence with how they are considered in qualitative research (Angen, 2000; Creswell, 2009; Eisner, 1991; Lather, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although the researchers' understandings and the terms used are different, the reliability is one of the most important criteria for measuring a qualitative research, and the idea is most often used in all kinds of research (Golafshani, 2003). According to Golafshani (2003), reliability is a concept related to the quality as an idea to test a qualitative research. Also, Eisner (1991) states that a good qualitative research can assist the readers in understanding the situation. Therefore, reliability is an important factor to ensure that this study is a good qualitative research.

Although the understanding of reliability is various, "to ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). As the instrument is vital to ensure the trustworthiness in this study, the researcher designed the interview questions according to the outline. After the pilot study, she gained different perspectives from the students, academic staff, and the other researchers in the subject university in order to increase the trustworthiness at this stage. Also, the suggestions that involved the chief investigator and researcher's colleagues were seriously taken. These various dimensions of feedback helped the reliability that has been achieved in the research. Based on these suggestions and recommendations, the researcher adjusted some questions in the final version of interview questions. It is believed that if the semi-interview is conducted again, the results would not be significantly different. Therefore, the qualitative stage is considered as reliable in this study.

The concept of validity is various in qualitative studies. This concept is not a fixed but "rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intensions of particular research methodologies and projects" (Winter, 2000, p. 1). Although the term has not reached consensus, the central issue the validity concerns is whether the research findings can accurately reflect the phenomenon under investigation and the interpretations derived (Henn, Weinstein, & Foard,

2006). Several validation strategies have been proposed by Creswell (2009) and it is suggested at least two of them should be engaged in this research. At this stage, the researcher used triangulation and peer review strategies proposed in the literature (Creswell, 2007, 2009). The researcher asked an open-ended question in the questionnaire draft from multiple dimensions in order to obtain the external check of the research process. Using this review can further keep the research valid and provide the researcher with an opportunity to express her true feelings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### 4.7 Triangulation

The triangulation method is commonly used in both quantitative and qualitative research (Neuman, 2004). This method is “a typical strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 603). Patton (2002) advocates the researcher to use triangulation by stating “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods, which means using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches” (p. 247). This process allowed the researcher to gain a view from various perspectives, and thereby to broaden sights to text validity (Sarantakos, 2005). Therefore, the validity and reliability were enhanced by using multiple methods in the study.

The researcher in this study ensured the research was valid and reliable by corroborating evidence from different individuals and methods of data collection (Creswell, 2005). The participants involving in this study were recruited from the same campus, but different departments in Central China Normal University. Additionally, the methods of data collection at two stages are different: questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Hence, the researcher gained valuable and credible picture in the research by combining different methods and instruments. (Fan, 2011). Apart from this, the researcher benefits from the triangulation to allow her to “increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, challenging or integrating theories, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem” (Thurmond, 2001, p. 254)

#### 4.8 Conclusion

Research methodology plays an important role in a research since it provides guidance for the research direction. Neuman (2011) illustrates that choosing specific research techniques are essential for making more sense on a research. Thus, whether an appropriate research methodology was chosen would influence

the success of the whole project. This chapter has explained the research methods and research tools that were used at different stages in this study. Also, a mixed methodological method has been discussed. It is believed that adopting a mixed research method was an advantage as it could provide different perspectives to address the research aim and objectives. In the following chapter, it will introduce the development of the research instruments and how they are explored in the pilot study.

## Chapter 5 Design of the Research Instruments

### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter firstly has reemphasized the research aim and the objectives to provide a more explicit framework for researchers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005), and secondly moved to explain the research approach and the data collection methods that has been utilized in this study. Then it showed the concept map of this research, which provided the details of the whole study. Subsequently, data collection methods used in both quantitative and qualitative stages were discussed, including using the SPSS software and the NVivo software as the research tools to analyze the data at these two stages. Finally, the validity, reliability, and triangulation of the research were addressed. This chapter focuses on how those research instruments are designed to be valid and reliable in the study. It is believed that validity and reliability of the research instruments are essential to assist in ensuring the quality of the whole study (Le, 1999). The research instruments, including the questionnaire items and the semi-structure interview questions, have been designed and developed from the initial stage, with a pilot study leading to the finalizing stage. In particular, on the one hand, the interview questions have been discussed with the academic staff in the subject university after the pilot study to ensure the validity and credibility. On the other hand, the questionnaire has been also tested by using the SPSS software to examine its validity, reliability and the grouping factors. This chapter will focus on the details of the process of the design of the research tools together with the slight changes and adjustments that have been made to the improvement of the research instruments.

### 5.2 Questionnaire design

A questionnaire was used in the quantitative stage of this study. It was designed to investigate the learning and teaching experiences in English based on the university students' perceptions. These four sections in the survey were carefully constructed, modified and finalized to achieve the research aim and objectives in the best way. The following three steps will be explained in detail:

- An initial design of the questionnaire items;
- Pilot study involving 100 university students in the survey stage and five students in the semi-structured interviews; and
- Slight changes and adjustments made to finalize the instruments.

### **5.2.1 Initial design of the questionnaire**

The initial survey items were designed according to the research aim and the objectives. Also, the design of the questions was based on the theories of language learning and teaching reviewed from relevant literature. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of five questions which aimed to collect participants' biographic information. The second part of the questionnaire included 60 scaled items about the participants' views and attitudes towards their English learning and teachers' teaching experiences in high schools and in the university, as well as an open-ended section (as shown in Appendix 4). The 60 scaled items were rated on a Likert Scale (1932). In order to answer these scaled question items properly, the participants were instructed to indicate from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' (1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree) to express to what extent they agreed or disagreed. The instructions indicated clearly that the meaning of each scale and allowed participants to select only a choice from the items in the questionnaire (as shown in Appendix 4).

### **5.2.2 The pilot study of the questionnaire**

The initial questionnaire was designed with three dimensions: experiencing teaching and learning in high schools; experiencing teaching and learning in the university; and the perception of a good teacher, all of which were based on students' perceptions. The information of this pilot survey was shown on the bulletin of the subject university website and the paper questionnaires were available to the students who would like to participate in this study. The paper questionnaires could be picked up at the reception desk of both their faculties and the International Office. This questionnaire was tested by 100 students in the subject university and finally 90 students submitted their paper questionnaires, giving a 90% response rate to the pilot study. Afterwards, the academics and the students' representatives within the subject university were invited to provide their suggestions on how to improve the organization and language elements in this survey. Also, the academics and students were encouraged to make comments and to provide recommendations for finalizing the questionnaire question items.

### **5.2.3 The data analysis in the pilot study**

The quantitative data of the pilot study was analyzed by using the SPSS Statistics software version 21 to ensure its reliability and validity. The reliability of the 60 questionnaire items was tested by using Alpha reliability. According to the nature of research fields and time allocation, the most frequently used indicators of a scale's reliability are internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Pallant, 2011). The internal consistency is to examine the degree to "which the items that make up the scale are all measuring the same underlying attribute" (Pallant, 2011, p. 6).

The test-retest reliability, however, is to assess the scales that the same people address in two different occasions. By using this indicator, the correlation between the two scores is calculated. In this pilot study, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to measure internal consistency, which is regarded as the most commonly used statistic in a number of measurements (Pallant, 2007). Nunnally (1978) recommends that if Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value items are above 0.7, which presents an acceptable inner-consistency of the questionnaire; while a minimum of all Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values should be above 0.6. It is recommended that while the higher value for Cronbach's alpha is, the better internal consistency of the items indicate within a questionnaire; however, it does not mean that the scale is uni-dimensional. Factor analysis is a method to determine the dimensionality of a scale (George & Mallery, 2003).

After examination of the reliability by using Cronbach's Alpha analysis, the questionnaire items were tested against the validity. The main types of validity discussed are "content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity" (Pallant, 2011, p. 7). Content validity refers to the measurement of the adequacy of all the facts in a given social context, which can assess all the scales in various dimensions within a survey (F. R. Wilson, Pan, & Schumsky, 2012). Criterion validity aims to compare the relationship between scale scores and some measurable criterion. The last element is construct validity, which is used in this research to test reliability since it concerns "testing a scale not against a single criterion but in terms of theoretically derived hypotheses concerning the nature of the underlying variable or construct" (Pallant, 2011, p. 7). The construct validity includes convergent validity and discriminant validity. These two subtypes of the construct validity measure the relationship with other constructs that theoretically related and unrelated. Importantly, both convergent validity and discriminant validity should work together to demonstrate the evidence of construct validity within a research; otherwise' it is insufficient for establishing construct validity by neither one alone (Westen & Rosenthal, 2003).

This research measures validity by adopting the content validity and construct validity. According to Hair et al. (2009), construct validity is crucial to ensure that a set of items actually represents what these variables were designed to measure theoretically. Specifically, convergent validity identifies the degree to which a variance for each factor is close to the common factors extracted; while discriminant validity examines the extent to which an independent variable is truly distinct from other independent variables in predicting the dependent variable (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). If a relevance value is above 0.5, it shows that the variance is closer to the common factor extracted. In



addition, convergent validity and discriminant validity can be tested by using factor analysis. The factor analysis cannot be used until the indicator meets the needs of a close relationship between each item within every dimension in a survey. This indicator can be reflected on the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistical test and Bartlett Test of Sphericity.

During the statistical analysis process for testing these factors in the initial survey, 60 scaled items questionnaires were conducted by using Principle Component Analysis for factor extraction and Varimax for factor rotation. According to Hair et al. (1995), only the factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 are considered significant and retained. The Cattell's scree test (1966) was further recommended for use in determining the number of components to retain as a visual inspection tool, which is perceived as "one of the most used strategy to determine the number of components to retain" (Raïche, Riopel, & Blais, 2006, p. 5). Cattell (1966) proposes that using scree plots to graph the eigenvalues with which factor is against it. Using scree plots is helpful as it provides us with a visual picture when deciding the factors' numbers used in the analysis. Within this pilot study, the scree graphic based on eigenvalues was examined to decide how many factors were related to the construct of the questionnaire (Green, Salkind, & Akey, 1997). The number of factors could be determined in which the slop changed quickly in the scree plots. After the factors have been extracted, varimax rotation, as a frequently used method accounted for independence, was utilized to interpret the factor analysis clearly and significantly, as well as to combine these components together which were correlated in one factor (Kaiser, 1958). In this process, it is obvious to find out how question items were grouped in this survey by measuring the same concept based on to which extent variables loaded onto these extracted factors.

#### 5.2.4 Results

A total of 100 participants completed the paper questionnaires and 90 of them responded and returned the questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 90% ( $n/N=90/100$ ). Details of the participants' background information are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 *Participants' information*

Students% (n/N)	
<b>Academic faculties/schools/disciplines</b>	
• Arts, Education, and Foreign Languages	30 (30/90)

• <b>Science/Engineering/Technology</b>	30 (30/90)
• <b>Economics and Management</b>	30 (30/90)
<b>Gender</b>	
• <b>Male</b>	50 (45/90)
• <b>Female</b>	50 (45/90)
<b>Courses</b>	
• <b>Degree</b>	68.8 (62/90)
• <b>Diploma</b>	15.6 (14/90)
• <b>others</b>	15.6 (14/90)
<b>Length of learning English at CCNU</b>	
• <b>Less than 1 year</b>	3.3 (3/90)
• <b>1 to 2 years</b>	48.9 (44/90)
• <b>2 to 3 years</b>	16.7 (15/90)
• <b>3 to 4 years</b>	31.1 (28/90)
• <b>Over 4 years</b>	0 (0/90)
<b>English test scores in the College Entrance Examination (Full score is 150)</b>	
• <b>Less than 90</b>	11.1 (10/90)
• <b>90-100</b>	23.3 (21/90)
• <b>101-110</b>	36.7 (33/90)
• <b>111-120</b>	20 (18/90)
• <b>121-130</b>	8.9 (8/90)
• <b>131-140</b>	0 (0/90)
• <b>141-150</b>	0 (0/90)

#### 5.2.4.1 Reliability

The reliability analysis showed that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.943. According to the statistic reports mentioned previously, if the coefficient value is above 0.8, it indicates that the instrument has higher inner-consistency reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Thus, the instrument used in this study was substantially reliable. Table 5.2 presents the statistical results of the reliability within these 60 items.

Table 5.2 *Total statistical results of the reliability of the questionnaire*

The questionnaire	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Item numbers
Total Statistics	0.943	60 (Q6-Q65)

The result of Item-Total Statistics revealed that all the question items should be kept because the value of Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted is not above 0.943 (Pallant, 2011). The details are presented in the following table.

Table 5.3 *Item-Total Statistics*

Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<b>Q6</b>	143.2778	745.686	.395	.942
<b>Q7</b>	143.0111	750.213	.284	.943
<b>Q8</b>	143.0222	752.764	.236	.943
<b>Q9</b>	143.2556	741.316	.446	.942
<b>Q10</b>	143.3556	744.411	.385	.942
<b>Q11</b>	143.5444	744.386	.374	.942
<b>Q12</b>	143.6000	741.389	.409	.942
<b>Q13</b>	143.3667	739.516	.427	.942
<b>Q14</b>	143.1111	742.729	.387	.942
<b>Q15</b>	143.2111	746.034	.381	.942
<b>Q16</b>	143.0556	746.750	.393	.942
<b>Q17</b>	143.4556	738.206	.483	.941
<b>Q18</b>	143.2556	747.541	.310	.942
<b>Q19</b>	143.3000	751.830	.267	.943
<b>Q20</b>	143.4222	753.842	.214	.943
<b>Q21</b>	143.4222	738.876	.504	.941
<b>Q22</b>	143.3111	736.239	.595	.941
<b>Q23</b>	143.0889	731.992	.620	.941
<b>Q24</b>	143.2778	746.877	.434	.942
<b>Q25</b>	143.1000	734.630	.502	.941
<b>Q26</b>	143.3556	736.344	.548	.941

<b>Q27</b>	143.0778	743.713	.381	.942
<b>Q28</b>	143.1333	733.353	.533	.941
<b>Q29</b>	143.0778	744.994	.353	.942
<b>Q30</b>	143.0444	750.605	.243	.943
<b>Q31</b>	142.7222	750.562	.260	.943
<b>Q32</b>	143.0333	753.269	.232	.943
<b>Q33</b>	143.3778	746.889	.381	.942
<b>Q34</b>	143.0556	743.536	.417	.942
<b>Q35</b>	143.5111	730.208	.576	.941
<b>Q36</b>	143.7444	742.282	.450	.942
<b>Q37</b>	143.3222	736.917	.491	.941
<b>Q38</b>	143.3778	747.226	.288	.943
<b>Q39</b>	143.4333	742.203	.380	.942
<b>Q40</b>	143.0111	744.416	.398	.942
<b>Q41</b>	143.4889	736.590	.568	.941
<b>Q42</b>	142.9222	736.230	.521	.941
<b>Q43</b>	143.0444	741.391	.437	.942
<b>Q44</b>	143.5111	737.623	.496	.941
<b>Q45</b>	143.4556	739.060	.535	.941
<b>Q46</b>	143.3111	741.071	.535	.941
<b>Q47</b>	143.1444	732.417	.586	.941
<b>Q48</b>	143.2000	735.285	.537	.941
<b>Q49</b>	143.2000	731.690	.590	.941
<b>Q50</b>	143.6111	738.353	.528	.941
<b>Q51</b>	143.1444	737.091	.545	.941
<b>Q52</b>	143.1889	739.413	.490	.941
<b>Q53</b>	142.9556	739.818	.439	.942
<b>Q54</b>	143.6889	744.419	.486	.942
<b>Q55</b>	143.4000	739.142	.533	.941
<b>Q56</b>	143.6889	737.722	.573	.941
<b>Q57</b>	143.5000	741.691	.539	.941

<b>Q58</b>	143.5222	745.668	.382	.942
<b>Q59</b>	143.4222	734.404	.578	.941
<b>Q60</b>	143.3667	731.291	.596	.941
<b>Q61</b>	143.7444	735.249	.477	.942
<b>Q62</b>	143.2889	736.140	.541	.941
<b>Q63</b>	143.6667	744.584	.414	.942
<b>Q64</b>	143.5000	731.421	.649	.941
<b>Q65</b>	143.5778	733.370	.561	.941

#### 5.2.4.2 Validity

##### *Content validity*

All the items in the questionnaire have been discussed with academic staff in TESOL fields to ensure the content validity of the instrument. After the discussion, changes were made according to their suggestions. For example, scaled items of Question 5 were changed from 7 scales to 4 scales: Less than 90; 90-120; 121-140; and 141-150. This question was designed so as to know the English level of the university students before they entered the university. The experienced TESOL experts suggested that scores between each scale should be set according to students' average English levels in the College Entrance Examination rather than 10 scores set originally in Question 5. Also, the result of the pilot study indicated this. Table 5.1 shows that none of these participants achieved English scores between 131 and 150 in the pilot study. Thus, the researcher believed that changing scale items in Question 5 could improve the content validity.

##### *Construct Validity*

The sample number of university students for factor analysis was 90 in the pilot study. According to the analysis result, it yielded a KMO statistical value of 0.644. As suggested by Kaiser (1974), KMO values greater than 0.5 are barely acceptable. Field (2009) further explains that KMO values between 0.5 and 0.7 are mediocre, values between 0.7 and 0.8 are good, values between 0.8 and 0.9 are great and values above 0.9 are superb. Hence, 0.644 is considered to be adequate for factor analysis. Also, the Bartlett test indicates that it is satisfied the requirement of factor analysis. By using the Bartlett test, it shows that approximate chi-squared is 3926.745, significance level  $\alpha$  is 0.000 ( $P < 0.01$ ), and thus, the null hypothesis is rejected ( $\text{sig.} < 0.05$ ). Both tests reveal that this

instrument has been constructed and organized well. The statistical results are presented in the following table.

Table 5.4 *KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.644
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3926.745
	df	1770
	Sig.	.000

As discussed above, when using the Varimax rotation method, the numbers of factors are determined by eigenvalues which are greater than 1. The results show that five factors can be extracted since their eigenvalues are greater than 1. Table 5.5 indicates that all questions items' Communalities are larger than 0.50 so that no items would be deleted. Also, the scree plot of eigenvalues for the 60 scaled questionnaire items is shown in Figure 5.1. Table 5.6 explains the factors based on the analysis of total variance in the data. These five factors explain 64.355% of the total variance in the data. According to Hair et al. (2006), a factor solution is considered to be accounted for 60% or more of total variance so as to satisfy in the social science. Also, Diekhoff (1992) and Heck (1998) regard 50% of total variance explain as the threshold. Therefore, it reveals that the validity of this questionnaire is satisfied.

Table 5.5 *All question items' Communalities*

Items	Initial	Extraction	Items	Initial	Extraction	Items	Initial	Extraction
Q6	1	0.686	Q26	1	0.614	Q46	1	0.782
Q7	1	0.612	Q27	1	0.824	Q47	1	0.745
Q8	1	0.763	Q28	1	0.826	Q48	1	0.716
Q9	1	0.600	Q29	1	0.701	Q49	1	0.739
Q10	1	0.755	Q30	1	0.781	Q50	1	0.746
Q11	1	0.799	Q31	1	0.729	Q51	1	0.758
Q12	1	0.748	Q32	1	0.731	Q52	1	0.642
Q13	1	0.660	Q33	1	0.669	Q53	1	0.778
Q14	1	0.740	Q34	1	0.668	Q54	1	0.793
Q15	1	0.668	Q35	1	0.823	Q55	1	0.676

Q16	1	0.677	Q36	1	0.777	Q56	1	0.683
Q17	1	0.585	Q37	1	0.847	Q57	1	0.725
Q18	1	0.684	Q38	1	0.811	Q58	1	0.695
Q19	1	0.655	Q39	1	0.706	Q59	1	0.766
Q20	1	0.626	Q40	1	0.819	Q60	1	0.604
Q21	1	0.663	Q41	1	0.571	Q61	1	0.698
Q22	1	0.715	Q42	1	0.756	Q62	1	0.715
Q23	1	0.777	Q43	1	0.702	Q63	1	0.809
Q24	1	0.778	Q44	1	0.771	Q64	1	0.787
Q25	1	0.757	Q45	1	0.729	Q65	1	0.782

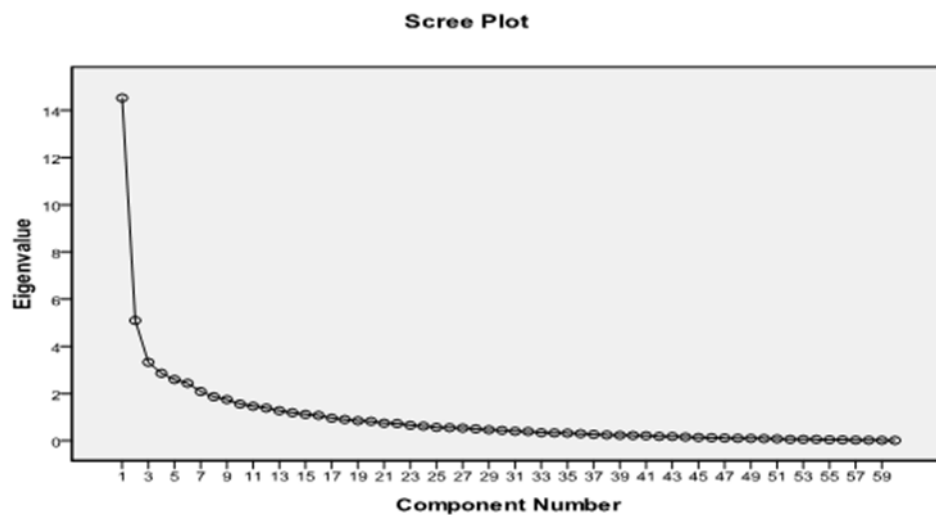


Figure 5.1 Scree Plot

Table 5.6 Total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings				Rotation Sums of Squared		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%
1	14.526	32.210	32.210	14.526	32.210	32.210	7.794	17.991	17.991
2	5.099	11.499	43.709	5.099	11.499	43.709	6.847	14.411	32.402
3	3.328	7.547	51.256	3.328	7.547	51.256	5.691	12.486	44.888

4	2.862	6.770	58.026	2.862	6.770	58.026	4.474	10.457	55.345
5	2.597	6.329	64.355	2.597	6.329	64.355	3.606	9.011	64.355

The scree plot in Figure 5.1 indicates the sharp decent of the eigenvalues 1 to 5, and a levelling off from 6 onwards. It also shows that five factors should be extracted and rotated in the questionnaire items. The result of this Varimax rotation is presented in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 *Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>*

	Component				
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Q6	0.569	0.416	-0.036	0.427	-0.015
Q7	0.581	0.426	-0.085	0.436	0.006
Q8	0.501	0.011	0.127	0.300	-0.211
Q9	0.521	0.029	0.325	0.217	0.110
Q10	0.551	0.029	0.108	0.186	0.193
Q11	0.720	-0.053	0.202	-0.071	0.253
Q12	0.703	0.202	0.200	-0.168	0.143
Q13	0.615	0.488	0.265	-0.034	0.131
Q14	0.550	0.349	0.013	0.110	0.138
Q15	0.582	0.042	0.363	0.286	0.102
Q16	0.579	0.386	0.032	0.306	0.095
Q17	0.621	-0.079	0.353	0.093	0.435
Q18	0.524	0.451	0.042	0.067	0.100
Q19	0.605	0.341	0.124	0.022	0.125
Q20	-0.217	0.527	0.038	-0.010	0.150
Q21	-0.311	0.514	0.301	0.362	0.269
Q22	0.026	0.630	0.211	0.282	0.361
Q23	0.102	0.601	0.373	0.286	0.091
Q24	0.083	0.575	0.370	0.481	0.199
Q25	-0.007	0.588	0.377	0.413	0.067
Q26	0.194	0.553	0.251	0.346	0.326
Q27	0.201	0.592	0.123	0.379	-0.126
Q28	0.227	0.627	0.072	0.257	-0.074



## Chapter 5 Design of the Research Instruments

Q29	0.003	0.577	-0.107	0.121	0.021
Q30	0.107	0.154	0.614	0.355	0.087
Q31	0.250	0.062	0.582	0.258	-0.022
Q32	0.137	0.084	0.599	0.358	-0.151
Q33	0.128	-0.015	0.592	0.108	0.101
Q34	-0.031	0.211	0.562	0.361	-0.186
Q35	0.160	0.363	0.648	0.085	0.196
Q36	0.222	-0.019	0.739	-0.005	0.224
Q37	0.235	0.012	0.722	0.042	0.234
Q38	0.208	0.025	0.612	-0.018	0.306
Q39	0.349	-0.140	0.531	0.314	0.258
Q40	0.034	-0.071	0.606	0.119	0.152
Q41	0.083	0.288	0.679	0.223	0.352
Q42	0.077	0.272	0.549	0.402	0.164
Q43	0.191	-0.044	0.543	0.236	0.030
Q44	0.129	-0.066	0.286	0.677	0.477
Q45	-0.254	-0.045	0.408	0.576	0.101
Q46	-0.238	0.009	0.204	0.531	0.430
Q47	-0.008	0.012	0.133	0.713	0.287
Q48	0.051	0.418	-0.049	0.549	0.184
Q49	-0.008	0.332	0.152	0.563	0.179
Q50	0.005	0.218	0.205	0.622	0.383
Q51	-0.087	0.164	-0.033	0.658	0.325
Q52	0.031	0.189	0.136	0.644	0.041
Q53	0.390	-0.040	-0.052	0.680	0.011
Q54	0.393	0.482	0.064	0.129	0.645
Q55	0.374	0.369	0.005	0.172	0.551
Q56	0.035	0.140	0.323	0.091	0.674
Q57	0.287	0.401	-0.026	0.143	0.531
Q58	-0.032	0.031	0.043	0.013	0.725
Q59	0.143	0.204	0.063	0.197	0.696

Q60	0.177	0.328	0.043	0.219	0.588
Q61	0.203	0.022	0.208	0.014	0.674
Q62	0.230	0.197	0.337	-0.002	0.569
Q63	-0.120	0.212	0.105	-0.080	0.779
Q64	0.096	0.283	0.225	0.174	0.679
Q65	0.224	0.408	0.194	0.019	0.613

By using the exploratory factor analysis, the construct validity of the questionnaire was ensured and it also helped the researcher to decide the number of dimensions needed to be used. Within this questionnaire, five factors were identified and no items were eliminated from the measure because of irrelevance (Green, Salkind, & Akey, 2000). After the factor extraction and rotation, the 60 scaled question items were re-grouped into five factors based on the data analysis from the factor loadings. These five factors are shown as follows and the final version of the instrument can be found in Appendix 4.

- My English learning in High schools ( From Question 6 to Question 19)
- English teaching in High schools (From Question 20 to Question 29)
- My English learning in the university (From Question 30 to Question 43)
- English teaching in the university (From Question 44 to Question 53)
- My preferred learning and teaching model (From Question 54 to Question 65)

### 5.3 Interview questions design

The development of interview questions was in the second phase of this study and this process was based on the first phase. At the qualitative stage, semi-structure interviews were used to gather textual data in the form of audio-recordings. This method is believed to be a suitable approach to investigate a deeper understanding of the participants upon some particular questions in the survey (Berends, 2006). The process of developing the interview questions included an initial design of the questions, a pilot study test, and a finalizing step of the questions.

#### 5.3.1 Initial design of the interview questions

The semi-structured interview questions were initially designed based on the literature review, the research aim and objectives. Also, the statistical results of the pilot study, and the feedback gathered from the open-ended question in the questionnaire were taken consideration. The comments and suggestions from both the participants and the academic staff in this field were of particular assistance to

the researcher. The interview questions were designed to obtain deeper understandings based on the participants' perceptions, which could not be explored in the questionnaire. The participants involved in the interview stage were able open to express their opinions compared with the choices made in scaled questionnaire items at the first stage. Therefore, it is believed that thoughts of the participants could be encouraged and responses of them can be broader when the researcher conducts a semi-structure interview (Berends, 2006; Brenner, 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

### 5.3.2 The pilot study of interviews

The pilot study of interviews was essential to ensure the final study to progress smoothly. A pilot study was carried out not only to examine the clarity of the language but also the structure of the questions. In terms of the participants involved being second language learners, five university students were invited prior to the final study to ensure the entire interview schedule and the lexical usage was organized properly for them. The pilot interviews were conducted in a similar procedure to the final study, and thus, they were considered as a valuable chance to find out inaccuracies in the format of the questions and an opportunity for other researchers to provide their suggestions and advice.

After the pilot study, recommendations and suggestions were gained from both the academics and students in this field and they provided feedback relating to the interview questions and the open-ended section in the questionnaire. The slight changes and adjustments were made based on their advice to finalize the interview questions. For example, Question 1 was changed from 'How do you learn English in high schools and in the university?' to 'What is your view about English teaching in high schools and in the university?' Question 8 was adjusted to 'What do you think of the current English assessments in high schools and in the university?' instead of 'How do you value of the current English assessments in high schools and in the university?' Not only these interview questions were adjusted, but also some valuable recommendations were gained for the researcher to improve her interview skills. To some researchers, interviews are regarded as "nothing more than casual everyday conversation" (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 239). However, compared with the casual conversation, interviews, as a research method, need using various skills, such as intensive listening, note taking, careful planning and sufficient preparation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Otherwise, a casual manner with improper preparation may result in a disappointing interview. Additionally, interviewers and interviewees may have different worldviews on some particular questions so that a good command of communicative skills is essential for the researcher to conduct the interviews

smoothly (Berends, 2006). Therefore, it is believed that a well-planned interview and an experienced interviewer can provide a rich set of data (Rowley, 2012). Apart from the recommendations obtained from other academics and students, the research instruments utilized also ensured its validity and credibility. The final version of the interview questions are shown in Table 5.8 (Also in Appendix 5).

Table 5.8 *Interview questions for university students*

Question number	Questions
<b>Q.1</b>	What is your view about English teaching in high schools and in the university?
<b>Q.2</b>	What do you think of the methods you used in your English learning in high schools and in the university? Do they help your English learning or not? If yes, to what extent?
<b>Q.3</b>	Are you satisfied with your English achievement in high schools and in the university? Why?
<b>Q.4</b>	What problems do you have in English learning?
<b>Q.5</b>	Which aspects do you want to improve (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English learning? Why?
<b>Q.6</b>	What do you think of English teachers' teaching in high schools and in the university?
<b>Q.7</b>	In your opinion, what kind of teaching methods are helpful to your English learning?
<b>Q.8</b>	What do you think of the current English assessments in high schools and in the university? For example, tests and exams.
<b>Q.9</b>	How do you compare your English learning and teaching environment in high schools and in the university? Why?
<b>Q.10</b>	In your opinion, what kind of the personality should a good teacher of English have?

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the development of the research instruments used at both quantitative and qualitative stages. In addition, this chapter has explained the process of how the initial design of research tools developed to the final version of the questionnaire and interview questions. Furthermore, the data analysis in the pilot study was explored. At the quantitative stage, the scaled questionnaire items were examined relating to their validity and reliability by using the SPSS software version 21. Several statistical techniques have been used to ensure the validity within the questionnaire items. For the semi-structured interviews, as an important data collecting method to gather the textural data; thus, at this stage, it is believed that a number of recommendations provided were helpful in

improving the design of the interview questions. After the pilot study, these instruments were utilized in the final study for data collection methods. The following chapter will focus upon discussing the data analysis process at the quantitative stage.

## Chapter 6 Quantitative Data Analysis

### 6.1 Introduction

The development of the research instruments has been introduced in Chapter 5. In the development process, different tests and techniques have been utilized to ensure the instruments' validity and credibility. University students' responses in the pilot study were coded, tested and analyzed by using the SPSS software version 21. After these tests were conducted, the questionnaire was finalized prior to the final study stage. This chapter focuses on introducing the quantitative data analysis process. The different dimensions in the questionnaire were obtained from the factors extracted in the pilot study. The questionnaire has four main parts (Part A to Part D) to gather students' responses. The details will be shown in the following sections.

The researcher used different types of SPSS statistical analysis to analyze the items in these parts. First, descriptive analysis was adopted to present general information of the responses of the participants. For example, the number of male and female participants, details of participants' English levels, and the length of their study. Moreover, the researcher adopted the Kruskal-Wallis test to find out whether statistically significant differences existed between groups within the five independent variables in the questionnaire. If a significant difference was found, a Mann-Whitney U test would be conducted to find out where the significant differences occurred. Thirdly, mean values were calculated according to the pairs designed in Part B and Part C so as to see the participants' responses towards their teaching and learning experience in schools and the university. Finally, a correlation analysis was explored to discover if there were strong relationships between the participants' responses in their English learning and their teachers' teaching in high schools and in the university. The following parts will begin with an explanation of outline of the questionnaire items in each section, and ending with the results that yielded.

### 6.2 Quantitative data analysis

After the factor analysis in the pilot study, the five factors were extracted by the factor explored analysis utilizing the SPSS. The questionnaire, therefore, was finally designed to address the research objectives with scaled items, including one background information part, three scaled parts and one open-ended question part. The research objective 5 was addressed based on students' responses from the questionnaires, interview questions, and the open-ended question part. The last research objective was also addressed according to Part D of the

questionnaire, responses from the interviews, and the open-ended question. Table 6.1 shows the details of each section and questions that are aligned with the research objectives.

Table 6.1 *Research objectives, questionnaire parts and question items*

Research objectives	Questionnaire parts	Question items
<b>Objective 1:</b> To investigate English learning in high schools based on university students' view	Part B	Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19
<b>Objective 2:</b> To investigate teachers' teaching of English in high schools based on university students' views	Part B	Q20, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, Q29
<b>Objective 3:</b> To investigate English learning in the university based on university students' views	Part C	Q30, Q31, Q32, Q33, Q34, Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38, Q39, Q40, Q41, Q42, Q43
<b>Objective 4:</b> To investigate teachers' teaching of English in the university based on university students' views	Part C	Q44, Q45, Q46, Q47, Q48, Q49, Q50, Q51, Q52, Q53
<b>Objective 5:</b> To examine the differences of students' views of teachers' teaching and learning in high schools and in the university	Part B and Part C Open-ended question, interview questions	Part B and Part C Open-ended question, interview questions
<b>Objective 6:</b> To construct a model of teaching and learning of English based on students' views and experiences	Part D Open-ended question, interview questions	Q54, Q55, Q56, Q57, Q58, Q59, Q60, Q61, Q62, Q63, Q64, Q65 Open-ended question, interview questions

### 6.2.1 Quantitative data analysis

The SPSS software version 21 was used to conduct the quantitative data analysis in this study. As the five factors were extracted and analyzed in the pilot study, the data gathered in the final study could be processed directly using the statistical methods mentioned before. At this stage, the researcher emphasized analyzing the relationships between five independent variables and dependent variables by using SPSS (Faherty, 2008). Independent variables provided the nominal data for analysis, which means that the number simply represents a category of objects; however, dependent data provided ordinal data which uses numbers for the

objects in some amounts. In other words, there is no measurement different within the nominal data but typically rank exists in the ordinal data (Huizingh, 2007). In this research, there were five independent variables and 60 dependent variables, covering research objectives 1 to 6. According to Fan (2011), independent variables were chosen as the researcher could yield interesting results, which could further explain the relationships between participants' responses in this part and dependent variables.

Descriptive statistics was firstly performed to analyze the participants' views in the survey. Descriptive statistical method provided information about each variable by median value, dispersion and distribution. Median values, mean values and mode values were also pursued in the descriptive statistical analysis (Huizingh, 2007). After obtaining the general information of the participants' responses, it is essential to find out the sample was normally distributed or not. Thus, nonparametric test was conducted. The options in the distribution of accessing skewness and kurtosis statistics methods were chosen (Pallant, 2011). If both the number of skewness and kurtosis statistics test were close to 0, the sample was usually considered as a normal distribution. After using these tests in the first step, the sample in this research was considered as a non-normal distribution as both the numbers of skewness and kurtosis statistics tests were not close to 0 (D. P. Yang, 2001). Therefore, nonparametric tests for the data analysis in the later steps were suitable for the sample in the study.

After the analysis in the first step, nonparametric tests were used to explore the relationships between the variables. First, K independent sample analysis was conducted between the independent variables and some dependent variables if the median value was 3. As the participants were divided into different groups, the K independent sample analysis was considered as the most suitable method in nonparametric analysis. If responses of the independent variables groups had differences indicated by their median values, Kruskal-Wallis test would be adopted in the K independent sample analysis to find out the factors that might be influential to these responses. This kind of test was used to determine if the participants' courses, gender, academic faculties, length of studying, and English scores in the College Entrance Examination had a strong relationship with the learning and teaching experiences in English in high schools and university based on students' perceptions. According to Pallant (2007), the Kruskal-Wallis test is most frequently used to compare the scores on continuous variables. Hence, in this research, the Kruskal-Wallis test was adopted as a suitable technique in this step. Although the Kruskal-Wallis test could find out whether the groups differed, it could not show the details in which the significance lies. Therefore, in this case,



a Mann-Whitney U test in two dependent samples analyzes would be applied to find out which group differed from the others in the sample. This test was used to explore the differences between two independent variables on scaled data (Pallant, 2007).

The last step was to see if there is a strong relationship between two categories of the dependent variables by accessing Spearman's Rank Order Correlation ( $\rho$ ). This test allowed the researcher to "determine the direction of the relationship and the strength of the relationship" (Pallant, 2011, pp. 133-134). That is, this analysis could allow the research to find out the two variables have a negative or positive relationship and an indication of the degree of strength between them. In this study, it was important to find out the correlation between participants' views on their English learning and teachers' teaching experiences in high schools and in the university. By applying the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation test, the Spearman correlation and Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficients were chosen to examine their correlations between each pair of variables. Cohen (2007) believes that the Pearson's  $r$  values ranged from -1.00 to 1.00. The ranges of the values have been divided into three levels:

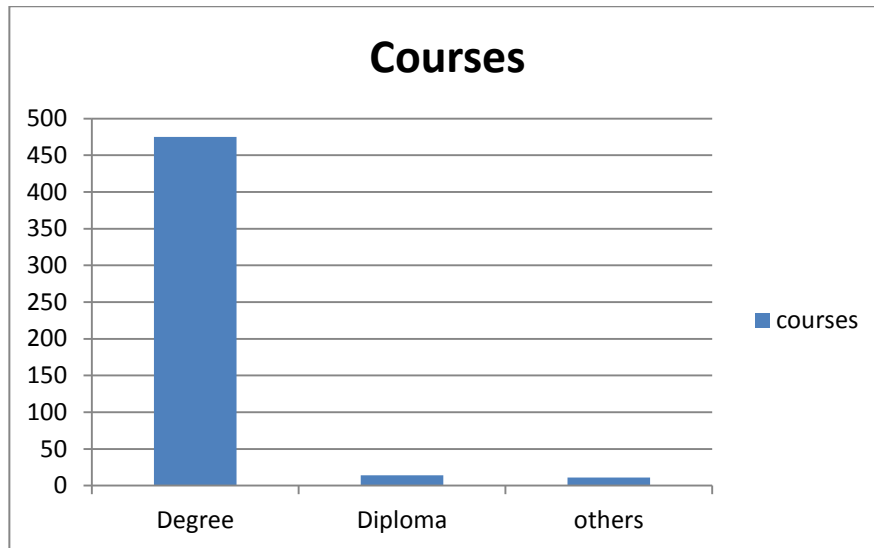
- Small strength:  $r=0.01$  to  $0.29$  or  $r=-0.01$  to  $-0.29$
- Medium strength:  $r=0.30$  to  $0.49$  or  $r=-0.30$  to  $-0.49$
- Large strength:  $r=0.50$  to  $1.00$  or  $r=-0.50$  to  $-1.00$

### 6.2.2. The sample

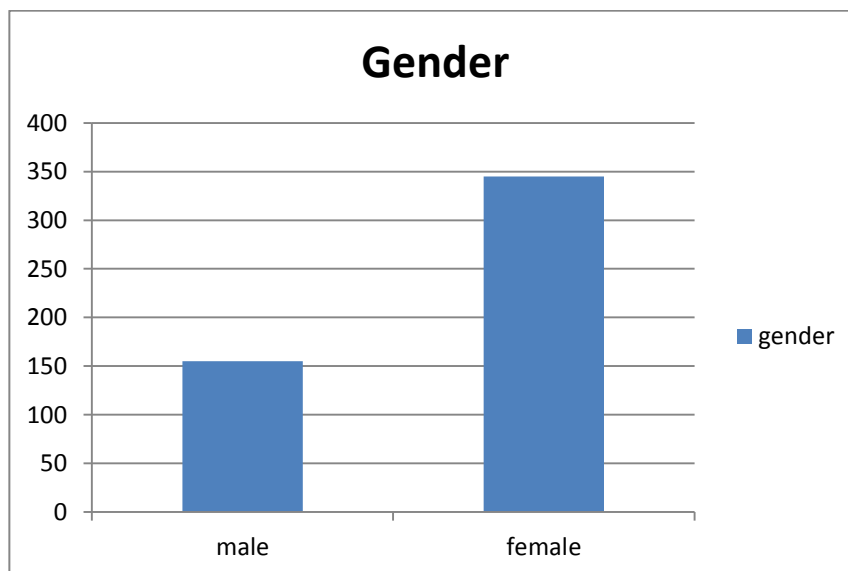
The sample was composed of 500 university students' perceptions in each section. All the participants were provided with the paper questionnaires instead of electronic ones as some students were unable to access the Internet in dormitories on campus. All the participants handed in their questionnaires finally. These 500 students came from different faculties in the subject university but they were grouped into six main disciplines according to the nature of their majors before data analysis. Most importantly, as they were divided into several categories, it is believed that their opinions could be more representative in the study. After the data collection process, the responses from these participants in the questionnaires were entered, coded and analyzed by SPSS version 21. In the following paragraphs, a number of bar charts were presented to give a more in-depth analysis of the biographic information.

From Figure 6.1, it can be seen that within these 500 participants on campus, almost all the students ( $N=475$ ) were undertaking undergraduate degrees rather

than the other two groups. To address the research objectives, it is believed that the influential factor of gender of the participants needs investigating. Therefore, Figure 6.2 shows the different numbers of male and female students. There were 345 female participants, which was approximately more than twice of the number of male participants (N=155). It seemed that more female students were interested in participating in the study rather than their counterparts.



*Figure 6.1* The courses of the participants' choices



*Figure 6.2* Numbers of male and female participants

Figure 6.3 shows the number of students from each faculty. The participants came from different departments in the subject university. The research, however,

categorized them into 6 groups according to the nature of their majors. As it can be seen from the following graph, the number of participants from the Faculty of Economics and Management was much more than the number of participants from the other five disciplines. It is believed that English was one of the most important subjects for these students in their learning on campus as well as their future careers. Also, the numbers of responses that came from the other five faculties were almost even, which means that the data collected could reflect students' different responses from various faculties. In other words, this suggests possible representation.

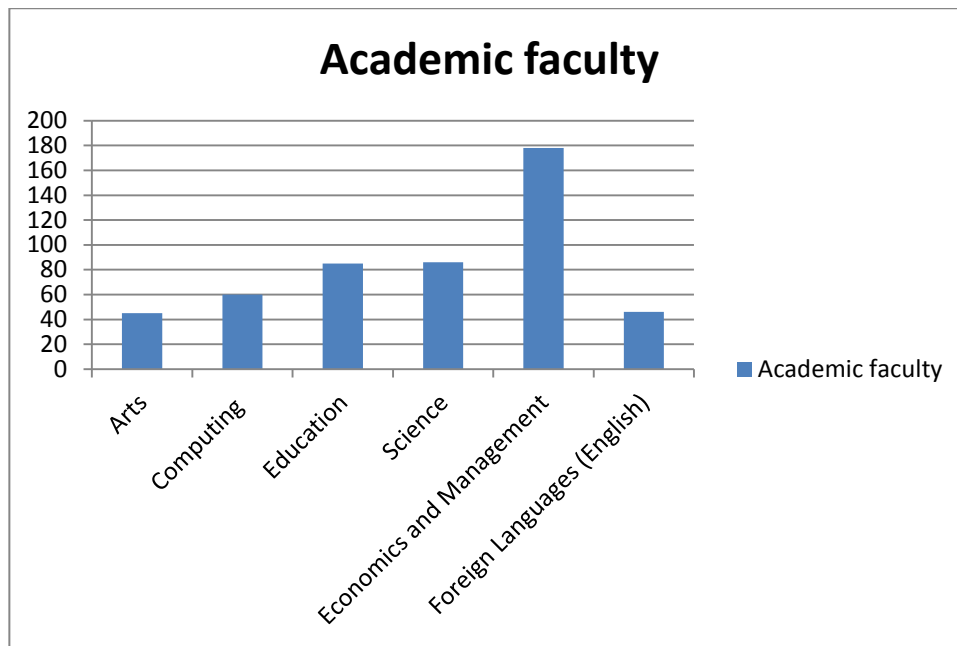
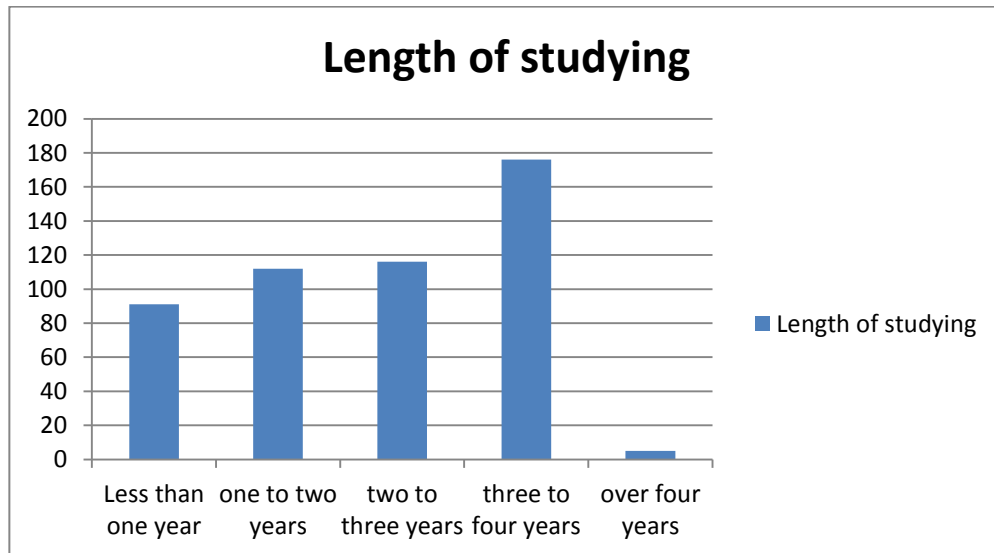


Figure 6.3 Numbers of participants from each faculty

The length of studying in the subject university and participants' English score in the College Entrance Examination were the last two independent variables in the questionnaire. These two variables were regarded as essential as they could show if there would be strong correlation between participants' learning experience, years of studying and their English levels. Hence, it is believed that these two factors could yield interesting results.

The number of participants was in an increasing trend from the first year students to the fourth year students, but there were few participants who had been studying over four years. The statistics are illustrated in the following Figure 6.4. It can be seen that the fourth year students (N=176) were more than other years' participants. The first year to the third year participants were 91 and 112 respectively. This situation was related to the research topic. As more the third

year and the fourth year students had much more experience in learning English than the first year and second year students, it is reasonable that there were more the fourth year students participating in the survey. According to the Chinese university context, students who had been studying in the university for more than four years were more likely to be postgraduates or sick leave students who continued their study on campus. Therefore, a majority of students were undergraduates, which is also corresponding to the research requirement.

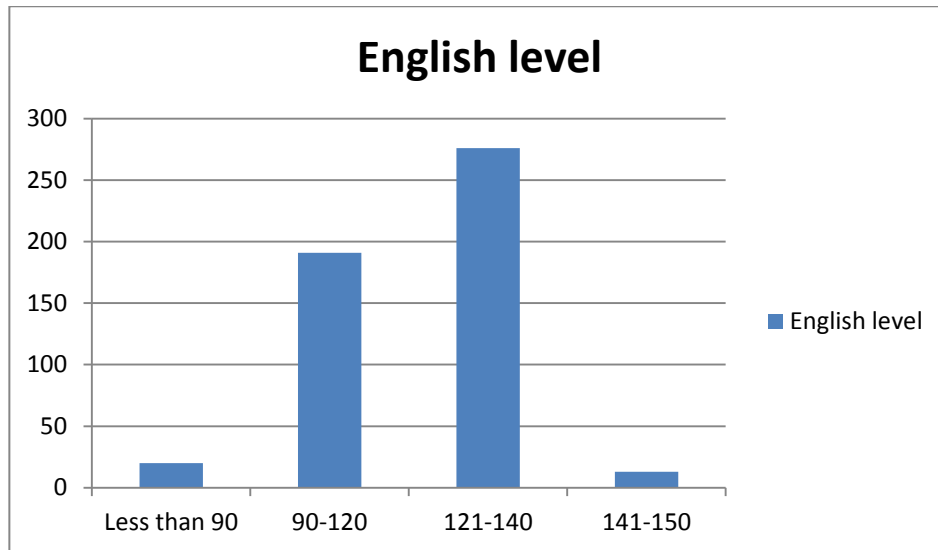


*Figure 6.4* Length of studying at the university

The participants' English level was the last independent variable to be investigated in the questionnaire. As the English score in the College Entrance Examination was regarded as the most suitable and fair assessment to evaluate students' English levels before they were accepted into universities in China, this factor was considered as one influential factor, which should be addressed. Also, the score in the English test in the College Entrance Examination could be compared with students' English levels after they entered the university. Figure 6.5 presents the participants' English levels in detail.

Within these 500 participants, scores of the majority (N=276) in the English test in the College Entrance Examination ranged from 121 to 140 (150 was the full mark). Hence, it is seen that most students' English level was outstanding in the examination. The second group (N=191) was the participants whose English scores ranged from 90 to 120. This level was considered as a medium level if the scores were converted to percentile system. Those participants' (N=20) scores were less than 90 meant that they failed in the English test in the College Entrance Examination before they entered the university. The English level of the last

group was in a high distinction as their scores were between 141 and 150, which meant their scores were above 93 in a percentile system. In other words, students who were ranked in this level had made few mistakes in the English test in the College Entrance Examination. From participants' choices, it was regarded as objective since the average English score of the subject university was 118 (Central China Normal University, 2012).



*Figure 6.5 English levels in the College Entrance Examination*

### 6.3 Results

As mentioned previously, the data analysis focused on examining the correlations between different variables. The results of different variables were interpreted based on different tests performed by SPSS. Question items in the first part of the questionnaire were independent variables which were designed to gather the participants' background information. Compared with items in Part A, the other 60 question items from Part B to Part D were designed to gather students' responses based on the research aim. The design of the questionnaire utilized Likert's Measurement of Attitudes (Likert, 1932), which was ranged from to value 1 to value 5. It is believed that this Likert scale reflects students' views clearly as the students were allowed to choose only a value to address each question item. Subsequently, the interesting results could be yielded. For each section, descriptive information was presented and followed by Kruskal-Wallis tests. The analysis process and research results are provided in this chapter.

### 6.3.1 English learning in high schools

Part B of the questionnaire has 24 questions, which is composed of two sections. The first section, from Question 6 to Question 19, focuses on students' English learning experiences in high schools; however, the second section has 10 questions, which is to investigate English teaching when participants were in high schools. Descriptive statistical analysis was first conducted on these two sections. Kruskal-Wallis tests were then performed to find out if their course, gender, academic faculty, length of studying and English scores in the College Entrance Examination were related with their views on their learning and teachers' teaching in English in high schools. The following questions examined were from the first section in the Part B of the questionnaire:

Q6. I strictly followed exactly what my teachers told me to do.

Q7. My learning depended entirely on my teachers' teaching.

Q8. I learnt a great deal from my friends.

Q9. I learnt a great deal by myself.

Q10. English grammar was important for my learning.

Q11. English speaking was important for my learning.

Q12. English listening was important for my learning.

Q13. English writing was important for my learning.

Q14. Computer use played an important role in my learning.

Q15. I liked to learn independently.

Q16. I learnt best by following teachers' instruction.

Q17. The learning environment was very helpful.

Q18. Testing was important to my learning.

Q19. Assignments were important to my learning.

Table 6.2 *Descriptive statistical analysis conducted on Q6 to Q19*

Question items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q6	500	1.0	5.0	2.334	.9296
Q7	500	1.0	5.0	3.226	1.0720
Q8	500	1.0	5.0	2.632	1.0289

Q9	500	1.0	5.0	2.052	.8165
Q10	500	1.0	5.0	2.122	1.0085
Q11	500	1.0	5.0	2.018	.9918
Q12	500	1.0	5.0	1.798	.8641
Q13	500	1.0	5.0	1.912	.8400
Q14	500	1.0	5.0	2.990	1.2653
Q15	500	1.0	5.0	2.206	.9927
Q16	500	1.0	5.0	2.596	.9200
Q17	500	1.0	5.0	1.830	.8617
Q18	500	1.0	5.0	2.316	.9623
Q19	500	1.0	5.0	2.324	.9823

From Table 6.2, the general information can be seen from the descriptive statistics provided. 500 participants joined in this research survey, and their responses' scale range was from 1 to 5, accordingly from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree' in the questionnaire. From the mean values in the table, it shows that majority of students hold a positive attitude on most questions as most mean values were less than 3. However, it worthy of mentioning that the mean value of the question 7 was more than 3, which means students did not agree with this question item. Also the mean value of the question 14 was almost 3, which means that students did not agree that computers played an important role in their learning in high schools. Although the descriptive analysis provided general information of these questions, the descriptive statistics did not present some important values such as Median and Mode. Therefore, frequency analysis needs exploring. Details are provided in the following table:

Table 6.3 *Frequency analysis on Q6 to Q19*

	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19
Mean	2.334	3.226	2.632	2.052	2.122	2.018	1.798	1.912	2.990	2.206	2.596	1.830	2.316	2.324
Std. Error of Mean	.0416	.0479	.0460	.0365	.0451	.0444	.0386	.0376	.0566	.0444	.0411	.0385	.0430	.0439
Median	2.000	3.500	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	3.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000

Mode	2.0	4.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	4.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Std. Deviation	.9296	1.0720	1.0289	.8165	1.0085	.9918	.8641	.8400	1.2653	.9927	.9200	.8617	.9623	.9823
Variance	.864	1.149	1.059	.667	1.017	.984	.747	.706	1.601	.986	.846	.743	.926	.965
Skewness	.717	.352	.373	.924	.801	.966	1.225	1.023	.005	.713	.405	1.259	.578	.779
Std. Error of Skewness	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109
Kurtosis	.148	.836	.653	1.311	.029	.479	1.676	1.339	1.076	.151	.350	1.854	.174	.227
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218

From Table 6.3, it can be seen that all the responses from 500 participants were valid as the missing value is 0. Participants' views on these questions were most positive apart from Question 7 and Question 14 as the mean, median and mode values were presented. From the mode value, it shows that majority of students chose scale 4 on Question 7 and 14, which means that they disagreed that their learning depended entirely on their teachers' teaching and they did not think computers played an important part in their learning. Interestingly, although the median value and mode value were both 2 on Question 12, participants had a strong positive attitude towards English learning as the mean value is less than 2 (Mean=1.798). It indicates that the average scale of this question that participants chose was 1.798 and they thought English listening was important in their learning in high schools. The other question item that needs mentioning was Question 13, which mean value is also less than 2 (Mean=1.912). After the general information was provided by the frequency analysis, some interesting results have been found. The following table gives further details of how many participants chose each scale by percentage on each question item as follows:

Table 6.4 *Number of participants' choices by Frequency analysis*

Question items	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total
<b>Q6 Frequency</b>	74	262	96	59	9	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	14.8	52.4	19.2	11.8	1.8	100
<b>Q7 Frequency</b>	28	120	102	211	39	500



<b>Percent (%)</b>	5.6	24.0	20.4	42.2	7.8	100
<b>Q8 Frequency</b>	54	211	117	101	17	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	10.8	42.2	23.4	20.2	3.4	100
<b>Q9 Frequency</b>	113	284	72	26	5	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	22.6	56.8	14.4	5.2	1.0	100
<b>Q10 Frequency</b>	147	216	75	53	9	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	29.4	43.2	15.0	10.6	1.8	100
<b>Q11 Frequency</b>	170	212	67	41	10	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	34.0	42.4	13.4	8.2	2.0	100
<b>Q12 Frequency</b>	209	215	50	20	6	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	41.8	43.0	10.0	4.0	1.2	100
<b>Q13 Frequency</b>	163	250	60	22	5	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	32.6	50.0	12.0	4.4	1.0	100
<b>Q14 Frequency</b>	71	122	115	125	67	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	14.2	24.4	23.0	25.0	13.4	100
<b>Q15 Frequency</b>	120	235	74	64	7	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	24.0	47.0	14.8	12.8	1.4	100
<b>Q16 Frequency</b>	41	220	149	80	10	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	8.2	44.0	29.8	16.0	2.0	100
<b>Q17 Frequency</b>	192	238	39	25	6	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	38.4	47.6	7.8	5.0	1.2	100
<b>Q18 Frequency</b>	93	232	107	60	8	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	18.6	46.4	21.4	12.0	1.6	100
<b>Q19 Frequency</b>	86	251	93	55	15	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	17.2	50.2	18.6	11.0	3.0	100

From the table, it can be seen that 209 participants strongly agreed that English listening was important for their learning in high schools (Q12), which takes the highest percentage (41.8) within these 14 questions. From Question 6 to Question 19, more than a half number of the participants chose 'Agree' on Q6, Q9, Q13 and Q19. Also, a large number of participants held a positive attitude on other question items apart from Question 7 and Question 14 as there were only about 20 percent of total number of the students chose 'Agree' on these two question items.

Particularly, there was a 13.4 percent of the total number of the participants strongly disagreed that computers played an important role in their learning in high schools. Besides positive and negative scales, some students chose ‘NS’ (Not Sure) within these question items. The largest number of this scale was on the question 16 (N=149, 29.8%), which means that some students were still not sure whether they learnt best by following teachers’ instructions in high schools. After the frequencies analysis was conducted, Kruskal-Wallis test was further explored to identify factors that have influenced their views on Q7 and Q14. As the median values of these two question items were 3.5 and 3, it indicates that the participants’ views were divided. The Kruskal-Wallis test was chosen to see whether these question items were correlated with the participants’ background information or not.

#### 6.3.1.1 Analysis of Q7

Question 7 investigated students’ views on their English learning in high schools. Specifically, it asks participants’ opinions about if their learning depended entirely on their teachers’ teaching. After the Kruskal-Wallis tests were explored on Q7 by course, gender and English scores in the College Entrance Examination, the results show that their p-values obtained are 0.847, 0.441 and 0.160 respectively. As these values are larger than 0.05, there was not statistical significance in these three variables. However, statistical significant differences were found by academic faculty and length of study.

Table 6.5 *Kruskal-Wallis test on Q7 “My learning depended entirely on my teachers’ teaching.” by academic faculty*

Academic faculty	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Arts	45	282.74	4.000
2. Computing	60	195.97	3.000
3. Education	85	255.85	3.000
4. Science	86	292.02	4.000
5. Economics and Management	178	233.91	3.000
6. Foreign Languages (English majors)	46	266.77	4.000
Total	500		3.500
Chi-Square value=23.214, df=5, p-value=0.000<0.05			

Table 6.6 *Kruskal-Wallis test on Q7 “My learning depended entirely on my teachers’ teaching.” by length of study*

Length of study	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Less than one year	91	290.18	4.000
2. One to two years	112	239.82	3.000
3. Two to three years	116	269.43	4.000
4. Three to four years	176	224.61	3.000
5. Over four years	5	239.90	3.000
<b>Total</b>	500		3.500
<b>Chi-Square value=16.794, df=4, p-value=0.002&lt;0.05</b>			

As it can be seen from Table 6.5 and Table 6.6, the p-values obtained are 0.000 and 0.002 respectively, which are less than 0.05. Therefore, there was statistical difference in the views of students from different faculties and those whose length of studying is different (Kinnear & Gray, 2009). Mann-Whitney U tests were used to determine where the significant difference lies between the groups.

The results of Mann-Whitney U tests indicate significant differences on the participants’ responses in the following groups within the six academic faculties:

- Arts and Computing (U=879.000, Z=-3.176, r=0.14, p-value=0.001<0.05)
- Arts and Economics and Management (U=3232.000, Z=-2.112, r=0.09, p-value=0.035<0.05)
- Computing and Education (U=1909.500, Z=-2.685, r=0.12, p-value=0.007<0.05)
- Computing and Science (U=1579.500, Z=-4.188, r=0.18, p-value=0.000<0.05)
- Computing and English (U=993.500, Z=-2.563, r=0.11, p-value=0.010<0.05)
- Science and Economics and Management (U=5908.500, Z=-3.197, r=0.14, p-value= 0.001<0.05)

Mean ranks are provided to indicate that participants from the Faculty of Computing (Mean rank=195.97) would like best to depend their learning on their

teachers' teaching; while the students who majored in Science were least likely to depend their learning on teachers (Mean rank=292.02).

After Mann-Whitney U tests conducted on Q7 by the length of study, following groups were found that they had differences in between:

- The first year students and the second year students ( $U=4056.000$ ,  $Z=-2.626$ ,  $r=0.12$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.009<0.05$ )
- The first year students and the fourth year students ( $U=5912.000$ ,  $Z=-3.682$ ,  $r=0.16$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.000<0.05$ )
- The third year students and the fourth year students ( $U=8401.500$ ,  $Z=-2.700$ ,  $r=0.12$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.007<0.05$ )

An inspection of the mean ranks also show that the most significant difference lies between the first year students and the fourth year students. The fourth year students (Mean rank=224.61) held a more positive view on this statement than the first year students (Mean rank=290.18).

#### 6.3.1.2 Analysis of Q14

Q14 was designed to investigate participants' views on whether computers played an important role in their English learning in high schools. Kruskal-Wallis tests were first explored on this question by five independent variables. The results of Kruskal-Wallis tests show that there are no statistical significant differences on Q14 by gender ( $p\text{-value}=0.161>0.05$ ) and English scores of the English test in the College Entrance Examination ( $p\text{-value}=0.053>0.05$ ). As P-values of the other three factors are 0.014, 0.000 and 0.002 respectively, which is less than the alpha level of 0.05, it is believed that significant differences exist by course, academic faculty and length of study on this question. The results of Kruskal-Wallis tests are presented in Table 6.7, Table 6.8, and Table 6.9.

Table 6.7 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q14 "Computers played an important role in my learning" by course*

Course	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Degree	475	254.32	3.000
2. Diploma	14	208.93	2.000
3. Others	11	138.50	2.000
Total	500		3.000

Chi-Square value=8.506, df=2, p-value=0.014<0.05
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Table 6.8 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q14 “Computers played an important role in my learning” by academic faculty*

Academic faculty	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Arts	45	283.92	3.000
2. Computing	60	200.50	2.000
3. Education	85	279.94	3.000
4. Science	86	275.38	3.000
5. Economics and Management	178	222.89	3.000
6. Foreign Languages (English majors)	46	288.96	4.000
Total	500		3.000
Chi-Square value=26.701, df=5, p-value=0.000<0.05			

Table 6.9 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q14 “Computers played an important role in my learning” by length of study*

Length of study	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Less than one year	91	278.04	3.000
2. One to two years	112	281.79	4.000
3. Two to three years	116	237.52	3.000
4. Three to four years	176	227.46	3.000
5. Over four years	5	160.60	2.000
Total	500		3.000
Chi-Square value=16.704, df=4, p-value=0.002<0.05			

Mann-Whitney U tests were used as a post hoc test to see where these significance differences occur in these groups. The results reported that the only

significant difference was found between the first group and the third group when conducting Mann-Whitney U tests by course ( $U=1401.000$ ,  $Z=-2.696$ ,  $r=0.12$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.007<0.05$ ). Mean ranks also indicated that students who chose “others” (Mean rank=254.32) held a more positive attitude on Q14 than those who pursued degrees (Mean rank=138.50). After it was explored by course, Mann-Whitney U tests were utilized to show significant differences between the disciplines. Results are presented as follows:

- Arts and Computing ( $U=897.000$ ,  $Z=-3.009$ ,  $r=0.13$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.003<0.05$ )
- Arts and Economics and Management ( $U=3043.500$ ,  $Z=-2.545$ ,  $r=0.11$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.011<0.05$ )
- Computing and Education ( $U=1735.500$ ,  $Z=-3.353$ ,  $r=0.15$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.001<0.05$ )
- Computing and Science ( $U=1781.500$ ,  $Z=-3.263$ ,  $r=0.15$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.001<0.05$ )
- Computing and English ( $U=878.500$ ,  $Z=-3.285$ ,  $r=0.15$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.001<0.05$ )
- Education and Economics and Management ( $U=5860.000$ ,  $Z=-3.025$ ,  $r=0.14$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.002<0.05$ )
- Science and Economics and Management ( $U=6049.000$ ,  $Z=-2.827$ ,  $r=0.13$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.005<0.05$ )
- Economics and Management and English ( $U=3018.500$ ,  $Z=-2.811$ ,  $r=0.13$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.005<0.05$ )

The mean ranks also indicated that participants from the Faculty of Computing (Mean rank=200.50) believed that computers were important in their study while students majoring in English (Mean rank=288.96) thought it was the least important in their English learning. The last category to be performed by Mann-Whitney U tests was the length of studying. Results show that following groups have significant differences in between.

- The first year students and the third year students ( $U=4403.000$ ,  $Z=-2.100$ ,  $r=0.09$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.036<0.05$ )
- The first year students and the fourth year students ( $U=6451.500$ ,  $Z=-2.661$ ,  $r=0.12$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.008<0.05$ )
- The second year students and the third year students ( $U=5286.000$ ,  $Z=-2.503$ ,  $r=0.11$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.012<0.05$ )
- The second year students and the fourth year students ( $U=7742.000$ ,  $Z=-3.140$ ,  $r=0.14$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.002<0.05$ )
- The second year students and over four years' students ( $U=133.500$ ,  $Z=-2.047$ ,  $r=0.09$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.041<0.05$ )

An inspection of mean ranks suggests that students who have studied over four years (Mean rank=281.79) on campus held a more positive view on this statement than those who were second year students (Mean rank=160.60).

### 6.3.2 English teaching in high schools

The second section of Part B in the questionnaire has 10 questions, which was to investigate university students' perceptions on their English teachers' teaching when they were in high schools. Descriptive and frequency statistics were first pursued to see if there was a statistically significant difference in the views of participants on these question items. The questions investigated within this section are shown as follows:

Q20. My teachers encouraged independent learning.

Q21. My teachers provided a learner-friendly environment.

Q22. My teachers gave students individual attention.

Q23. My teachers provided interesting learning materials.

Q24. My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.

Q25. My teachers provided different learning activities.

Q26. My teachers encouraged group learning.

Q27. My teachers used a variety of teaching styles.

Q28. My teachers knew best about what was good for my learning.

Q29. My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.

Table 6.10 *Descriptive statistical analysis conducted on Q20 to Q29*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q20	500	1.0	5.0	2.226	.9277
Q21	500	1.0	5.0	2.178	.8899
Q22	500	1.0	5.0	2.422	.9766
Q23	500	1.0	5.0	2.674	1.0382
Q24	500	1.0	5.0	2.306	.9111
Q25	500	1.0	5.0	2.774	1.0493
Q26	500	1.0	5.0	2.554	1.0943
Q27	500	1.0	5.0	2.820	1.1109

Q28	500	1.0	5.0	2.666	1.0318
Q29	500	1.0	5.0	2.818	1.0349
Valid N (listwise)	500				

Table 6.11 *Frequency analysis on Q20 to Q29*

	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29
Mean	2.226	2.178	2.422	2.674	2.306	2.774	2.554	2.820	2.666	2.818
Median	2.000	2.000	2.000	3.000	2.000	3.000	2.000	3.000	3.000	3.000
Mode	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Std. Deviation	.9277	.8899	.9766	1.0382	.9111	1.0493	1.0943	1.1109	1.0318	1.0349
Skewness	.776	.860	.382	.188	.634	.096	.299	.061	.308	.163
Std. Error of Skewness	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109
Kurtosis	.256	.672	.570	.891	.032	.831	.829	.954	.581	.780
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218

Table 6.12 *Number of participants' choices by Frequency analysis*

Question items	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total
<b>Q20 Frequency</b>	96	263	80	54	7	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	19.2	52.6	16.0	10.8	1.4	100
<b>Q21 Frequency</b>	97	274	79	43	7	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	19.4	54.8	15.8	8.6	1.4	100
<b>Q22 Frequency</b>	82	214	121	77	6	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	16.4	42.8	24.2	15.4	1.2	100
<b>Q23 Frequency</b>	58	191	119	120	12	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	11.6	38.2	23.8	24.0	2.4	100
<b>Q24 Frequency</b>	80	255	103	56	6	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	16.0	51.0	20.6	11.2	1.2	100



<b>Q25 Frequency</b>	53	167	138	124	18	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	10.6	33.4	27.6	24.8	3.6	100
<b>Q26 Frequency</b>	87	183	112	102	16	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	17.4	36.6	22.4	20.4	3.2	100
<b>Q27 Frequency</b>	59	159	120	137	25	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	11.8	31.8	24.0	27.4	5.0	100
<b>Q28 Frequency</b>	56	189	141	94	20	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	11.2	37.8	28.2	18.8	4.0	100
<b>Q29 Frequency</b>	41	176	138	123	22	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	8.2	35.2	27.6	24.6	4.4	100

Table 6.10 and Table 6.11 present the results of descriptive and frequency analysis. From these two tables, it can be seen that participants held an overall positive attitude on these statement as the mode value is 2. Particularly, more than 70 percent of the participants had an agreement on Q21 (Table 6.12), which means that a majority of students agreed that their English teachers provided a learner-friendly environment in high schools. An inspection of median values also supported that students agreed that their teachers encouraged independent learning (Q20, median value=2) and group learning (Q26, median value=2). Moreover, the participants claimed that their teachers provided a learner-friendly environment (Q21, median value=2) and gave students individual attention (Q22, median value=2), as well as helpful feedback to students (Q24, median value=2). However, their views on Q23, Q25, Q27, Q28, and Q29 were divided. Therefore, it is interesting to find out factors which have influenced their views on these five question items. The Kruskal-Wallis test was chosen to see whether the five questions were related to the independent variables.

#### 6.3.2.1 Analysis of Q23

Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted on Q23 to see whether the five independent variables might be influential to the participants' responses. The results indicate that course ( $X^2=1.786$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.409>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=0.335$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.563>0.05$ ), length of study at the university ( $X^2=3.356$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.500>0.05$ ) and English scores in the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=2.483$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.478>0.05$ ) are not correlated with this question item. However, participants' responses are significant in relation to the academic faculty. The results obtained from the tests are shown below:

Table 6.13 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q23 “My teachers provided interesting learning materials” by academic faculty*

Academic faculty	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Arts	45	262.27	3.000
2. Computing	60	226.77	2.000
3. Education	85	251.83	2.000
4. Science	86	273.13	3.000
5. Economics and Management	178	233.12	2.000
6. Foreign Languages (English majors)	46	292.46	3.000
Total	500		3.000
Chi-Square value=11.460, df=5, p-value=0.043<0.05			

According to Pallant (2007), a statistical difference lies in the continuous variables if the significance level is less than 0.05. In Table 6.13, the significance level is 0.043 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence, it suggests that there is a significant difference within the six faculties on this statement. In addition, Mann-Whitney tests were conducted to determine where the differences are within these faculties. The following groups were found statistical significant differences:

- Computing and Science (U=2107.500, Z= -1.971, r=0.09, p-value=0.049<0.05)
- Computing and English majors (U=1012.000, Z= -2.458, r=0.11, p-value=0.014<0.05)
- Science and Economics and Management (U=6444.500, Z=-2.167, r=0.10, p-value=0.030<0.05)
- Economics and Management and English majors (U=3132.500, Z=-2.554, r=0.11, p-value=0.011<0.05)

Although the median values of the participants' responses from the Faculties of Arts, Science and English were the same (median value=3), an inspection of mean ranks suggest that English majors agreed to the smallest extent that their English teachers provided interesting learning materials for them in high schools; while

students from the Faculty of Computing agreed on this question item to the largest extent.

### 6.3.2.2 Analysis of Q25

Similar to other questions, Kruskal-Wallis tests were firstly conducted on Q25 to see if there were significant differences by the five independent variables. The results also indicate that Q25 has no correlation with course ( $X^2=0.402$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.818>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=1.169$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.280>0.05$ ), length of study ( $X^2=6.061$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.195$ ), and English scores in the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=2.402$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.493>0.05$ ). The only significant difference was found within these six faculties ( $X^2=14.396$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.013<0.05$ ). Table 6.14 shows the results in detail as follows:

Table 6.14 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q25 “My teachers provided different learning activities.” by academic faculty*

Academic faculty	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Arts	45	244.37	3.000
2. Computing	60	259.52	2.000
3. Education	85	230.32	2.000
4. Science	86	259.12	3.000
5. Economics and Management	178	237.44	2.000
6. Foreign Languages (English majors)	46	316.46	3.000
Total	500		3.000
Chi-Square value=14.396, df=5, p-value=0.013<0.05			

The output of Kruskal-Wallis test on Q25 by academic faculty is shown in the above table. As the p-value is less than 0.05, it indicates that there is a statistical significant difference in different learning activities provided by teachers across the six disciplines (Kinnear & Gray, 2009). After a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted, differences were found within following groups:

- Arts and English majors ( $U=733.500$ ,  $Z=-2.486$ ,  $r=0.11$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.013$ )
- Computing and English majors ( $U=1068.500$ ,  $Z=-2.066$ ,  $r=0.09$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.039<0.05$ )

- Education and English majors ( $U=1285.000$ ,  $Z=-3.365$ ,  $r=0.15$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.001<0.05$ )
- Science and English majors ( $U=1511.000$ ,  $Z=-2.325$ ,  $r=0.10$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.020<0.05$ )
- Economics and Management and English majors ( $U=2810.000$ ,  $Z=-3.403$ ,  $r=0.15$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.001<0.05$ )

It is interesting to find that although the median value of the participants' responses from English majors is the same as those from the faculties of Science and Arts, the mean ranks suggest that participants who majored in English agreed that their English teacher provided different learning activities in high schools to the smallest extent; while those who were from the Faculty of Education believed that to the largest extent.

#### 6.3.2.3 Analysis of Q27

Q27 was designed to ask participants' views on if their teachers used a variety of teaching styles in high schools. In order to find out if there is a statistical significant difference, the Kruskal-Wallis test was first used to explore on this statement. The researcher did not find any relationships between Q27 and course ( $X^2=0.152$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.927>0.05$ ), length of study, ( $X^2=2.441$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.655>0.05$ ) and English scores in the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=1.999$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.573>0.05$ ). However, significant differences were found in relation to the variable of gender ( $X^2=5.449$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.020<0.05$ ) and academic faculties ( $X^2=16.140$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.006<0.05$ ). Table 6.15 and Table 6.16 show its analysis results.

Table 6.15 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q27 "My teachers used a variety of teaching styles." by gender*

Gender	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Male	155	228.78	3.000
2. Female	345	260.26	3.000
Total	500		3.000
Chi-Square value=5.449, df=1, p-value=0.020<0.05			

Table 6.16 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q27 “My teachers used a variety of teaching styles.” by academic faculty*

Academic faculty	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Arts	45	252.57	3.000
2. Computing	60	212.57	2.000
3. Education	85	241.87	2.000
4. Science	86	257.74	3.000
5. Economics and Management	178	245.82	3.000
6. Foreign Languages (English majors)	46	318.49	4.000
Total	500		3.000
Chi-Square value=16.140, df=5, p-value=0.006<0.05			

Although the median value is the same of that of Q27 from both male and female participants (median value=3) in Table 6.15, an inspection of the mean rank suggested that male (Mean rank=228.78) students held a more positive attitude towards this question than female students (Mean rank=260.26). After it was conducted by Kruskal-Wallis tests on this question item by faculty, Mann-Whitney U tests were followed up to determine where the differences were within the faculties. Following groups were found significant difference:

- Arts and English majors (U=756.500, Z=-2.333, r=0.10, p-value=0.020<0.05)
- Computing and Science (U=2083.500, Z=-2.050, r=0.09, p-value=0.040<0.05)
- Computing and English majors (U=749.500, Z=-4.175, r=0.19, p-value=0.000<0.05)
- Education and English majors (U=1399.500, Z=-2.791, r=0.12, p-value=0.005<0.05)
- Science and English majors (U=1483.000, Z=-2.482, r=0.11, p-value=0.013,0.05)
- Economics and Management and English majors (U=2926.000, Z=-3.085, r=0.14, p-value=0.002<0.05)

The medians and mean ranks are presented in Table 6.16, which indicate that English majors (Mean rank=318.49, median value=4) have a negative view on

this question. In other words, they did not believe that their teachers provided a variety of teaching styles; while participants from the Faculty of Computing had the most positive attitude towards it (Mean rank=212.57, median value=2).

#### 6.3.2.4 Analysis of Q28

Q28 asked about participants' views on if their teachers knew best what was good for their learning. The Kruskal-Wallis tests were firstly researched on the statement to find out if there were some significant differences.

Table 6.17 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q28 "My teachers knew best about what was good for my learning" by English scores in the College Entrance Examination*

English Scores	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Less than 90	20	293.48	3.000
2. 90-120	191	270.81	3.000
3. 121-140	276	232.58	2.000
4. 141-150	13	266.31	3.000
Total	500		3.000
Chi-Square value=10.863, df=3, p-value=0.012<0.05			

After it was conducted by the Kruskal-Wallis tests, no statistical significant difference was found between Q27 and course ( $X^2=1.938$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.379>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=1.697$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.193>0.05$ ), academic faculty ( $X^2=7.083$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.215>0.05$ ) and length of study ( $X^2=3.927$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.416>0.05$ ). However, a statistically significant difference was found within the English scores in the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=10.863$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.012<0.05$ ). Additionally, to find out which groups were statistically significantly different from one to the other, follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests were performed between all groups. The only difference existed between the "90-120" group and the "121-140" group ( $U=22308.000$ ,  $Z=-2.955$ ,  $r=0.13$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.003<0.05$ ). An inspection of the mean rank also indicates that the participants in the third group (121-140) had a positive attitude on this statement (Mean rank=232.58, median value=2.000). Particularly, it is worthy to mention that the participants who achieved higher English scores in the College Entrance Examination held a more positive attitude on this question; however, a small effect size occurs by using Cohen's (1988) criteria.

### 6.3.2.5 Analysis of Q29

It is similar to other questions that Kruskal-Wallis tests were firstly used to explore on Q29 to see if there were correlations with the independent variables. The results show that only English scores in the College Entrance Examination are correlated with teachers' teaching ( $X^2=13.983$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.003<0.05$ ); however, no correlation was found between this question and course ( $X^2=0.723$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.697>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=3.156$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.076>0.05$ ), academic faculty ( $X^2=4.142$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.529>0.05$ ) and length of study ( $X^2=4.939$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.294>0.05$ ).

Table 6.18 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q29 "My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching" by English scores in the College Entrance Examination*

English Scores	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Less than 90	20	306.00	3.000
2. 90-120	191	258.32	3.000
3. 121-140	276	236.20	3.000
4. 141-150	13	353.81	4.000
Total	500		3.000
Chi-Square value=13.983, df=3, p-value=0.003<0.05			

The result is shown in Table 6.18. The median value indicates that the students whose English scores are above 141 held a negative view on this question item. It was interesting to note that participants who failed in the English test in the College Entrance Examination (Mean rank= 306.00) also did not have a positive view compared with the participants who achieved an English score between 90 and 140 in the English test in the College Entrance Examination, although the median value is the same (median value=3). Statistical differences were found within the following groups:

- Less than 90 and 121-140 ( $U=1998.500$ ,  $Z=-2.152$ ,  $r=0.10$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.031<0.05$ )
- 90-120 and 141-150 ( $U=763.500$ ,  $Z=-2.418$ ,  $r=0.11$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.016<0.05$ )
- 121-140 and 141-150 ( $U=951.000$ ,  $Z=-2.994$ ,  $r=0.13$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.003<0.05$ )

### 6.3.3 English learning in the university

The first section of Part C is about investigating students' views on their English learning experiences in the university, which is a comparison to their English learning in high schools in the first section of Part B. This section has 14

questions, ranging from Q30 to Q43. Details of these questions are introduced as follows:

Q30. I strictly followed exactly what my teachers told me to do.

Q31. My learning depended entirely on my teachers' teaching.

Q32. I learnt a great deal from my friends.

Q33. I learnt a great deal by myself.

Q34. English grammar was important for my learning.

Q35. English speaking was important for my learning.

Q36. English listening was important for my learning.

Q37. English writing was important for my learning.

Q38. Computer use played an important role in my learning.

Q39. I liked to learn independently.

Q40. I learnt best by following teachers' instruction.

Q41. The learning environment was very helpful.

Q42. Testing was important to my learning.

Q43. Assignments were important to my learning

In order to obtain the general information of the views on these 14 questions, descriptive and frequency analysis were first conducted.

Table 6.19 *Descriptive statistical analysis conducted on Q30 to Q43*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q30	500	1.0	5.0	2.854	1.0483
Q31	500	1.0	5.0	3.394	1.0454
Q32	500	1.0	5.0	2.584	.9533
Q33	500	1.0	5.0	2.018	.7713
Q34	500	1.0	5.0	2.434	1.1560
Q35	500	1.0	5.0	1.746	.7891
Q36	500	1.0	5.0	1.704	.8035
Q37	500	1.0	5.0	1.976	.9237



Q38	500	1.0	5.0	2.034	.9668
Q39	500	1.0	5.0	1.958	.8682
Q40	500	1.0	5.0	2.776	1.0256
Q41	500	1.0	5.0	2.038	.9646
Q42	500	1.0	5.0	2.684	1.0929
Q43	500	1.0	5.0	2.556	1.0531
Valid N (listwise)	500				

Table 6.20 *Frequency analysis on Q30 to Q43*

	Q 3 0	Q 31	Q 32	Q 33	Q 34	Q 35	Q 36	Q 37	Q 38	Q 39	Q 40	Q 41	Q 42	Q 43
Mean	2.854	3.394	2.584	2.018	2.434	1.746	1.704	1.976	2.034	1.958	2.776	2.038	2.684	2.556
Median	3.000	4.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	3.000	2.000	3.000	2.000
Mode	2.0	4.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Skewness	.064	.472	.441	.890	.490	1.097	1.307	1.013	.814	.948	.236	.906	.310	.405
Std. Error of Skewness	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109
Kurtosis	.871	.475	.635	1.280	.718	1.506	2.022	.846	.116	.769	.687	.364	.702	.586
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218

From the two tables above, it can be seen that majority of the participants held positive views on these statements except Q31 as its median value is 4. However, the participants' views were divided on Q30 (median value=3), Q40 (median value=3), and Q42 (median value=3). Therefore, it needs further analysis by conducting Kruskal-Wallis tests on these three question items to see if there are significant differences. It is also worth mentioning that although the median value

of Q36 is 2, the mode value is 1, which suggests that most participants strongly agreed that English listening was important for their learning in the university. Interestingly, Table 6.21 shows that more than 80 percent of the 500 participants agreed that they learnt a great deal by themselves in the university.

Table 6.21 *Number of participants' choices by Frequency analysis*

Question items	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total
<b>Q30 Frequency</b>	43	166	133	137	21	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	8.6	33.2	26.6	27.4	4.2	100
<b>Q31 Frequency</b>	23	86	120	213	58	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	4.6	17.2	24.0	42.6	11.6	100
<b>Q32 Frequency</b>	42	240	110	100	8	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	8.4	48.0	22.0	20.0	1.6	100
<b>Q33 Frequency</b>	111	300	60	27	2	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	22.2	60.0	12.0	5.4	0.4	100
<b>Q34 Frequency</b>	117	181	93	86	23	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	23.4	36.2	18.6	17.2	4.6	100
<b>Q35 Frequency</b>	213	220	51	13	3	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	42.6	44.0	10.2	2.6	0.6	100
<b>Q36 Frequency</b>	229	215	34	19	3	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	45.8	43.0	6.8	3.8	0.6	100
<b>Q37 Frequency</b>	163	235	60	35	7	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	32.6	47.0	12.0	7.0	1.4	100
<b>Q38 Frequency</b>	165	207	80	42	6	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	33.0	41.4	16.0	8.4	1.2	100
<b>Q39 Frequency</b>	155	252	55	35	3	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	31.0	50.4	11.0	7.0	0.6	100
<b>Q40 Frequency</b>	42	183	142	111	22	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	8.4	36.6	28.4	22.2	4.4	100
<b>Q41 Frequency</b>	157	226	65	45	7	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	31.4	45.2	13.0	9.0	1.4	100
<b>Q42 Frequency</b>	64	183	127	99	27	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	12.8	36.6	25.4	19.8	5.4	100

<b>Q43 Frequency</b>	72	203	118	89	18	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	14.4	40.6	23.6	17.8	3.6	100

### 6.3.3.1 Analysis of Q30

Q30 investigated students' views on whether they strictly followed their teachers' teaching in their process. Kruskal-Wallis test was used in the first step to find out if some significant differences exist within the five variables. There was no statistical difference between this question and course ( $X^2=4.737$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.094>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=2.591$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.107>0.05$ ), academic faculty ( $X^2=3.121$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.681>0.05$ ), and English scores in the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=0.903$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.825>0.05$ ). However, a significant difference was found between Q30 and length of study ( $X^2=16.781$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.002<0.05$ ). The result is shown in Table 6.22.

Table 6.22 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q30 "I strictly followed exactly what my teachers told me to do" by length of study*

Length of study	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Less than one year	91	233.23	3.000
2. One to two years	112	273.92	3.000
3. Two to three years	116	281.80	3.000
4. Three to four years	176	224.69	2.000
5. Over four years	5	222.30	3.000
<b>Total</b>	500		3.000
<b>Chi-Square value=16.781, df=4, p-value=0.002&lt;0.05</b>			

To find out where the difference lied within the participants, a Mann-Whitney U test was explored to determine the difference from one group to another. The following groups were found the differences occurred within them after the Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted.

- The first year students and the second year students ( $U=4223.000$ ,  $Z=-2.193$ ,  $r=0.10$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.028<0.05$ )
- The first year students and the third year students ( $U=4257.500$ ,  $Z=-2.491$ ,  $r=0.11$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.013<0.05$ )

- The second year students and the fourth year students ( $U=7843.500$ ,  $Z=-3.039$ ,  $r=0.14$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.002<0.05$ )
- The third year students and the fourth year students ( $U=7989.500$ ,  $Z=-3.270$ ,  $r=0.15$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.001<0.05$ )

An inspection of the mean rank indicates that participants who just began the university life (Mean rank=233.23) and those who have studied four years (Mean rank=224.69) and over four years (Mean rank=222.30) in learning at the university held a more positive view on this question item than those who were the second year students (Mean rank=273.92) and the third year students (Mean rank=281.80).

#### 6.3.3.2 Analysis of Q40

Q40 asked if participants agreed that they learnt best by following teachers' instructions or not in the university. 29 percent of the 500 participants chose "Not Sure" on this question item, which takes the highest portion among the 14 questions. Similar to other questions, the Kruskal-Wallis tests were firstly conducted to see if there were significant differences. No correlation was found between this question and course ( $X^2=0.816$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.665>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=0.063$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.801>0.05$ ), academic study ( $X^2=0.632$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.986>0.05$ ), and English scores in the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=1.503$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.682>0.05$ ). However, the only statistical significant difference was found by length of study ( $X^2=11.808$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.019<0.05$ ). The results are shown in detail in Table 6.23.

Table 6.23 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q40 "I learnt best by following teachers' instruction" by length of study*

Length of study	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Less than one year	91	246.89	2.000
2. One to two years	112	233.72	3.000
3. Two to three years	116	286.59	3.000
4. Three to four years	176	241.36	3.000
5. Over four years	5	176.50	2.000
Total	500		3.000

Chi-Square value=11.808, df=4, p-value=0.019<0.05

It can be seen that although the median values are the same of the first group and the last group (median value=2), the mean rank suggests that the participants who have studied over four years (Mean rank=176.50) held a more positive view than those who are in other groups. In order to further analyze which group is different from the others, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted on Q40. Following groups were found significant difference:

- The first year students and the third year students ( $U=4462.000$ ,  $Z=-1.995$ ,  $r=0.09$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.046<0.05$ )
- The second year students and the third year students ( $U=5062.500$ ,  $Z=-3.016$ ,  $r=0.13$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.003<0.05$ )
- The third year students and the fourth year students ( $U=8402.500$ ,  $Z=-2.663$ ,  $r=0.12$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.008<0.05$ )

#### 6.3.3.3 Analysis of Q42

This question was designed to investigate participants' views on English examinations and tests. Although the median value obtained on Q42 is 3, which indicates that their views on this question has been divided (Pallant, 2007), no correlation was found between this question with course ( $X^2=0.795$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.672>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=0.245$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.621>0.05$ ), academic faculty ( $X^2=7.395$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.193>0.05$ ), length of study ( $X^2=3.243$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.518>0.05$ ) and English scores of the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=3.368$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.338>0.05$ ) after Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted.

#### 6.3.4 English teaching in the university

There are 10 questions in this section, ranging from Q44 to Q53, which composes the second section of Part C. It focuses on investigating university students' views on their English teachers' teaching after they came to the university. Descriptive and frequency statistics were first pursued to obtain general information of participants' opinions on these questions. The questions investigated within this section are shown as follows:

Q44. My teachers encouraged independent learning.

Q45. My teachers provided a learner-friendly environment.

Q46. My teachers gave students individual attention.

Q47. My teachers provided interesting learning materials.

Q48. My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.

Q49. My teachers provided different learning activities.

Q50. My teachers encouraged group learning.

Q51. My teachers used a variety of teaching styles.

Q52. My teachers knew best about what was good for my learning.

Q53. My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.

Table 6.24 *Descriptive statistical analysis conducted on Q44 to Q53*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q44	500	1.0	5.0	1.924	.8530
Q45	500	1.0	5.0	2.138	.9385
Q46	500	1.0	5.0	2.824	1.1418
Q47	500	1.0	5.0	2.238	.9794
Q48	500	1.0	5.0	2.380	.9388
Q49	500	1.0	5.0	2.270	.9607
Q50	500	1.0	5.0	1.966	.8754
Q51	500	1.0	5.0	2.366	1.0267
Q52	500	1.0	5.0	3.010	1.0603
Q53	500	1.0	5.0	3.176	1.0841
Valid N (listwise)	500				

Table 6.25 *Frequency analysis on Q44 to Q53*

	Q44	Q45	Q46	Q47	Q48	Q49	Q50	Q51	Q52	Q53
Mean	1.924	2.138	2.824	2.238	2.380	2.270	1.966	2.366	3.010	3.176
Median	2.000	2.000	3.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	3.000	3.000
Mode	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	4.0
Std. Deviation	.8530	.9385	1.1418	.9794	.9388	.9607	.8754	1.0267	1.0603	1.0841
Skewness	.924	.700	.162	.691	.591	.649	.966	.437	.081	.174

Std. Error of Skewness	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109	.109
Kurtosis	.782	.038	.849	.136	.191	.113	.850	.570	.735	.683
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218	.218

Table 6.26 *Number of participants' choices by Frequency analysis*

Question items	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total
<b>Q44 Frequency</b>	165	242	62	28	3	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	33.0	48.4	12.4	5.6	0.6	100
<b>Q45 Frequency</b>	127	236	82	51	4	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	25.4	47.2	16.4	10.2	0.8	100
<b>Q46 Frequency</b>	61	156	131	114	38	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	12.2	31.2	26.2	22.8	7.6	100
<b>Q47 Frequency</b>	109	241	79	64	7	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	21.8	48.2	15.8	12.8	1.4	100
<b>Q48 Frequency</b>	71	251	102	69	7	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	14.2	50.2	20.4	13.8	1.4	100
<b>Q49 Frequency</b>	99	242	91	61	7	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	19.8	48.4	18.2	12.2	1.4	100
<b>Q50 Frequency</b>	154	251	57	34	4	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	30.8	50.2	11.4	6.8	0.8	100
<b>Q51 Frequency</b>	105	198	115	73	9	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	21.0	39.6	23.0	14.6	1.8	100
<b>Q52 Frequency</b>	31	144	155	129	41	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	6.2	28.8	31.0	25.8	8.2	100
<b>Q53 Frequency</b>	33	106	153	156	52	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	6.6	21.2	30.6	31.2	10.4	100

The results of descriptive and frequency analysis suggest that most participants held a positive view on these questions. Particularly, more than 50 percent of the total number of students agreed that their teachers gave them helpful feedback (Q48) and encouraged group learning (Q50). However, a large number of students

disagreed that their success depended heavily on their teachers' teaching (Q53) although the median value is 3, which is the same as that of Q46 and Q52. As the median value is 3 on three of these questions (Q46, Q52 and Q53), it indicates that students' views were divided on them. Hence, a Kruskal-Wallis test was utilized to determine if there is some significant difference by the five independent variables.

#### 6.3.4.1 Analysis of Q46

Q46 asked students' views on whether their teachers gave students individual attention. An inspection of the median value is 3 on Q46, which shows that participants' views on this question has been divided (Pallant, 2007). However, the results of Kruskal-Wallis tests suggest that there is no correlation between this question with course ( $X^2=2.251$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.324>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=1.561$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.212>0.05$ ), academic faculty ( $X^2=8.848$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.115>0.05$ ), length of study ( $X^2=6.864$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.143>0.05$ ), and English scores of the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=3.845$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.279>0.05$ ).

#### 6.3.4.2 Analysis of Q52

This question was to find out students' perceptions of whether teachers knew best about what was good for students in their learning process. In the first place, Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to determine if there were statistical significant differences by course, gender, academic faculty, length of study and English scores in the College Entrance Examination. The statistical analysis presents that there was not any relationships between Q52 and course ( $X^2=0.123$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.940>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=1.454$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.228>0.05$ ), academic faculty ( $X^2=7.387$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.193>0.05$ ), and English scores of the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=4.960$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.175>0.05$ ). The only correlation was found by length of study ( $X^2=16.205$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.003<0.05$ ) as the significance level is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, a Mann-Whitney U test was needed to further explore to see which group is different from one to another.

Table 6.27 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q52 "My teachers knew best about what was good for my learning" by length of study*

Length of study	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Less than one year	91	282.67	3.000
2. One to two years	112	225.76	3.000



3.	Two to three years	116	277.78	3.000
4.	Three to four years	176	232.95	3.000
5.	Over four years	5	204.10	3.000
Total		500		3.000
Chi-Square value=16.205, df=4, p-value=0.003<0.05				

The results of the Mann-Whitney U tests suggest that following groups have a significant difference in between:

- The first year students and the second year students ( $U=3949.000$ ,  $Z=-2.855$ ,  $r=0.13$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.004<0.05$ )
- The first year students and the fourth year students ( $U=6418.000$ ,  $Z=-2.761$ ,  $r=0.12$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.006<0.05$ )
- The second year students and the third year students ( $U=5148.000$ ,  $Z=-2.809$ ,  $r=0.13$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.005<0.05$ )
- The third year students and the fourth year students ( $U=8357.500$ ,  $Z=-2.725$ ,  $r=0.12$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.006<0.05$ )

Although the median value of the five groups is the same (median value=3), the value of mean rank indicates that who have studied over four years at the university (Mean rank=204.10) held a more positive view on this statement than other groups of students.

#### 6.3.4.3 Analysis of Q53

This question asked if students' success depended heavily on their teachers' teaching. Kruskal-Wallis tests were also performed on this question by the five independent variables mentioned previously. The results show that the academic faculties ( $X^2=11.474$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.043<0.05$ ) and length of study ( $X^2=20.034$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.000<0.05$ ) appeared to be correlated to the participants' views on this question item. The other factors, including course ( $X^2=1.595$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.451>0.05$ ), gender ( $X^2=2.548$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.110>0.05$ ), and English scores of the College Entrance Examination ( $X^2=7.404$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.060>0.05$ ) did not have correlation with their responses. The results that show the significances are introduced below:

Table 6.28 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q53 “My success depended heavily on my teachers’ teaching” by academic faculty*

Academic faculty	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Arts	45	269.54	3.000
2. Computing	60	198.49	3.000
3. Education	85	252.32	3.000
4. Science	86	245.21	3.000
5. Economics and Management	178	258.21	3.000
6. Foreign Languages (English majors)	46	276.41	3.000
Total	500		3.000
Chi-Square value=11.474, df=5, p-value=0.043<0.05			

As the above table shows that the significance level is 0.043, which is less than the alpha level 0.05; thus, it indicates that there is a statistical significant difference within the academic faculties. Therefore, a Mann-Whitney U test is to be conducted to find out where the significant difference lies. Differences were found in the following groups:

- Arts and Computing (U=959.000, Z=-2.624, r=0.12, p-value=0.009<0.05)
- Computing and Education (U=1966.500, Z=-2.437, r=0.11, p-value=0.015<0.05)
- Computing and Economics and Management (U=4121.500, Z=-2.725, r=0.12, p-value=0.006<0.05)
- Computing and English majors (U=923.000, Z=-3.030, r=0.14, p-value=0.002<0.05)

The mean rank in Table 6.28 also shows that participants from the Faculty of Computing held a more positive view on their success dependent on their teachers’ teaching rather than those who were from other faculties, although the participants’ responses had the same median values.

Table 6.29 *Kruskal-Wallis tests on Q53 “My success depended heavily on my teachers’ teaching” by length of study*

Length of study	N	Mean rank	Median
1. Less than one year	91	283.20	4.000
2. One to two years	112	222.28	3.000
3. Two to three years	116	281.20	4.000
4. Three to four years	176	234.02	3.000
5. Over four years	5	155.30	2.000
<b>Total</b>	500		3.000
<b>Chi-Square value=20.034, df=4, p-value=0.000&lt;0.05</b>			

The result of Kruskal-Wallis tests presents that the significance level is 0.000 on Q53, which is far less than the alpha level 0.05. Therefore, it suggests that there is a statistically significant difference between participants’ responses within these groups. In order to find out where the differences are, a Mann-Whitney U test was used to conduct on this question item. The following groups were found differences in between:

- The first year students and the second year students (U=3783.000, Z=-3.296, r=0.15, p-value=0.001<0.05)
- The first year students and the fourth year students (U=6450.500, Z=-2.697, r=0.12, p-value=0.007<0.05)
- The first year students and over four years’ students (U=112.000, Z=-2.003, r=0.09, p-value=0.045<0.05)
- The second year students and the third year students (U=4939.500, Z=-3.248, r=0.15, p-value=0.001<0.05)
- The third year students and the fourth year students (U=8352.000, Z=-2.716, r=0.12, p-value=0.007<0.05)

It is interesting to find that the first year students and the third year students disagreed that their success depended heavily on their teachers’ teaching (median value=4), while participants who have studied over four years at the university held a more positive view on this statement (median value=2). Also, an inspection of the mean rank of the first year students (Mean rank=283.20) and the students

who have studied over four years (Mean rank=155.30) strongly indicates that this occurs.

### 6.3.5 Learning and teaching model participants preferred

Part D is the last part of the scaled items in the questionnaire. This part has only one section, including 12 questions, which is to investigate students' preferred learning and teaching model. Similar to the previous sections, descriptive and frequency analysis were pursued to see whether the views of different groups were significantly different. The question items examined in this part are listed below:

Q54. Interactive class is important.

Q55. Group learning is important.

Q56. Students should develop independent learning ability.

Q57. Different kinds of assessment should be used.

Q58. Teachers should pay attention to students' different learning styles.

Q59. Teachers should provide different learning activities.

Q60. Computer-assisted learning should be provided.

Q61. English communication is an important goal of English teaching and learning.

Q62. Teachers should be flexible in treating individual students.

Q63. A good teacher should be a good communicator.

Q64. A good teacher should have a warm personality.

Q65. A good teacher should have a sense of humor.

Table 6.30 *Descriptive statistical analysis conducted on Q54 to Q65*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q54	500	1.0	5.0	1.696	.7434
Q55	500	1.0	5.0	1.866	.7831
Q56	500	1.0	4.0	1.506	.6378
Q57	500	1.0	5.0	1.774	.7348
Q58	500	1.0	5.0	1.764	.7678

Q59	500	1.0	5.0	1.712	.7000
Q60	500	1.0	5.0	1.884	.8148
Q61	500	1.0	5.0	1.490	.6346
Q62	500	1.0	5.0	1.612	.6829
Q63	500	1.0	5.0	1.540	.6822
Q64	500	1.0	5.0	1.536	.6675
Q65	500	1.0	5.0	1.648	.7465
Valid N (listwise)	500				

Table 6.31 *Frequency analysis on Q54 to Q65*

	Q5 4	Q5 5	Q5 6	Q5 7	Q5 8	Q5 9	Q6 0	Q6 1	Q6 2	Q6 3	Q6 4	Q6 5
Mean	1.6 96	1.8 66	1.5 06	1.7 74	1.7 64	1.7 12	1.8 84	1.4 90	1.6 12	1.5 40	1.5 36	1.6 48
Median	2.0 00	2.0 00	1.0 00	2.0 00	2.0 00	2.0 00	2.0 00	1.0 00	2.0 00	1.0 00	1.0 00	2.0 00
Mode	2.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Std. Deviation	.74 34	.78 31	.63 78	.73 48	.76 78	.70 00	.81 48	.63 46	.68 29	.68 22	.66 75	.74 65
Skewness	1.1 73	.79 3	1.2 11	.80 9	1.0 17	1.0 63	.79 6	1.2 66	1.0 49	1.3 76	1.1 06	1.1 68
Std. Error of Skewness	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9	.10 9
Kurtosis	2.0 02	.60 2	1.7 68	.78 8	1.5 01	2.4 35	.52 8	2.2 29	1.5 34	2.6 05	1.2 62	1.6 69
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8	.21 8

Table 6.32 *Number of participants' choices by Frequency analysis*

Question items	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total
<b>Q54 Frequency</b>	218	233	34	13	2	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	43.6	46.6	6.8	2.6	0.4	100
<b>Q55 Frequency</b>	170	247	64	18	1	500

<b>Percent (%)</b>	34.0	49.4	12.8	3.6	0.2	100
<b>Q56 Frequency</b>	279	196	18	7	0	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	55.8	39.2	3.6	1.4	0	100
<b>Q57 Frequency</b>	191	243	55	10	1	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	38.2	48.6	11.0	2.0	0.2	100
<b>Q58 Frequency</b>	201	232	54	10	3	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	40.2	46.4	10.8	2.0	0.6	100
<b>Q59 Frequency</b>	201	253	38	5	3	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	40.2	50.6	7.6	1.0	0.6	100
<b>Q60 Frequency</b>	174	232	74	18	2	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	34.8	46.4	14.8	3.6	0.4	100
<b>Q61 Frequency</b>	287	186	23	3	1	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	57.4	37.2	4.6	0.6	0.2	100
<b>Q62 Frequency</b>	242	218	33	6	1	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	48.4	43.6	6.6	1.2	0.2	100
<b>Q63 Frequency</b>	272	197	21	9	1	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	54.4	39.4	4.2	1.8	0.2	100
<b>Q64 Frequency</b>	276	184	37	2	1	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	55.2	36.8	7.4	0.4	0.2	100
<b>Q65 Frequency</b>	243	203	43	9	2	500
<b>Percent (%)</b>	48.6	40.6	8.6	1.8	0.4	100

The descriptive and frequency analysis show that the participants have made agreements to a large extent on these question items in this part. It can be seen from Table 6.30 and Table 6.31, the participants held a positive view on all the question items in this section. For example, they supported that both interactive class (Q54, median value=2) and group learning were important (Q55, median value=2). They also agreed that different kinds of assessments should be used (Q57, median value=2), as well as teachers should pay attention to students' different learning styles (Q58, median value=2) and teachers should provide different learning activities (Q59, median value=2). In addition, the participants held a positive view on statements such as "Computers-assisted learning should be provided" (Q60, median value=2), "Teachers should be flexible in treating individual student" (Q62, median value=2), and "A good teacher should have a sense of humor" (Q65, median value=2). Besides these questions, the participants

strongly agreed that teachers should develop independent learning ability (Q56, median value=1), English communication is an important goal of English teaching and learning (Q61, median value=1), and a good teacher should be a good communicator (Q63, median value=1) and have a warm personality (Q64, median value=1). Particularly, about 91 percent of the participants held a rather positive view on Q61, which gives us a range of implications and recommendations that will be discussed in Chapter 8 and Chapter 9. As the median values of the participants' views on this part show that the participants have reached a high level of agreement, there is no need for further investigation or tests.

### 6.3.6 Relationships between English learning in high schools and in the university

In order to address the research objectives, the question items designed for the first section in the Part B of this questionnaire were accordingly also designed for the first section in the Part C of this questionnaire. That is, these two sections were designed to ask the participants' views of their English learning in their high schools and in the university respectively. Therefore, comparisons can be made to find out correlations and differences on these question items. Firstly, the mean values were compared to provide information of differences between participants' views of English learning in high schools and in the university. Moreover, correlation analyses were conducted to see whether each pair of the question items has an inter-correlation. These correlations were examined by using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation tests. The results of the tests, including mean values and the strength of correlations are introduced in the following parts.

Table 6.33 *Comparison of the mean values on Q6 to Q19 and on Q30 to Q43*

	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19
Mean	2.33 4	3.22 6	2.63 2	2.05 2	2.12 2	2.01 8	1.79 8	1.91 2	2.99 0	2.20 6	2.59 6	1.83 0	2.31 6	2.32 4
	Q30	Q31	Q32	Q33	Q34	Q35	Q36	Q37	Q38	Q39	Q40	Q41	Q42	Q43
Mean	2.85 4	3.39 4	2.58 4	2.01 8	2.43 4	1.74 6	1.70 4	1.97 6	2.03 4	1.95 8	2.77 6	2.03 8	2.68 4	2.55 6

Table 6.33 presents the results of the mean values of each pair in these two parts. It can be seen that the mean values of the six question items (Q8, Q9, Q11, Q12, Q14 and Q15) in high schools are larger than the pairs (Q32, Q33, Q35, Q36, Q38, and Q39) in the university. In other words, students agreed that English speaking and listening were more important for their English learning in the university than that in high schools. Additionally, they believed that they learnt more from

friends (Q32) and by themselves in the university (Q33). The participants also held a more positive view on computer-assisting learning (Q38) and independent learning (Q39) in the university. However, the mean values of the other eight question items in the university are larger than those pairs in high schools, which indicate that the participants held more positive views on these statements in high schools. For example, the participants agreed more that they followed exactly what teachers told them to do (Q6), as well as depended more on teachers' teaching (Q7) and learnt best by following teachers' instructions (Q16) in high schools. Moreover, they also agreed more on English grammar (Q10) and English writing (Q13) were important for them when they were in high schools. Apart from these, they thought more positively that the learning environment was helpful (Q17), testing (Q18), and assignments (Q19) were important for their learning in high schools.

Correlation analyses were conducted on these 14 pairs to examine the strength of the relationships between them. The results are presented in Appendix 7, indicating that all the pairs have a positive correlation. More specifically, three pairs had a strong correlation as the  $r$  level is between 0.50 and 1.00, or between -0.50 and -1.00 (J. W. Cohen, 1988). It means that the larger number of students agreed that English grammar (Q10 & Q34,  $r=0.516$ ), as well as English listening (Q12 & Q36,  $r=0.578$ ) and English writing (Q13 & Q37,  $r=0.551$ ) were important for them in high schools, more important they believed them in the university. Interestingly, only one pair (Q14 & Q38,  $r=0.281$ ) has a very small correlation, suggesting that there is a small correlation of agreement between what the participants believed that "Computers played an important role in their learning" in high schools and that in the university. However, the other 10 pairs have a medium correlation as their  $r$  levels are between 0.30 and 0.49 or between -0.30 and -0.49 (J. W. Cohen, 1988).

#### **6.3.7 Relationships between teaching models in English teaching in high schools and in the university**

As mentioned previously, in order to address the research objectives, some questions were designed accordingly in the questionnaire. This section is to investigate the correlations between English teaching models in high schools (Q20 to Q29) and in the university (Q44 to Q53). Above all, the mean values were calculated and compared, and then a correlation analysis was conducted to see the strength of two variables in pairs. The mean values of these questions are shown below:



Table 6.34 *Comparison of the mean values on Q20 to Q29 and on Q44 to Q53*

	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29
Mean	2.226	2.178	2.422	2.674	2.306	2.774	2.554	2.820	2.666	2.818
	Q44	Q45	Q46	Q47	Q48	Q49	Q50	Q51	Q52	Q53
Mean	1.924	2.138	2.824	2.238	2.380	2.270	1.966	2.366	3.010	3.176

The results of a comparison of the mean values are shown in the above table, suggesting that the participants have a positive attitude on more question items regarding English teaching models in the university than the pairs in high schools. For example, students agreed more that their teachers encouraged independent learning (Q44), provided a learner-friendly environment (Q45), and interesting and learning materials (Q47). Also, the participants had a larger extent of agreement on learning activities that were provided in the university than those in high schools (Q49), as well as group learning was encouraged (Q50) and a variety of teaching styles were used (Q51). However, in four question items regarding high schools the participants still held more positive attitudes. Specifically, they agreed more that their teachers gave students individual attention (Q22) and helpful feedback to students (Q24). Also, they believed more that their teachers in high schools knew best about their learning (Q28) and they agreed more that their success depended heavily on their teachers' teaching (Q29).

Follow-up correlation analyses were conducted to examine the strength of the relationships between these 10 pairs. The results are shown in Appendix 8, suggesting these 10 pairs have a positive correlation. Although the results suggest that these 10 pairs have a positive correlation, the strength of the correlation is not strong as the  $r$  level is not between 0.50 and 1.00, or between -0.50 and -1.00. More specifically, only four pairs have a medium correlation and the other six pairs have a small correlation. It means that English teaching models used in high schools and in university are not correlated with each other strongly from students' views.

#### 6.3.8 Relationships between the participants' views on English learning and teaching models

This part is necessary in the qualitative analysis. As the research objectives are to investigate students' English learning experience and English teachers' teaching, it is essential to find out which question item regarding English teaching has the

strongest correlation with students' English learning based on their views. It is believed that English learning is influenced by some teaching models. Relatively, teaching would also be affected by learning. Hence, each question item in the Part B of the questionnaire had a question designed accordingly in the Part C of the questionnaire. These correlations were also examined by using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation test. The results show the pairs which have the strongest correlation to the English teaching model in the questionnaire.

Table 6.35 *The strongest correlation of questions between English learning and teaching models in high schools*

Correlated questions regarding English learning and teaching models in high schools	
Q 6 and Q29 (r=0.240)	Q6 I strictly followed exactly what my teachers told me to do. Q29 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q7 and Q29 (r=0.294)	Q7 My learning depended entirely on my teachers' teaching. Q29 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q8 and Q27 (r=0.248)	Q8 I learnt a great deal from my friends. Q27 My teachers used a variety of teaching styles.
Q9 and Q20 (r=0.168)	Q9 I learnt a great deal by myself. Q20 My teachers encouraged independent learning.
Q10 and Q24 (r=0.158)	Q10 English grammar was important for my learning. Q24 My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.
Q11 and Q23 (r=0.204)	Q11 English speaking was important for my learning. Q23 My teachers provided interesting learning materials.
Q12 and Q24 (r=0.253)	Q12 English listening was important for my learning. Q24 My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.
Q13 and Q24 (r=0.206)	Q13 English writing was important for my learning. Q24 My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.
Q14 and Q25 (r=0.248)	Q14 Computer use played an important role in my learning. Q25 My teachers provided different learning activities.
Q15 and Q20 (r=0.166)	Q15 I liked to learn independently. Q20 My teachers encouraged independent learning.
Q16 and Q29 (r=0.254)	Q16 I learnt best by following teachers' instruction. Q29 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.

Q17 and Q22 ( $r=0.249$ )	Q17 The learning environment was very helpful. Q22 My teachers gave students individual attention.
Q18 and Q29 ( $r=0.223$ )	Q18 Testing was important to my learning. Q29 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q19 and Q29 ( $r=0.240$ )	Q19 Assignments were important to my learning. Q29 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.

The above table presents the results of the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation test conducted between questions regarding English learning (Q6-Q19) and English teaching models (Q20-Q29). Table 6.35 shows the pairs which has the strongest correlation within this part. From the table, it can be seen that a large number of participants agreed that their learning in English depended heavily on teachers' teaching in high schools. Moreover, those who agreed that English grammar (Q10), listening (Q12), and writing (Q13) were important for them had a strong correlation with their teachers who provided helpful feedback to them. Lastly, students also believed that testing (Q18) and assignments (Q19) were important for them as they agreed that their success depended heavily on teachers' teaching. As mentioned previously, question items in the Part B of this questionnaire had a question designed accordingly in the Part C of the questionnaire so that the investigation of participants' English learning and teaching models in the university is essential to find out the differences between high schools and the university. The details of the result are provided in the following table.

Table 6.36 *The strongest correlation of questions between English learning and teaching models in the university*

Correlated questions regarding English learning and teaching models in the university	
Q30 and Q53 ( $r=0.296$ )	Q30 I strictly followed exactly what my teachers told me to do. Q53 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q31 and Q53 ( $r=0.518$ )	Q31 My learning depended entirely on my teachers' teaching. Q53 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q32 and Q45 ( $r=0.206$ )	Q32 I learnt a great deal from my friends. Q45 My teachers provided a learner-friendly environment.
Q33 and Q44 ( $r=0.192$ )	Q33 I learnt a great deal by myself.
Q33 and Q53 ( $r=-0.109$ )	Q44 My teachers encouraged independent learning.

	Q53 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q34 and Q48 (r=0.255)	Q34 English grammar was important for my learning. Q48 My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.
Q35 and Q50 (r=0.307)	Q35 English speaking was important for my learning.
Q35 and Q53 (r=-0.130)	Q50 My teachers encouraged group learning. Q53 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q36 and Q50(r=0.287)	Q36 English listening was important for my learning. Q50 My teachers encouraged group learning.
Q37 and Q45 (r=0.223)	Q37 English writing was important for my learning. Q45 My teachers provided a learner-friendly environment.
Q38 and Q44 (r=0.222)	Q38 Computer use played an important role in my learning.
Q38 and Q53 (r=-0.138)	Q44 My teachers encouraged independent learning. Q53 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q39 and Q44 (r=0.221)	Q39 I liked to learn independently.
Q39 and Q53 (r=-0.132)	Q44 My teachers encouraged independent learning. Q53 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q40 and Q53(r=0.399)	Q40 I learnt best by following teachers' instruction. Q53 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q41 and Q45 (r=0.256)	Q41 The learning environment was very helpful. Q45 My teachers provided a learner-friendly environment.
Q42 and Q53 (r=0.291)	Q42 Testing was important to my learning. Q53 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.
Q43 and Q53 (r=0.293)	Q43 Assignments were important to my learning. Q53 My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.

Table 6.36 shows the strongest correlation of the question items regarding teaching models and English learning experience in the university. From the table, it is interesting to see that the question which has a negative correlation regarding teaching model is Q53 while the other pairs have positive correlations. Compared with the correlations of these pairs in high schools, several differences were found. Firstly, the participants agreed that they learnt a great deal from their friends (Q8) and this had the strongest correlation with the teaching model of using a variety of

teaching styles (Q27) for participants when they were in high schools. However, when students came to the university, the participants agreed that they learnt a great deal from their friends (Q32) and this had the strongest correlation with providing a learner-friendly environment (Q45). Similarly, the participants believed that the reason why they agreed that English writing (Q37) was important for them in the university was that their teachers provided a learner-friendly environment (Q45) rather than giving them helpful feedback in high schools. Secondly, the strongest correlation of the questions regarding English speaking and listening changed from teaching models of providing interesting learning materials and giving helpful feedback to encourage group learning (Q50) in the university. That is, the reasons why students believed speaking and listening was important for them in the university was that their teachers encouraged group learning and they depended the least heavily on their teachers' teaching (Q53). Thirdly, the participants' opinions on computer-assisted learning adopted to assist learning also differed. They believed that the strongest correlation with this item was that their teachers provided different learning activities when they were in high schools; however, when they came to the university, they regarded that the reason that computers played an important role in their learning was that their teachers encouraged independent learning (Q44) and they depended the least heavily on their teachers' teaching (Q53). Apart from these, some pairs regarding English learning and teaching models had the strongest correlations in the university. For example, the participants still believed that helpful feedback provided by their teachers and the importance of English grammar had the strongest correlation within these pairs. Also, testing and assignments were regarded as important for the participants both when they were in high schools and in the university.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the quantitative data analysis process and the results of the analysis in this research. This chapter first introduced the analysis techniques used and it provided the information of the sample in the final study. Moreover, the results were introduced by analyzing the independent variables and dependent variables. In the analysis process, the responses were examined by using strategies such as descriptive analysis, Kruskal-Wallis tests and Mann-Whitney U tests to find out significant difference within and between groups. Last, in order to examine the correlation between the teaching and learning models, mean values have been calculated and Spearman's Rank Order Correlation tests have been conducted to find out the strongest correlation question items between the pairs.

The next chapter will present the qualitative data, which will be shown in a different form. The analysis process will be underpinned by the constructivist grounded theory and thematic analysis. The textual data were obtained from two sources: the open-ended section in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. Compared with the numerical data at this stage, the second phrase shows participants' opinions from their feeling and thoughts. The process of qualitative data analysis will be explained in detail in the following chapter.

## Chapter 7 Qualitative Data Analysis

### 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter mainly focused on quantitative data analysis and provided numerical results. The data analysis found substantially statistical significance according to the participants' course, gender, academic faculty, length of studying, and English scores in the College Entrance Examination. This chapter, however, will provide details relating to the qualitative data analysis, including the participants' responses to the open-ended question in the questionnaire and the interview questions. Compared with the numerical data at the quantitative stage, questions from the two stages formed textual data that will be discussed as a whole at this qualitative stage. The researcher will use constructivist grounded theory and thematic analysis to underpin the qualitative data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). A three-step coding approach will be introduced by using thematic analysis (Sarantakos, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). Also, the NVivo software was adopted to assist in analyzing the qualitative data (Bazeley, 2009, 2010).

This chapter focuses on providing a descriptive discussion of the themes and categories that have emerged from the qualitative data analysis process. Six categories were generated by the researcher during the analysis process. Compared with the results yielded at the first stage, some of the themes that emerged at this stage confirmed the quantitative data analysis. However, there are other some other interesting results from the textual data that were not featured at the quantitative stage. Therefore, these new features will be discussed in detail in this chapter. From the dominant themes emerged, some issues were of more concern than others as the participants' responses seemed noticeably stronger in these particular themes and categories. For example, English speaking in the university and English examinations and tests.

### 7.2 Qualitative data analysis

As introduced in the previous chapter, the interview questions were designed according to the six research objectives. The set of ten question items addressed one or more objectives. The details of question items and the objectives they addressed are shown in the following table.

Table 7.1 *Research objectives and question items*

Research objectives	Instrument	Interview question items
<b>Objective 1:</b> To investigate the learning of English of university students in high schools	Interview questions	Q1 Q2
<b>Objective 2:</b> To investigate teachers' teaching of English in high schools based on university students' views	Interview questions	Q6, Q7
<b>Objective 3:</b> To investigate the learning of English of university students in the university	Interview questions	Q1 Q2
<b>Objective 4:</b> To investigate teachers' teaching of English in the university based on university students' views	Interview questions	Q6, Q7
<b>Objective 5:</b> To examine the differences of students' views and experiences of teaching and learning in high schools and in the university	Open-ended questionnaire section and interview questions	Q1,Q2,Q3, Q6,Q8, Q9
<b>Objective 6:</b> To construct a model of teaching and learning of English based on students' views and experiences	Open-ended questionnaire section and interview questions	Q1, Q2, Q3,Q4, Q5,Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9,Q10

### 7.2.1 Qualitative data analysis

At the qualitative stage, the analysis method was used in an inductive way rather than the deductive way that it was used at the quantitative stage. Instead of having assumptions and calculating numbers, the researcher explored textual data from the participants' responses to the questions in the semi-structured interviews to generate theories (Creswell, 2012). Based on the researcher's previous experiences and her understanding, the meanings and interpretations from the raw data could be reconstructed. By doing this, the participants' teaching and learning experiences can be grounded and generated into themes and categories. Therefore, the qualitative data provides a broader and extended range to understand the textual data collected (Patton, 2002).



There are two forms of data collected at this stage. One comes from the participants' responses in the open-ended question section of the questionnaire, and the other is from their responses in the semi-structured interviews. Data in both forms is textual. The interview data was first audio-recorded and then was transcribed and subsequently combined with the participants' answers to the open-ended question in the questionnaire. Instead of reading the participants' responses in a paper-format line by line, the researcher utilized the NVivo software in this process. Compared with the SPSS used in analyzing the quantitative data, this analysis process provides the researcher with more chances to obtain further insights in the raw data. Also, it is a theoretically generated and saturated process which is based on research matters generated out of theory (Silverman, 2005).

The theory underpinning the qualitative data analysis process is constructivist grounded theory and thematic analysis. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998b), constructivist grounded theory is a "general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed" (p. 361). Three steps have been involved in this methodology: sampling, coding, and theorizing. As the sampling process has been given in detail in the methodology chapter, this chapter focuses on the coding process and writing a theory which followed Strauss and Corbin's coding approach (1998a). By using this approach, the researcher first read the raw data word by word, then line by line to identify them into various codes. Afterwards, the different codes identified were generated into themes that are grounded in the data. The last step is to generate these themes into categories to form a systematic scheme (Grbich, 2007; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). These rigorous steps ensured that the analysis and output of the data was conducted in a flexible and valid way. The details of how the data developed into themes and categories are introduced in the following sections.

### 7.2.2 Participants and participants' responses

The first component of the qualitative data is the participants' responses from the open-ended question in the questionnaire, including 80 participants' answers. There was only one question asked in this section: "Are there any comments you would like to give regarding your English learning and teaching?" The participants were allowed to leave their remarks or comments in this section or they could contact investigators directly to air their opinions via phone. The length of answers gathered in this part ranged from several words to one paragraph with approximately 100 words. In spite of some spelling mistakes, grammatical mistakes, and careless handwriting errors from the answers, most participants' responses were transcribed. The number of participants who left

messages in the open-ended question of the questionnaire across faculties is presented below:

Table 7.2 *Number of participants in the open-ended question of the questionnaire*

Academic faculty	Students number (n/N)
7. Arts	5/45
8. Computing	20/60
9. Education	20/85
10. Science	10/86
11. Economics and Management	15/178
12. Foreign Languages (English majors)	10/46
Total number of participants	80/500

The second component of the qualitative data is the participants' responses in the semi-structured interviews. There were 20 participants from six different academic faculties within the subject university. All the participants were investigated by the one set of interview questions. Before the interview, the participants could obtain an outline of the interview, and it was believed that the outline could guide these participants to answer the questions confidently. Although the participants were guided by pre-determined questions, they were allowed to share and discuss more on any particular question or they could share their experiences in learning regarding the research topic. All the interview data with an audio length between 15 minutes and 30 minutes were transcribed into textual format after the interview. The participants' background information is summarized in Table 7.3

Table 7.3 *Participants in the semi-structured interviews*

Academic faculty	Students	Gender
1. Arts	Student 1-A (Freshman)	F
	Student 2-A (Sophomore)	F
2. Computing	Student 1-C (Senior)	F
	Student 2-C (Junior)	M
	Student 3-C (Senior)	F
3. Education	Student 1-E (Junior)	F
	Student 2-E (Senior)	F

	Student 3-E (Senior)	F
<b>4. Science</b>	Student 1-S (Freshman)	F
	Student 2-S (Senior)	M
<b>5. Economics and Management</b>	Student 1-EM (Junior)	F
	Student 2-EM (Senior)	F
	Student 3-EM (Junior)	F
	Student 4-EM (Junior)	F
	Student 5-EM (Senior)	F
	Student 6-EM (Sophomore)	M
<b>6. Foreign Languages (English majors)</b>	Student 1-FL (Junior)	F
	Student 2-FL (senior)	F
	Student 3-FL (Junior)	F
	Student 4-FL (Freshman)	F
<b>F=Female M=Male</b>		

Within the subject university, there were 20 participants involved in the semi-structured interviews, including 17 female students and 3 male students across six main academic faculties. From the information presented in the above table, it can be seen that there were more participants involved in the interview from the Faculty of Economics and Management than those from other faculties. Also, the number of female participants outweighed substantially male participants in the semi-structured interviews. Their responses in the semi-structured interviews are presented in the results section.

### 7.2.3 The coding process

As the qualitative data analysis was directed in an inductive way, the aim of this process was to generate theories from core categories, which was grounded from the raw data. In this study, the researcher generated themes from various categories after she compared concepts and clustered them into categories by reading line by line and paragraph by paragraph. Within this process, the researcher could obtain more information from the phenomenon and concepts. Also, she could relocate these concepts to different categories after comparison. By constant comparison from incidents in the data to other incidents, incidents to categories, and categories to other categories, the categories are grounded from the data (Creswell, 2009). Charmaz (2006) asserts that a constructivist grounded

theory approach allows researchers keep close to the phenomenon and both data and analysis could be created from participants' experiences and other sources.

A constructivist grounded theory approach and thematic analysis approach were used in the analysis process, which involved three steps in coding. The initial codes were recorded from participants' responses in the first layer, which was later gathered and then categorized into a higher layer. Afterwards, a number of higher levels of themes were generated into categories. The details of these three steps are discussed in the following sections.

#### *7.2.3.1 Open coding*

The open coding was the first step in the coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998b). At this stage, the first-order concepts and substantive codes are identified and developed as well as the concepts being analyzed and compared constantly before being delimited into a core category (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Fan, 2011; Fei, 2007). The researcher thus remains open to the raw data without any perceived codes (Glaser, 1992). In this research, 98 open codes were developed by classifying the participants' views on English learning and teaching in both high schools and university (See Appendix 6). This analysis process allows the researcher to have an open mind in looking deeper into phenomenon. Also, it incorporates with the researcher's previous teaching and learning experiences; thus, the initial codes are open to reconstruction and revisitation.

#### *7.2.3.2 Axial coding*

Axial coding is a second step to analyze qualitative data. It means that when the researcher analyzes the open codes, she only keeps a close eye on "those variables that relate to the core variable in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory" (Glaser, 1978, p. 61). Under this guidance, the core variable can lead the researcher to further data collection. Thus, the researcher needs to make detailed comparisons between the concepts in this stage in order to construct higher-order concepts (Sarantakos, 2005). Meanwhile, the constant comparisons between the concepts allows the researcher to make visible the links between open codes and to group them into themes according to these interconnections (Fan, 2011). These links between axial codes in turn improve the researchers' understanding of the meanings represented in the data. In this study, after comparing and constructing the open codes in the first step, 46 themes were reclassified (See Appendix 6).

### 7.2.3.3 Selective coding

The final stage is the selective coding process. At this stage, the researcher may write a 'story line' by working through the axial codes and connecting them together into higher levels of abstraction (Creswell, 2007, p. 67). Within this study, the researcher compared constantly the various themes classified in the axial coding process and tried to organized the analysis around core generalisations and ideas (Neuman, 2003). By doing this, the themes can be further compared and constructed into higher categories. According to Sarantakos (2005), the core categories should be as abstract as possible since "the higher the abstract level of categories, the wider the applicability of the theory" (p. 350). With this in mind, the researcher finally generated six dominant categories from 46 themes.

## 7.3 Results

At the end of the coding process, six core categories emerged from the participants' responses to the open-ended question in the questionnaire, as well as the 10 semi-structured interview questions. The process of constructing these categories enabled the researcher to look closer at the raw data so that she could use the constructivist ground theory method to analyze the participants' responses. Also, these categories helped the researcher to 'dig' more information that was not in the quantitative data. The details of the discussion of these six categories are provided in the following paragraphs.

- 1 Learning and teaching in English in the university (575 references)
- 2 Learning and teaching in English in high schools (444 references)
- 3 Students' expectations in learning and teaching in English (106 references)
- 4 Characteristics of a good English teacher (81 references)
- 5 Learning attitude (80 references)
- 6 Learning motivation (67 references)

### 7.3.1 Category 1: Learning and teaching in English in the university

The largest number of gathered responses from the participants was 'Learning and teaching in English in the university', which had 575 references. It focused on investigating learning and teaching in the university. This category was the richest one in these six core categories, including 52 open codes at the beginning stage. Afterwards, these open codes were reorganized into a higher level with eight distinct themes by constant comparison and relocation. Some of these eight themes also had sub-themes, such as 'Language skills in the university',

‘Learning and teaching methods in the university’ and ‘Teaching model used in the university’. More specifically, the sub-theme regarding learning and teaching methods included a wide variety of teaching and learning methods, for example, listening to English songs, watching English movies, and using the Internet to learn English. Students and teachers used large quantities of methods to improve English capacity in classes and out of class in the university. Within this category, the numbers of references relating to English speaking skills were very significant, which indicated that students focused mainly on this part when they entered the university. The themes, sub-themes and codes are shown in the following table:

Table 7.4 *Learning and teaching in English in the university*

Learning and teaching in English in the university	responses
<b>Themes:</b>	575
● <b>Learning and teaching methods in the university</b>	277
<b>Sub-themes</b>	
➤ <b>Audio-Lingual Method</b>	45
Doing presentations	
Listening to English news	
Listening to English songs	
Watching English films	
➤ <b>Collaborative learning</b>	8
Learning with friends	
➤ <b>Communicative Method</b>	106
Dialogue practice in English	
Doing duty report	
Doing English speech	
Doing role-plays	
Online chatting	
Talking with foreigners	
Group work and group discussions	
➤ <b>Computer-assisted Method</b>	26
Online learning	
Using computers for learning English	

Using the Internet to learn English	
Using PowerPoint	
➤ Grammar-Translation Method	9
Translating from textbooks	
➤ Individualized learning	33
Learning English by myself	
English final examinations and tests	77
Reading English magazines	3
Reading English newspapers	7
● Language skills in the university	261
Sub-themes	
➤ Macro-skills	212
English listening	
English speaking	
English reading	
English writing	
➤ Micro-skills	77
English grammar	
English intonation and pronunciation	
English vocabulary	
● English assessments in the university	107
BEC	
CET-4, CET-6	
English final examinations and tests	
TOEFL	
TOEIC	
● Teaching model used in the university	73
➤ ‘Student-centered’ model	73
English self-access learning center	
Learning English by myself	
Online learning	

	Self-conscious	
	Self-discipline	
	Using computers for learning English	
	Using the Internet to learn English	
●	Learning and teaching environment in the university	47
	Freedom	
	Relaxed	
●	English learning and teaching problems in the university	36
	Lacking confidence to speak English	
	Limited time in the English class	
	No partners to practice	
●	English activities in the university	24
	Duty reports	
	English corner	
	English speech	
	Presentations	
	Role-plays	
●	Learning and teaching resources in the university	13
	Resources from libraries	
	Useful resources online	

### 7.3.1.1 Learning and teaching methods in the university

Within these eight main themes in this category, ‘Learning and teaching methods in the university’ appeared to be the largest theme (N=277). It is believed that what and how these methods were used by teachers and participants would influence English teaching and learning in the university. This theme has six sub-themes, which were generated from the methods students and teachers used widely in English language learning and teaching. Based on students’ views, the Communicative Method was the most popular one among these six methods; while Collaborative learning was the least popular. A large number of responses from the participants stated that they like communicating in the university. Among this sub-theme, the most popular one for university students is to talk with foreigners (N=82). A student from the Faculty of Education expressed: *“I felt so excited when I knew there were some exchanged students would come to live in*



*my dormitory this year as I thought it was a great chance to talk with them.”* However, only eight responses were gathered to indicate that they like learning with friends. Most participants shared information with the interviewer that it was very difficult to work closely with friends in the university. The main reason is that university students come from different places, and are born with various backgrounds, so it is not so easy to make sincere friends. Secondly, university students have more free time in their personal life than high school students do in China so that it is difficult for university students to make friends with their classmates.

Apart from these two methods, the researcher found that an increasing number of university students have been using computers to assist their learning, as well as going to the self-access learning centers by themselves frequently in the first semester of 2012-2013. Compared with learning from friends, students like learning by themselves. The following reasons are given to show the advantage of using computer-assisted learning:

*I really like using online learning method to assist my English learning. Not only because my PC is portable but also I can listening to English CDs with it to improve my listening and speaking. From this semester, I have access to the Internet in my dorm so that it seems more convenient for me to learn English by myself in the university.*

*Student 2-A (Sophomore)*

Moreover, from the participants' point of view, they like using any method related to the Audio-Lingual Method, such as doing presentations, listening to English news and English songs, and watching English films. Particularly, students showed their strongest interest to watch English films as 32 responses were gathered. The participants believed that sound, pictures and movements in movies could cultivate their interest to learn more in English.

*We often watched movies in the summer's (English teacher) class. The pictures are more vivid than the words in the textbooks so that I think this method could cultivate my interest to learn more in the university.*

*Student 1-S (Freshman)*

There are three other methods that could not be generated into any of these sub-themes, but it was interesting to find out that many students and their English teachers still like using previous English examinations and tests papers as a dominant way to learn and teach English rather than reading newspapers and reading English magazines. A senior student shared her opinions with the researcher:

*Examinations and tests are still the main methods to improve my English learning in the university now. You know, we should face them in every semester, particularly, in the last year at the university. For me, anyway, through examinations papers, I could know which part (listening, reading and writing) is my disadvantage. Consequently, I know what I need to improve.*

*Student 5-EM (Senior)*

From students' responses, although some teachers still translate texts and paragraphs in English classes, the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) is not frequently used at present by students and teachers (N=9). A participant aired that, "*When I began studying in the university, the learning and teaching methods were more flexible than those in high schools. The GTM was not often used by us now as I believed it was boring because teachers translated every English sentence to Chinese in the class.*"

### **7.3.1.2 Language skills in the university**

The second significant theme within this category is 'Language skills in the university', which had 261 responses. The participants focused mainly on these skills in two directions: macro and micro items. Macro-skills were generated from skills related to English listening, reading, writing and speaking; while micro skills were reorganized from English grammar, intonation and pronunciation, and vocabulary. When students entered the university, they focused more on their English speaking and listening skills. Particularly, they believed that English speaking skills played an important role in their communication. However, these oral skills were the most difficult part for the students to improve as most Chinese students cannot be immersed in an English spoken environment all the time. Thus, the participants thought it was necessary for them to acquire some skills to enhance their oral English. On the other hand, skills regarding English reading and writing were easier for most participants to obtain as they said they could learn from other resources instead of communicating with others. Within the micro-skills, the participants claimed that they still needed more

skills to improve English grammar in the university. In their opinions, a good command of English listening, speaking, reading, and writing, is all based on how well they learnt English grammar. Some students did not believe that they could learn English well if they were poor at English grammar. One participant's conversation is shown as an example related to the discussions above.

*Interviewer: What language skills do you think you need to improve?*

*Student: English speaking is my disadvantage in the university since I did not have a lot of chances to speak with others in English after class. The atmosphere was not good in my dormitory as all of my friends speak Chinese. However, I need to improve it because I know it is important in my future.*

*Interviewer: What do you think of writing and reading?*

*Student: They are easier to learn.*

*Interviewer: Why do you think it is easier?*

*Student: I could improve reading and writing by reciting more articles and memorizing a large amount of English vocabularies, but I really do not know how to improve my English listening and speaking in the university.*

*Student 2-C (Junior)*

### **7.3.1.3 English assessments in the university**

Apart from the English learning and teaching methods and language skills, the participants were also concerned about English assessments in the university, which had 107 responses. English assessment is important in teaching and learning English as it is still a dominant technique to measure how and what students have achieved in their English learning in China. Based on the participants' views, English final examinations, CET-4, and CET-6 (college English test band four and band six) are three major forms of assessments for university students in China. Apparently, other forms of the English assessments, such as TOEIC, BEC, and IETLS, were also addressed by some participants, who thought there might be other types of assessment more widespread in the near future in China. A senior student from the Faculty of Economics and Management stated that she was preparing to take part in the BEC examination because she thought this examination focused more on examining students' speaking skills, and this

student expressed that oral English was not included in the university final examinations at present. Moreover, she thought taking part in these examinations, such as BEC, could show her communicative skills more to the examiners rather than sitting for traditional examinations in the university. In other words, she did not believe current English assessment could evaluate a student's overall English proficiency.

#### **7.3.1.4 Teaching model used in the university**

The participants considered that the traditional model used was influential in English teaching and learning. When students entered the university, they perceived that teachers were inclined to place students in the center of the teaching and learning process rather than the teachers themselves. Teachers and students changed the basis of their roles between high schools and the university in the learning process. From the number of responses, it can be seen that students often went to the self-access learning centers to learn English in the university. An example of a participant's learning experience in the university related to 'student-centered' teaching is shown below:

*When I came to the university, I learnt English most of the time by myself. English teachers encouraged us to go to self-access learning centers as it is a good way to monitor my learning process by myself instead of following teachers' instruction all the time.*

*Student 4-FL (Freshman)*

#### **7.3.1.5 Learning and teaching environment in the university**

'Learning and teaching environment' was the fifth theme that emerged from the participants' responses in this category. The university environment is considered by the participants as an attribute to the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The participants believed that the learning and teaching environment was quite free and relaxing in the university, which has been strongly indicated in the participants' conversations. A participant from the Faculty of Science reflected that "*Learning environment is unrestricted and free that makes me passionate to learn English. I could choose what I would like to learn and how I learn it.*" Another student majoring in English said that she felt relaxed to learn English in the university as lots of Chinese and foreign teachers provided her with a friendly learning atmosphere. These two participants both claimed that they had a stronger motivation to learn English in this relaxed and free learning environment.

### 7.3.1.6 English learning and teaching problems in the university

The sixth theme within this category was ‘English learning and teaching problems’, which was believed to be very important for both students and teachers to rethink in their learning and teaching process. 36 responses were gathered from the participants focusing on three main problems: lacking confidence to speak English, limited time in class and lack of partners to practice. Most participants indicated that the time was so limited for both students and teachers in the university. A student from the Faculty of Foreign Languages argued that *“The time given for us to practice English was so little that not everyone could share their opinions in the class. After class, we could not find any English teachers to help us as they were not in their offices regularly.”* Another student from the Faculty of Computing supported this view by asserting as: *“We just have four-hour English classes each week in the university, you know, the time is so limited. After class, we cannot find teachers to help as they are not available.”*

### 7.3.1.7 English activities in the university

The seventh theme that emerged in this category was ‘English activities in the university’ (N=24). This theme is believed to influence the students’ enthusiasm in learning a language. There were four popular activities based on the participants’ opinions. Almost 50 percent of the total number of participants indicated that the activities held in English corners every week seemed the most attractive and interesting to them. Particularly, the participants whose major was not English held a positive view towards English corners as a friendly place for students to share opinions. Non-English majors stated that the English corner was the most ideal place to take part in English activities, such as English Evening, English Saloon, and English Play Competition, all of which could improve English speaking skills. Also, the participants majoring in English believed it was beneficial for English majors to take part in the activities in the English corner held by the English Association in the university. They agreed that joining in these activities could not only improve their English speaking skills, but also increase more opportunities for making foreign friends, and exchanging cultures. Besides English corners, presentations and role-plays were the other two forms of activities that attracted students as being positive in English activities. However, one participant complained that she liked to join in English speech but that there were not so many chances for her in the university.

### 7.3.1.8 Learning and teaching resources in the university

The last theme ‘Learning and teaching resources’ within this category had the smallest number of responses (N=13). It would appear to show that not so many

students held a positive view on the forms of resources provided in the university. However, within these small numbers of forms, 11 responses from the participants stated that online learning provided them with useful information, including vivid learning materials, helpful tutorial classes, and assignment assistance. Interestingly, the library is commonly regarded as a comfortable and resourceful place for university students; however, the participants in this study did not believe the university library could provide a large body of resources for them. A possible reason could be found in the following comments:

*I seldom go to the library on campus since a lot of books were not renewed, and academic journals were not current issues. I cannot find much useful information there. Moreover, computers there (in the library) could not access the Internet until I prepaid or obtain some vouchers. It is not inconvenient for us.*

*Student 3-EM (Junior)*

### 7.3.2 Category 2: Learning and teaching in high schools

The second largest category that emerged from the selective coding process was ‘Learning and teaching in high schools’ and it had 444 responses from the participants. This category emphasized learning and teaching experiences in high schools. A large number of open codes were grouped into eight distinct themes, which was similar to the themes in Category 1. However, the participants’ views regarding learning and teaching in high schools were quite different from those in the university. In language skills, for example, students focused more on macro-skills in high schools than those in the university. Also, a huge difference was found in English activities. Based on students’ views, duty report was the only form of activity that was utilized in high schools. As a considerable number of responses were obtained, the details of each theme and sub-themes are introduced in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5 *Learning and teaching in English in high schools*

Learning and teaching in English in high schools	responses
<b>Themes:</b>	444

● <b>Language skills in high schools</b>	265
<b>Sub-themes</b>	
➤ <b>Macro-skills</b>	215
English listening	
English speaking	
English reading	
English writing	
➤ <b>Micro-skills</b>	78
English grammar	
English intonation and pronunciation	
English vocabulary	
● <b>Learning and teaching methods in high schools</b>	138
<b>Sub-themes</b>	
➤ <b>Audio-Lingual Method</b>	18
Listening to English songs	
➤ <b>Communicative Method</b>	3
Dialogue practice in English	
➤ <b>Grammar-Translation Method</b>	52
Doing English grammar exercise and practice	
Reading and translating texts	
Translating from textbooks	
English final examinations and tests	77
● <b>English assessments in high schools</b>	116
College Entrance Examination	
English final examinations and tests	
● <b>Learning and teaching environment in high schools</b>	38
Strict	
● <b>Teaching model used in high schools</b>	34
➤ <b>‘Teacher-centered’ model</b>	
Learning English by following teachers' instructions	

Teaching everything in detail	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English learning and teaching problems in high schools</li> </ul>	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacking confidence to speak English</li> <li>Pressure teachers faced</li> <li>Simple teaching materials</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning and teaching resources in high schools</li> </ul>	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simple teaching handouts in English</li> <li>Textbooks</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English activities in high schools</li> </ul>	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duty reports</li> </ul>	

### 7.3.2.1 Language skills in high schools

This theme became the most significant one in this category and it obtained 265 responses from the participants. On the one hand, in the sub-theme of macro-skills, students felt eager to know how to improve their speaking and listening skills as they thought these two parts were important in the examinations if they wanted to be accepted as English majors in the university. However, most students admitted that English reading and writing were still two major parts in all kinds of English examinations in high schools. If students wanted to get a high score in examinations, they must acquire some skills to improve reading and writing. Meanwhile, some participants disclosed that it was not so difficult to improve reading and writing as an increasing number of books have been published to guide students on how to improve these two parts. Students believed they benefited significantly from these publications in high schools. On the other hand, students also believed that English grammar and vocabularies were the basic skills to improve other parts in English learning. An example from an English major is given:

*I must try hard to improve my English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills when I was in my high school. As such, I could have chances to be accepted as an English major student in the university. However, in my opinion, I compared English vocabularies to the “Blood” in our body since they are vital. Without them, I could not understand any English sentences. Also, English grammar is like the “Backbone”; without it, I could not know the orders of English words and to make a sentence.*

*Student 3-FL (Junior)*



### 7.3.2.2 Learning and teaching methods in high schools

The theme ‘Learning and teaching methods in high schools’, which had 138 responses, emerged as the second largest theme in this category. Compared with the methods used in the university, participants did not disclose so many methods in high schools. For example, only two methods, listening to English songs and practicing dialogues were reflected in the Audio-Lingual Method and the Communicative Method respectively. Moreover, students and teachers did not use English magazines and newspapers as a teaching method in high schools. According to the participants’ views, there were two reasons within this phenomenon: limited resources in newspapers and magazines for Chinese high school students, and limited time in reading English newspapers and magazines. Most participants claimed that although large number of English magazines and newspapers were published every year, there was limited useful information involved in these publications. Thus, students could not find many English resources that were beneficial to them in high schools. During the interviews, regarding ‘limited time in reading English newspapers and magazines’ there was aroused a heated discussion among the participants. Nearly 20 participants admitted that they did not have enough time to read English newspapers and magazines when they were in high schools since they spent quite a lot of time on other major subjects related to the College Entrance Examination, such as Chinese, Mathematics, and Chemistry.

In contrast to the Audio-Lingual Method and the Communicative Method, the Grammar-Translation Method was generated as the largest sub-theme within this major theme (N=52). Generally speaking, students and teachers utilized English grammar exercise and practice, texts reading practice, and textbooks translation as three major methods. Lots of participants complained that there were “*loads of English grammar exercises for them every day*”. Another participant expressed negatively that “*When I read grammar items in the examination paper, I felt sick as I was fed up with them. They were very boring and full of rigid rules.*” Similar to the grammar exercises, students disliked reading texts and translation methods as well. Most participants’ views could be reflected by the comment that “*no interaction between students and teachers was involved when they translated and read texts words by words*”. In this case, unsurprisingly, they felt bored in learning English in high schools.

Compared with the large number of responses from the theme ‘final examinations and tests’ in the university, this situation was still a common practice in high schools. 77 responses were gathered and all the participants held a considerable agreement that final examinations and tests were vital methods in English

learning in high schools. A Science student emphasized that *“nothing else would be more important than examinations and tests in high schools. Different kinds of English examinations were held each semester and the teachers used these papers as a mirror to reflect students’ weak points in learning and teaching”*. Although most students held a negative attitude towards taking examinations, a small number of participants conveyed that *“I knew English writing was my disadvantage from so many examinations I have taken. In this case, I could find efficient solutions to improve my writing. From this point of view, examinations were not too bad for us.”*

### 7.3.2.3 English assessments in high schools

The third dominant category that emerged from the coding process was ‘English assessments in high schools’ (N=116). Compared with the number of assessment techniques used in the university, it appeared that there was less forms adopted in high schools: the College Entrance Examination and English final examinations and tests. It is also interesting to discover that the code ‘English final examinations and tests’ was overlapped between the theme of ‘English teaching and learning method’ and ‘English assessment’. The participants believed that previous English examination papers and tests were both a method in learning and a tool in assessment. Among these 116 responses in this theme, more than half of the responses were related to the English final examinations and tests (N=77), and nearly half of the responses were concerned on the College Entrance Examination (N=49). Although the number regarding the College Entrance Examination was smaller than that of English examinations and tests, large quantities of answers gathered from the open question in the questionnaire and the interview stated that the students had put much effort in the College Entrance Examination when they were in high schools. An example of the participant’ answer from the open question is given as evidence:

*The College Entrance Examination was the most important examination in my life as it could decide my fate in future. Every year, the College Entrance Examination is held from the 6<sup>th</sup> June to the 8<sup>th</sup> June. During this time, industrial companies and construction fields are not allowed to work as people want to create a harmonious environment for students. Teachers, parents and students bear a lot of pressure in these three days.*

*Open-ended question in the questionnaire*

### 7.3.2.4 Learning and teaching environment in high schools

‘Learning and teaching environment in high schools’ was generated to be the fourth theme in this category (N=38). This theme concerned the environment in

which students and teachers were involved everyday. When the participants were asked to share their opinions on the learning and teaching environment, most of them thought it was so strict that they could not broaden their minds in high schools. The participants expressed that they liked more informality such as that was found in the university learning and teaching environment. A participant indicated that *“When I studied in high schools, everything related to learning and teaching seemed strict. For example, we could have chance to select any interesting subjects. The only choice for us was the compulsory course which could help us to get high scores in the College Entrance Examination.”* Another participant gave his opinion from the other angle regarding the strictness: *“The teacher treated us strictly like kids since they set very strict rules for us, including timetables, uniforms and moral values”*. From his opinion, it can be seen that students were not satisfied with the learning and teaching environment in high schools.

#### 7.3.2.5 Teaching model used in high schools

This theme emerged as the fifth theme within this category, which had 34 responses. Compared with the ‘student-centered’ model used in the university, the ‘teacher-centered’ model was emphasized in the results generated from the participants’ responses. Most participants reflected that their teachers controlled the whole class when they were in high schools, including the pace of teaching, the teaching and learning materials, and class activities. Thus, it is believed that teachers played a dominant role in the classes rather than students. However, when the participants were asked if they liked this model or not, 30 responses were obtained and none of these was positive. A participant wrote in the open-ended question section like this:

*From the primary education to the secondary education, my English teachers always behaved like a queen as she stood on the stage telling us to do this or that. Moreover, we had to follow her instruction to learn otherwise we would be treated as a bad student.*

*Open-ended question of the questionnaire*

Although a small number of the participants complained that their English teachers asked students to follow them, they believed that the main reason of this phenomenon was the unique teacher-pupil relationships in Chinese culture. A participant’s view could be seen as a support to it:

*From the kindergarten till the high school, all teachers used a cramming method to teach us. We must be fed by them otherwise*

*teachers were regarded as irresponsible for us. Moreover, we must sit quietly in the class and listen carefully to what teacher said. This was the same as how my parents treated me at home as I could not go against parents in China.*

*Student 1-FL (Junior)*

#### **7.3.2.6 English learning and teaching problems in high schools**

Although this theme emerged as the sixth largest one in this category, the numbers of responses were smaller than those obtained in universities (N=9). Three major problems were generated from the open codes: lacking confidence to speak English, pressure teachers faced, and simple teaching materials. The highest response students gave was still not having enough confidence to speak English, which was the same as it was in the university. The participants found that they felt embarrassed in front of many audiences and classmates if they made mistakes in English speaking. Other participants argued that the reason was that they were short of practice. They believed that ‘Practice makes perfect’. Apart from confidence, they stated that their teachers felt a lot pressure in high schools as students’ scores in examinations would be related to teachers’ income. In other words, if most students in the class could achieve a high score in examinations, the teacher who was in charge of this class could have a higher bonus than those students whose scores were lower. Besides this pressure, high school teachers also had family burdens and social expectation pressure. Thus, it is becoming a social problem in China. Lastly, some participants who were proficient in English thought their English teaching materials were too easy for them. “*I have already grasped the major points in these textbooks before I came to the high school. Thus I used English class to finish assignments of other subjects most of the time*”, was as disclosed by a participant majoring in Education.

#### **7.3.2.7 Learning and teaching resources in high schools**

The seventh theme that emerged in this category was ‘English activities held in the university’ (N=5). Similar to the responses gathered for the university resources, participants did not hold a positive view on the resources provided in high schools. Teachers’ handouts and textbooks became two major English learning resources for high school students. When they were asked their views on libraries and online resources, some participants expressed that there were not any libraries and computers to access since they came from remote country areas. They said some of their classmates needed to walk five to six kilometers to attend classes, let alone to access so many high-technology devices in the schools. A small number of participants described that although the high schools they had been in were in urban areas, they did not have time to go to library and use

computers. Since they should finish a variety of assignments and tests every day, there was no time to go to libraries and to surf the Internet to seek for useful information.

#### 7.3.2.8 English activities in high schools

The last theme in this category was ‘English activities in high schools’, which had the smallest number of responses (N=4). Compared with the various forms of activities that were held in the university, the duty report was the only activity that emerged from the raw data. Most participants shared their opinions with the interviewer as follows:

*Almost all high school English teachers required students to do duty report everyday since it had been required as an important way to increase the interaction between students and teachers by the Ministry of Education in China. However, the topic of the duty report was not full of interest. Most of time teachers were just keen on grammar points that were related to the examinations in the previous class.*

*Open-ended question of the questionnaire*

From this conversation, on the one hand, it can be seen that students felt helpless when being required to finish this daily report; on the other hand, embarrassment would occur between teachers and students if the English dialogues were not natural in communication. Thus, students wished they could have more live and interesting activities in high schools.

#### 7.3.3 Category 3: Students' expectations in learning and teaching in English

The third dominant category emerging from the coding process was ‘Students’ expectations in learning and teaching in English’, which had 106 responses. This category provided information on suggestions proposed by the participants, as well as their wishes towards future English learning and teaching. It also emphasized the desired support strategies from the participants’ views in relation to their English learning. The considerable number of responses was from both the open-ended question section and the interviews. Details of the themes and number of responses are shown in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6 *Students' expectations in learning and teaching in English*

Students' expectations in learning and teaching in English	responses
Themes:	106

●	Hope to communicate more in English	82
●	Hope to be taught foreign cultures	13
●	Hope to have more chances to speak in class	4
●	Hope to have more foreign teachers	2
●	Hope to share and express opinions in class	2
●	Hope to be taught current news	2
●	Hope to get more feedback from teachers	1
●	Hope to have bilingual class	1
●	Hope to be taught something new	1

#### ***7.3.3.1 Hope to communicate more in English***

The largest theme generated within this category was that students hoped they could have more chances to communicate English in and out of English classes (N=82). Suggestions were made not only for the English learning and teaching in high schools but also in the university. Within these 82 responses, several groups of the participants' opinions were shared and gathered, including the benefits of increasing chances of communication, the consequences of more communication, and its linguistic function. Firstly, the students proposed that it would be beneficial to increase the opportunity of communication for the following three purposes:

- To learn English more efficiently with a stronger interest
- To have a better understanding between teachers and students
- To have more chances to practice their spoken English and listening

A lot of students expressed that due to the limited time in the English class and much pressure teachers had to face at present, they did not know how to communicate with friends and teachers in English. Sometimes, it was worse to cause misunderstandings between teachers and students. Thus, the participants believed that if they would have more chances to communicate with teachers in and out of classes, there would be more benefits for both.

Secondly, other participants discussed this phenomenon from the view of the consequences of more communication in and out of classes. A participant coming from the Faculty of Economics and Management pointed out sharply that

increasing communication chances for students in and out English classes definitely resulted in the possibility of finding a good job more easily for the majors like him. *“In particular, those who wanted to find decent jobs like bank officers, international traders and stock consultants, the first requirement of the employers was to speak English fluently and to communicate well in English”* commented he. He further expressed that the major reason he has not been offered any job was his poor communication skills. He emphasized: *“when I was approaching to the face-to-face interview step, I knew my disadvantage of poor intonation and communication skills would be a failure in the process of hunting jobs”*. He strongly believed that more practice in communication guided by English teachers could improve his spoken language.

However, the consequence of the increase of chances to communicate is essential for students' future career plans. It was suggested that Chinese education developed in an examination-orientated direction so that anything that was related to examinations would be vital to students' futures. One student remarked in the open-ended question section as follows:

*I did not know how to communicate with others in English since no chances for me to practice it in high schools. However, when I sat for the College Entrance Examination, it required all students to attend speaking test at that time. It was no wonder that I failed in the speaking test finally, which influenced me significantly on choosing my major that I like in the university.*

#### *Open-ended question of the questionnaire*

Thirdly, some participants mentioned that communication was the purpose of learning a foreign language. Also, it assists towards making our society more developed and drives humankind to progress in a wide range of areas when people have interaction and learn from others. Without this function, humankind could not progress, let alone to learn English. One English major student addressed that the influential sociolinguist Hymes held different opinions on the definition of communicative competence to Chomsky in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hymes (1972) defines it not only as an inherent grammatical competence but also as the ability to use grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations. From this definition, it emphasizes the importance of communication and the function of using it in the society. Whereas Chomsky (1965) regards that only performance would reflect competence is in an idealized situation that speaker-hearer is unaffected by grammatically irrelevant conditions. In other words,



Chomsky' theory makes a fundamental distinction between competence and performance.

### *7.3.3.2 Hope to be taught foreign cultures*

The second theme 'Hope to teach foreign cultures' (N=13) concentrated on two perspectives: in class and out of class. Some students suggested that it would be more interesting to learn English if their teachers taught them other countries' cultures in the classrooms. A participant expressed that compared with what they regarded as boring grammar rules, teaching foreign cultures would cultivate her interest in learning English. Also, some participants proposed that the number of assignments related to foreign cultures should be increased as it is an efficient way for students to learn more about other nations' cultures. Subsequently, it can broaden students' minds and improve their English language capacity.

### *7.3.3.3 Hope to have more chances to speak in class*

Although the third theme 'Hope to have more chance to speak in class' received a small number of responses (N=4), it shows how important the speaking part is in English language learning. It emphasized the students' eagerness to have more opportunities to speak English in classes, as well as to be provided with more workshops to improve their speaking skills. As in-class time is so limited and the rote-learning teaching model is still structured in the English curriculum as mentioned previously, the participants believed that some training and workshops in relation to how to improve speaking would be beneficial to them. However, many students have shown a strong desire to obtain more chances to speak within the class. They suggested that teachers could use five minutes at the beginning of each class to organize a group mini talk or a round-table speech for students. A student majoring in Computing disclosed that most university and high school students could not have more opportunities to speak English out of the English classrooms if they were not provided any opportunity to speak in the classrooms. The reasons can be found in the following interview transcript:

*I think there are two major reasons. Firstly, students could not easily find anyone who has a better command of English speaking skills than their English teachers' out of the class. As we know, our mother tongue is Chinese; thus, people use Chinese for daily life instead of English. Secondly, it is difficult to find out any place that is suitable for practicing my English speaking. In the class, students were equal to be educated. Friends and classmates would not laugh at me if I made any mistakes. However, if I went to other places, such as English Club, people might laugh at me due to my strong accent.*



#### ***7.3.3.4 Hope to have more foreign teachers***

This theme was only developed from 2 responses of the participants' views. Although the number is so small, the suggestions proposed were significant. Compared with Chinese teachers, more merits were mentioned related to foreign teachers based on students' views. First, foreign teachers could know more about English cultural knowledge than Chinese teachers. As most students hoped to be taught foreign culture in the English classrooms, hiring foreign teachers would be likely to satisfy these students' needs. Secondly, from the point of improving English intonation and pronunciation, native speaker teachers have incomparable advantages compared with Chinese teachers' English. With increasing opportunities to practice speaking by following foreign teachers' instructions, students would be more likely to improve their spoken language faster. Thirdly, most Chinese teachers teach students following an examination-orientated curriculum; however, foreign teachers are more likely to use a different curriculum design that would have more effective outcomes, such as emphasising students' needs to cultivate their learning interest as the dominant goal.

#### ***7.3.3.5 Hope to share and express opinions in class and to be taught current news***

These two themes had 2 responses respectively, which were also generated from responses of the participants' opinions. The theme 'Hope to share and express opinions in class' reflected that students hoped that the relationship between teachers and students could be equal. It was anticipated teachers and students could be more like friends rather than the relationships presented as that of father and son. Under the influence of Confucian heritage, Chinese students must obey their teachers' instructions otherwise they were treated as bad students. Thus, suggestions based on this theme are that the participants wished to enjoy similar equal rights in learning situations to their teachers. The other theme 'Hope to be taught current news' focused on the teaching content. It was mentioned in the Category 1 and Category 2 that some problems existed at present in high schools and the in the university. For example, simple teaching materials and handouts were discussed. Thus, some participants believed that if they could have access to current news, the English class would be likely to be more authentic.

#### ***7.3.3.6 Hope to get more feedback from teachers***

This theme received the smallest number of responses within this category (N=1). The expectation involved was from two perspectives: written feedback and oral

feedback. A participant with a science background stated that he hoped that he could receive some feedback after he submitted assignments to teachers. As he said: “*My English teacher usually gave scores in the assignment instead of writing down some comments*”. Moreover, he reflected that his English teacher has never given him any feedback after he finished presentations and duty report in the class.

#### 7.3.3.7 Hope to have bilingual classes and to be taught something new

The last two themes within this category also obtained one response each, however, the suggestion of providing bilingual classes was significant, particularly, and for those who were minority students in China. As we know, English is the third language for most Chinese minority students. If a bilingual education was offered for them, it is believed that a more significant improvement in English learning will be made. Moreover, providing bilingual classes can benefit Han nationality students as well. The reasons were expressed as follows:

*At present, non-English majors were required to learn a course called ‘English for Specific Purpose’ in relation to their own majors when they were in the last year in the university. Although this course is a selective unit, we tried very hard to learn it well as it is essential for us to find a good job. However, due to a lack of good English foundation, we found it is difficult to understand and to pass the examination. I think if it was provided some bilingual classes in the first year and second year for us, it will be easier to handle it when we became seniors.*

*Student 2-EM (senior)*

Other students supposed that it would be more interesting if their English teachers could teach something new instead of being stereotypical by being repetitive in the information they directed at the class. For instance, students would like to share learning experiences from their teachers rather than being informed the importance of sitting for examinations.

#### 7.3.4 Category 4: Characteristics of a good English teacher

The fourth dominant category ‘Characteristics of a good English teacher’ had 81 responses. Within this category, as the raw textual data was obtained from both the interview and the open-ended question in the questionnaire, 13 themes were generated from this bountiful phenomenon. This category focused on investigating how a good English teacher could be from the students’ perspectives. The details of the themes and the frequency of responses are shown in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7 *Characteristics of a good English teacher*

Characteristics of a good English teacher	responses
<b>Themes:</b>	81
● Optimistic and patient	23
● Humorous	18
● Paying attention to individual students	18
● Being like a guider	12
● Interacting with students	12
● Understanding and communicating with students	9
● Responsible and easy-going	8
● Passionate	5
● Strict	4
● Kind	3
● Respecting students	2
● Friendly	1
● Warm-hearted	1

#### 7.3.4.1 *Optimistic and patient*

The most popular English teachers from the participants' views are those who are optimistic and patient (N=23). According to students' opinions, without patience and optimism, teachers were unlikely to be regarded as a good English teacher. Some students argued that *"If the teachers are not patient, students would feel coward and fear seeking help from them when student have difficulties in learning. Also, if the teachers are not optimistic, it is difficult to influence students to be positive."* A participant recalled his high school life: *"We already had much pressure in high schools as the College Entrance Examination was close at that time, I could not imagine how I could survive if my teachers felt negative on me. I was so lucky that my optimistic teachers usually supported me as possible as they could"*. Thus, to be an optimistic teacher, it not only benefits the teachers themselves but also enables them to encourage students.

#### 7.3.4.2 Humorous and paying attention to individual students

Both of these two themes received 18 responses from the participants respectively. Although the number of the responses was smaller than the first theme, not so many English teachers in China were thought to incorporate a sense of humour into their lessons; neither were they thought to pay much attention to the individual student. Therefore, the views from the participants in these themes are valuable to be discussed and explored. First, a student from the Faculty of Education disclosed the reason why they liked teachers and who utilized a sense of humour in their lessons:

*I think humorous teachers will be more popular among students in general rather than those who are of coldness. Since humorous teachers could create a better classroom atmosphere than those who are not, it is believable that English learning is likely to be more efficient in this relaxed environment than stuffy one. However, the reality is very few English teachers use a sense of humour into English lessons*

*Student 1-E (Junior)*

The second example was from a participant who answered the question in the open-ended question section in the questionnaire. It reflected his experiences and some common phenomenon that is evident in most Chinese universities and high schools. The example of the conversation is given as follows:

*I felt a good English teacher must first be able to pay attention to students, particularly, to some individual students when they met difficulties rather than concerned on the only top students. As we know, nowadays, different schools, teachers, and students all need to face competition in various examinations. Therefore, most English teachers would argue they did not have time and energy to put much more effort to those whose English ability was poor or medium as top students could bring them awards. However, this reason is just a pretext to be a good English teacher. I would never believe that a good English teacher could make use of top students to receive awards for themselves.*

*Open-ended question of the questionnaire*

Thirdly, some participants commented that a good English teacher should pay attention to individual students; otherwise, it is a contradiction to the plan initiated by the Ministry of Education. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the MOE has required that English classrooms should be ‘student-centered’, and schools and teachers should put effort to develop quality education, and pay

attention to develop students' individual learning ability. Therefore students strongly believed and hoped that a good English teacher should not discriminate against poor students and should pay more attention to those individuals who need help.

#### **7.3.4.3 Being like a guider and interacting with students**

The theme 'Being like a guider' and 'Interacting with students' were the third largest themes in this category, which had 12 responses respectively. Based on the participants' ideas, a good English teacher should guide students in their learning process and interact with students more often. It revealed that some English teachers preferred teaching students in a rote-learning model instead of being open to give students instructions related to more effective teaching models to guide them in the English learning process. The participants argued that they disliked being 'fed' since they could not have chances to monitor their own learning. Interacting with students was another theme generated from the raw data, which emphasized the importance of a student-teacher interaction in relation to being a good English teacher. This view was supported by a participant, who expressed: *"My English teacher seldom interacted with students. He just came to give a lecture by reading the textbooks. I did not learn a lot in his lecture."* Another student claimed that without interaction, teachers could not know what students have learnt and understand their needs, such as students' difficulties in learning and the evaluations from teachers.

#### **7.3.4.4 Understanding and communicating with students**

The sixth theme that emerged within this category was 'Understanding and communicating with students'. It was regarded that a good English teacher should have a better understanding with students. A negative example was given by a participant majoring in Economics, who stated: *"My English teacher could hardly understand me most of time. He just blamed me if I was absented-minded in the English class. However, he never came to me and talked with me to find out the reason why I was absented-minded in the class. I did not think he was a good English teacher."* It is easier to cause misunderstandings between teachers and students if teachers do not pay attention to improve their own communication skills. This participant further emphasized that a good English teacher would not blame students indiscriminately without engaging in any communication first.

#### **7.3.4.5 Responsible and easy-going**

'Responsible and easy-going' was the seventh theme in this category, which had 8 responses. Within these 8 responses, the participants stated the reasons why being

responsible and easy-going was essential for a good English teacher. “*Without a sense of responsibility of teachers, students could not be educated well in schools, nor could become a useful talent person in the society*” was claimed by a participant in the interview. This reason was supported by the following example from this participant’s own experience:

*When I was in the high school, various kinds of computer games were offered in the Internet bars close to the schools. The owner of the bars did not require us to pay much money for the game since it was a trick to attract more teenagers to go there. At that time, I was not good at self-discipline so that I skipped a lot of English classes to play computer games in these bars. However, my parents believed that I was sitting in the English classes since my English teacher never cared about what I did. Because of her irresponsibility, it might have resulted in failing in the College Entrance Examination at the first time, which has caused me struggling it for a long time.*

*Student 2-C (Junior)*

Easy-going was another important characteristic mentioned by the students. Students disclosed that compared with strict and cold teachers, easy-going teachers could reduce the possibilities of students’ embarrassment, fear, and shyness while talking in the English class. Also, some participants agreed that easy-going teachers would have a warmer personality that could bring a closer relationship between students and teachers in daily life.

#### **7.3.4.6 Passionate, strict, kind and respecting teachers**

These four themes just received a small number of responses from the participants, which has been displayed in Table 7.7. The views still focused on explaining the reasons why they thought these English teachers were welcomed by students as good teachers. Most students argued: “*Treating every student equally in the English classrooms is the beginning to show the respect to students. Without respect, poor students will lose heart to learn English quickly.*” It is interesting to find that male students preferred teachers to be strict while female students believed good teachers should be passionate and kind. A Science background male student held the opinion that good teachers should be strict as most students were short of self-discipline in high schools. He commented: “*Without strictness, students are easy to skip classes and be misled.*” However, female students stressed that passionate and kind teachers were more likely to be energetic and to cultivate students’ creativity.

#### 7.3.4.7 Friendly and warm-hearted

The last two themes generated in this category were ‘Friendly’ and ‘Warm-hearted’, which had only one response respectively. Although the number of responses was the smallest within this category, it is believed that the participants’ remarks are valuable and significant for teachers. An example of the conversation is shown as evidence:

*I like friendly and warm-hearted teachers as they could be easily close to me. When I was in trouble, warm-hearted teachers are more likely to give me a hand. I believe I can be a good friend of my English teacher's if she is friendly to me.*

*Student 3-EM (Junior)*

#### 7.3.5 Category 5: Learning attitude

The fifth most dominant category that emerged was ‘Learning attitude’ (N=80), which was mainly based on the answers from the semi-structured interviews. Also, some responses were from the open-ended question section. This category put emphasis on the views of how the students evaluated their English learning. As students’ attitude plays an important role in their learning process, the two major themes generated from these codes provided significant information. Also, the consequences they resulted in will be discussed in the following chapter. The number of responses indicates that more participants held a positive view on their English learning. The details of the themes and codes are shown in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8 *Learning attitude*

Learning attitude	responses
<b>Themes:</b>	80
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Positive attitudes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enjoy English learning</li> <li>Interest to learn English</li> <li>Passionate to learn English</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	42
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Negative attitudes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English is not important</li> <li>English learning is difficult</li> <li>Learning English is boring</li> <li>No motivation to learn English</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	39



### 7.3.5.1 Positive attitudes

The theme ‘Positive attitudes’ emerged as the first one due to its largest number of responses (N=42). Due to its close relationship to other categories discussed previously, such as learning and teaching methods, teaching models, and characteristics of a good English teacher, some cases mentioned in this theme might overlap with other themes. However, within this theme, the participants evaluated their English learning based on their actual learning and their teachers’ teaching experiences. Thus, the information provided was particularly worthwhile for further investigation. It is interesting to find that the largest number of the participants’ positive responses in relation to their learning experiences were English learning in the university. *“Due to the access to the Internet and high-technology devices in the university, I felt English learning was more interesting”*, was disclosed by a student in the interview. Moreover, some students expressed that being supported by lecturers and experiencing a ‘student-centered’ teaching model brought them more joy to their learning in the university as they felt they were in control of their own learning process. Compared with learning interest and learning enjoyment, it seemed learning passion was not too strong among the students’ ideas. However, there was still a small number of responses gathered that stated that they were passionate to learn English due to the comfortable learning environment in the university classrooms.

### 7.3.5.2 Negative attitudes

Besides the positive attitudes, negative experiences were also shared by the participants. The largest number of responses received was due to the difficulties of English learning (N=26), which took up two thirds of the total number of negative responses (N=39) within this category. The difficulties that were indicated including lack of proper English learning skills, being short of relevant computer-assisted technological learning experience, and lack of support from both schools and parents. A student majoring in Computing claimed that he did not know how to master English vocabularies, which resulted in being short of English words when he wrote essays and it also became an obstacle in reading. Moreover, some participants expressed that their teachers and parents were only concerned about their scores in the English examinations instead of improvement in learning, which made them lose heart and further they found that English was more difficult to learn.

It was also interesting to see that these difficulties were found in those who received secondary education and higher education differing in teaching and learning methods, models and learning environment. The participants reflected due to these huge differences between the two levels of education, that they found



learning English seemed more difficult for them. This remark to the open-ended question was reflected in the following comment:

*I received my primary and secondary education in En'Shi, which was a remote country area in Hubei Province. When I came to the capital city-Wuhan to receive the higher education, I found it was difficult for me as I did not have any chances to access web-based technology when I was in high schools; however, I needed relevant skills to monitor my own English learning in the self-access learning center. Also, the high school teachers never required us to finish any assignments related to listening and speaking, but now, I needed to find some partners to complete these assignments. Due to my poor spoken English, few friends would like to be my partners, which usually made me in trouble.*

*Open-ended question of the questionnaire*

Apart from the difficulties in English learning, some students felt pessimistic about their English learning as they believed the English subject was boring and there were not enough interesting learning and teaching materials provided. Also, the Grammar-Translation Method used in some schools and universities would be likely to make this situation even worse. There were a small number of students expressing that they did not regard English learning as an important subject to them. The participants who held this opinion indicated that English was seldom used in their future jobs so that it was not important to them. A small group of participants were forced to learn English by their parents. Consequently, they did not have any passion in the learning. They addressed: *“My parents hope me to be a diplomat or an interpreter in the future so that they emphasize the importance of acquiring English language skills; however, my dream is to be a painter. Therefore, English learning is just like a routine job for me without any passion. Not surprisingly, I could not learn it well.”*

### 7.3.6 Category 6: Learning motivation

The last category that emerged from the qualitative data analysis process was ‘Learning motivation’ which had the smallest number of responses (N=67). Although, the number of the responses were small, a large body of information provided within this theme was significant as investigating students’ learning motivation was essential in their learning experiences. The responses from the raw data mainly focused on getting a high score in examinations and finding a good job. The relevant themes are shown in the following table.

Table 7.9 *Learning motivation*

Learning motivation	responses
<b>Themes:</b>	67
● To get a high score (mark) in examinations	35
● To find a good job	19
● To study abroad	6
● To pass examinations	5
● To improve my capacity in English learning	3
● To make foreign friends	2

#### 7.3.6.1 *To get a high score (mark) in examinations*

The first theme emerged was ‘To get a high score (mark) in examinations’, which had the largest number of responses (N=35). Many participants disclosed that the only purpose of learning English was to get a high score in examinations, which was regarded as a significant achievement for them. Also, they shared that the reason why top students had a lot of priorities was just because they could obtain a higher score. An English major student was supportive to this point. She claimed: “*I always got the highest score in my grade in the high school so that I had the priority to choose my study fellows, speaking partners, and I was set as a good model for other students*”. Under this examination-oriented education method, it is strongly suggested that students who were driven to learn English were less willing to learn English.

Apart from the priorities top students could get, there were other benefits for those achieving a higher score in examinations. For instance, they could receive a large sum of scholarship awarded based on a provincial and national level if they had a higher score in the College Entrance Examinations. Also, students with a higher score could choose their majors prior to other students when entering the university. The participants reflected that commonly teachers were concerned more about students with a higher score than those who did poorly in examinations.

#### 7.3.6.2 *To find a good job*

‘To find a good job’ was the second largest theme that emerged within this category, which had 19 responses. Some cases of this theme overlapped with the

first theme in this category as these two motivations have some common elements. Specifically, lots of students mentioned they chose to receive higher education just because their parents believed it was the only way to find a good job in future. A student from the Faculty of Economics and Management emphasized that her parents hoped that she could take a career leading to become a bank manager after graduation. As a result, she chose Business Management as her major. She further stated that *“I was not good at English but I knew fluent English was the basic requirement for my ideal job position. Thus, I tried all my best to learn English in the university.”* Moreover, some of the participants expressed that their English capacities were closely related to their English scores in examinations, and these scores were in relation to their future jobs. A senior student supported: *“Nowadays, almost all employers require students to show how good their English abilities are; however, a good English level needs to be proved by the English scores we had in the university. Therefore, as to get a high score and to find a good job, I must learn English well.”*

#### 7.3.6.3 To study abroad

Compared with the first and second themes in this category, the theme ‘To study abroad’ emerged but did not obtain a large number of responses. However, the participants’ responses provided us with information regarding their learning motivation in another direction, which focused on the reasons and benefits to study abroad. A small group of students who held this idea indicated that they tried hard to learn English in order to study in western countries, for example, America, England, and Australia, as it can broaden their minds and improve cultural exchange. In addition, a student majoring in Science expressed that the main reason that he wanted to study abroad was to learn more advanced technological skills as he dreamed of being a scientist.

#### 7.3.6.4 To pass examinations

Apart from the learning motivations mentioned above, ‘To pass examinations’ emerged as the fourth theme in this category, which had a small number of responses. This theme was similar to the first theme as some cases in this theme overlapped with those in the first one. However, the cases in this theme emphasized more on ‘passing examinations’ instead of ‘achieving a high score’. An example is presented in the following comment:

*The only reason I attended the English classes was to pass the final examinations. I thought a pass for me was enough as my future job was little related to English. Also, my parents did not have a higher expectation on my academic record. Thus, I became lazier when entering the university.*

Also, it is interesting to find out the participants whose responses frequently appeared in this theme were university students; while those involving in the first theme were almost all high school students.

#### **7.3.6.5 To improve our capacity in English learning and to make foreign friends**

The last two themes in this category were ‘To improve our capacity in English learning’ (N=3) and ‘To make foreign friends’ (N=2). Although the number of responses were rather small, the cases were found interesting in the two themes. Compared with the themes discussed previously in this category, the cases in these two themes showed that students would like to choose to learn English instead of being driven to learn. A participant from the Faculty of Foreign Languages stated that “*Learning English well could both show ourselves to the world, and improve our learning abilities. This includes the ability of tackling problems, overcoming difficulties and monitoring ourselves.*” Thus, she believed that if a student wanted to learn well, he/she needed to have an intrinsic motivation. The other small group of responses focused on the aim of learning English was to make foreign friends. The students discussed that they tried hard to learn English because they hoped they could make more foreign friends. It was emphasized that chatting with foreign friends online could bring them a lot of fun and also assist in creating a more relaxed learning environment for them.

### **7.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the whole qualitative data analysis process within this study. It investigated the textual data that came from both the participants’ responses to the open-ended question section in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview questions. This chapter first discussed the background information of the participants, and then it focused on the exploration of analytical process. The qualitative data process was constructed by using the NVivo software underpinned by adopting constructivist grounded theory and thematic analysis. Six core categories emerged, as well as a large number of sub-themes after the exploration. The results indicate that a number of reasons are related to learning and teaching experiences in high schools and in the university, such as teaching and learning methods, teaching models, learning motivations. The results also show that most students highly evaluate their English learning although some learning and teaching problems still exist, such as being short of learning resources and the opportunity for speech practices. The participants’ expectations and suggestions for future learning and teaching were finally

provided, as well as key characteristics of being a good English teacher were also generated.

The next chapter will provide an analytic discussion on the findings based on the results obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative stages. The findings will be discussed in a comparative way by examining the data analysis results in this study and linked to those relevant aspects that were previously addressed in the literature review chapters. The purpose is to find out whether the discoveries in different phases of this study are supportive to the research results in the previous studies. The results of this study will be shown in an order according to the six research objectives. Finally, detailed discussions will be presented based on these findings and their fulfilment of the aims and the objectives in this study.

## Chapter 8 Discussion and Recommendations

### 8.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 have introduced the quantitative and qualitative data analysis processes. At the quantitative data analysis stage, the results of the analysis have been presented in the order of the questionnaire sections by using different statistical methods. Based on the analysis at the quantitative stage, the qualitative stage discussed the six core categories that emerged from the participants' responses. Some of these categories supported the data that was gathered at the quantitative stage, for example, Category 1: Learning and teaching in English in the university, Category 2: Learning and teaching in high schools, and Category 4: Characteristics of a good English teacher. However, the other categories generated at the qualitative stage also provided valuable information such as participants' evaluations, suggestions and expectations regarding future learning and teaching.

This chapter investigates the extent to which the research aims and objectives have been addressed and achieved. Based on the results obtained in the data analysis, six dominant findings were discovered in understanding English learning and teaching in both high schools and in the university. These findings are shown in the order of the six research objectives. Discussions are followed by examining whether the research questions have been answered satisfactorily. Furthermore, the researcher revisited the data and compared them with the theories mentioned in the literature review to see the extent to which the research findings strongly supported previous studies or were contrary to those arguments made by other researchers.

### 8.2 Research objective 1: To investigate the learning of English of university students when they were in high schools

The first research objective of this study is to investigate university students' views on English learning when they were in high schools. This objective was addressed by both the quantitative and qualitative stages. The following five questions related to the research objective were focused on:

- How do students evaluate their English learning in high schools?
- What kind of English learning methods did students use in high schools?
- What are the views of students on the English learning environment in high schools?
- What do students think of the English assessments in high schools?
- What were the problems in students' English learning in high schools?

### 8.2.1 Evaluation of English learning in high schools

As learning and teaching are incorporated, the evaluation from students is essential for teachers to improve their teaching in high schools (Joyce et al., 2000). Based on the results from both the quantitative and qualitative stage, it revealed that the participants held a highly positive attitude on their English learning in high schools. However, data analysis from both the two phases provided evidence that most students disagreed with the adoption of independent learning and computer-assisted learning method in high schools. These results are strongly compatible with research findings of D. Bond (1981) and H. Bond's (1991) studies on Chinese students in high schools. It showed that a majority of Chinese students relied heavily for their learning on teachers' teaching, thereby resulting in a lack of development of independent learning abilities. The limitations regarding the students' evaluations that emerged from qualitative data are listed below:

- The students' learning process heavily depended on teachers' teaching.
- Students were unable to access computers and the Internet at both home and schools.
- Students were stressed and they had heavy studying burdens.

The participants highly acknowledged that the students' learning process heavily depended on teachers' teaching when they were in high schools. It was generally believed that Chinese students were required to obey the school's rules, such as attending classes on time, taking notes, keeping quiet in classrooms, and finishing assignments in time. In addition, those who followed the teachers' pace to learn were regarded as poor students otherwise they were viewed by the teachers as bad students in schools. In the English class, the learning contents were rigidly restricted within the textbooks utilized rather than being allowed to read and learn passages out of the textbooks. This becomes a barrier for the students who are more proficient in English as they were likely to think the textbooks were quite simple for them. However, some students who are less proficient in English learning might still struggle with the learning materials since they thought the learning resource provided was rather difficult for them. Subsequently, according to Godwin-Jones (2011), this is likely to result in a polarization among the students of widely different language abilities.

Rich quantitative data from this study also revealed that the significant differences of students' majors and their length of study on campus were strongly correlated with the students' evaluations as to the extent of how much they relied on their teachers' teaching in their high schools. Generally, students majoring in Computer and Science relied on their high school teachers' teaching to the largest

degree; while English majors disagreed that their learning relied heavily on their high school teachers' teaching. Also, the first year and the third year university students disagreed that they relied heavily on teachers' teaching when they were in high schools. These findings are congruent with a Chinese-Taiwan research that was undertaken by Yang and Tsan (2008), who found that students majoring in English used different English learning strategies and this had a more effective learning outcome than students majoring in other subjects. Based on students' perceptions, these significant differences are possibly related to two factors: English competency levels and students' learning experiences.

In most Chinese universities, the choices of majors have a close relationship to the English scores in the College Entrance Examination. In other words, the participants whose majors were English in this research achieved a higher score in the College Entrance English Examination when they were in high schools than those in other majors. It can be seen that their English levels were definitely above the students majoring in Computer and Science. Thus, it is likely that they did not need as much help as the students from the Faculty of Computing. In addition, it is usual that the students who chose English as their majors when they came to universities had more enjoyable and more English learning experiences than other students when they were in high schools (Wen, 2010). Therefore, it is not a surprise that the participants in this study whose major was English would hold a negative attitude on the extent to which they depended on teachers' teaching.

Given the evidence of this close correlation with students' majors and their English proficiency at the university level, a more recent Chinese research study by Li (2012) confirms this result. Li (2012) reports that the English test scores in the College Entrance Examination of English majors were much higher than the non-English majors and this might influence their learning styles as the group of the English majors were higher in their mean values achievement related to individual learning style than that of the non-English major students.

The second limitation proposed was the difficulties in accessing computers at home and in schools. Chinese high school students had few chances to use computers at home and in schools due to social and financial reasons. First, the owner of the Internet bars usually advertised popular online softwares to attract high school students to purchase or to become a potential customer. Actually, due to a lack of self-discipline and self-control, high schools students were likely to spend a large amount of time in these Internet bars playing computer games



instead of learning English by the advertised programs. Therefore, schools and parents did not encourage students to use computers as a learning assistance tool at home or in schools. Second, some rural high schools were subject to a long-term financial loan so that there were not enough funds to build computer labs and self-access learning centers for English learning and teaching (Gil, 2006). This situation was more serious in ethnic minority areas and remote areas in mainland China. However, it was against the requirement by the MOE (2000b), which requires schools to set up computer labs and self-access learning centers in order to innovate quality education.

In spite of these difficulties, students had a high expectation that they could benefit more if they were able to use computers and the Internet to assist their English learning. In the first place, online classes could be an effective supplementary learning resource for both the top and poor students as they are able to utilize these programs to learn English after classes or when the teachers' assistance is not available. Moreover, accessing computers and the Internet with more opportunities in English learning can cultivate students' interests since students prefer to learn with sounds and pictures more than with only textual words (F. Y. Yang & Tsai, 2008). Thirdly, some social media tools based on the web-technology, such as Skype, Twitter, and Facebook, could provide efficient platforms for both students and teachers to communicate and exchange ideas (MA, 2010). Particularly, these social media technologies could increase communicative opportunities for students and teachers.

The last limitation that emerged in the evaluation was that high school students felt stressed and overloaded with heavy burdens from both mental and physical aspects. The fierce competition and academic pressure in high schools drove students to be less likely to feel mentally and physically healthy. More specifically, a majority of Chinese students spent more than 10 hours learning per day in schools, and some needed to study till midnight after school time (Y. Gao, 2011). Even worse, the participants reported that almost all outdoor movement classes were usually replaced by Chinese, English and Mathematics classes because they are the major subjects in all kinds of examinations. This case is also against the requirement from the MOE (2001), which proposes that education is supposed to develop each student's ability in an all-round way-morally, mentally and physically.

### 8.2.2 English learning methods in high schools

This study investigated the usage of English learning methods when the university students were in high schools and rich data from two stages indicated that the range of learning methods used in high schools was limited. At the secondary education stage, most students still followed teachers' steps to learn English rather than developing their own autonomous learning ability to monitor their own learning process. They relied for their success on teachers' teaching rather than seeking help from friends and solving problems independently. Moreover, a large number of students adopted previous examination papers and exercise books as the main learning methods to improve their English ability. These examination papers and exercises mostly focused on drilling students' grammar skills instead of other skills. Thus, students had few chances to improve speaking and listening skills. As the examination-oriented education is still significant in mainland China, students and parents believe that the more exercises students complete the higher scores in the College Entrance Examination they are likely to achieve.

These interesting findings align with western studies on Chinese students' English learning. For example, Siemon (2010) reports that there has been few changes in English learning methods among Chinese EFL learners in high schools in the last ten years as the observation in his study shows that the instruction is 'teacher-centered' and teaching is predominantly too formal, and as a consequence, students are less likely to monitor their own learning pace. Similarly, Benson (2001) argues Chinese students are strongly influenced by this formal instruction and this might result in the lack of their development of learning autonomy.

Researching students' preferred learning styles in their high schools is essential. As students' learning preferences are different, knowledge of individual learning style results in their choosing different and more effective learning methods for learning. Also, these differences in learning preferences and cognitive learning are related to students' learning styles, (Dunn & Griggs, 2000). From the research findings, it shows that a passive learning style and a studial learning style were preferred by the participants when they were in high schools. These findings are supportive of Ellis's (1992) research on Chinese students, which presents that Chinese students would like a studial learning style. Ellis argues further that those who are inclined to adopt a studial learning style (a preference for accuracy and grammatical explanation) appear to be more successful learners than the students who adopted an experiential style (a tendency towards achieving fluency and engaging in real authentic communication) (R. Ellis, 1992, cited in Ren, 2002). Apart from studial and passive learning styles, the participants in this study reflected that they also favored visual learning in their high schools. This result

was also confirmed by Li (2012), who presented empirical data to indicate that Chinese EFL learners favored least individual learning while visual learning was preferred most.

Due to social environmental and contextual factors, most students utilized a passive learning style in their high schools. However, the expectations proposed from the participants, such as learning English by listening to songs, watching English movies, and being provided with more chances to talk with foreign teachers, indicate that they would like to develop their learning abilities in a direction of auditory and experiential styles utilizing authentic language materials. The learning style model from Tan could be the best support (1995), within which he states that the learning styles developed from western countries do not consider factors such as Chinese social context and Chinese historical culture. Additionally, this finding is consistent with Wang's (2012) research, within which a case study was utilized, and revealed that watching English television drama is an effective method to improve Chinese EFL learners' English ability.

### **8.2.3 English learning environment in high schools**

In this research, the participants believed they were in a strict and competitive English learning environment when they were in high schools. As learning environment is related closely to the learners' motivation and their learning styles, it is a key factor that influences the success of second language learners' learning (Campbell & Storch, 2011). Under this strict learning environment, students were highly driven to learn English instead of being more willing to learn by themselves. Based on the participants' views, their teachers and parents were strict with them since they hoped that students could achieve high scores in the examinations. From this point of view, the students followed an instrumental motivation when they were in high schools. This supports the research findings by Yashima (2009) and Lamb (2009), which report that second language learners would be more likely to have an instrumental motivation. Also, in Campbell and Storch's study (2011), it reveals that learners' motivation to learn Chinese as a second language is in the same case. Campbell and Storch (2011) claim that those learners have an instrumental motivation as they are driven by desires to be able to work internationally, and to become members of an international, multilingual workforce.

Apart from participants' views of a strict learning environment, a competitive learning environment was the other feature in Chinese high schools from the findings in this research. The participants had to compete with each other as they

must ensure their scores in the examinations were in a top rank; otherwise, they could not have access to some of the high ranking universities in China. Thus, students tried their best to compete and gradually became isolated from the increasingly competitive environment within the group. This was also supportive of Tan's theory (1995), where he discusses that Chinese students' learning styles are influenced by social environmental factors, such as competition and alienation. Thus, generally, Chinese high school students were motivated to learn English by obtaining high scores in examinations under a strict and a competitive English learning environment.

#### 8.2.4 English assessments in high schools

A general negative belief of the participants' perceptions on English assessments in high schools was found in this research. Assessment is of vital importance to both students and teachers as it indicates that the numbers of students who have already achieved learning goals, who are still struggling with their learning, and which activities or methods are more helpful than others (Plakans, 2010). Within this study, the types of assessments that emerged from the qualitative data were in a Sino-way, which emphasizes the usage of previous examination papers as a dominant method to measure students' ability. It is worthy of noting that only officials have the authority to decide the management, evaluation, and redirection of English teaching and learning (Geng, 2010). Hence, most examination papers are formulated from a nation or province-based instead of school-based papers being developed as is more likely to occur in western countries.

In high schools, most English examination papers were designed to cover important grammar and linguistic aspects that were found in the students' textbooks. Under these conditions, those students who had a good memory in reciting passages in the textbooks and memorizing large numbers of English words would be more likely to get high scores in the examinations. On the contrary, those who did not learn English by following textbooks might be more likely to fail in these examinations. Moreover, the format of English papers was focused on a large number of multiple choice questions. It could be argued that some students might choose the correct answers but it does not mean they comprehensively understand that question in the paper. Another interesting finding was that there were no speaking and listening parts in English examination papers in rural areas, such as Guizhou Province and Yunan Province. The contents in the examination papers only focused on writing and reading parts. This gap between urban and rural areas in relation to English learning and teaching was also investigated by Siemon (2010), who argues that children in Beijing and Shanghai began their English learning at an earlier age than those in

Chinese rural areas. This might result in formulating local English examination papers. Nevertheless, the lack of speaking and oral parts in English examination papers is contrary to the requirement of the MOE (2001).

Due to the importance of reading and writing parts emphasized by all Chinese English teachers in high schools, a large number of students bought some writing instructions from the senior students. Interestingly, findings of this research study showed that these instructions were like the Chinese ‘Bagu essay’, which was a writing template displayed by a fixed format with all the necessary words. The students who followed these instructions only needed to remember the structure before they sat for the examinations. By following this, students could more easily pass English examinations. From this point of view, these formats and the design of the assessments were related to the rote-learning educational system, which was not beneficial to enhance students’ independent learning, and individual learning in a constructivist learning process.

#### **8.2.5 English learning problems in high schools**

To discover learning problems could benefit both students and teachers. Three major problems were found in this study, namely, lack of confidence in English speaking, high pressure facing teachers and students, and the use of traditional teaching methods with simple teaching materials. Generally, on the one hand, the participants held a quite positive view on the importance of English speaking in high schools. On the other hand, the students must face the reality that they were not provided with enough chances in the English class to develop their speaking abilities, which results in their lack of confidence to speak English in front of others. These issues relate to the main secondary educational system in China, (Ministry of Education, 2000b), which has been presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. The figure below shows the current status of the English subject in the secondary educational system in China.

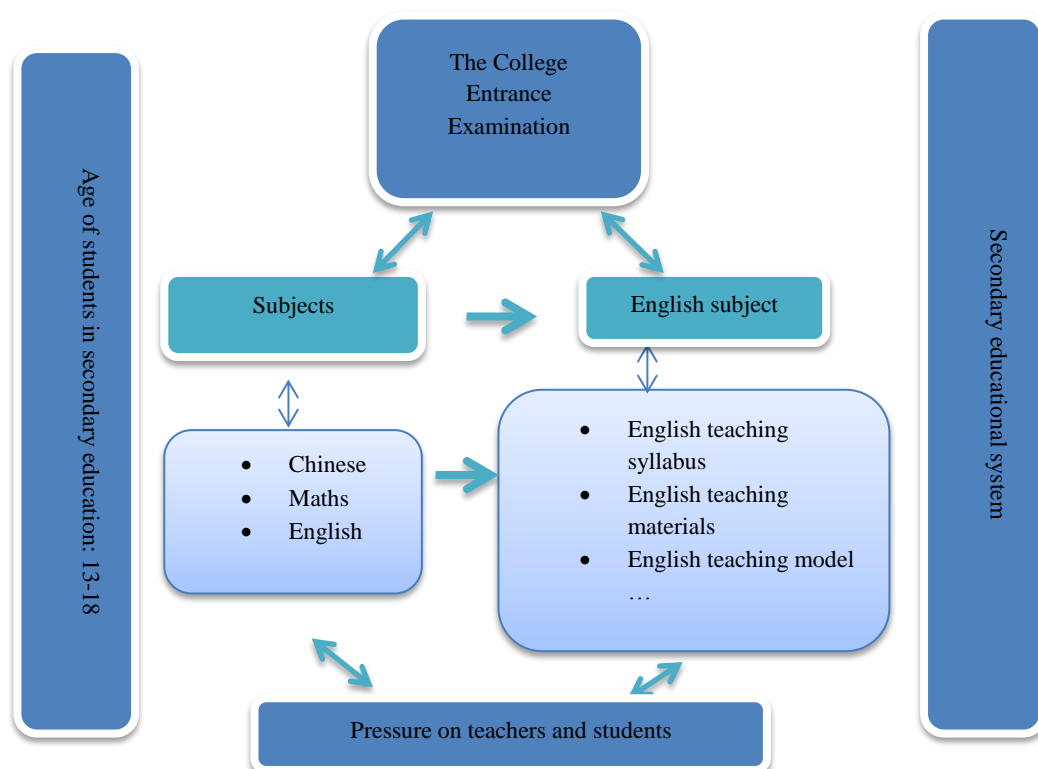


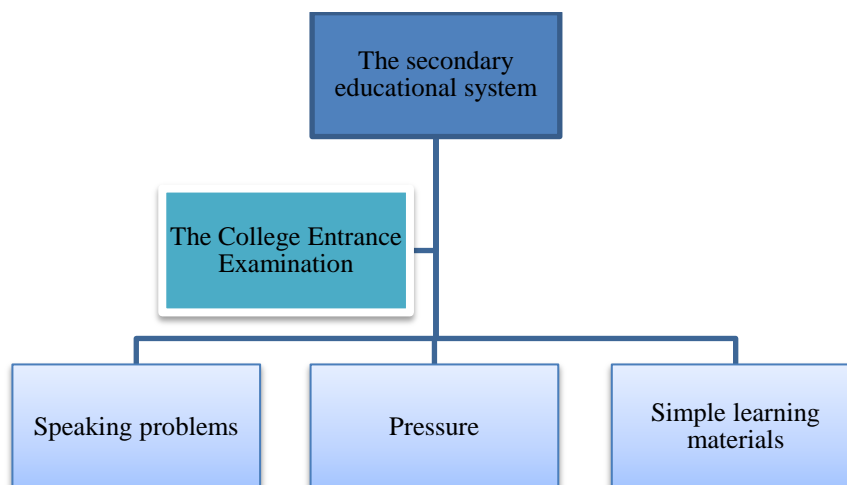
Figure 8.1 Status of the English subject in the secondary educational system

The College Entrance Examination was regarded as the most important examination for all the high school students because the scores influence their future significantly. The higher scores they achieve, the more likely they would be accepted into a high ranking university. As a consequence, they were thought to be more likely to have an increasing number of vocational opportunities in their future after graduation. Under this situation, students and teachers faced a lot of pressure in high schools. The teachers wanted more students to be accepted to high ranking universities, which could increase the likelihood of a good reputation for both schools and universities. However, students and their parents were pressured to work hard on all kinds of assignments and examinations in high schools in order to get satisfactory scores.

Under the significant influence of the College Entrance Examination, English learning materials were text-oriented, which was consequently presented in a restricted way for students. The participants showed dissatisfaction about the learning materials they utilized since the texts in the English books were often used in western schools long ago. Moreover, most exercises that were related to the texts were driven by a concentration on linguistic aspects. As the articles in the textbook were required learning in a preparation for the College Entrance

Examination, students felt that the content focused on drilling grammatical points instead of developing students' ability on how to use English. Thus, it is more likely some students with high scores would not be able to speak English fluently.

The relationship between the three problems and the major factor is presented in the following figure:



*Figure 8.2* Relationship between the three problems and the major factor

### 8.3 Research objective 2: To investigate teachers' teaching of English in high schools

The second research objective focuses on investigating English teachers' teaching in high schools, which was addressed at both stages. The following questions were asked:

- What do university students think of English teachers' teaching in high schools?
- What kind of English teaching methods did teachers use in high schools?
- What were the teaching problems in high schools based on students' views?

#### 8.3.1 English teachers' teaching in high schools

Similar to the evaluation of learning in high schools, an overall positive evaluation was given by the participants in this study. However, the research finding shows that a 'teacher-centered' teaching model is prevalent in Chinese high schools. Teachers still play an important role in the English classes and students are passive in acquiring knowledge. This model is underpinned by the theory of Behaviorism (B. G. Wilson & Myers, 2000), which focuses on learning

as the acquisition and strengthening of responses. Also, it supports the study undertaken by Mergel (1998), who argues that this teaching model is used in Chinese high schools as it emphasizes teaching students step by step, from simple materials to complex ones.

Apart from the theory of Behaviorism, another factor that results in the prevalence of the ‘teacher-centered’ teaching model is the significant influence of Chinese Confucian heritage in education. In Chinese history, the relationship between students and teachers was like ‘father and son’. That is, students should obey teachers’ words just like the son follows his father (Throssell & Zhao, 2011). Even if the teachers made a mistake, students could not point this out directly in order to show their respect for teachers. As it has been a historical cultural aspect in the thousands of years of Chinese civilization, the current relationship between teachers and students is similar to that throughout Chinese history. More specifically, it is a usual case that teachers stand in the center of the stage, as actors would be, while students listen carefully and take notes as the passive audience. Students could not discuss with others until the teacher calls their names. Thus, it is no wonder why Chinese students keep silent in English classes most of the time. This finding is a support of Cortazzi and Jin’s argument (1996b), who claim that this rote-learning process leads to heavy memorizing and disciplined reciting of texts, which lessens students’ own effort.

### 8.3.2 English teaching methods used in high schools

As teaching methods are related to the traditional teaching model (S. C. Yang & Chen, 2007), it is not surprising to find that very limited teaching methods in high schools were revealed in this study. It is worth noting that the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the use of previous English tests and final examinations papers were two major teaching methods stated by the participants when they were in their high schools. By adopting the GTM, teachers explained English texts by translating English into Chinese and focusing on emphasizing grammatical points. This method is enacted on the belief of learning a language by first mastering the grammatical rules and then applying these learnt grammar rules in grammar-translation exercises (Stern, 1983). This fits the format of the College Entrance Examination as a large number of questions have been designed for testing whether students have understood grammatical points. Therefore, teachers prefer to utilize this method in English teaching in high schools.

Additionally, this method is regarded as being beneficial in improving students’ reading and writing abilities effectively. This is based on the belief that the



written and reading form of language are superior to the spoken form (Stern, 1983). Students are regarded as more likely to understand complex sentences and the usage of morphology from activities such as bilingual translation. It proposes to suggest that with a better understanding of the morphology and the syntax, students' ability of analyzing and solving language problems are more likely to be improved as well. Thus, with these perceived benefits, this method is welcomed not only by teachers but also by students.

English examinations and tests were originally regarded as pivotal evaluation tools in students' learning processes and teachers' teaching. Agrawal (2004) argues that "Examinations influence the quality of teaching and learning in schools" (p. 361). A high acknowledgement emerged that previous English examination papers have been used as an essential teaching and learning tool in high schools, and they have played an important role in providing teachers with a large body of useful diagnostic information. For instance, from the examination papers, teachers could find out the weak points of students' understanding of English language overall, as well as being able to focus upon individual students. Since students' English levels and learning styles are different, the weak points they might display in an examination paper are accordingly different. Therefore, through that it can be beneficial for developing students' individual learning in Chinese high schools.

Besides these two major teaching methods used in high schools, the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) was also prominently disclosed in the research findings. This method was used in high schools as a minor teaching method due to the format of the College Entrance Examination and a lack of resources in remote areas. Compared with the GTM, the ALM puts more emphasis on listening and speaking. This method emphasizes that listening and speaking should be developed prior to fostering reading and writing ability in learning a language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). However, this theory does not match the current format of the English College Entrance Examination in China, which emphasizes the testing of students' reading and writing abilities. Consequently, this method is not popular among teachers and schools.

Another factor that generated from the participants was the lack of educational resources and it might influence the development of the ALM in Chinese high schools. Based on Kong and Chen's research (2012) in Chinese minority schools, it reveals that large quantities of ethnic students lack English learning resources to improve their spoken and listening ability. Also, in their research, it shows that

graduate and postgraduate students are less likely to devote themselves to education careers in counties in Xinjiang rural areas due to its poverty. The cases are not only applicable to Xinjiang ethnic zones, it is usual to see this unbalanced economic situation in other Han rural areas in China as related by Hu (2001). He illustrates explicitly that there is a huge gap between rural schools and urban schools in language learning and teaching in China.

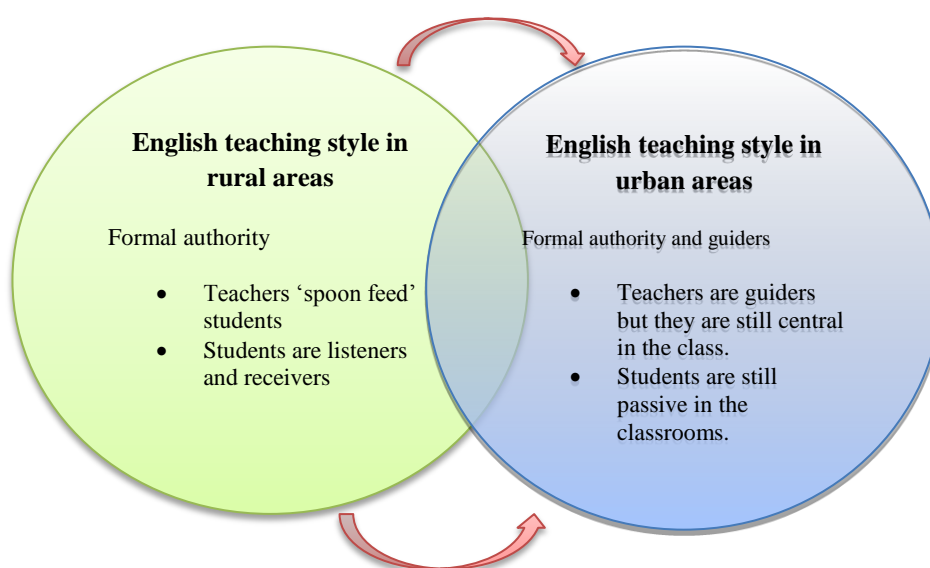
### 8.3.3 English teaching problems in high schools

Although a majority of students held a positive view on their teachers' teaching in high schools, problems were highlighted within this study. Generally, the Sino-form of teaching activities, teaching materials and teaching styles were the main limitations proposed by the students when they were in high schools. More specifically, the duty report was adopted as a main teaching activity in the English classes, which aims for improving students' communicative competence (Amber, 2010). This activity is in accordance with the requirement of the MOE (2001), however, the actual situation is that it does not foster students' oral competence. As the content of the duty report was required to talk about the English learning experiences and the subjects that were related to English, many students felt this activity was tedious after a semester. Thus, this activity was unlikely to enhance students' English oral competence.

Similar to the learning materials, teaching materials utilized were only in the form of English textbooks in high schools (Ministry of Education, 2000a). As students could seldom access computers and the Internet, English textbooks became the only resource for them. In the class, teachers tended to follow a textbook systematically in teaching students the articles and passages in each unit. After the class, students had to finish the exercises required in the textbooks. Without any variations, such as vivid pictures and attractive audio-sound, there is an increasing likelihood for students to feel bored from their three-year English learning and teaching.

The last limitation was the teaching style that occurred in Chinese high schools. As Chinese traditional teaching methods have been utilized and subsequently have influenced students' learning styles significantly, the students are more likely to use learning styles that are appropriate to the teaching methods. This is supportive to Brown et al. (2009), who claim that the teaching style is incorporated with the learning styles. Within this research, the findings reveal that the students behaved passively including keeping visual ways to acquire knowledge when they were in high schools. Students are silent in the class in

congruence with the Confucian heritage cultures (R. Ellis, 1989; Tan, 1995). This is strongly influenced by passive learning styles within the Confucian heritage culture. Consequently, the teaching style in Chinese high schools is unique with its own cultural and contextual characteristics. This cannot totally follow Grasha's (1996) five teaching style models which emphasizes that the four clusters of models could be independent. However, due to the unbalanced economic development of Chinese schools, teaching models utilized in Chinese schools might be blended. The characteristics of the teaching style models in Chinese high schools are presented as follows:



*Figure 8.3 English teaching styles in rural and urban high schools*

#### **8.4 Research objective 3: To investigate the learning of English of students in the university**

To get a better understanding of students' learning at the university level is the third research objective in this study, which was addressed by both qualitative and quantitative stages. Five questions were focused on:

- How do students evaluate their English learning in the university?
- What kind of English learning methods do students use in the university?
- What are the views of students on the English learning environment in the university?
- What do students think of the English assessments in the university?
- What are the learning problems in students' English learning in the university?

### 8.4.1 Evaluation of English learning in the university

The university students held a considerably positive view on their English learning in the university. Various learning activities and learning methods were adopted by students when they came to the university, for instance, computer-assisted learning, web-based learning, and self-accessed learning. Also, the learning environment was regarded as relaxed, unrestricted and friendly. Students usually learnt together with their friends instead of only relying heavily on their learning from teachers. Interestingly, students paid more attention to the speaking and listening parts of their English rather than their writing and reading. Although the students spoke highly of their English learning in the university, the following limitations were also found in the study:

- Limited time for English classes
- Lack of communication with teachers
- Few chances to practice spoken language

The first issue that was found in the university was that there was limited time allocated for English classes at the university. According to the requirement of the MOE (2007), the first year and second year university students should take English as a compulsory unit; but English was not counted as a credit for the third year and the fourth year students. Some top universities, like Qinghua University and Beijing University, were allowed to adjust this schedule according to their students' levels (Ministry of Education, 2007). However, the majority of the university academic staff must follow this plan based on the requirement of the MOE. This problem is mainly due to the English curriculum design. Generally, four-hour English classes were set for university students in two weekdays in the first two years. From the third year on, no English class would be available for the students on campus. Thus, if students felt interested in English learning and eager to know more about it, they had to attend other English classes out of the university or they would need to have a good command of autonomous learning ability; otherwise, they could not achieve significantly in English learning after the second year in the university.

The other factor that affects this issue is likely to be the new model constructed after 2007 in most Chinese universities. More specially, the traditional English class for university students was carried out under a "2+2" model, which was explained explicitly in the syllabus (Ministry of Education, 2007). That is, the four-hour English teaching periods was divided into two working days and each time was allocated 2 hours for English. The first 2 hours was used for teaching reading and writing; while the second 2 hours was for teaching speaking and listening. The university students only needed to attend these two periods of

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English classes. The other time was for other subjects related to their majors. However, after 2006, the MOE (2007) reissued the requirement of the English curriculum for the university, which put emphasis on developing the students' learning autonomy in China. Thus, some universities used a '2+X' model to replace the traditional one as they believed that the 'X' was infinite time for students to learn English. This is supported by the research undertaken in Chongqing University (Ministry of Education, 2007). The challenge was that the four-hour teaching content was squeezed into 2 hours, which was not beneficial for the development of acquisition, assimilation, transformation and exploration of students' abilities. As a consequence, limited time in English classes occurred.

The second issue was concerned about a lack of direct communication with teachers. Students held a negative view that their success depended entirely on their teachers and they disagreed that their teachers knew best about their learning. Actually, students wanted to communicate with teachers but the academic staff were not often available. In Chinese universities, academic staff do not need to stay in their offices when no classes are offered. Thus, when students wanted to meet their English teachers for consultations and in order to answer questions, they needed to make an appointment in the first place. However, due to staff's personal affairs, professional involvement and transportation difficulties, the students could not resolve their problems immediately with the teacher. Without effective assistance, students might choose not to contact academic staff anymore. Thus, the lack of communication with teachers easily results in misunderstandings between students and teachers.

This phenomenon not only exists out of the class but also happens in the English classrooms. Due to the large number of the students who attended the English classes, it is difficult for the staff to directly communicate with every student. It was proposed that within the classroom more emphasis was given to the top students rather than the poor students by the teachers. In terms of lacking direct communication, the other students usually felt that they were neglected by the teachers. This is against the requirement of the MOE (2007), which requires the teachers to teach students according to their individual learning styles and preferences.

The last limitation proposed was that there were few chances for the students to practice their oral English in the classes and out of the English classes. It was mentioned that university students focused on their speaking and listening parts in English; however, their needs could not be sufficiently satisfied. This was due to

three major reasons: large numbers of students in classes, differences in English speaking ability levels, and a lack of an authentic English speaking environment. In most Chinese universities, the numbers of students who attended English classes were usually from 60 to 100. Consequently, not every student could have a chance to speak in the class. The usual case was that the students with a good command of English would be more likely to discuss and to talk with teachers in English. Compared with these students, the student with a poorer English spoken ability was likely to keep silent and tended to sit towards the back of the classrooms. This case is against the requirement of the MOE (2007), which stresses the importance of fostering university students' oral language capacities in order to develop quality education at the university stage.

The second factor was that the university students' English speaking levels differed. As the university students came from various provinces and their secondary educational backgrounds were different, their English scores in the College Entrance Examination widely ranged from below 90 to over 140. Moreover, some students participated in the oral English tests for the College Entrance Examination while others did not. Thus, when they were arranged in the same university English classes, there was no doubt that some poor students were unable to find partners to practice their spoken English (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

A foreign language environment in the Chinese context was the last factor which resulted in limited chances for the university students to practice their oral English after the classes. As we know, Mandarin is the mother language for Chinese students; while English is a foreign language in this context. After the English classes, students speak Mandarin as a communicative tool in the society, which is not beneficial for their acquisition of English. Wang (2009) stresses that "an effective environment for foreign language acquisition is very essential, but English is not commonly used as a medium of communication outside the classrooms" (p. 60). Thus, it is difficult for the university students to practice English out of the English classes.

Moreover, the Chinese culture measures very high on the 'collectivism' scale compared to most western cultures, which is the other detrimental factor that discourages English speaking out of the classrooms. Xu's research (2008) supports this case. She claims that individual students would speak English in classes only when being called upon personally by their teachers as they are influenced profoundly by the strong Chinese collectivism-oriented culture. It is explained further that Chinese do not like speaking English because face-

consciousness is strong in terms of collectivism. In other words, an individual university student is likely to lose his/her face if he/she makes mistakes in oral English out of the classes.

#### 8.4.2 English learning methods used in the university

Within this study, the research findings present that various learning methods have been utilized by the university students. Students like utilizing computers and the Internet to assist their English learning, such as through English online courses, English online cafes, and English online chat rooms. Also, university students are inclined to use multimedia tools to learn English, such as listening to English music via their mobiles and MP3, as well as watching English movies on their MP4. These methods are beneficial to improve students' communicative learning. This is supportive to the requirement of the MOE (2007), which stresses that developing university students' listening and speaking capacity is vital in College English reform.

Apart from these learning methods, some university students still adopt previous examination papers and exercises from textbooks as supplementary methods to improve their English learning. This phenomenon is likely to be due to two main reasons: learning preferences and extrinsic learning motivation. As mentioned previously, learning preferences and learning styles are influential in the way students choose their learning methods (Dunn & Griggs, 2000). The research results show that the behavior of the students in the university is positively correlated with their choices of learning activities and learning preferences in their high schools. Thus, those who adopted utilizing previous examination papers as a learning method did not change their learning preference when they came to the university. In other words, their 'teacher-centered' learning activities in high schools were the same as those that they followed in the learner-centered environment at the university. It means that the different learning environment at university compared to high schools did not influence changes in this small number of students' learning preferences. However, within this research, a majority of students were significantly influenced by the change in learning opportunities and learning environment in the university setting. Particularly, their learning styles were changed from emphasizing visual learning activities to audio-based learning activities.

The second reason is that following an instrumental learning motivation resulted in this small number of students still using previous examination papers and their textbook exercises as their predominant learning methods. The result of this study

presents that these students with an instrumental learning motivation learn English in the university so as to plan their futures or to pass examinations. This case is supported by Campbell and Storch (2011), who assert that learners with an extrinsic motivation only learn a foreign language as an auxiliary tool for a purpose, such as passing examinations or planning future careers. In their research, they also demonstrate that learners with an intrinsic motivation will have a better command of a language than those who have an instrumental motivation.

#### **8.4.3 Learning environment in the university**

In this study, the participants reflected that the university learning environment was unrestricted and relaxed. Also, the university students regarded the learning environment as being friendly and helpful to them. As mentioned previously, the learning environment is related to the learners' motivation and their learning styles (Campbell & Storch, 2011), and consequently it would influence potential success in language learning. Thus, in this environment they relate as being unrestricted and relaxed, the university learners are not often driven by their teachers to learn English. The students revealed that they would like to adopt various learning methods in the university to improve their English. Based on the students' views, they suggested that their parents and teachers would not force them to learn English in the university. Nevertheless, their friends and teachers usually provide them with the help and guidance they need. Rather than achieving a high score in every English examination, university students are likely to focus more on the improvement of their communicative skills.

#### **8.4.4 English assessments in the university**

English examination papers are still the main form of assessment for the university students. Examination papers have been adopted in all kinds of English assessments to evaluate students. The format of the paper is university-based, thus, university staff could adjust the contents of the English examination papers according to their students' levels. This supports the requirement of the MOE (2007), which requires that the forms of English assessment should be various and suitable for students' English levels. However, the participants from the six major disciplines proposed that the current English evaluations, such as CET-4 and CET-6 in the university, were still needed to have more inputs in order to enhance students' communicative skills and listening comprehension ability. Also, other forms of English assessments are suggested from the research findings. The details are introduced in the following table.



Table 8.1 *Characteristics of different English examinations*

Examinations	Characteristics
<b>Current English examinations adopted in Chinese universities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final examinations</li> <li>CET-4 and CET-6</li> </ul>	Textbook-orientated  Reading and writing skills
<b>Examinations proposed by the participants</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BEC</li> <li>TOEFL</li> <li>TOEIC</li> </ul>	Business English test on four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing)  Academic English test for international students (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing)  English skills test in the workplace (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing)

#### 8.4.5 Learning problems in the university

This research finds that there is a strong correlation with students' majors and their lengths of learning in the university. The major difficulty for the first year students is to adapt to the new learning environment as the English teaching and learning is conducted differently from their high schools. However, for the second year students, their problem is more related to the lack of chances to practice the English speaking part in an authentic setting. Since they put more effort to learn the knowledge related to their majors, studying and learning the English subject is not the most important focus for them at this moment. Also, they have further demands on their time from needing to attend seminars, workshops, and activities held by clubs. Thus, the time for English learning seems very limited for them. When students come to the third year, most of them would prepare and plan for the Postgraduate Program Entrance Examinations, which will draw their attention to learn English more intensively. Due to the English course not being compulsory for juniors and seniors in China, they then need to join in other kinds of English activities for improving their English proficiency, such as attending English language training schools and English language online lectures. Therefore, for the third year students, their major problem is to seek the limited time available to improve their English to a suitable standard to evaluate them to sit for the English examinations. Senior students do not need to attend a lot of lectures on campus. However, these seniors would consider how to obtain the related

qualifications that would enable them to acquire a good job because a lot of students have not passed CET-4 and CET-6. Under this situation, the students are eager to obtain a CET-4 and CET-6 certificate as soon as they can. Driven by this, they concentrate on learning English in a predominantly rote-learning process to cater for the CET-4 and CET-6 examinations. Without any guidance provided in the last year, English learning for many of these students would be tough and often unachievable. Thus, it is not a surprise to see many Chinese students feel frustrated if they cannot obtain a CET-4 and CET-6 certificate before they graduate from the university.

Another correlation occurred between students' majors and their learning problems in English at the university. Within this study, students whose majors were Science and Computing felt that their difficulties in learning English was due to their lack of chances to practice, particularly, the limited chance to speak in English. As these graduates might not use English in their workplace frequently, they have an extrinsic motivation to learn English in the university. Additionally, the current English assessments, such as CET-4 and CET-6 still emphasize linguistic usage. Consequently, this leads to learning problems being related to communicative skills. Compared with Science and Computing students, those who majored in Arts, English and Education held a different opinion on the learning problems they faced in English. They believed the lack of resources and limited time for communication with teachers were two major barriers in their English learning. As a large number of students from the discipline of Arts and Education are females and would be more likely to use English frequently in their future jobs, they are likely to be intrinsically motivated in learning English. Thus, they would seek and need a wider range of resources to learn English rather than learning from the textbooks. In addition, their learning is part of a reflective process as they tend to discuss with friends and communicate with teachers rather than memorizing words in the vocabulary list. This finding is consistent with previous studies which emphasize that gender, motivation and students' previous learning experiences would have an influence on Chinese second language learners (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Y. F. Zhang & Hu, 2010).

### **8.5 Research objective 4: To investigate teachers' teaching of English in the university**

The fourth research objective emphasizes investigating English teachers' teaching at the university level, and this was addressed at both stages. The following questions were formulated:

- What do students think of English teachers' teaching in the university?

- What kind of English teaching methods do teachers use in the university?
- What are the teaching problems in the university based on students' views?

### 8.5.1 English teachers' teaching in the university

Both the quantitative data and qualitative data analysis indicated that the participants held a positive view on their teachers' English teaching in the university. The most outstanding finding shows that teachers are not central to English language teaching in the university. Consequently, the students need to monitor their own learning pace and control their own learning process. Out of the English classes, teachers tend to support and encourage students to join in English speaking competitions and English clubs instead of pushing students to do more grammar exercises similar to what the teachers did in high schools. The students felt supported and more interested in English learning on campus. However, in the meantime, teachers provide various learning resources so that students also felt that it was challengeable for them to decide what they needed to learn and how they could learn more efficiently. This teaching process has a basis of Constructivism, which emphasizes that students are a central part of the teaching process (Boud, 1981; Castellano, Mynard, & Rubesch, 2011; Harding-Esch, 1977; Oxford, 2003). Thus, students cannot be isolated in the learning and teaching process.

Although, most students held a positive attitude on teachers' teaching in the university, the following limitations were proposed:

- Insufficient feedback was provided by teachers
- No orientation program was provided at the university

Data from the research showed that students' English proficiency in grammar was closely correlated with the extent of the efficient feedback provided by teachers. As mentioned previously, grammar points in the examinations have been still prevalent in the English assessments at the university level; consequently, students hoped that their teachers would provide feedback efficiently. However, due to the limited time for English classes and lack of communication with teachers, students cannot be provided with feedback in time by the lecturers at the university. This is incongruent with the previous study (H. Hu, 2004) that emphasizes that feedback for Chinese students through their English learning process is essential.

The other limitation that was found in the research is that there was not any orientation program provided at the university for introducing the university English teaching models. As university students came from various educational backgrounds and many of them were used to being taught in a rote-learning way, they often found difficulties in adapting to the university English teaching models at the beginning, especially if they had limited English competence. Thus, it is highly recommended that an orientation program should be provided to these students.

### **8.5.2 English teaching methods adopted in the university**

Another positive finding of this research is that the Communicative Teaching Method (CTM) was revealed as a major teaching method at the university. The participants highly acknowledged that their English academic staff adopted the Internet and computers as media to improve students' communicative language ability in the English classrooms. Students learnt English in the class by means of lectures, workshops, discussions and role-plays. The academic staff encouraged students to speak more than to write and read within the classroom and small group interactions frequently occurred. Out of class, students have been supported to monitor their own learning in the self-access learning centers as more online learning resources are provided there. Additionally, students could choose to join in some English clubs, and to participate in various English extra-curriculum activities. This finding is compatible with previous research studies (d' Anglejan et al., 1986; Halstead & Zhu, 2009; Little, 1995; Y. F. Zhang & Hu, 2010), which demonstrate that adult students find it beneficial to monitor their own learning in the self-access learning centers.

However, the students' perceptions of different majors had a significant difference in the teaching methods their teachers utilized at the university. The participants who majored in Science and Computing expressed that the traditional GTM in the English classrooms was more suitable for them. Most students in these two majors obtained high scores in the College Entrance Examination in Mathematics and Chemistry. However, they were less proficient in English. Moreover, they claimed that they would not need to use English often in their future careers and consequently would not feel they have a need to develop their English competence. Thus, these students felt that they just needed to be competent in their grammatical parts such as through rote-learning and exercise-drilling methods, so as to pass examinations in the university. From this point of view, it would seem that they believed that traditional GTM was more suitable for them. Therefore, they thought being taught in a rote-learning way was efficient for them at the university. This finding is in alignment with arguments from

others who claim that Chinese students who are less proficient in English believe that being taught through the GTM is more efficient (Lu et al., 2011).

### 8.5.3 Teaching problems in the university

Within this research, the large size of English classes and lack of individual attention to students are indicated as two major problems in university English teaching. As English is one of the compulsory courses in the university, it is common that 60-100 students would be arranged in the same class. These students are usually from the same faculty so that they have common interests in the class. However, due to this large class size, teachers and students find that it is difficult to directly communicate with each other most of the time. Particularly, those students who choose to sit in the back rows of the class are more easily neglected. Consequently, these students are more likely to feel alienated from the others. Moreover, due to a large size of the class, it is difficult to satisfy the English learning needs for every student. There is a clear gap between students who are more proficient and less proficient in English language competence when they are arranged in the same English class. It suggests that it is more likely that these students who are less proficient in English will gradually lose interest in learning English when they find it is difficult to improve their English language competence in comparison with other students. This finding is confirmed by Hu (2003), who claims that a large size of English class is not beneficial for individual students to develop their English language ability.

The other problem that emerged from this research was the lack of individual attention from teachers in English teaching in the university. Due to the mobility of university staff and large class sizes, not every student can obtain efficient feedback from teachers. Also, teachers could not pay sufficient attention to individual students, particularly to those who need help in their learning. Teachers usually pay more attention to the students who are more competent at English because they are more active in responding in the class; thus, others that keep silent most of the time are often neglected. Consequently, a polarization can be caused in the same English class. This finding is a challenge to the document of the MOE (2007), which emphasizes that it is essential to develop students' individual learning in the university so as to enhance students' learning autonomy in the English language process.

### **8.6 Research objective 5: To examine the differences of university students' views and experiences of teaching and learning in high schools and in the university**

This research objective is to compare English learning and teaching in schools and in the university so as to find out the differences. This was addressed in both the quantitative and qualitative stages. The following questions are focused upon:

- What are the differences of English teaching models used in high schools and in the university?
- What are the differences teaching methods used by English teachers in high schools and in the university?
- What are the differences of the learning environment in high schools and in the university?
- What are the differences of students' learning problems in high schools and in the university?
- What are the differences of students' learning styles in high schools and in the university?

#### **8.6.1 Different teaching models in English used in high schools and in the university**

Significant differences were found between the English teaching model adopted in high schools and in the university. Rich data from this study revealed that the salient difference was from adopting a 'teacher-centered' teaching model in high schools to a 'student-centered' teaching model in the university. In high schools, teachers played a central role in teaching and they imparted knowledge to students. Students were expected to be passive in the classrooms. In the university, however, students were encouraged and able to control and monitor their own learning process. They became active in acquiring knowledge and were eager to put it into practice. Compared with the students' lack of independent ability in high schools, the findings also present that the students have a higher capability to learn independently in the university since they did not depend heavily on their teachers' teaching. This finding is supportive to Hu (2002a), who explains that the teaching models adopted in Chinese high school English language classrooms and in the university are quite different. Additionally, more recent similar studies (Nunan, 2011; Y. F. Zhang & Wang, 2011) also give evidence that Chinese teachers are more likely to adopt a 'teacher-centered' approach in language classrooms than those from other countries.

### **8.6.2 Different teaching methods used by English teachers in high schools and in the university**

Another significant difference that was found within this research was that English teachers used a Sino-form of teaching method in high schools but teachers adopted a multi-form of teaching methods in the university. More specifically, the GTM was a major method adopted in English teaching in high schools; while the CLT approach was adopted as an important teaching approach in the university. The GTM focuses on improving students' linguistic usage initially through drilling lexical and grammatical items, and as a consequence the students focus upon improving their reading and writing ability prior to enhancing other English skills. However, the CLT approach emphasizes aspects related to communicative competence such as fostering students' contextual ability in spoken language. Thus, different teaching methods are likely to influence students' learning motivation and learning outcomes (Campbell & Storch, 2011).

Moreover, data from this research positively indicated that the use of online language teaching motivated students to learn and join in more English activities on campus. In particular, the adoption of computer-assisted learning and web-based learning approaches was utilized as a compliment in the university English class. For example, self-access learning centers involve a substantial number of online learning resources and the learning systems that are equipped based on utilizing of Web 2.0 tools, which aims to develop students' independent learning ability and to increase their learning interest. Students who have access to the Internet on campus are likely to have more chances to access online learning activities. With the help of these advanced Web 2.0 tools, the students can choose the extent to which they can exert efforts to their benefits. This result supports the more recent research findings found by Lindberg, Olofsson and Stödborg (2010), who believes that through using recent technologies, there is a shift from initial online 'teacher-centered' approaches to a more 'student-centered' approach where students participate and collaborate actively in constructing knowledge themselves.

### **8.6.3 Different learning environments in high schools and in the university**

The significant difference was also found within this research that the learning environment has been changed from being restricted in high schools to being unrestricted in the university. The general belief showed that the students in high schools were restricted through the need to focus on learning the subjects that were necessary for success in the College Entrance Examination. However, when they came to the university, they had increased openness to learn more rather than by following the method more likely to be used on compulsory courses in high



schools. They enjoyed learning English within a relaxed environment, such as in the library, and in self-study rooms, which could not be realized when they were in high schools. Moreover, the students enjoyed a friendlier and more unrestricted English learning environment in the class on campus. University teachers often provide assistance and guidance according to students' different English proficiency instead of a focus on teaching students for a particular purpose. Friends and roommates are more likely to interact with each other, which is less likely to occur in high schools due to the examination-oriented outcomes. This finding is compatible with a study by Hampel (2009), who claims that a collaborative learning environment enable learners to interact with each other and reflect on their work.

#### **8.6.4 Different learning problems in high schools and in the university**

Generally, the research finding showed the overall consequence was similar in the learning problems students had in high schools and in the university. Students agreed that they all had few chances to speak English in high schools and in the university and that they found it difficult to practice spoken English. In high schools, due to the pressure for the College Entrance examination and a competitive learning environment, students did not feel confident to speak English in front of others. When they came to a relaxed and unrestricted learning environment in the university, they were eager to speak and communicate with others in English. However, due to limited English classes and lack of communication with teachers, they still lacked confidence to speak English, particularly in an authentic context. From this point of view, the development of students' spoken English has been an obstacle all the way through high schools to the university.

It is worth noting that a significant difference lies in university students who majored in different subjects. For example, the participants from the Faculty of Science had a belief that their weaknesses were on vocabularies and grammar aspects while the students from the Faculty of Arts were more likely to regard English speaking part as a disadvantage. Thus, even though a range of students came to the same university, their learning problems were likely to be different. This provided evidence that teachers should be required to pay attention to individuals so as to understand their learning difficulties in English and consequently to assist them to develop autonomous learning (Dunn, 2000; R. Ellis, 1989; Y. F. Zhang & Hu, 2010).



### 8.6.5 Different learning styles in high schools and in the university

In identifying different learning styles in high schools and in the university, the finding of this study adds new knowledge to the literature in the field. This research finding found that the students were more likely to be passive learners and utilize a studial way to learn English when they were in high schools, and when they came to the university, most students were more likely to exhibit learning styles that were more active in learning. This difference was a literature gap in previous Chinese studies, and thus it is here that a major value of this study resides. However, interestingly, there was also a small number of students majoring in Science and Computing who continued to be passive in their learning process. The other difference is that the students were more likely to be visual learners when they were in high schools; while most of them were more likely to be audio learners in the university. This change probably was caused by different teaching models and learning and teaching methods adopted in high schools and in the university (Lin, 2008), rather than by changes in their preferred learning styles.

## 8.7 Research objective 6: To construct a model of teaching and learning of English based on university students' views and experiences

The last research objective of this study is to construct a model of teaching and learning according to university students' preferences. This objective was addressed by the data collection and analysis in both stages within which the following five questions were asked:

- What is the learning style students prefer in English learning?
- What is the learning method students prefer in English learning?
- What is the teaching model students prefer in English learning and teaching?
- What is the learning environment students prefer in English learning and teaching?
- What kind of teacher do students think of a good English teacher?

### 8.7.1 Students' preferences

Insights from the students' preference can be divided into two parts: preferences in high schools and preferences in the university. The students emphasized that they would like to learn from their English teachers in a passive and studial way in high schools as they depended for their success heavily on their teachers. In high schools, they needed to learn for achieving success in all kinds of examinations, particularly, in the College Entrance Examination. In this restricted

and competitive learning environment, students relied on their teachers' teaching as they believed the rote-learning process was an efficient way to achieve high scores in examinations. Thus, they felt that it was beneficial to listen to teachers' instructions passively and watch their teachers within a familiar traditional teaching model in the English classes. However, in this learning process, the students were limited in understanding the knowledge that was imparted to them as they never learnt via a reflective process. In other words, what the students learnt in high schools was limited when they were exposed to an authentic English speaking environment.

When these students came to the university, they found English teachers were not 'central' in the teaching process anymore, and that they had a more unrestricted learning environment than they experienced in high schools. Subsequently, the students would be more likely to be 'student-centered' and interested in English learning via using online learning. Thus, they became more active and unrestricted in learning English. The teachers adopted various methods to increase students' learning interest in order to enhance their independent learning. For example, the students had access to the Internet to learn English in self-access learning centers. Also, a variety of English activities were held both in and out of the classes. In this relaxed and unrestricted learning environment, the students enjoyed learning English more autonomously. They would not depend for the success of all of their learning on their teachers. Only when they met difficulties would they turn to teachers and friends for help. From this point of view, their success is achieved by their own efforts rather than relying on the teachers.

However, due to different educational backgrounds and majors, the outcomes of this study revealed that some students at the university still preferred rote-learning to learn English, such as the students from the Faculty of Science. Their entry English levels were likely to be lower than other students from different majors and their learning motivation is likely to be more extrinsic. Therefore, their needs were different from the students from other majors in the university. From this point of view, English is not likely to be important for their future careers, nor is related to their majors. What they need is to pass the final examinations in the university. Thus, their preference is still utilizing traditional English learning methods, which they feel more familiar with.

#### **8.7.2 A good English teacher**

The data in the study highlighted a preference among students for a good teacher to be characterized by kindness, to be easy-going, passionate, patient, and

interactive directly with students and was likely to demonstrate a sense of humor in the classroom. Similar attributes are suggested by Sutkin (2008), who argues a good teacher is characterized by “inspiring, supporting, actively involving, and communicating with students” (p. 452). The students believed that a positive relationship between teachers and students is supportive to them as they can be provided with a comfortable and favorable learning environment (Sutkin et al., 2008). Also, interaction with students is particularly essential as excellent listening and speaking skills allow teachers to encourage active participation and to answer questions carefully and precisely (Molodysky, Sekelja, & Lee, 2006). Last but not the least, the students like being with teachers who have a sense of humor. This finding is a challenge to the previous historical study, which emphasizes that Chinese teachers have a higher authority influenced by the Confucian heritage (Throssell & Zhao, 2011). However, Ziv (1988) argues that students whose teachers have a sense of humor would be more likely to achieve a higher score than those whose teachers do not .

### **8.7.3 A model of teaching and learning of English based on students' views and experiences**

Regarding students' preferences and their needs in different stages, a model is demonstrated based on students' views. This model addresses the range of different learning models and learning methods adopted, as well as including the learning environment in high schools and in the university. This model is a unique finding generated from the research and fills the gap in the area which has never been addressed in previous Chinese studies. Hence, this becomes an outstanding finding within this research. The details are presented in Figure 8.4.

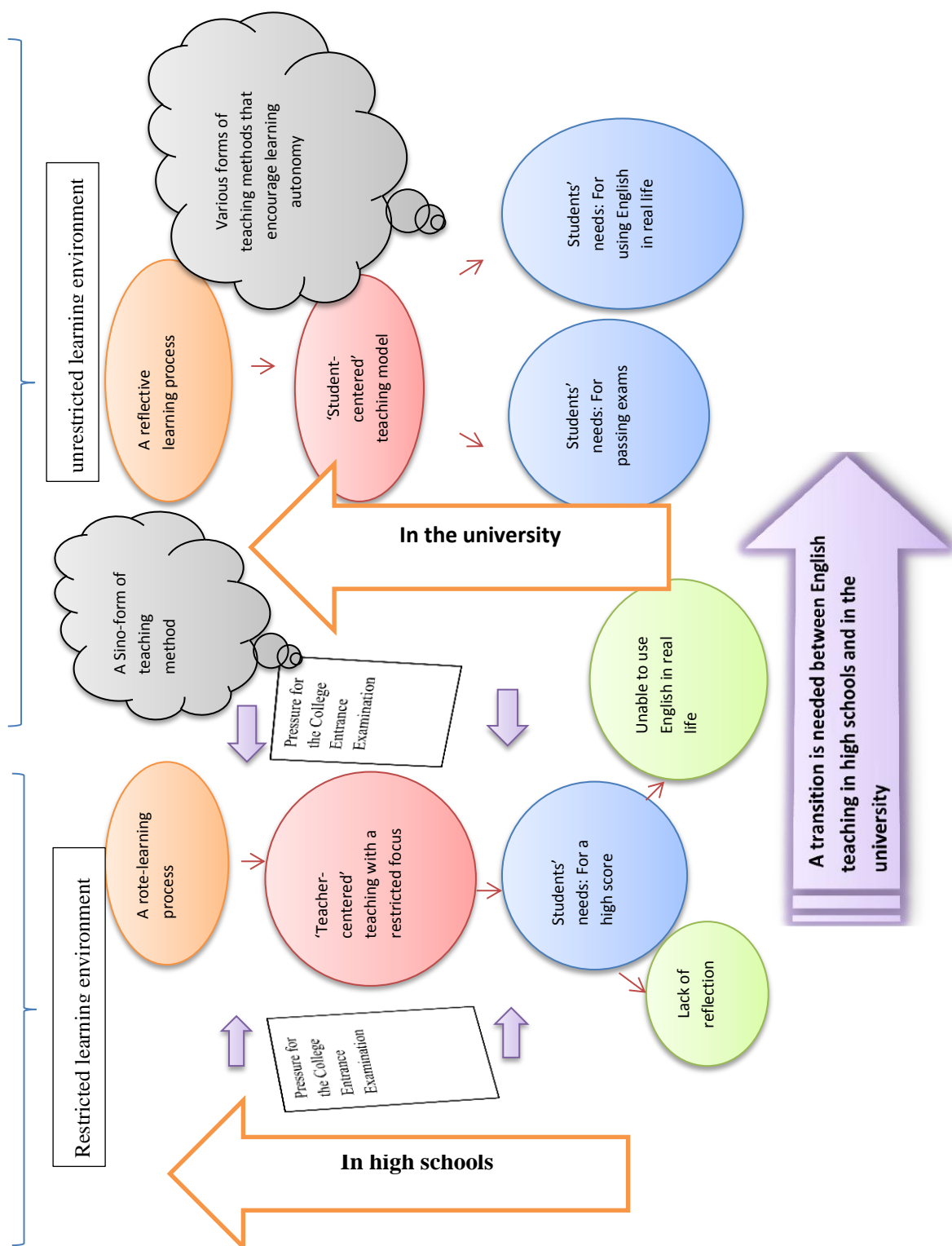


Figure 8.4 A model of teaching and learning of English based on students' views and experiences

## 8.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive discussion based on the research findings in accordance with the research objectives and questions formulated in the study. The results gained from both the quantitative and the qualitative stages were examined and compared with the theories from previous studies. The research findings were presented in the order of the six research objectives. This chapter revealed salient elements of current teaching and learning situations both in high schools and in the university context in China. Also, comparisons were provided from both contexts, including the teaching models and methods that were adopted in learning and teaching, the perceived learning and teaching environment, and the students' individual learning styles. Factors that might influence these differences were also analyzed, such as the current Chinese educational system, Confucian heritage cultural influences, and the effect of large English class sizes. Furthermore, challenges to current English teaching and learning practices were also discussed, followed by relevant recommendations made by the participants so as to create a more effective learning and teaching environment for both the students and teachers. At the end of the discussions and recommendations, a learning and teaching model that synthesized key elements that students preferred at both levels was constructed.

The following chapter is the last chapter of this thesis. As a conclusion of this project, it will summarize this research journey in the first place. Also, it will provide an overview from the motivation of undertaking this project to the finalization of this study. Afterwards, it will present recommendations for the future development of the English class both in Chinese high schools and in the university. Particularly, suggestions will be proposed on bridging the gap between these two levels of education regarding the different teaching models utilized. Implications will be suggested from the aspects of utilizing online learning, such as computer-assisted learning and web-based learning, to enhance students' independent learning ability. At the end of the following chapter, the directions of future research will be highlighted.

## Chapter 9 Conclusion

### 9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has provided discussions and recommendations within this research. The discussions were presented according to the six research objectives. According to Le (1999), undertaking a research study is like taking an excursion, the researcher can only see the entirety when the excursion ends. Thus, the researcher would have a map of the whole research journey at the end of the study. Actually, this study had difficulties and obstacles, as well as enjoyable moments. However, no matter what happened in this journey, the researcher tried her best to fulfil all the requirements to complete this research journey.

This chapter, as the conclusion of the thesis, first provides an overview of the entire journey, the key elements, as well as a general discussion of the research findings. Secondly, it examines to what extent the research aim and objectives have been fulfilled. Thirdly, this chapter presents a focused discussion in relation to the six objectives. Fourthly, suggestions are proposed based on the participants' views. Lastly, this chapter gives three aspects of implications towards future research on English language education in China. As a consequence, this could provide new ESL horizons.

### 9.2 The overall research journey

As mentioned in the first chapter, the initial inspiration of this research was derived from the researcher's own learning and teaching experiences. Back in the early 1990s, the researcher started to access secondary education and to start to learn English as a foreign language in China. In the past twenty years, she experienced being both a student and an English university lecturer under the Chinese educational system. As these unique experiences proceeded, she determined to look into the differences of teaching and learning experiences based on students' perceptions. One of the main reasons, which triggered her to investigate this particular area, was the observable gap between English teaching models adopted in high schools and in the university in the current Chinese educational context. These differences might not be beneficial for students to develop their learning autonomy and enhance their individual learning ability. Thus, this research study gave her an opportunity to investigate this gap based on the students' perceptions.

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The study was conducted in a particular university context, Central China Normal University, and involved the participation of 500 university students. Data was collected by using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and they were analyzed adopting the SPSS software version 21, and the NVivo software version 10 respectively. This kind of data analysis provided the researcher with a further insight in generating the participants' experiences related to English learning and their teachers' teaching in China. The findings were discussed comprehensively to see the extent to which they are supportive to the previous studies or not.

This research has achieved the research aim. This study investigates the differences in learning and teachers' teaching experiences in high schools and in the university based on students' perceptions. Significant results were found according to students' academic faculties, length of studying, and the College Entrance Examination scores in English tests in terms of the learning and teaching they received in high schools. However, in the university, statistically significant differences were found among students who came from different academic faculties and the lengths of their studying on campus. The findings also showed that the correlation between English teaching models used in high schools and in the university was not strong. The results obtained from the questionnaires enabled the researcher to conduct further semi-structured interviews to investigate in further depth in relation to students' perceptions on their learning and teaching in English. This included areas such as learning and teaching methods, learning and teaching problems, and learning and teaching resources based on the students' views.

This research was completed within a reasonable time frame with all the research objectives achieved. The researcher adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methods to ensure a triangulation of the data results with a high reliability. This project used a pilot study to test all these instruments by using the SPSS software to examine the factors at the beginning, and by involving discussions with a group of researchers and students. The considerable number of participants assisted the generalizability of the research findings (Fan, 2011). Within this study, the data collection and data analysis process were systematically performed with professional tools and methods to assure the reliability of the findings. The purposeful design and careful considerations related to all stages of the study helped to ensure the achievement of research aim and objectives and the completion of this study.

### 9.3 An overview of the research findings

This research has uncovered six dominant findings in accordance with the six research objectives. This section presents a brief summary of the research findings. The results revealed the university students' learning and teachers' teaching in English based on the students' views at this particular university. Although the participants held a positive view of their English learning and teachers' teaching both in high schools and in the university, teaching models adopted in high schools did not have a strong correlation with those adopted by the lecturers in the university. In other words, there is a gap between English teaching models utilized in high schools and in the university. Consequently, it is likely to influence students' learning outcomes in English language learning (H. Hu, 2004). Based on the students' views, a model of students' preferences in their learning and teachers' teaching in English was generated within this study (as shown in Figure 8.4).

#### 9.3.1 Learning and teaching in English in high schools

The students held a positive view of their learning and teachers' teaching in English in their high schools. They believed that the feedback provided by teachers was essential for their English learning improvement. Also, the participants had a common view that previous examination papers and assignments were two major learning methods in high schools. The problems uncovered from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were mainly the Sino-form of teaching methods, a stressed and restricted learning and teaching environment, and a 'teacher-centered' classroom. As a consequence, students depended for their success heavily on their teachers' teaching as teachers always were dominant in the classrooms. From this point of view, students acquired knowledge from the 'spoon-feed' way rather than assimilating and processing information autonomously.

Based on the participants' views, they emphasized being more likely to be visual and studial learners when they were in high schools. Students utilized their textbooks and previous examination papers as dominant learning materials. Most textbooks were traditionally-based and focused on illustrating English grammar and linguistic use. In the meantime, teachers strongly focused their teaching on the knowledge from the textbooks as they were regarded as being essential for all kinds of English examinations. From this point of view, students predominantly acquired information in the English classroom from reading and writing. Chinese students also were likely to be passive and studial in high schools. As such, they preferred learning English in the traditional teaching models such as through drilling grammar exercises. There also emerged a number of influential factors



that led to this emphasis on a rote-learning process in high schools. The major influential factors that emerged are the construction of English curriculum in the current Chinese educational system and the influences of Confucianism on traditional learning. That is, English is one of compulsory courses all the way through the education levels, from primary schooling to doctoral programmes. Consequently, all the examinations to a higher level of education are related to the English scores students achieved. The College Entrance Examination is the case in point. Chinese students who wanted to be accepted by universities had to obtain a satisfactory score in the English test in the College Entrance Examination. Under this situation, Chinese students learnt English with a test-driven extrinsic motivation in a fierce competitive learning environment at high schools.

The influence of Confucianism also emerged as a major factor that affects English learning and teaching at high schools. It is known that Confucianism emphasizes the obedience between ‘Fu’ and ‘Zi’, and between pupils and adults (Ju, 1991). That is, sons must obey fathers’ wills, and pupils have to follow adults. Consequently, this relationship had an influence on the relationship between students and teachers in schools. As teachers were highly respected in ancient times in China, students treated them as their ‘fathers’ for honour. Thus, students should follow their teachers in the way they would obey their ‘fathers’. Under this situation, Chinese students seldom discuss, argue or initiate interactions with teachers in the classrooms as this behaviour would be regarded as rudeness. Consequently, students became used to being led in learning by teachers, reducing communicative interaction and independent learning, and as a consequence they did not have opportunities to develop their learning autonomy.

### **9.3.2 Learning and teaching in English in the university**

Another finding was found among the participants who held a positive attitude towards their learning and teachers’ teaching in the university. In the university, the students were more likely to use a learner-centered method in the English learning process. The teaching methods adopted were various, such as presentations, role-plays, and group discussions. Students were exposed to this unrestricted and flexible learning and teaching environment. English is still a compulsory unit for the first-year and second-year students, however, the third and fourth-year students could also choose some subjects they are interested in rather than English. From this point of view, learning English for university students is not totally driven by outcomes such as tests and examinations.

Although university students were not focused upon a test-orientated learning environment, learning motivations and learning styles are different among the students from different faculties. More specifically, the participants who came from the faculties of Science and Computing did not believe English was useful for their future careers so that they still aimed to pass English final examinations at the university. As such, they were likely to have an extrinsic motivation when learning English. However, students who came from the faculties of Arts, Education, and Foreign Languages, perceived that English was not just related to their future career so this led them to have a more intrinsic motivation. Thus, they would like to use English for more real-life situations, such as communicating with friends and learning more about English and American culture. Moreover, most students with a Science background still preferred learning English in a visual way; however, most of those who majored in English preferred learning English in an audio way.

Two major influential factors affecting English learning and teaching that emerged from this study were the wide use of CET-4 and CET-6 examinations as dominant English assessments on campus, and the innovation of the ‘2+2+X’ English teaching model utilized in most Chinese universities. In the current university English system, CET-4 and CET-6 are two major English examinations for non-English majors. Without obtaining the CET-4 certificate, they could not have the opportunity to apply for any postgraduate programmes. From this point of view, it is more likely that non-English majors, such as students from the faculties of Science and Computing, learnt English in a test-orientated way. Moreover, the CET-4 and CET-6 examinations still focused on grammatical knowledge and linguistics use, which might result in the students with a Science background learning English by reading and memorization rather than by listening and communication.

An innovation of the ‘2+2+X’ English teaching model utilized is the other factor that affects English learning and teaching on campus. This new teaching model replaced the old model of ‘2+2’ in English as it is believed that ‘X’ represented unrestricted time (Ministry of Education, 2007). In other words, students could use this unrestricted time to learn English more besides the scheduled four hours. Particularly, students were encouraged to learn English in the self-access learning centers more often within the ‘X’ hours. Students majoring in Science and Computing, were more likely to learn English through a rote-learning process; thus, they seemed not so interested in developing their learning autonomy ability in the self-access learning centers. Usually, they came there just for finishing assignments. However, students majoring in Arts, Education and English

preferred monitoring their own learning. They enjoyed learning English in the self-access learning centers as it provided them with a wide range of online resources based on the Web 2.0 tools. Thus, they could communicate English in more authentic settings such as in conversations with native speakers and friends utilizing social media tools.

### 9.3.3 Differences of English learning and teaching in high schools and in the university

A strong correlation was uncovered between the views of students' English learning in high schools and in the university. For example, students believed that previous assignments and examination papers were very important learning methods when they were in high schools and in the university. Also, they held a positive attitude that the listening and writing parts of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in English learning played a vital role in the whole learning process. In the meantime, students still regarded English grammar as essential all the way through the English learning process. The details are presented below:

- Grammar is essential both in high schools and in the university
- Listening and writing are important for students
- Previous examination papers and exercises are dominant learning methods both in high schools and the university

However, based on university students' views, English teaching models used in high schools and in the university did not have a strong correlation. Consequently, a range of differences were revealed in the following aspects:

- Traditional teaching methods in high schools vs. flexible teaching methods in the university.
- A 'teacher-centered' classroom in high schools vs. a 'student-centered' classroom in the university.
- Following teachers' teaching in high schools vs. monitoring students' own learning pace in the university.
- Relying on the success on teachers' teaching in high schools vs. monitoring their own learning in the university.
- Visual, studial learners in high schools vs. audio, active learners in the university.
- Emphasizing on reading and writing in high schools vs. emphasizing on listening and speaking in the university.
- Focusing on improving students' linguistic language skills in high schools vs. focusing on enhancing students' communicative skills in the university.

- Sino-form of assessments in high schools vs. various assessments in the university.
- Restricted teaching environment in high schools vs. unrestricted teaching environment in the university.
- Limited teaching and learning materials in high schools vs. diversified resources in the university.
- Textbooks-orientated in high schools vs. authentic learning and teaching materials in the university

#### *9.3.3.1 English Teaching and learning models*

A significant gap existed between English teaching models adopted in high schools and in the university. As English teaching was driven by the College Entrance Examination in high schools, teaching materials, teaching methods, and assessments in English were formed upon the requirement of this examination. The teaching goal is to teach students how to achieve a higher score in this examination. Thus, teachers became dominant in the classrooms and students felt that only by following teaching's teaching could they achieve a high score. As a result, teachers who enabled more students to obtain a higher score in the examination would be regarded as responsible and effective teachers; otherwise, they would be more likely to be treated as irresponsible ineffective teachers. Similarly, students who achieved a higher score in the examination were regarded as more proficient students, and vice versa.

#### *9.3.3.2 Teaching methods*

A significant difference in English teaching methods was also found between schools and the university level. English teachers usually used the GTM to teach students in high schools. This method is mainly based on textbooks and examination papers, which are utilized to drill grammatical points from set exercises. By using this method, students must spend a substantial amount of time in English reading and writing to improve their ability. However, at the university, teachers adopted various teaching methods, such as the ALM, CLT, and computer-assisted teaching. Students could learn English in and out of the class via multimedia. Also, students were encouraged to monitor their own learning in self-access learning centers. Generally, within the English classrooms in high schools, teachers used a text-oriented method to teach students how to learn and what to learn. However, when students came to the university, they learnt English in informal authentic settings from foreign friends, roommates and classmates by using multi-methods. They were also encouraged to learn English by using group discussions, role-plays, and presentations rather than only focusing on textbooks. In the meantime, teachers facilitated by providing a range of online teaching

resources. Thus, students could learn English from both visual and audio ways in the university.

#### *9.3.3.3 Teaching and learning resources*

Teaching and learning resources were also found to be different between high schools and the university. Authentic English textbooks from Longman International Company became a dominant teaching and learning resource in high schools (Ministry of Education, 2007) and the exercise books were national-based. However, teaching and learning resources utilized in the university could be varied. According to the MOE, academic staff in high ranking universities are able to choose the most appropriate materials according to their students' English levels and the learning environment (2007). Furthermore, students could not access computers and the Internet in high schools but university students could have an open and restricted access to large amounts of online teaching resources, such as teachers' PowerPoints, online tutorials, and online blogs. Also, they could communicate directly with their teachers via social media tools, for instance, MSN, Skype, Twitter, Facebook and QQ. Generally, teaching and learning resources were more bountiful and varied than those in high schools.

#### *9.3.3.4 Learning environment*

The learning environment was also viewed differently by the students when they were in high schools and in the university. Fierce competition and restriction were the key characteristics of the learning environment provided in high schools as both teachers and students faced competitive examinations for enabling students to enter the university. However, when students came to the university, they found that they were exposed to an unrestricted and more relaxed learning environment. University lecturers encouraged students to have more cooperation with friends and enhanced students' learning autonomy ability. Thus, students had more chances to discuss and learn English in this friendly and unrestricted environment.

#### *9.3.3.5 Learning problems*

The focus of learning problems was viewed differently by the participants in high schools and in the university. Students spent a large amount of time on grammar exercises and preparing for English examinations in high schools. Consequently, their problems usually were on vocabulary and grammatical items as these two parts were closely related to the examinations. However, when they came to the university, the English subject focused on fostering their communicative ability. Thus, they found their focus was shifted to an increasing emphasis on the

listening and speaking parts. Moreover, as university students' majors and backgrounds were different, their learning problems were related to the individuals. That is, an individual student had his/her own learning problems when they came to the university rather than high school students who were more likely to have problems that were common across the class group. Although students perceived their learning problems differently in high schools and the university, they held a positive attitude towards the importance of speaking within the four language skills both in high schools and the university.

#### **9.3.3.6 Learning styles**

Different learning styles were uncovered in the study. Generally, students were more likely to emphasize visual aspects of learning when they were in high schools; however, they were more likely to use audio ways to improve their English learning at the university. This was strongly influenced by the teaching models and methods related to each setting. However, at the university, with more exposure to students' choices, they were more likely to prefer choosing the learning styles they like. For example, the participants from the faculties of Science and Computing reflected that they preferred learning English in a passive and visual way. That is, they focused more on reading and writing parts than listening and speaking items. This provides evidence of the necessities of developing students' individual learning in China (T. Brown et al., 2009). The potential factors causing this phenomenon are learning motivation and learning preferences which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### **9.3.4 Students' preferences in learning and teaching**

Within this study, the students believed that they preferred English teaching and learning in a friendly and unrestricted environment. By using various teaching methods, such as communicative and collaborative teaching methods, teachers aimed to improve students' independent learning ability. Furthermore, students would like to use computers as an assistance to learn English. Efficient English teachers, both in high schools and in the university, were perceived to have characteristics that include being a good communicator, having a warm personality as well as a sense of humour.

Students' views strongly indicated that they preferred to follow the teachers' pace to learn English in high schools. Also, effective feedback given by teachers was regarded as essential to students when they were in high schools. They further suggested that they should have increased access to use computers to learn English in schools. However, when students came to the university, they wanted

their objectives to be central to learning English in the classroom. In other words, contrary to their high school experience, they did not like following teachers' pace and relying heavily on teachers who controlled the classrooms in their learning process. The participants perceived that they needed to have a relaxed and unrestricted environment in their learning in English. Students revealed that the teachers' direct communications and contact were not available and effective in the university most of the time. As a result, students who were less proficient in English would be more likely to lose interest in English learning and as a consequence, an increasing trend of polarization in students' English levels will occur in the university.

The participants had a strong belief that the current English curriculum needs to adopt different kinds of English assessments to evaluate students' proficiency. They asserted that the College Entrance Examination focused mainly upon English reading and writing parts instead of listening and speaking items. As a consequence, even students who obtained a high score in the examination were not confident in speaking in front of others when they entered the university. Similarly, with the significant influence of CET-4 and CET-6 examinations, it is not a surprise to see university graduates could not communicate effectively with English native speakers in China. Based on students' views, TOEIC, BEC, and other forms of assessments should be introduced to replace traditional CET-4 and CET-6 examinations.

Generally, on the one hand, a rote-learning process is still regarded as reasonable for most high school students in China. However, students who were more proficient in English expressed that they should be encouraged to acquire more knowledge out of the textbooks rather than being restricted in their use of textbooks. On the other hand, at the university, multi-teaching models and methods, such as self-access learning and computer-assisted teaching should continue to be constructed to satisfy students' needs. For example, students from the faculties of Arts, Education and Foreign Languages needed more assistance to improve communicative skills; while students with a science background wanted assistance to improve their Specialized English skills (SES). Hence, available guidance and training workshops should be provided to meet their satisfaction.

#### **9.4 Recommendations and implications**

In this section, recommendations and implications are summarized based on the results from the study utilizing both the participants' perceptions and the theories

reviewed in the literature. There are implications relating to the following three perspectives:

- Policy implications
- Implications for practice
- Implications and direction for future research

#### **9.4.1 Policy implications**

Within this study, a number of significant issues with policy implications were found relating to English learning and teaching in Chinese high schools and universities. There are two prominent areas in the implications: English curriculums in the Chinese educational system and the influence of the current College Entrance Examination in China. After reviewing recent documents of the MOE (2013), the English subject is still a major course through all levels of the Chinese educational system for students. The latest policy document has been issued by Beijing Education Examination Authority (2013), which discusses that the full score in the Middle School Entrance Examination in English test would be likely to be reduced from 150 to 100 in 2016. Although the total score will be decreased, the ratio of the listening part in the examination is proposed to be increased in 2016. As such, the reformation of the College Entrance Examination might be a policy implication sign as it previously focused more on grammatical items and linguistic usage.

##### **9.4.1.1 Reform the current College Entrance Examination**

The data from this study reaffirms that the English test in the current College Entrance Examination should be reviewed as a prerequisite to reforming the examination. The findings showed that the College Entrance Examination was one of the major factors affecting effective English learning and teaching in high schools in China. The content and format of the examination need to emphasize the authentic use of the English language rather than focusing primarily on linguistic knowledge. According to Liu (2013) and Sieman (2010), the reason why most high school students learnt English in a rote-learning process was that the English test in the College Entrance Examination focused mainly upon the knowledge from textbooks in high schools. As a result, their English teachers had to teach their students textbook-restricted knowledge. From this point of view, the researcher proposes that the English test should take account of current theories related to English teaching as a second language and instigate a review of the perceived learning outcomes and the basis for these. In this case, the proportion of the linguistic items in the English test in the College Entrance Examination should be reduced while increasing the emphasis on the listening and speaking items.



Moreover, it is strongly proposed to increase the number of chances for allowing students to participate in the English test in the College Entrance Examination each year. As discussed previously, this major examination resulted in high pressure from both teachers and students because every Chinese student only had one chance to sit for the College Entrance Examination each year. As a consequence, all Chinese students and their teachers would feel pressured to prepare for this major examination. Hence, it is highly likely that the increase in the number of times in participating in the examination could not only release the nervousness for students but also provide an opportunity for more equal chances for students in high schools (Ministry of Education, 2013). For example, occasional health and mental factors at the time of the examination would be more likely to result in a lower score in the College Entrance Examination. Consequently, it is likely that those students might lose chances to be accepted by high ranking universities in China. According to the recent policy document (Ministry of Education, 2013), this proposal is highly likely to be documented and instigated as a new policy for students who will attend the English test in the College Entrance Examination in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou in 2017.

Finally, the researcher also recommends that the assessment system of the College Entrance Examination should be re-evaluated. Chinese students have been measured by scores in the College Entrance Examination for more than 30 years (Ministry of Education, 2013). There is no evidence to confirm that those students who have obtained high scores in the examination are more outstanding in hands-on skills or critical thinking skills than those who had not a high score. It is known that America uses SAT, UK adopts A-Level, and Korea utilizes different levels instead of scores to evaluate students' abilities as a basis for their university entrance examinations. Thus, compared with these developed countries, the Chinese College Entrance Examination only uses scores to evaluate a student's ability and this limitation needs reviewing.

#### 9.4.2 Implications for practice

Implications for practice are in the English classrooms at schools and universities. The significant gap found in this research was that there were different English teaching models utilized in Chinese high schools and the university. Consequently, there is a need for a transitional policy for smoothing transition for students from high schools to universities. In other words, there is a need to overcome the lack of transitional guidance, and this can be achieved by the operation of orientation programmes. The researcher strongly suggests this transitional guidance should be provided to the first year students on campus. The researcher also believes that this guidance is beneficial for the freshmen at the university as they would be

more able to adapt to a new learning and teaching environment as soon as they can. This orientation programme could include an introduction of the English teaching models and methods utilized at the university, as well as an increased understanding of learning autonomy development, learning styles, learning environment, and the effect these have on students' learning.

The findings of this research presented that the participants believed that it is necessary to develop individual learning abilities so as to enhance Chinese students' learning autonomy as it is essential for their English learning process. Particularly, enhancing students' learning autonomy in the university has been stressed by the MOE since 2004. However, to foster students' learning autonomy needs students, teachers and their learning communities to cohesively focus on achieving this outcome. Specifically, students need to develop their learning ability in controlling their own learning pace and evaluating their learning processes and outcomes while teachers need to provide constructive and effective guidance for students. Learning communities are composed of the stakeholders who are involved in the process of learning and teaching. Thus, it is essential to create a beneficial and relaxed atmosphere for these people to feel unrestricted in sharing, cooperating and communicating with others.

Additionally, improving students' English communicative learning competence is vital to enhance their learning autonomy. As learning autonomy does not mean total self-learning, as discussed earlier, it requires communicative interaction between students to students (Ss-Ss), students to teachers (Ss-Ts), and students and teachers to others in the community (Ss and Ts-Os). In fact, this dissertation suggests the development and construction of a Communicative Language Community of English Learners (CLCOEL). This CLCOEL needs to be prominently highlighted in the practical applications for English learners and teachers as it is essential to create a harmonious and effective atmosphere in English learning and teaching for both students and teachers.

Besides the university, the concept of a CLCOEL is also highly likely to be applicable to Chinese high schools as most university students believed that their English learning process in high schools was still 'teacher-centered' at present. This CLCOEL is suggested by the researcher via using the following model to create a harmonious atmosphere for students, teachers and the community of English learners. In the model, in order to enhance CLCOEL, the interaction between students, teachers and other stakeholders in the community is like smoothly interlocking gears. Details are shown in Figure 9.1.



*Figure 9.1* Model of Communicative Language Community of English Learners (CLCOEL)

In this model, to improve students' communicative language competence, it is suggested that students and students, students and teachers, and students, teachers and communities should improve interaction on all aspects related to English teaching in high schools and at universities. Compared with the authentic teaching and learning materials used to enhance Chinese ESL learners' communicative language competence, this community in the above model could be both a real community and a virtual community; that is, students could interact with their English teachers and friends who are native English speakers both in and out of English classes. Also, they can acquire authentic learning materials to develop their communicative language competence. Most importantly, however, this model is also suitable for those who learn English in a virtual learning and teaching environment. This environment is able to be constructed by using Web 2.0 tools, such as Moodle Learning Platform. This free and self-help resource could expand on applications on learners' mobile devices and more learners could be involved in this community. From this point of view, the use of the model of CLCOEL would be beneficial to both full-time students in high schools and universities, as well as adult learners who are part-time students taking any university courses or completing their pathways to earn degrees.

#### ***9.4.2.1 Orientation programmes for freshmen at the university***

Orientation programmes are strongly recommended to be provided for students, particularly, freshmen in the university. Due to substantial differences between English teaching models adopted in high schools and the university, freshmen feel that it is difficult to adapt to a new teaching and learning environment. The researcher suggests that orientation programmes should be planned for freshmen

to assist them to understand better in the transition process between the teaching models and methods used in high schools and the university. According to Zhang (2013), it is highly beneficial for freshmen to enter orientation programmes for the English subject in the university as students are able to know more about their English teachers and the methods they will use in the university. Accordingly, students could understand better what learning methods and learning materials are more beneficial to them to learn English, and to further understand their own learning needs through knowledge of their learning styles and preferred learning environment.

In these orientation programmes, the researcher proposes that educationists should explain the importance of monitoring students their own learning at the university instead of following the teachers' pace to learn English. As a large number of students receive English education in traditional classrooms in their high schools, and the normal emphasis in English teaching is a 'teacher-centered' teaching model, it is essential for students to understand that changing to a 'student-centered' learning model is beneficial for them to develop their learning autonomy. As a consequence, students would be more likely to be able to monitor their English learning in the self-access learning centers on campus. Another focus in the orientation programmes should be on emphasizing the importance of enhancing English communicative competence at the university, particularly, to those coming from faculties of Arts, Education, and Foreign Languages.

#### **9.4.2.2 IT support**

The researcher also recommends that effective IT support should be available to university students. The research findings revealed that some students coming from rural areas did not enjoy learning English in self-access learning centers as they lacked IT skills. As discussed previously, university students came from various provinces with different educational backgrounds, and as such, it is more likely that students from urban areas would have more IT skills than those who are from rural areas. From this point of view, technical support and effective guidance should be available to support these university students in the form of lectures, workshops, or tutorials.

#### **9.4.3 Implications and direction for future research**

Howard (2009) argues that research studies tend to generate more questions. This research study has brought a number of possibilities for conducting new research to provide additional depth in key areas arising from the university students' perceptions of their own English learning and their teachers' teaching experience.

Following the outcomes of this study, further research into areas related to students' learning autonomy and learning styles within China, but in particular on the mainland, would be valuable. Also this research study highlighted urban and rural differences related to English learning and teaching regarding various key aspects relating to teaching resources and effective learning outcomes. Furthermore, the College English Examination needs reviewing to address its viability in a changing and challenging world. For example, the design of the examination needs to evaluate students' proficiency in lexical use, phonetic usage as well as communicative skills. Consequently, the researcher suggests that the following key areas from this study could be explored with a focus upon English learning and teaching in the Chinese context:

- Investigating students' English learning ability in different levels of schooling;
- Researching English teachers' teaching experiences in different levels of schooling;
- Investigating English learning and teaching in high schools and in the university based on teachers' views;
- Investigating English learning and teaching in high schools based on high school students' views;
- Reviewing how to provide effective IT assistance to university students in their English learning;
- Constructing an effective model for the English College Examination in China based on quality education; and
- Reviewing the further possible collaborations and support provided with stakeholders in the CLCOEL.

Apart from the key areas mentioned above, other beneficial research areas also need to be focused upon as they are essential to future research studies of English education in the Chinese context:

- Investigating which grade is suitable for pupils to begin learning English in Chinese primary schools;
- Examining different teaching models used in English learning and teaching between Autonomous Minority areas and Non-Minority areas;
- Researching into students' learning autonomy in Hong Kong and Macau; and
- Comparing different learning styles in English learning between students in Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China.

## 9.5 Conclusion

This research study has filled a gap in the literature by looking at university students' learning experience and their teachers' teaching in English in both high schools and the university in mainland China. Perspectives were based on students' views. The research aim and objectives were achieved by investigating the ways that students learnt and teachers taught English in language classrooms. Statistical significance was found within the participants groups, according to the course, gender, academic faculty, length of study and English scores in the College Entrance Examination. Furthermore, the researcher generated a model based on university students' preferences in English learning and teaching. The concept of the CLCOEL was developed to encourage discussion and interaction with regard to areas such as Communicative Language Teaching and learning autonomy. Also, this model was constructed for the benefit of learners in both a real learning environment and a virtual environment.

This chapter has concluded the general research findings, provided recommendations and implications, and suggested directions for future research. This research focused on discussing English learning and teaching in high schools and in the university based on university students' views. Although research objectives have been fulfilled, future research and policy implications related to English learning and teaching in various areas were proposed. The researcher of this study believes that she not only has fully answered research questions within this study, but also has provided areas that need exploring further in future.

The research journey has finally reached its destination. Through this research, the researcher has emotionally engaged in areas of deep personal interest, and also developed a more comprehensive understanding of educational theories, learning theories, as well as second language learning and teaching theories. Also, the researcher has further facilitated her skills in data collection and data analysis by using the SPSS and NVivo, as well as gaining further insights by adopting a mixed methodology in the research study. However, a valued element of this study was that the researcher had opportunities to have face-to-face talks and interviews with Chinese educators and university students, which made this study more beneficial to future Chinese researchers when they search for research studies in the field of EFL/ESL in the Chinese context. Increasing challenges brought about by an increasingly technological global environment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century were addressed and emphasize that it is essential that further development of effective learning practices of English in China is encouraged.

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HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK

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31 July 2012

Dr Thao Le  
Education  
Private Bag 1307

Sent via email

Dear Dr Le

**Re: FULL ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL**

Ethics Ref: H0012633 - The investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China

We are pleased to advise that the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee approved the above project on 27 July 2012.

This approval constitutes ethical clearance by the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. The decision and authority to commence the associated research may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance from other organisations or review by your research governance coordinator or Head of Department. It is your responsibility to find out if the approval of other bodies or authorities is required. It is recommended that the proposed research should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

Please note that this approval is for four years and is conditional upon receipt of an annual Progress Report. Ethics approval for this project will lapse if a Progress Report is not submitted.

The following conditions apply to this approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval.

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval, to ensure the project is conducted as approved by the Ethics Committee, and to notify the Committee if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.

A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

2. Complaints: If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, investigators should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 03 6226 7479 or [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au).
3. Incidents or adverse effects: Investigators should notify the Ethics Committee immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
4. Amendments to Project: Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval is obtained from the Ethics Committee. Please submit an Amendment Form (available on our website) to notify the Ethics Committee of the proposed modifications.
5. Annual Report: Continued approval for this project is dependent on the submission of a Progress Report by the anniversary date of your approval. You will be sent a courtesy reminder closer to this date. Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean that ethics approval for this project will lapse.
6. Final Report: A Final Report and a copy of any published material arising from the project, either in full or abstract, must be provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely



Lauren Townsend  
Ethics Administrator  
Office of Research Services  
Tel: +61 (0)3 6226 2764  
Email: [Lauren.Townsend@utas.edu.au](mailto:Lauren.Townsend@utas.edu.au)  
University of Tasmania, Private Bag 01 Hobart Tas 7001



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE  
(TASMANIA) NETWORK



**SOCIAL SCIENCES HREC  
FULL COMMITTEE APPLICATION**

**Important**

Please email an electronic version of this application plus the supporting documentation as Microsoft Word documents to:

[Katherine.Shaw@utas.edu.au](mailto:Katherine.Shaw@utas.edu.au)

A .pdf attachment is acceptable for appropriate documents, eg., advertisements, posters, etc.

A signed hard copy must also be sent to: Katherine Shaw, Private Bag 1, Hobart, 7001  
We will use the electronic version to meet agenda deadlines and the signed copy can follow in due course, once signatures have been obtained.

**If you have any questions, please call: 6226 2763**

**1. Title of proposed investigation**

Please be concise but specific. Titles should be consistent with those used on any external funding application.

The investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China (PhD thesis)

2. Expected commencement date:	Expected completion date of project
2012	2015

<b>3. Investigators:</b>		
<b>CHIEF INVESTIGATOR</b>		
Note: This is the researcher with ultimate responsibility for the research project.		
<b>The Chief Investigator cannot be a student.</b>		
Given Name	Thao	Surname Lê
Staff Position:	Senior Lecturer	Qualifications: PhD
Staff ID:		
School & Division:	Education Department	
Contact Address:	Locked bag: 1307, Launceston, Tasmania 7250	
Telephone:	+61 (0)3 6324 3696	Email: <a href="mailto:T.Le@utas.edu.au">T.Le@utas.edu.au</a> (Required)
<b>A. CO-INVESTIGATOR(S)</b>		
i) Given Name	Surname	
Megan	Short	
Staff Position:	Lecturer in Education	Qualifications: B.A; B.Ed; PhD
Staff ID:	02274509	
Contact Address:	Locked Bag 1307, Launceston 7250	
Telephone:	+61 3 6324 3188	Email: <a href="mailto:Megan.Short@utas.edu.au">Megan.Short@utas.edu.au</a> (Required)
ii) Given Name	Surname	
Staff Position:		Qualifications: <input type="text"/>
Staff ID:		
Contact Address:		
Telephone:		Email: <input type="text"/> (Required)

<b>C. STUDENT Investigator(s):</b>			
i) Given Name Jinjin		Surname Lu	
Gender: Female	Date of Birth: 19/09/1982	Preferred Title: Ms	
Student Number: 162849	Level: PhD		
Contact Address: 15 Laver Grove, Newnham, Tas 7248			
Telephone: +61 0420983573	Email: <a href="mailto:Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au">Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au</a>		
(Required)			

ii) Given Name		Surname	
Gender: _____	Date of Birth: _____	Preferred Title: Mr / Ms / Miss /Mrs /Dr	
Student Number: _____	Level: Undergraduate / Hons / Masters / Postgraduate Diploma / PhD		
Contact Address: _____			
Telephone: _____	Email _____		
(Required)			

4. Is this a student project that requires School approval (eg., program of study approval)?				Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, the project has been:				
a) Submitted	<input type="checkbox"/>	i) Approved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ii) Not yet approved
b) Not yet submitted	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>

**5. Approvals from other Departments / Institutions**

**Does this project need the approval of any institution other than the University of Tasmania (e.g., Department of Education, particular wards in hospitals, prisons, government institutions, or businesses)?**

No ☒

Upon obtaining the ethics approval from HREC at UTAS

**Does this project need the approval of any other HREC?** Yes ☐ No ☒

*If NO, why not?*

UTAS HREC is sufficient for this study because there is not any ethics board needs to go through in mainland China.

*If YES, please indicate below which Human Research Ethics Committee, and the status of the application.*

Other HREC(s):

Status:

**6. Is the investigation a follow-up of a previous study?**

Yes ☐

No ☒

*If yes, what is the ethics reference number of that study?* H0012633

*What was the title of that study?*



**7. Funding**

*Under the National Statement (2.2.6) a researcher must disclose:*

- the amount and sources or potential sources of funding for the research; and
- financial or other relevant declarations of interest of researchers, sponsors or institutions

Is this research being funded?      Yes ☐      No ☒

*If yes, please detail amount and source of funds  
(NS 5.2.7)*

*If this application relates to Grant(s) and/or  
Consultancies, please indicate the Title and  
Grant Number relating to it*

*If no external funding has been obtained, please indicate how any costs of research will be met:*  
As it is a PhD study, it is covered by the School of Education and UTAS Graduate Research Unit  
Ms Lu is a Utas PhD scholarship holder and some expenses can be paid from her allowance. Similarly she  
gets some allowance for her research-related expense from the School of Education and The Graduate  
Research Unit for research students. Moreover, she will stay with her family in China when she goes back  
for data collection.

Do the investigators have any financial interest in  
this project?      Yes ☐      No ☒

*If yes, please give details:*

**8. Keywords** Please provide definitions for any technical terms and acronyms

Term	Lay Explanation
SLC	Self-access learning Centre

**9. Rationale and Background for the Project:**

Has the research proposal, including design and methodology, undergone a peer review process?

Yes ☒

No ☐

*If YES - provide details:*

This research proposal has undergone a PhD review process with supervisors.

*If NO – please explain why:*

Please give a plain English description of the aims of this study.

The dominant aim of this study is to investigate the views of students about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China. In this research, there are six research objectives:

1. Investigate the learning of English of students in high school
2. Investigate teachers' teaching of English in high school
3. Investigate the learning of English of students in university
4. Investigate teachers' teaching of English in university
5. Examine the differences of students' views and experiences of teaching and learning in high school and in university
6. Construct a model of teaching and learning of English based on students' views and experiences

Please give a plain English description of the *justification* for this study.

The research project intends to investigate the differences of English teaching and learning in high schools and university based on university students' views. With the development of economy and high technology, English has become the most popular foreign language in China (Adamson & Morris, 1997). Therefore, families, schools and students have put much effort on English. However, the learning outcomes are not satisfied. This could be due to different learning styles and teaching models used in high schools and in universities (Pang, 2000; Shi, 1999).

Currently, the "teacher-centred" teaching is utilized as a dominant teaching model in English classroom in Chinese high schools, and traditional English teaching methods are still popular in English teaching and learning, which is unbeneficial to enhance students' quality education (Nunan, D. & Choi, J, 2010). Moreover, the Ministry of Education (2007) issued a College English Course Requirement to put forward individualized learning and autonomous learning. In terms of different teaching models in high schools and university; thus, investigating students' learning styles is essential for teachers to develop and match their teaching models (Dunn, R., & Griggs, S., 2000).

This study will contribute insights into the different English learning styles and teaching models used in the high schools and in the university in mainland China. It will compare the differences of English teaching and learning based on students' views and their English learning experience in high schools and university. Subsequently, it attempts to develop a model that students prefer in their English learning and teaching. This research will also contribute suggestions of how to improve learning environments in the subject Chinese university and high schools by changing the role of the teachers, developing the SLC and utilising various teaching methods, etc. The findings of the research will assist teachers at education institutions develop support strategies in assisting future students in their English learning, as well as help educators develop a more effective and practical English syllabus for high school students for their transition to the university pathway.

Please list the most relevant and recent literature references, both by the investigator and/or by others, that support the justification for the study.

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<b>10. Participants</b>			
<p><b>Number of Participants</b>  How many participants do you intend to recruit?  500 students in the subject university will be recruited in the questionnaire and 20 students will be intended to recruit in the interview.  Provide research justification for the number of participants you intend to recruit.  There are about 18,000 students in the Central China Normal University in mainland China. It is common for survey researchers to collect information from some of the individuals, groups, or organizations rather than all of them (Berends, 2006; Chromy, 2006). The sample size for the studies which have a population size of 5000 or more should be approximately 400 (Garry &amp; Airasian, 2003). 500 students will be recruited in the study, which can represent the opinions of the students in the university.</p>			
<b>Selection of Participants</b>			
<p>Clearly describe the experimental and, where relevant, control groups. Include details of sex, age range, and any special characteristics (ethnic origin, demographic details, health status etc).  Give a justification for your choice of participant group(s).</p> <p>The data collection will be undertaken in the Central China Normal University in mainland China.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Upon getting the ethics approval, an approval letter and an information sheet for the head of the international office will be forwarded to him, as the International Office is responsible for the overseas research projects undertaken in the university.</li> <li>2. The questionnaires with pre-addressed envelopes, information sheet for students, and drop boxes will be provided at the reception desks of the International Office. The students who are interested in this project will come to the International office to pick up those packages. In this process, all the participants are voluntary to participate.</li> <li>3. Those students, who have completed the questionnaire, are further interested in the semi-structured interview will pick up the consent forms from the reception desks in the International Office and contact the researcher to participate in the interview.</li> </ol> <p>Justification for the choice of participant groups</p> <p>Students come from Central China Normal University in mainland China will be invited to take part in this study. To reach this university level, their English learning experiences and their English ability are enough to undertake the questionnaire and the interview.  This university is one of the most well-known universities in mainland China and its departments and disciplines are comprehensive. This university is likely to be representative of a typical university in mainland China.</p>			
<p>Will the project involve any of the following participants? Please note that any random sample of the population may possibly include all of these participants, unless the study has been designed to specifically exclude a particular type of participant.</p> <table> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> <td>Possibly</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	No	Possibly
Yes	No	Possibly	

10. Participants				
(a) Pregnant Women?	(NS 4.1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Minors, i.e. children under 18 years of age?	(NS 4.2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) People highly dependent on medical care who may be unable to give consent?	(NS 4.4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) People with a cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability, or mental illness?	(NS 4.5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) People who may be involved in illegal activities?	(NS 4.6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) People in other countries?	(NS 4.8)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?	(NS 4.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) People who are identifiable by their membership of a cultural, ethnic or minority group?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For each "Yes" or "Possibly", show how your research complies with the relevant section in the *National Statement*.

There are not any sensitive items, political questions and local cultural values in this research. The researchers have understood how to conduct the research in other countries in the guidelines of NS.4.8.

If you answered "Yes" to (g) you must also attach a statement indicating how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sensitivities will be recognised (see the following publication for guidance: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e52syn.htm>)

Recruitment of Participants
<p>How will participants be recruited? From where will your participants be recruited?</p> <p>Give specific details about how participants will be recruited. Some questions to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you recruiting through advertisements? If so, indicate where they will be placed and append a copy</li> <li>• Are you recruiting through 3rd parties like associations, schools or clubs? If so, detail how you will approach the organisations and the process that the stakeholders will use to pass on information to potential participants. Please attach copies of letters of introduction, emails, and telephone preambles if appropriate</li> <li>• Are the participants University or DHHS staff, or regular patients in a particular clinic?</li> </ul>

If so, detail how they will be approached i.e. through personal invitation, email etc
<p>The participant will be recruited with the help of Central China Normal University in mainland China.</p> <p>The participants will be recruited in following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. With the obtainment of this ethics approval, the information sheet for the heads of the International Office will be provided with detailed information about this study.</li> <li>2. With the permission of the international office, the news of recruitment of this research will be sent via e-mail (provided in the information sheet) to students in the university.</li> <li>3. The questionnaires, information sheet, and drop boxes will be provided at the reception desk of the International Office for the students who are interested to participate.</li> <li>4. Students who are interested in attending a semi-structured interview may pick up an information sheet and the consent forms from the reception desk, and contact the researchers of this study via the contact details written in the information sheet.</li> </ol>



11. Data Source and Identifiability	
Does the project involve information sourced from databanks?	(NS 3.2) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, state which one(s) and indicate what permission for access is required. Include a description of any conditions of access and attach any relevant approvals.	
Is the data collected about individual participants:	
<p><b>a) Non-identifiable?</b> Non-identifiable data is data which have never been labelled with individual identifiers or from which identifiers have been permanently removed, and by means of which no specific individual can be identified. A subset of non-identifiable data are those that can be linked with other data so it can be known that they are about the same data subject, but the person's identity remains unknown.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>b) Re-identifiable?</b> Re-identifiable data is data from which identifiers have been removed and replaced by a code, but it remains possible to re-identify a specific individual by, for example, using the code or linking different data sets.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>c) Individually Identifiable?</b> Individually identifiable data is data where the identity of an individual can reasonably be ascertained. Examples of identifiers include the individuals name, image, date of birth or address, or in some cases their position in an organisation.</p> <p>Participants' responses to the questionnaires will be non-identifiable data, as the completed questionnaires will be collected via mails, and no specific individual can be identified by anyone including the researchers. Pre-addressed envelopes will also be provided to the students who choose to do the paper questionnaires. A box will be provided in the International Office, reception desk of Education Department and English Department in Central China Normal University for the participants who want to put their completed questionnaires in. Their identities cannot be identified in this way.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Participants' responses to the interview questions will be re-identifiable data. However, the confidentiality of the participants will be well protected. The audio recorded data of the semi-structured interviews will be collected and stored in a locked cabinet in the chief investigator's office. Transcripts of the data will erase any reference to any particular named participant so that the information is known to the researchers only but that the participants are not identified in the research. Names of departments and students will be erased from these initial data and will be replaced by pseudonyms. Confidentiality from the semi-structured interviews will be protected with no discussion of the participants' with other people. The participants will be</p>	



given a pseudonym in the initial collection of the data and will be recorded as students' numbers, such as No. 1 students, No.2, etc. The transcripts can be viewed by the participants upon request.

## 12. Federal Privacy Legislation

The following questions are part of the requirements concerning federal privacy legislation.

- (a) Is this project medical research (including epidemiological research?) Yes ☐ No ☒ **Go to (b)**
- If yes, will you require the use or disclosure of information from a Commonwealth agency?* Yes ☐ No ☐
- If yes, will the information to be disclosed be personal information, i.e. identifiable information?* Yes ☐ No ☐
- If yes, will you be obtaining consent from the individuals to whom the information relates?* Yes ☐ No ☐
- (b) Is this Research relevant to public health or safety, or to the management, funding or monitoring of a health service? Yes ☐ No ☒ **Go to (Question 13)**
- If yes, does the research involve the collection, use or disclosure of information from a private sector organisation?* Yes ☐ No ☐
- If yes, will you be collecting, using or disclosing health information* Yes ☐ No ☐
- If yes, will consent be obtained from the individuals to whom the health information relates?* Yes ☐ No ☐

## 13. Procedures

Describe the procedures to which participants will be subjected or the tasks they will be asked to carry out (**please detail exactly what you will be doing**).

This study includes pilot study and final implementation of the questionnaire and interview questions. The

research procedures introduced below include research approach, the design of measurements, the procedure of both pilot study and final study, and the data analysis.

#### Research approach

The research approach to be adopted by this study is a combination of qualitative data (from the interviews) and quantitative data (gathered by the questionnaire). The combination of these two data sources will be productive in gathering data appropriate to the research questions, because “no one methodology can answer all questions and provide insights on all issues” (Burns, 2000, p. 11). These interview sessions will be recorded for later data analysis.

It is accepted that qualitative data are prone to a certain degree of impressionism, in that it is subjective to the opinion of the interviewer and the interviewee, however, it can also be argued that its value lies in the holistic picture it provides (Burns, 2000). These data will enrich the information provided by the questionnaire, and provide the triangulation needed to improve the internal validity of the study (Burns, 2000).

#### Design of research instruments.

##### *Questionnaire*

The use of the questionnaire is important for obtaining data from a big population. It provides insights about the issues dealt with in the research in terms of statistical interpretation. It is also used for triangulation with the qualitative analysis.

The questionnaire is designed purposely for this research, which aims to investigate the views of students about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China. It divides into four parts: Part A, Part B, Part C, and Part D. Part A is the participants' background information. The questions in Part B are designed to achieve research objective 1&2. The questions in Part C are to achieve research objective 3&4. Part D is designed for research objective 5&6, which is to find out students' preferred learning styles and teaching models. The questionnaire is self-designed according to the definition of learning style of Tan (2005) and learning theory underpinned by constructivism. Tan's model has been used widely in China and other countries; thus, it is believed that this questionnaire has validity and reliability.

In these four parts of the questionnaire, a five-point Likert scale is a recognised tool for measuring attitudinal responses (Burns, 2000; Hatch, 2002), and will be employed in the questionnaire aspect of this study to provide insight into the participants' perceptions about, and their attitudes to the English teaching and learning experience they had in both high schools and university. The quantitative responses will enable the calculation of an overall numerical 'score' for each participant in relation to these objectives. The identification of this 'score', in turn, will facilitate the comparison of participants' results with other data gained from the questionnaire, such as the teaching models the teacher adopted. Furthermore, the questionnaire will provide the raw data for analysis (Prensky, 2001).

##### *Interview*

The qualitative data to be gathered by a semi-structured interview is designed to probe the aforementioned objectives on a deeper level than is possible with the questionnaire. The interview has been designed for 10 questions, which are believable to explore deeper thoughts of the participants. The table 1.1 below shows how these questions link to the research objectives.

Table 1.1. *Research objectives and interview question items*

Research objectives	Interview question items
1. Investigate the learning of English of students in high school	Q1, Q2, Q3
2. Investigate teachers' teaching of English in high school	Q6, Q7
3. Investigate the learning of English of students in university.	Q1, Q2, Q3
4. investigate teachers' teaching of English in university	Q6, Q7
5. Examine the differences of students' views and experiences of teaching and learning in high school and in university	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 Q6, Q5 Q7, Q8, Q9
6. Construct a model of teaching and learning of English based on students' views and experiences	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 Q6, Q5 Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10

Pilot study

The pilot study will be conducted approximately in March in Central China Normal University, 2013. About 80 students will be recruited for the pilot study in the survey, among which 3-5 students will be invited in the interview. The participants in the pilot study will not be recruited in the later final surveys and interviews. The method of participant recruitment is the same as the final study (mentioned in Page 11). A pilot study of both the questionnaire and interview will be conducted using a small number of students to uncover any problems with the research approach, test the research instrument, and enable the researcher to better the interview questions and structure.

Final study (questionnaire)

The students will first be e-mailed through the International Office of Central China Normal University with their permission once the ethics approval has been obtained from UTAS. Next, the students who would like to take part in the questionnaire will pick up the paper-questionnaire with a pre-addressed envelope and the information sheet at the reception desk in the International office. After the questionnaire, students can drop these envelopes into a box provided in the International Office in Central China Normal University. Students will be noticed that completion and submission of the questionnaire signifies their consent to participate in the questionnaire part of the study. All questionnaires are paper printed, no online-survey will be used because some students cannot access to internet in the university in China.

Final study (interview)

The participants, who have finished questionnaires, will also be invited to a semi-structured interview at a mutually convenient time and, either face to face, or over the phone, depending upon their preference, which will be audio recorded. According to the contact method of those participants provided at the end of the questionnaire who would like to take part in the interview, the researchers will arrange time for them. The interview for each participant will not take more than 30 minutes, which makes more effective and productive for both the researchers and the participants.

Method of data analysis

As this study utilises both qualitative and quantitative research methods, there will be two forms of data analysis; statistical analysis of questionnaire data will be used SPSS 18 and thematic analysis of interview data will be explored by NVivo version 10.

**14. Data**

Will photographs be taken? Yes ☐ No ☒

Will video-recordings be made? Yes ☐ No ☒

Will interviews or focus groups be tape-recorded? Yes ☒ No ☐

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, please describe the information to be collected.

Audio-recorded will be made of each student who takes part in the interview for later review and verification of data.

**15. Disclosure and consent:**

Does the project collect information from which individual participants can be identified? (NS 2.2) Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, could the research be conducted using non-identifiable information? Yes ☐ No ☒

Does this project use any form of implicit or passive consent? (NS 2.2.5, 2.3) Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, please describe how your research complies with the relevant section of the National Statement.

For the questionnaire, consent is not required. For the interview, consent is required (see consent form)

According to National statement 2.2.5, tacit is common and appropriate way for seeking consent for participation in a survey in China, in particular, when the size of participant group is large.

Will there be any deception of participations including concealment and covert observation? (NS 2.3.1, 2.3.2) Yes ☐ No ☒

*If yes, please describe how your research complies with the relevant section of the National Statement.*

#### 15. Disclosure and consent - continued . . .

Describe how participants will **consent** to participate in this study and how they will be informed of their rights (NS 2.2.1-2.2.7). Attach copies of your Information Sheet and Consent Form (where relevant) or give an explanation of the process by which you will obtain consent. (Pro formas for Information Sheets and Consent Forms are available on our website at: [http://www.research.utas.edu.au/human\\_ethics/social\\_science\\_forms.htm](http://www.research.utas.edu.au/human_ethics/social_science_forms.htm))

##### Questionnaire

With the permission of the International Office in Central China Normal University, all students at campus will be invited via e-mail (attached in the information sheet) to participate. Information sheets, paper-questionnaire with a pre-addressed envelope will be provided at the reception desk of the International Office in the university. They will know the detail of this study in the information sheet and decide if they would like to take part in the survey. Their rights and data confidentiality have been mentioned explicitly in the information sheet. When students finish the survey, they can put the questionnaire into the pre-addressed envelope and drop them into a box that provided at the reception desk of the International Office in the university. Completion and submission of the questionnaire signifies the consent to participate in the questionnaire part of the study.

##### Interview

The participants who would like to take part in the semi-structured interview can pick up the consent forms at the reception desk of the international Office. Before the interview, they will be provided with an outline of the interview and they will decide if they would like to take part in this interview. The participants who would like to take part in the interview will sign the consent form. Their rights and data confidentiality are informed in the consent forms with detail.

#### 16. Reimbursement

Is any reimbursement, payment, or other reward (outside of course credit) being offered to participants in the study? (NS 2.2.10)

Yes ☐ No ☒

*If yes, please state what will be offered, what amount will be offered and for what purpose (e.g. a voucher as a prize, reimbursement to cover expenses etc).*

### 17. Intrusiveness

Are there any aspects of the study that are intrusive in areas ordinarily considered personal and private, or that could create apprehension and anxiety for participants?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Are you collecting personal details or private information?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Is there any kind of dependency relationship between the researcher and any of the participants?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, please explain in more detail.

### 18. Potential benefits, risks and harms (NS 2.1)

(a) What are the possible benefits of this research to:

(i) The participant?

The research will give some insights into the participants 'context of teaching and learning and these insights may be useful to students and staffs in understanding their teaching and learning and they can be taken into consideration for improvement of the curriculum

(ii) The wider community?

The research could be useful for other research in the future dealing with English curriculum development

(b) What are the possible risks or harms of this research to the participants? (NS 2.1)

Could your research evoke anxiety or lead to the recall of painful memories?

Yes ☐ No ☒



**18. Potential benefits, risks and harms (NS 2.1)**

Will participants be asked to provide any information or commit any act, which might diminish self-respect or cause them to experience shame, embarrassment or regret? Yes ☐ No ☒

Will any procedure be used which may have an unpleasant or harmful side effect? Yes ☐ No ☒

Does the research use any stimuli, tasks, or procedures, which may be experienced by subjects as stressful, noxious, or unpleasant? (NS 2.1) Yes ☐ No ☒

Will you induce or create physical pain beyond mild discomfort? Yes ☐ No ☒

Are there any other possible risks or harms of this research to the participants? Yes ☒ No ☐

*If yes, please list other possible risks or harms.*

If it is possible that some students may feel anxious in an interview. Thus efforts will be made to help them to deal with the situation such as access to available consultancy or termination of the interview etc.

If you answered yes to any of the above, please describe how your research will comply with the National Statement (2.1). In addition, please describe the process(es) you will use to manage possible risks (e.g. if interviews may cause distress, provide details of support processes that will be put into place).

**19. Monitoring**

What mechanisms do you intend to implement to monitor the conduct and progress of the research project? (NS 5.5)

A timetable of the research project will be designed in the research plan form, which can be downloaded from the university website. The timetable will include every single step of the progress of this study for over the three-year research period. The project will be conducted strictly according to the timetable and there will be an annual and progress reports to HREC.

The supervisor is in regular contact with the research student while she is overseas (e.g. phone, email) to ensure that the progress is well communicated and conducted.

**20. Feedback**

What feedback will be given to participants?

How will feedback be given? (NS 1.5)

A summary of the results of this project will be placed on the noticeboard of the International Office of their university so that they are aware of the report completion.

Participating university will be provided with a final report of the study in electronic form, which will also be available to the students upon request. Students will be advised of the report availability by the International Office of the Central China Normal University.

## 21. Data Storage

Please state how and where your data will be stored, for how long it will be retained, and how it will be destroyed.

Address any issues of data security.

**Please note: Data must be stored for at least five years beyond the date of publication and then destroyed.**

**All data must eventually be destroyed, unless explicit consent has been obtained from the participants to archive their data.**

When the data collection is completed, all the questionnaires, interview recordings, transcripts and consent forms will be handed back personally by Ms Lu to be kept in locked filing cabinets in the office of the chief investigator Thao Lê at the School of Education, UTAS, and in password protected computer files, as appropriate. Audio-tapes recordings and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet and/or in password protected computer files. After 5 years, the data will be deleted and audio recordings wiped as per UTAS guidelines.

## 22. Other Ethical Issues

Are there in your opinion any other ethical issues involved in the research?

Yes ☒

If you answered "Yes", please explain in more detail.

Regarding the safety of the researcher: Ms Lu will undertake data collection in a Chinese university where she has lived and studied. Thus, there are no risks as she is very familiar with the context there culturally and linguistically. She will be also guided by her parents and friends there in terms of safety.

## 23. Declarations

a) Statement of Scientific Merit:



**The Head of School or the Head of Department is required to sign the following statement of scientific merit:**

"This proposal has been considered and is sound with regard to its merit and methodology."

The Head of School's or Head of Department's signature on the application form indicates that he/she has read the application and confirms that it is sound with regard to:

- (i) educational and/or scientific merit; and
- (ii) research design and methodology.

This does not preclude the SSHREC from questioning the research merit or methodology of any proposed project.

If the Head of School is one of the investigators, this statement must be signed by an appropriate person. This may be the Head of School/Department in a related area or the Dean. The certification of scientific merit may not be given by an investigator on the project.

Name

Position

Signature

Date

#### **b) Conformity with the National Statement**

The *Chief Investigator* is required to sign the following statement:

I have read and understood the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007*. I accept that I, as chief investigator, am responsible for ensuring that the investigation proposed in this form is conducted fully within the conditions laid down in the *National Statement* and any other conditions specified by the HREC (Tasmania) Network.

Name

Position

Signature
Date

<b>c) Signatures of other investigators</b> I acknowledge my involvement in the project and I accept the role of the above researcher as chief investigator of this study.		
Name: Thao Le	Signature:	Date: 18/06/2012
Name: Megan Short	Signature:	Date: 18/06/2012
Name:	Signature:	Date:

<b>CHECKLIST</b>	
<b>Please ensure that the following documents are included with your application:</b>	
Information sheet/s (if not attached ensure you have explained why in Section 10)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consent form/s (if not attached ensure you have explained why in Section 15)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaires (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interview schedules (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
A copy of any permissions obtained i.e. Other HREC, Other Institutions (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
All documents relevant to the study, including all information provided to subjects.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Telephone Preambles (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruitment Advertisements (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Email Contents (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>TO SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION:</b>  <b>1. You must email an electronic copy of this application form (can be unsigned) and all supporting documents to:</b>  <a href="mailto:Katherine.Shaw@utas.edu.au">Katherine.Shaw@utas.edu.au</a>  <b>(Please submit as Microsoft Word documents)</b> <b>.pdf versions are acceptable for appropriate documents, eg., posters or advertisements, some questionnaires etc.</b>  <b>2. You must also send a signed hard copy of this application form and all supporting documents to Katherine Shaw, Private Bag 1, Hobart, 7001</b>	
Has the 'Statement of Scientific Merit' been signed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have all investigators signed the form?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Locked Bag 1307 Launceston  
Tasmania 7250 Australia  
Telephone: (03) 6324 3696;  
Fax: (03) 6324 3048  
Email: T.Le@utas.edu.au  
Website: www.utas.edu.au/educ



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**An investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China**

**The information sheet for the head of International Office of Central China Normal University**

**Purpose of the study:** The study examines the views of students about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high school and university of mainland China. According to their views, a teaching and learning model that students prefer will be developed based on their views. The investigator will use questionnaires with participants to examine students' English learning experiences in high schools and university, as well as their English teachers' teaching in high schools and university they experienced. Participants will also be invited to semi-structured interviews, which will help investigate the students' perceptions of how and to what extent they use learning and teaching methods in both high schools and university to help them improve English. This study is being undertaken by the Chief Investigator Dr. Thao Lê and PhD student Jinjin Lu in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a PhD in Education under the supervision of Dr Thao Lê.

The researchers are from the University of Tasmania, Australia.

Your university has been invited to take part in this study. We would appreciate your assistance by making this research project known to your students. We hope that your students will be happy to participate in a questionnaire and also in an interview. We would invite 20 students to take part in an individual interview.

Participation in this study is voluntary and any research data gathered during this study will be kept confidential. Also the identity of the participants will be kept confidential, and any information your students supply will not identify them as participants.

Taking part in the study involves the following:

**For the questionnaire:** With your permission, our questionnaires with a stamped addressed return envelope will be made available at the reception desk of the International Office in your university. The questionnaires will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Completion and submission of the questionnaires signifies participants' consent to participate in the questionnaire part of the study.

**For the interview:** Students who would be interested in participating in an interview will be asked to contact Dr. Thao Lê or Jinjin Lu at the contacts given at the end of this information sheet. A consent form will be provided for the students who are interested in participating in the interview to sign before conducting the interview.

1. Interviews will be conducted by telephone or face-to-face at the place and time of mutual convenience.
2. Participants will be provided with an outline of the questions prior to the interview.
3. Participants will need to allow about 30 minutes for the interview.
4. Participants will be contacted by email or telephone to arrange an appropriate time and date to undertake the interview.
5. At the start of the interview we will seek the participant's permission to audio-record the interview; he/she may decline permission.
6. As part of the study process participants will be able to withdraw their data at any time within twenty eight [28] days of the interview.
7. All interview data used in this study will be kept in a locked and secure filing cabinet in the Department of Education, University of Tasmania and will be destroyed five[5] years after the completion of the study.
8. A copy of the paper reporting the results of the work will be made available to you and to those interviewees who indicate an interest in the final outcomes.

The Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network has approved this study. If you have any concerns about the manner in which the project is conducted you may contact the Executive Officer of the Human Research ethics committee (Tasmania) who can be contacted on (03)-6226 7479 or [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au).

If you are happy for your students to take part in this study, please contact the chief investigator Dr. Thao Lê at [T.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:T.Le@utas.edu.au), or the PhD student Jinjin Lu at [Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au](mailto:Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au).

More information on the study can be obtained from the chief investigator Dr. Thao Lê, phone 61-3 6324 3696, or the PhD student Jinjin Lu, phone 61-03 63243696. Thank you for your time in reading this information sheet and we look forward to your reply.

Dr. Thao Lê                      Jinjin Lu

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION



**An investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China**

**STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET (questionnaire)**

**Invitation**

As a student at the Central China Normal University, you are invited to participate in this study. This study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a PhD study for PhD student Jinjin Lu under the supervision of Dr. Thao Le.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to investigate university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China.

**Why have I been invited to participate?**

All students at the Central China Normal University campus will be invited to participate in this study.

Your participation in this project will have us to understand how English is taught at high school and university and we hope the findings of this project will be useful to teachers of English at schools and universities.

**What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Complete a questionnaire about your views of English learning experiences in high schools and university. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete.
2. When finishing the questionnaire, you can put the questionnaire in an pre-addressed envelope provided before and drop them into a box provided at the International Office reception desk. Your completion and submission of the questionnaire signifies your consent to participate in the questionnaire part of the study.

Participation in this study is voluntary and any research data gathered during this study will be kept confidential. Also the identity of the participants will be kept confidential,

and any information you supply will not identify you as a participant. If you choose to participate, you are entitled to withdraw from the study at any time. If you wish, request that any data you have contributed to that point also be withdrawn. If you do not like to participate, there will be no implications for the relationship between participants and the university.

**Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?**

The major benefit to you of being involved is the chance to share your learning experiences in the high schools and universities, as well as offer suggestions for the future development of English learning and teaching. These suggestions will help both schools and teachers to improve English teaching.

**Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?**

For the survey, there are not any risks from participation because all the participants are voluntary and they are free to say no at any time in this process.

**What if I change my mind during or after the study?**

Participants in this study are free to withdraw at any time, and that they can do so without providing an explanation. When they decide not to would like to participate in the survey, they do not need to put the questionnaire into the envelope. Therefore, their information will not be seen by anyone.

**What will happen to the information when this study is over?**

Surveys, hard copies of interview transcripts, and audio-recorded files will be stored on the Launceston campus of the University of Tasmania in a locked and secure filing cabinet accessible only by the researchers. The identifying information will be removed from the documents. All the data will be destroyed five [5] years after the completion of the study.

All information collected will be treated confidentially by the researchers. The participants will be reminded the importance of confidentiality.

**How will the results of the study be published?**

Participating university will be provided with a final report of the study in electronic form, which will also be available to the students upon request. Students will be advised of the report availability by the International Office of the Central China Normal University.

**What if I have questions about this study?**

If you have any questions relating to this study, feel free to contact any member of the researchers.

Chief investigator Dr. Thao Lê at [T.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:T.Le@utas.edu.au)

PhD student Jinjin Lu at [Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au](mailto:Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au).

We would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au). The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. Please quote ethics reference number [H12633].

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study. If you wish to take part in the survey, completion and submission of the questionnaire signifies your consent to participate in the questionnaire part of the study. This information sheet is for you to keep.



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FACULTY OF EDUCATION



**An investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China**

**STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET (interview)**

**Invitation**

As a student at the Central China Normal University, you are invited to participate in this study. This study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a PhD study for PhD student Jinjin Lu under the supervision of Dr. Thao Le.

The researchers are from the University of Tasmania, Australia.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to investigate university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China.

**Why have I been invited to participate?**

All students at the Central China Normal University campus will be invited to participate in this study.

**Your participation of the interview will involve:**

1. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face or via phone at the place and time of mutual convenience.
2. Participants will be provided with an outline of the questions prior to the interview.
3. Participants will need to allow about 30 minutes for the interview.
4. Participants will be contacted by email or telephone to arrange an appropriate time and date to undertake the interview.
5. At the start of the interview we will seek the participant's permission to audio-record the interview, you may decline permission.
6. As part of the study process participants will be able to withdraw their data at any time within twenty eight [28] days of the interview.
7. All interview data used in this study will be kept in a locked and secure filing cabinet and password protected computers in the Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania, and will be destroyed five[5] years after the completion of the study.

8. Those who would like to participate in the interview will have a chance to be invited to enter a draw to a film voucher. If the participants are interested in the draw, they can contact the researchers via email provided in the information sheet.

Participation in this study is voluntary and any research data gathered during this study will be kept confidential. Also the identity of the participants will be kept confidential, and any information you supply will not identify you as a participant. If you choose to participate, you are entitled to withdraw from the study at any time. If you wish, request that any data you have contributed to that point also be withdrawn. If you do not like to participate, there will be no implications for the relationship between participants and the university.

**Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?**

The major benefit to you of being involved is the chance to share your learning experiences in the high schools and universities, as well as offer suggestions for the future development of English learning and teaching. These suggestions will help both schools and teachers to improve English teaching.

**Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?**

Apart from your time for interview, we can foresee no risks for you.

**What if I change my mind during or after the study?**

During the interview, you can decline to answer any or all questions or ask the interview to cease at any time without explanation. Simultaneously, the data you have provided in the audio-recorded files will be removed immediately. If you experience discomfort as a result of any aspect of the research you can speak to any of your researcher. After the study, you will be able to withdraw the data at any time within twenty eight [28] days of the interview.

**Can have opportunity to review and correct interview transcript?**

Yes, you will have an opportunity to review and correct a transcript of their interview;

**What will happen to the information when this study is over?**

Surveys, hard copies of interview transcripts, and audio-recorded files will be stored on the Launceston campus of the University of Tasmania in a locked and secure filing cabinet accessible only by the researchers. The identifying information will be removed from the documents. All the data will be destroyed five [5] years after the completion of the study.

All information collected will be treated confidentially by the researchers. The participants will be reminded the importance of confidentiality.

**How will the results of the study be published?**

Participating university will be provided with a final report of the study in electronic form, which will also be available to the students upon request. Students will be advised of the report availability by the International Office of the Central China Normal University.

**What if I have questions about this study?**

If you have any questions relating to this study, feel free to contact any member of the researchers.

Chief investigator Dr. Thao Lê at [T.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:T.Le@utas.edu.au)

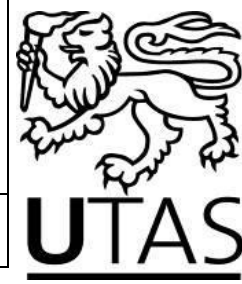
PhD student Jinjin Lu at [Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au](mailto:Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au).

We would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on 61-3- 6226 7479 or email [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au). The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. Please quote ethics reference number H12633.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study. If you wish to take part in the interview, please sign the attached consent form for the interview. This information sheet is for you to keep.

Locked Bag 1307 Launceston  
Tasmania 7250 Australia  
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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

## Student Consent Form: Interview

Study Title: An investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China

This consent form is for participants who would like to take part in the semi-structured interview in this research.

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
4. I understand that I will participate in an interview of 30 minutes which will seek information relating to my learning experiences in high schools and university. The semi-structured interviews will be audio taped with my permission, and I am entitled to receive a transcript if I require. I will be able to correct the transcript of the interview
5. I understand that the study involves exploring the views of students on their English learning and teaching experience they got through in high schools and university.
6. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for a period of 5 years from the publication of the study results, and will then be destroyed.
7. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
8. I understand that the researcher(s) will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research.
9. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant.
10. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any effect. If I so wish, I may request that any data I have supplied be withdrawn from the research until May 31st, 2013.

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement by Investigator**

☐

I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐

The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Investigator's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Topic: An investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China

**Initial Version**

**Part A: Information about the participants' background. Please tick the most appropriate response.**

1. Which course are you taking in the university now?
  - ☐ Degree
  - ☐ Diploma
  - ☐ Others
2. Gender:
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
3. Academic Faculty:
  - ☐ Engineering
  - ☐ Information technology
  - ☐ Biochemistry
  - ☐ Environment
  - ☐ Management
  - ☐ Computing
  - ☐ Physics
  - ☐ English
  - ☐ Education
  - ☐ Economics
  - ☐ Mathematics
  - ☐ History
  - ☐ Law
  - ☐ Social science
  - ☐ Psychology
  - ☐ Arts
4. Duration of studying at the Central China Normal University (up to now):
  - ☐ Less than one year
  - ☐ One to two years
  - ☐ Two to three years
  - ☐ Three to four years
  - ☐ Over four years
5. Yours scores in the English test in the College Entrance Examination (full mark is 150):

- ☐ Less than 90
- ☐ 90-100
- ☐ 101-110
- ☐ 111-120
- ☐ 121-130
- ☐ 131-140
- ☐ 141-150

**Part B: Investigation of the English language learning and teaching in high schools and university in China. Please circle your most appropriate response.**

Directions: To answer Part B, please indicate your most appropriate response by circling one of the following responses:

- 1= Strongly Agree  
 2= Agree  
 3= Not Sure/Not Applicable  
 4= Disagree  
 5= Strongly Disagree

6	I strictly followed exactly what my teachers told me to do.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My learning depended entirely on my teachers' teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I learnt a great deal from my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I learnt a great deal by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
10	English grammar was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
11	English speaking was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
12	English listening was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
13	English writing was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Computer use played an important role in my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I liked to learn independently.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I learnt best by following teachers' instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
17	The learning environment was very helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
18	Testing was important to my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
19	Assignments were important to my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
20	My teachers encouraged independent learning.	1	2	3	4	5
21	My teachers provided a learner-friendly environment.	1	2	3	4	5
22	My teachers gave students individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5
23	My teachers provided interesting learning materials.	1	2	3	4	5

24	My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.	1	2	3	4	5
25	My teachers provided different learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5
26	My teachers encouraged group learning.	1	2	3	4	5
27	My teachers used a variety of teaching styles.	1	2	3	4	5
28	My teachers know best about what was good for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
29	My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
30	I strictly followed exactly what my teachers told me to do.	1	2	3	4	5
31	My learning depended entirely on my teachers' teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
32	I learnt a great deal from my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
33	I learnt a great deal by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
34	English grammar was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
35	English speaking was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
36	English listening was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
37	English writing was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
38	Computer played an important role in my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
39	I liked to learn independently.	1	2	3	4	5
40	I learnt best by following teachers' instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
41	The learning environment was very helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
42	Testing was important to my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
43	Assignments were important to my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
44	My teachers encouraged independent learning.	1	2	3	4	5
45	My teachers provided a learner-friendly environment.	1	2	3	4	5
46	My teachers give students individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5
47	My teachers provided interesting learning materials.	1	2	3	4	5
48	My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.	1	2	3	4	5
49	My teachers provided different learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5
50	My teachers encouraged group learning.	1	2	3	4	5
51	My teachers used a variety of teaching styles.	1	2	3	4	5
52	My teachers know best about what was good for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
53	My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.	1	2	3	4	5



54	Interactive class is important.	1	2	3	4	5
55	Group learning is important.	1	2	3	4	5
56	Students should develop independent learning ability.	1	2	3	4	5
57	Different kinds of assessment should be used.	1	2	3	4	5
58	Teachers should pay attention to students' different learning styles.	1	2	3	4	5
59	Teachers should provide different learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5
60	Computer-assisted learning should be provided.	1	2	3	4	5
61	English communication is an important goal of English teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
62	Teachers should be flexible in treating individual students.	1	2	3	4	5
63	A good teacher should be a good communicator.	1	2	3	4	5
64	A good teacher should have a warm personality.	1	2	3	4	5
65	A good teacher should have a sense of humour.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

If you are interested in participating in an interview so that you could provide more ideas to the study, please contact us with details below for information about the interview.

Jinjin Lu at [Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au](mailto:Jinjin.Lu@utas.edu.au), 6104 20983573

Dr. Thao Lê at [T.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:T.Le@utas.edu.au), 613 6324 3696

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION



Topic: An investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university of mainland China

**Final Version**

**Part A: Information about the participants' background. Please tick the most appropriate response.**

1. Which course are you taking in the university now?
  - ☐ Degree
  - ☐ Diploma
  - ☐ Others
2. Gender:
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
3. Academic Faculty:
  - ☐ Engineering
  - ☐ Information technology
  - ☐ Biochemistry
  - ☐ Environment
  - ☐ Management
  - ☐ Computing
  - ☐ Physics
  - ☐ English
  - ☐ Education
  - ☐ Economics
  - ☐ Mathematics
  - ☐ History
  - ☐ Law
  - ☐ Social science
  - ☐ Psychology
  - ☐ Arts
4. Duration of studying at the Central China Normal University (up to now):
  - ☐ Less than one year
  - ☐ One to two years
  - ☐ Two to three years
  - ☐ Three to four years
  - ☐ Over four years
5. Yours scores in the English test in the College Entrance Examination (full mark is 150):

- ☐ Less than 90
- ☐ 90-120
- ☐ 121-140
- ☐ 141-150

**Part B: Investigation of the English language learning and teaching in high schools.**  
**Please circle your most appropriate response.**

Directions: To answer Part B, please indicate your most appropriate response by circling one of the following responses:

- 1= Strongly Agree  
 2= Agree  
 3= Not Sure/Not Applicable  
 4= Disagree  
 5= Strongly Disagree

No.	My English learning in High schools	Weighted scores				
6	I strictly followed exactly what my teachers told me to do.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My learning depended entirely on my teachers' teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I learnt a great deal from my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I learnt a great deal by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
10	English grammar was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
11	English speaking was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
12	English listening was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
13	English writing was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Computer use played an important role in my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I liked to learn independently.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I learnt best by following teachers' instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
17	The learning environment was very helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
18	Testing was important to my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
19	Assignments were important to my learning.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Teaching models in English teaching in High schools	Weighted scores				
20	My teachers encouraged independent learning.	1	2	3	4	5

21	My teachers provided a learner-friendly environment.	1	2	3	4	5
22	My teachers gave students individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5
23	My teachers provided interesting learning materials.	1	2	3	4	5
24	My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.	1	2	3	4	5
25	My teachers provided different learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5
26	My teachers encouraged group learning.	1	2	3	4	5
27	My teachers used a variety of teaching styles.	1	2	3	4	5
28	My teachers know best about what was good for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
29	My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.	1	2	3	4	5

**Part C: Investigation of the English language learning and teaching in university.  
Please circle your most appropriate response.**

Directions: To answer Part C, please indicate your most appropriate response by circling one of the following responses:

- 1= Strongly Agree  
 2= Agree  
 3= Not Sure/Not Applicable  
 4= Disagree  
 5= Strongly Disagree

No.	My English learning in the university	Weighted scores				
30	I strictly followed exactly what my teachers told me to do.	1	2	3	4	5
31	My learning depended entirely on my teachers' teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
32	I learnt a great deal from my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
33	I learnt a great deal by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
34	English grammar was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
35	English speaking was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
36	English listening was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
37	English writing was important for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
38	Computer played an important role in my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
39	I liked to learn independently.	1	2	3	4	5

40	I learnt best by following teachers' instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
41	The learning environment was very helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
42	Testing was important to my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
43	Assignments were important to my learning.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Teaching models in English teaching in the university	Weighted scores				
44	My teachers encouraged independent learning.	1	2	3	4	5
45	My teachers provided a learner-friendly environment.	1	2	3	4	5
46	My teachers give students individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5
47	My teachers provided interesting learning materials.	1	2	3	4	5
48	My teachers gave helpful feedback to students.	1	2	3	4	5
49	My teachers provided different learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5
50	My teachers encouraged group learning.	1	2	3	4	5
51	My teachers used a variety of teaching styles.	1	2	3	4	5
52	My teachers know best about what was good for my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
53	My success depended heavily on my teachers' teaching.	1	2	3	4	5

**Part D: Investigation of my preferred learning and teaching model. Please circle your most appropriate response.**

Directions: To answer Part D, please indicate your most appropriate response by circling one of the following responses:

- 1= Strongly Agree  
 2= Agree  
 3= Not Sure/Not Applicable  
 4= Disagree  
 5= Strongly Disagree

No.	My preferred learning and teaching model	Weighted scores				
54	Interactive class is important.	1	2	3	4	5
55	Group learning is important.	1	2	3	4	5

56	Students should develop independent learning ability.	1	2	3	4	5
57	Different kinds of assessment should be used.	1	2	3	4	5
58	Teachers should pay attention to students' different learning styles.	1	2	3	4	5
59	Teachers should provide different learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5
60	Computer-assisted learning should be provided.	1	2	3	4	5
61	English communication is an important goal of English teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
62	Teachers should be flexible in treating individual students.	1	2	3	4	5
63	A good teacher should be a good communicator.	1	2	3	4	5
64	A good teacher should have a warm personality.	1	2	3	4	5
65	A good teacher should have a sense of humour.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

If you are interested in participating in an interview so that you could provide more ideas to the study, please contact us with details below for information about the interview.

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Research Topic: An investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university**

**Initial version**

Questions for semi-structured interview is to investigate the views of students about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university

Q.1 How do you learn English in high schools and university?

Q.2 What do you think of the methods you used in your English learning in high schools and university? Do they help your English learning or not? If yes, to what extent?

Q.3 Are you satisfied with your English achievement in high schools and university? Why?

Q.4 What problems do you have in English learning?

Q.5 Which aspects do you want to improve (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English learning? Why?

Q.6 What do you think of English teachers' teaching in high schools and university?

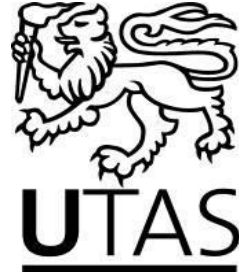
Q.7 In your opinion, what kind of teaching methods are helpful to your English learning?

Q.8 How do you value current English assessments in high schools and university?

Q.9 How do you compare your English learning and teaching environment in high schools and university? Why?

Q.10 In your opinion, what kind of the personality should a good teacher of English have?

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Research Topic: An investigation of university students' views about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university**

**Final version**

Questions for semi-structured interview is to investigate the views of students about teaching and learning English through their own experiences in high schools and university

Q.1 What is your views about English teaching in high schools and in the university?

Q.2 What do you think of the methods you used in your English learning in high schools and in the university? Do they help your English learning or not? If yes, to what extent?

Q.3 Are you satisfied with your English achievement in high schools and in the university? Why?

Q.4 What problems do you have in English learning?

Q.5 Which aspects do you want to improve (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English learning? Why?

Q.6 What do you think of English teachers' teaching in high schools and in the university?

Q.7 In your opinion, what kind of teaching methods are helpful to your English learning?

Q.8 What do you think about the current English assessments in high schools and in the university? For example, tests and exams.

Q.9 How do you compare your English learning and teaching environment in high schools and in the university? Why?

Q.10 In your opinion, what kind of the personality should a good teacher of English have?



## Nodes

Name	Sources	References
Students' expectations in learning and teaching in English	32	106
Hope to share and express opinions in class	1	2
Hope to have more foreign teachers	1	2
Hope to have more chance to speak in class	2	4
Hope to have bilingual class	1	1
Hope to get more feedback from teachers	1	1
Hope to communicate more in English	28	82
Hope to be taught something new	1	1
Hope to be taught foreign cultures	10	13
Hope to be taught current news	2	2
Learning motivation	33	67
To study abroad	5	6
To pass examinations	5	5
To make foreign friends	2	2
To improve my capacity in English learning	3	3
To get a high score(mark) in examinations	15	35
To find a good job	15	19
Learning attitude	33	80
Positive attitudes	23	42
Passionate to learn English	4	4
Interest to learn English	16	23
Enjoy English learning	13	22
Negative attitudes	23	39
No motivation to learn English	4	4
Learning English is boring	7	9
English learning is difficult	16	26
English is not important	2	4
Learning and teaching in English in the university	69	575
Teaching model used in the university	28	73
Student-centered methods	28	73
Using the Internet to learn English	7	15
Using computers for learning English	6	7
Self-discipline	9	10
Self-conscious	2	2
Online learning	6	8
Learning English by myself	14	25
English self-access learning center	9	19
Learning and teaching resources in the university	10	13
Useful resources online	8	11
Resources from libraries	3	3
Learning and teaching methods in the university	46	277

Name	Sources	References
Reading English newspapers	4	7
Reading English magazines	2	3
Individualized learning	14	33
Learning English by myself	14	33
Grammar Translation Method	6	9
Translating from textbooks	6	9
English final examinations and tests	26	77
Computer-assisted Method	15	26
Using the Internet to learn English	7	15
Using PowerPoint	1	1
Using computers for learning English	7	8
Online learning	5	7
Communicative Method	31	106
Talking with foreigners	28	82
Online chatting	3	3
Group work and group discussions	10	16
Doing role-plays	6	6
Doing English speech	1	1
Doing duty report	1	1
Dialogue practice in English	3	3
Collaborative learning	5	8
Learning with friends	5	8
Audio-Lingual Method	17	45
Watching English films	16	32
Listening to English songs	10	18
Listening to English news	2	4
Doing presentations	6	6
Learning and teaching environment in the university	25	47
Relaxed	7	10
Freedom	23	37
Language skills in the university	38	261
Micro-skills	20	77
English vocabulary	16	31
English intonation and pronunciation	6	11
English grammar	19	47
Macro-skills	38	212
English writing	18	40
English speaking	35	138
English reading	19	41
English listening	28	92

Name	Sources	References
English learning and teaching problems in the university	14	36
No partners to practice	1	1
Limited time in the English class	14	30
Lacking confidence to speak English	3	5
English assessments in the university	29	107
TOEIC	2	3
TOEFL	2	3
English final examinations and tests	25	76
CET-4, CET-6	14	30
BEC	1	3
English activities in the university	11	24
Role-plays	6	6
Presentations	6	6
English speech	1	1
English corner	7	11
Duty reports	3	4
Learning and teaching in English in high schools	67	444
Teaching model used in high schools	21	34
Teacher-centered methods	21	34
Teaching everything in details	1	1
Learning English by following teachers' instructions	19	30
Learning and teaching resources in high schools	3	5
Textbooks	2	4
Simple teaching handouts in English	1	1
Learning and teaching methods in high schools	34	138
Grammar Translation Method	25	52
Translating textbooks	6	9
Reading and translating texts	1	1
Doing English grammar exercise and practice	23	42
English final exams and tests	26	77
Communicative Method	3	3
Dialogue practice in English	3	3
Audio-Lingual Method	10	18
Listening to English songs	10	18
Learning and teaching environment in high schools	24	38
Strict	24	38
Language skills in high schools	42	265
Micro-skills	21	78
English vocabulary	17	32

Name	Sources	References
English innoation and pronunciation	6	11
English grammar	20	48
Macro-skills	41	215
English writing	18	40
English speaking	38	141
English reading	19	41
English listening	29	93
English learning and teaching problems in high schools	7	9
Simple teaching materials	1	1
Pressure teachers faced	3	3
Lacking confidence to speak English	3	5
English assessments in high schools	35	116
English final examinations and tests	26	77
College Entrance Examination	23	49
English activities in high schools	3	4
Duty report	3	4
Charateristics of a good English teacher	22	81
Warm hearted	1	1
Understanding and communicating with students	6	9
Strict	3	4
Responsible and easy going	7	8
Respecting students	2	2
Paying attention to individual students	13	18
Passionate	5	5
Optimistic and patient	16	23
Kind	2	3
Interacting with students	7	12
Humorous	17	18
Friendly	1	1
Being like a guider	10	12

**Correlation analysis on the relationships between English learning in high schools and the university 14 pairs (Q6-Q19, and Q30-Q43)**

Correlations				
			Q6	Q30
Spearman's rho	Q6	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.390**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q30	Correlation Coefficient	.390**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q7	Q31
Spearman's rho	Q7	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.467**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q31	Correlation Coefficient	.467**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q8	Q32
Spearman's rho	Q8	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.407**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q32	Correlation Coefficient	.407**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q9	Q33
Spearman's rho	Q9	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.388**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q33	Correlation Coefficient	.388**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q10	Q34
Spearman's rho	Q10	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.516**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q34	Correlation Coefficient	.516**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q11	Q35

Spearman's rho	Q11	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.450**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q35	Correlation Coefficient	.450**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q12	Q36
Spearman's rho	Q12	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.578**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q36	Correlation Coefficient	.578**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q13	Q37
Spearman's rho	Q13	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.551**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q37	Correlation Coefficient	.551**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q14	Q38
Spearman's rho	Q14	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.281**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q38	Correlation Coefficient	.281**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q15	Q39
Spearman's rho	Q15	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.405**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q39	Correlation Coefficient	.405**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q16	Q40
Spearman's rho	Q16	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.311**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q40	Correlation Coefficient	.311**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

		N	500	500
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Correlations				
			Q17	Q41
Spearman's rho	Q17	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.471**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q41	Correlation Coefficient	.471**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Correlations				
			Q18	Q42
Spearman's rho	Q18	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.377**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q42	Correlation Coefficient	.377**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Correlations				
			Q19	Q43
Spearman's rho	Q19	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.427**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q43	Correlation Coefficient	.427**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

**Correlation analysis on the relationships between teaching models in English teaching in high schools and the university 10 pairs (Q20-Q29, and Q44-Q53)**

Correlations				
			Q20	Q44
Spearman's rho	Q20	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.302**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q44	Correlation Coefficient	.302**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Correlations				
			Q21	Q45
Spearman's rho	Q21	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.333**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q45	Correlation Coefficient	.333**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Correlations				
			Q22	Q46
Spearman's rho	Q22	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.207**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q46	Correlation Coefficient	.207**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Correlations				
			Q23	Q47
Spearman's rho	Q23	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.220**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q47	Correlation Coefficient	.220**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Correlations				
			Q24	Q48
Spearman's rho	Q24	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.287**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q48	Correlation Coefficient	.287**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Correlations			Q25	Q49



Spearman's rho	Q25	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.228**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q49	Correlation Coefficient	.228**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q26	Q50
Spearman's rho	Q26	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.147**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	500	500
	Q50	Correlation Coefficient	.147**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q27	Q51
Spearman's rho	Q27	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.238**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q51	Correlation Coefficient	.238**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q28	Q52
Spearman's rho	Q28	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.300**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q52	Correlation Coefficient	.300**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations				
			Q29	Q53
Spearman's rho	Q29	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.334**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	500	500
	Q53	Correlation Coefficient	.334**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).