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A case study of EFL education in a Chinese independent college: How does the College English curriculum meet learners' expressed needs?

Jingyan Peng

Abstract

This is a case study of EFL education in a Chinese independent college, which is a newly-established type of institution of higher education in China. The study focuses on how the College English curriculum meets the English learning needs expressed by the learners, as a basis for improving the curriculum.

The empirical findings show that: 1) the English learning needs expressed by the learners can be identified as two types: their expressed target needs (their expressions of their desired learning outcomes) and their expressed learning needs (their expressions of what they think are the factors in the learning situation that affect their English learning). 2) The learners' expressed needs – both target and learning – are generally insufficiently addressed in the CE curriculum by the curriculum designers, teachers, institution and other parties involved. This lack of accommodation of the learners' expressed needs can, to a large extent, be related to over-emphasis on a product-oriented perspective, and particularly on testing, and neglect of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum. 3) There are three relevant features in the learning environment that impact on the CE curriculum, and thus on the possibility of accommodating the learners' expressed needs: the national curriculum, the physical environment, and cultural factors.

The findings give valuable insights and have practical implications for EFL education at tertiary level, especially in the context of Chinese independent colleges.

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college: How does the College English curriculum meet
learners' expressed needs?**

By

Jingyan Peng

**In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctorate in Education**



School of Education

June 2014

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Abbreviations

CE	College English
CECR	<i>College English Curriculum Requirements</i>
CET	College English Test
CET-4	College English Test Band four
CET-6	College English Test Band six
CMOE	The Chinese Ministry of Education
EFL	English as a foreign language
ICC	Intercultural communicative competence
LSA	Learning situation analysis
NA	Needs analysis
TSA	Target situation analysis
WTO	The World Trade Organisation

Declaration

This EdD thesis is my own work and no part of the material offered in it has previously been submitted for a degree in this or in any other university.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This study is a case study of English as a foreign language (EFL) education in a Chinese independent college, referred to as College X. Independent colleges are newly-established privately funded institutions of higher education in China. College English (CE) is the English course provided for non-English major students in all Chinese colleges and universities, including independent colleges.

The focus of the study is on learner-perceived English learning needs and how these needs are being met and can be accommodated in the CE curriculum, which includes the national curriculum – the document *College English Curriculum Requirements* (CECR) issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education (CMOE) – and College X’s institutional curriculum. I seek to draw together understanding from the fields of needs analysis (NA), curriculum development, and foreign language teaching and learning to explore the impact of curriculum planning and implementation on learners’ English learning and personal growth in order to inform practice in foreign language education.

In this opening chapter, I first state the rationale for the present study (Section 1.1), and then locate the study in the broader context of Chinese higher education, and particularly English education (Section 1.2). I present the aims of the study in Section 1.3, and outline the importance and originality of the study in Section 1.4. Section 1.5 provides the definitions of two key terms: College English (CE), and the College English curriculum. The chapter concludes in Section 1.6 with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Research rationale

It is nowadays assumed by many people that the primary purpose of education is to contribute to one’s vocational and economic life. This is known as the social market perspective on education (McKernan, 2008). This perspective is also seen in language courses, with the College English course in Chinese higher

education being an example. The CE national curriculum, i.e. the CECR, has been drawn up with a view to “meeting the needs of the country and society for qualified personnel in the new era” (2007, p.22), among several other purposes.

As McKernan (2008, p.96) notes, social market advocates stipulate that accountability is required in education because public funds are expended on “investment spending”. Long (2005a, 2005b) also argues that in this era of shrinking resources there are growing demands for accountability in public life, with education being a particularly urgent case and foreign language education a prime example within it. Long (2005b) further states that in foreign language education this accountability translates into an urgent need for courses of all kinds to be relevant to the needs of specific groups of learners and of society at large. These involve “academic, occupational, vocational, or “survival” needs for functional L2 proficiency” (2005b, p.19). The needs tend to concentrate on the end-product of course learning: the actual language which learners need to use in their social and economic lives.

I believe that education should also be accountable to learners as individuals. As McKernan (2008, p.96-97) argues, “education must not be seen as merely an investment in the economy but also as a service to be judged by the contribution it makes to the well-being of the individual” (p.96-97). Developing the individual as a *person* is a more fundamental purpose of education (p.96). This is echoed by Kelly (2009, p.98), who argues that “the prime concern of the educational process is with human development”.

In this concept of education, curriculum designers, teachers and other parties involved should be more concerned with accommodating the needs of learners as individuals. Accordingly, needs analysis should focus on understanding individual learners’ perceptions of their own learning so as to inform curriculum development. This differs from the common view of NA, i.e. NA as “a prerequisite for effective course design” (Long, 2005a, p.1). The needs of learners as individuals should be taken into serious account not only in the planning of the

curriculum, but also throughout the process of implementing it, i.e. in teaching and learning practice.

This study aims to understand the English learning needs perceived by students in one particular institution, i.e. College X, and then to see how these needs are addressed in the CE curriculum as a basis for improving the CE curriculum, including both curriculum planning and implementation.

1.2 Research context

In this section, I justify the research purposes stated above by locating the present study in the broader context of English teaching in Chinese institutions of higher education. First, I review criticisms of CE teaching so as to underline the importance of improving the CE curriculum and allowing learners' voices to be heard. I then look at how the national curriculum, the CECR, was designed in order to justify my research focus on the NA with learners as the primary source. Following this, I introduce a newly established institution in Chinese higher education, namely the independent college, to explain why I have chosen to conduct this study in that context.

1.2.1 Criticisms of CE teaching

CE teaching has come under continual criticism in China. In 1996, Vice Prime Minister Li Lanqing made the following comments:

Current foreign language teaching in our country, in terms of its level and pedagogy, is generally time-consuming and inefficient.

Since then, the criticism of “inefficiency” in CE teaching has been extensively reported (e.g. Jing, 1999; Dai, 2001; Nie & Li, 2008; Wang, C., 2010; Cai, 2006, 2012). By “inefficient”, the critics refer to a situation in which the English learning achievements of college and university students, compared with their investment of time and effort or the importance attached to English education by the CMOE, are far from sufficient.

As the 21st century began, the CMOE attached great importance to English education in China. In January 2001, it issued ‘Guidelines for actively promoting the offering of English courses in primary schools’, which brought forward the beginning of English compulsory education by four years, from Year 1 in junior high school to Year 3 in primary school. In fact, even before the release of this document many primary schools and even nurseries in urban areas already offered English courses. In August 2001, the CMOE issued ‘Some views on strengthening undergraduate teaching work to improve the teaching quality of higher education’ to emphasise the importance of teaching in English and other foreign languages in higher education. The document suggests that within three years courses taught in foreign languages should account for 5% to 10% of all courses offered in certain subjects, such as bio-technology, information technology, finance, and law. Furthermore, the CMOE released the CECR for trial implementation in 2004 and for full implementation in 2007. In the CECR, CE is set as “a required basic course for undergraduates” (2007, p.22) which “should account for 10% (around 16) of the total undergraduate credits” (p.34). In short, the CMOE has paid considerable attention to English education in China.

English education receives so much emphasis in China that English proficiency is closely associated with entrance examinations, employment, and even the assessment of professional qualifications. This situation is referred to by many as “English first”, “English fever”, or “English for the whole people” (e.g. Hu, 2005; Wang, 2011; Li, 2013).

In colleges and universities, many students expend a great deal of time and effort on learning English. According to a survey made by the State Language Commission, up to 73% of college and university students spend over a quarter of their study time on foreign language learning, and others spend even more time, up to half or three quarters of their learning time (State Language Commission, 2007). This foreign language learning is primarily English learning, as English is the only or principal foreign language offered to students in Chinese institutions of higher education.

On the other hand, unsatisfactory English learning achievements of college and university students have been extensively reported. It has been pointed out by many that students' ability to use English, including their listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating abilities, is insufficiently developed (e.g. Jing, 1999; Wang & Wang, 2003; Zhang & Luo, 2004; Cai, 2012). In particular, their inability to understand what they hear and to speak has been continually reported, and this phenomenon is even referred to as "deaf" English, "dumb" English, or "deaf-dumb" English (e.g. Cen, 1998; Dai, 2001; Zhang, 2002; Cai, 2006; Wang, C., 2010).

Many have discussed the reasons for the 'inefficiency' of CE teaching. For example, Jing (1999) questions the teaching content: textbooks focus on classic works but have a lack of practical content. Cen (1998) and Zhang (2002) relate the unsatisfactory teaching situation to the inconsistency of the English teaching offered at different stages of school education. Jing (1999) and Qian (2003) question the role of College English Test (CET), the nationwide English test for evaluating college and university students' English learning achievements. Zhang (2002) attributes "deaf" and "dumb" English to the English teaching objectives, which focus on the development of students' reading comprehension but neglect listening and speaking abilities. Furthermore, Cai (2006, 2012) questions the orientation of CE towards General English.

It is notable that the above comments have all been made by Chinese educators or researchers, with learners' voices not being heard. Zhao et al. (2009) note that in designing and implementing the CE teaching reforms, researchers and managers often work in a top-down fashion, focusing on setting objectives and faculty development, and emphasising the roles of the institution and teachers. They neglect, however, research on the English learning of students, who are the main participants in educational activities (Pan, 2004). It is, therefore, to allow learners' voices to be heard by policy makers, curriculum designers and teachers that I take a learner-centred perspective in this study to understand the CE curriculum.

1.2.2 The design of the CECR

The above criticisms of CE teaching contributed to a reform of CE teaching which was launched by the CMOE in 2002. As a major result, the CECR was issued for trial implementation in 2004 and has been in full implementation since 2007.

However, there was little serious needs analysis as a basis for the design of the CECR. Cai (2006), a witness to and participant in the teaching reform, reviews the NA process as follows:

The 3rd National Advisory Committee on TEFL in Higher Education did not do this job [undertake a new needs analysis]. They did not assemble a panel to do this job. Only the secretariat of the committee conducted a questionnaire in 630 colleges and universities between November 2001 and April 2002. They posted the questionnaire to the Academic Affairs Office of these institutions but only received back 357 copies... There was not much discussion on the questions included in the questionnaire. Rather, a few people made the decisions. Thus, the questionnaire involved neither the English requirements of society nor the needs perceived by students. Consequently, there was little first-hand information for the design of the CECR. Instead, the design was based on the perceptions and experience of the committee members, as well as media reports and academic papers. (Cai, 2006, p.10)

Cai's comments suggest that the design of the CECR was not based on careful studies of learners' needs. In particular, there was no analysis of students' perceptions about their English learning needs.

The insufficiency of CE teaching after the release of the CECR may to some extent be related to the insufficiency of the NA. As Zhao et al. (2009) argue, even after the CECR was put into practice, CE teaching still fails to sufficiently represent and meet students' needs, and this has led to a lack of motivation and interest on the part of many students. On the basis of several surveys (Yu, 2008; Cai et al., 2008; Jiang, 2010; cited in Cai, 2012) of college and university students' perceptions of their English level, Cai (2012) suggests that students are generally dissatisfied with CE teaching.

In the existing NA literature, there is also a lack of research relating NA to the development of the CE curriculum. According to Chen and Wang's (2009) review of NA studies of language teaching in China, there were only two such papers among the publications in the 11 main Chinese foreign language education journals¹ between 1979 and 2008: Wang Hai-xiao's (2004) research at a theoretical level, and Wang and Liu's (2003) study at an empirical level.

Given these circumstances, there is an urgent need to conduct a serious NA to understand the English learning needs perceived by college and university students, and to relate these needs to the development of the CE curriculum in order to improve CE teaching. This is precisely the focus of the present study. Next, I explain why I locate this study in the context of an independent college.

1.2.3 Independent colleges

As stated earlier, CE is offered to non-English major students in all colleges and universities in China. Before 1999, these were all public institutions. However, since 1999 privately funded institutions have emerged: independent colleges. An independent college is co-established by a public institution which offers both undergraduate and postgraduate education, and a private enterprise. It is based on private finance rather than national funds (CMOE, 2008). Although an independent college relies to some extent on the teaching resources of the public institution, it is independent in many respects, including finance, which accounts for the name.

Independent colleges have emerged as a result of the policy of expanding enrolment in higher education which was released by the CMOE in 1999. Since that year, undergraduate enrolment in China has increased by 8% a year (Cai,

¹ The 11 main Chinese journals of foreign language education are: 1) *外语教学与研究* (*Foreign Language Teaching and Research*), 2) *外语与外语教学* (*Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*), 3) *外语教学* (*Foreign Language Education*), 4) *外语研究* (*Foreign Languages Research*), 5) *外语界* (*Foreign Language World*), 6) *现代外语* (*Modern Foreign Languages*), 7) *外语学刊* (*Foreign Language Research*), 8) *解放军外国语学院学报* (*Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages*), 9) *外语电化教学* (*Computer-Assisted Foreign Language Education*), 10) *语言教学与研究* (*Language Teaching and Linguistic Studies*), 11) *中国外语* (*Foreign Languages in China*).

2006, p.5). Consequently, the existing public colleges and universities are no longer able to provide enough places for an increasingly growing number of applicants. To alleviate the financial pressure facing the state and to meet the expanding need of students to receive higher education, privately funded independent colleges have been established to absorb those applicants who cannot be accommodated in public institutions.

Students in independent colleges tend to have different characteristics compared to their counterparts in public institutions. Students who achieve poorly in the National College Entrance Examination can pay a much higher tuition fee to be enrolled in independent colleges. This has two implications. First, students in independent colleges are likely to be weaker higher education students. Second, they are more likely to come from a rich family. Otherwise they would have difficulty in paying the high tuition fee.

Independent colleges differ from public institutions in two major ways. First, being newly established, independent colleges have a short history and this may have a certain impact on the construction of their facilities and the development of the faculty. Second, as privately funded institutions, independent colleges have a profit-making purpose in addition to their educational purposes, as the private investors are allowed to earn reasonable returns from the colleges' profits (CMOE, 2008). These two characteristics suggest a different learning environment in independent colleges.

Despite the differences between independent colleges and public institutions and those between their students, the two types of institutions both offer CE to their students and both follow the guidelines of the national curriculum, i.e. the CECR, in their English teaching. A major concern thus arises: can the national curriculum which is used to guide the English teaching in public institutions be applicable to independent colleges? More specifically, does the CECR meet the English learning needs of students in independent colleges?

As stated in the previous section, no serious NA was carried out for the design of the CECR, except for a questionnaire survey, which had a low return

rate, conducted in some colleges and universities between November 2001 and April 2002 (Cai, 2006, p.10). At that time, the independent college, as a new type of institution of higher education, had only just emerged in China, and many independent colleges had yet to be established. For example, it was not until July 2002 that College X became the first independent college in its province. Thus, the design of the CECR was not likely to be based on much information gained from independent colleges. Moreover, the survey did not seek the opinion of students generally, let alone those in independent colleges.

Furthermore, in the existing research on NA for CE teaching, there are only a limited number of NAs conducted in the context of the independent college (e.g. Zhou Su, 2007; Wang & He, 2008; Wang, Y., 2010; Huang, 2013; Yu & Zhang, 2012; Yu et al., 2013) and none of them have been published in the main Chinese foreign language education journals. In addition, a questionnaire is used as the only method (Zhou Su, 2007; Wang & He, 2008; Wang, Y., 2010; Huang, 2013) or primary method (Yu & Zhang, 2012; Yu et al., 2013) of collecting data. Consequently, these NAs focus on collecting learners' needs from a given sample, rather than on gaining in-depth understanding of learners' perceptions of their needs. In order to understand independent college students' perceptions of their English learning needs, I therefore locate this study in the context of the independent college.

1.3 Research aims

This study has three aims:

1. To understand the English learning needs perceived by learners in the context of Chinese independent colleges;
2. To see how the CE curriculum meets learners' needs, as a basis for improving the CE curriculum;
3. To investigate how the CE curriculum can be improved, in order to accommodate learners' needs.

These research aims provide the basis in this study for designing three research questions, the formulation of which is also based on a review of relevant literature. The literature review and the research questions are presented in Chapter 2.

1.4 Importance and originality of the study

The importance of this study lies in the research topic: the CE curriculum. As Cai (2006) points out, CE is a course offered to the majority of students in Chinese institutions of higher education, and it is given the most teaching and learning time, but it also comes under extensive criticism. College English Test (CET), on the one hand, is the test carried out on the largest scale in the world, and on the other hand, has been much criticised and is extremely challenging for students. This study aims to gain an understanding of the CE curriculum and students' English learning experiences under the guidance of this curriculum in order to make suggestions for its improvement.

CE is the EFL course in Chinese higher education. China is the country which has the most people learning English in the world. This study on English teaching and learning in China may also shed light on research about EFL education in other countries.

The originality of this study has been suggested in the previous sections. First, as stated in Section 1.1, an analysis of students' English learning needs is used as a basis for improving the CE curriculum. This is different from the two common purposes of needs analysis in language programmes: NA as the basis for designing a curriculum or for re-evaluating the original needs assessment (Brown, 1995; see also Song et al., 2013).

Second, as suggested in Section 1.2.1, while the problems with CE teaching have been extensively discussed, what is lacking is a focus on students' perceptions of their own English learning. This study therefore takes a student-centred view in order to address this gap in the literature.

Third, as stated in Section 1.2.2, the present study relates students' perceptions of their English learning needs to development of the CE curriculum, something which has been rarely attempted in the existing NA literature in China.

Fourth, as shown in Section 1.2.3, there is a lack of serious NAs conducted for CE in the independent college context, particularly of ones which relate students' needs to curriculum development. Being located in an independent college, this study aims to fill this gap.

Last, as pointed out in Section 1.2.3, the few existing NAs conducted in independent colleges rely on questionnaires to collect students' English learning needs. This is also the case in the NAs carried out in public institutions (e.g. Wang & Liu, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Liu & Liu, 2008; Zhao et al., 2009). This study draws on an open-ended methodology to understand students' perceptions of their needs rather than depending on a closed-question survey to collect needs from a large sample. The study is therefore also original at the methodological level.

1.5 Definition of key terms

“College English” and “the College English curriculum” are two key terms which have ambiguous meanings and need to be clarified.

College English

The term “College English” is usually used to refer to the General English courses offered in Chinese colleges and universities. However, CE is defined in the CECR as a course system including both General English and subject-related English, for example, legal English or business English. According to the CECR (2007, p.29), CE is “a course system which is a combination of required and elective courses in comprehensive English, language skills, English for practical uses, language and culture, and English of specialty²”. The course English of Specialty is a subject-related English course, and all the other courses are General

² “English of specialty” is the original term used in the document CECR, the CE national curriculum.

English courses. In this sense, CE consists of General English and English of Specialty. This is also the definition of CE used in this study.

The College English curriculum

CE is the English course offered to non-English major students in all Chinese colleges and universities. In this sense it is a national curriculum. CE is also an institutional curriculum in a specific college or university. Thus, I use the term “the CE curriculum” to refer to both the national curriculum and the institutional curriculum of College X, the independent college studied.

More specifically, the national CE curriculum is a document entitled “College English Curriculum Requirements”. It was issued by the CMOE in 2004 for trial implementation and in 2007 for full implementation, with a view to providing colleges and universities with guidelines for English instruction to non-English major students (CECR, 2007).

The institutional CE curriculum in College X consists of the General English curriculum and the English of Specialty curriculum. General English is offered by the English Department to first and second year students across all non-English subjects, under the guidance of a teaching plan, which is a written document designed by the director of General English. English of specialty is offered to their students by individual departments, often in one term of the last two years of the four-year undergraduate programme. There is no coordination between the different departments or a general teaching plan for this course. This study focuses on both curriculum planning and implementation, and so the institutional curriculum of CE in College X can be divided into three parts: i) the General English teaching plan; ii) General English teaching practice; and iii) the English of Specialty curriculum. The planning and implementation of English of Specialty will be identified as the fieldwork is unfolded.

Furthermore, General English teaching practice is defined as the implementation of the teaching plan. This definition is based on the concepts of “intended curriculum” and “implemented curriculum” introduced by McKnight

(1979), with a view to identifying a structure for investigating General English teaching practice in this study. According to McKnight (1979), the intended curriculum is what an official educational agency plans for a course, and the implemented curriculum is the instructional implementation of the intended curriculum. Thus, the General English teaching plan can be seen as an intended curriculum, and General English teaching practice can be seen as an implemented curriculum and defined as the implementation of the General English teaching plan.

1.6 Overview of the thesis

In this chapter, I stated the rationale for the present study, and then located the study in the broader context of Chinese higher education and English education to justify my research focus and methodological decisions. The aims, importance and originality of the study were highlighted, and key terms were defined. I now conclude the chapter with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 sets the theoretical scene of the present study. In section 2.1, I review existing research on needs analysis in language teaching, including the definitions of “needs”, the purposes, philosophies, and types of needs analysis. Section 2.2 reviews theories of curriculum development by focusing on two models of curriculum development: the product model and the process model. In Section 2.3, I review theories regarding the purposes of language education, including grammatical competence, communicative competence, intercultural communicative competence, and language learning autonomy. The chapter finishes by setting out the research questions and providing a theoretical framework for addressing these questions.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter. I first present the rationale for a social constructionist paradigm and a case study approach. A detailed description is provided of the data sources and data collection procedures, involving documents,

observations and interviews, and the data analysis process is described. Important issues in the research process are also introduced, including reflexivity, ethical issues, and trustworthiness.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the findings of the study and answer the three research questions in sequence, with one chapter focusing on each question. Chapter 4 presents the English learning needs expressed by the learners, both their target needs and their learning needs. In Chapter 5, I first present a review of the CE curriculum, covering both the national curriculum and the institutional curriculum of College X. Subsequently, the learners' expressed needs are compared with relevant issues in the CE curriculum in order to evaluate the extent to which the CE curriculum meets the learners' expressed needs. Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the learning environment in College X, identifying the factors that impact on the improvement of the CE curriculum, and accordingly, the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter. It summarises the main findings and discusses how they contribute to existing theories on needs analysis and curriculum development in language teaching. The pedagogical and methodological implications are also discussed, and the limitations of the study are analysed. Furthermore, the directions for future research on the development of the CE curriculum are suggested, with a view to informing foreign language education. The chapter is concluded with an overview of the study, including its key focus and its overall value.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This study aims to understand how the College English (CE) curriculum meets the English learning needs perceived by learners, so as to provide a basis for improving the CE curriculum. In order to address this aim, it is necessary to conduct a needs analysis (NA) to understand the English learning needs perceived by learners, and also to investigate the CE curriculum, both of which are located in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL) education. Therefore, I review existing theories and studies in three areas: i) needs analysis in language teaching, ii) curriculum development, and iii) foreign language education.

2.1 Research on needs analysis in language teaching

This section reviews the existing research on needs analysis (NA) in language teaching in order to understand how to investigate the English learning needs perceived by learners in the context of Chinese independent colleges.

“Needs analysis” is rarely defined in the language teaching literature on the subject. In general terms, it refers to “the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of students” (Brown, 1995, p.35). However, this definition is vague and general, as it does not clarify some of the key elements of NA: the definition of needs, and the purposes, philosophies, and types of needs analysis. These issues are reviewed below.

2.1.1 Definitions of “needs”

The term “needs” is often seen as an umbrella term (Richterich, 1983, p.2; Porcher, 1983, p.22; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p.55). Important terms include *felt/expressed needs* and *perceived needs* (Berwick, 1989), *objective needs* and *subjective needs* (Brindley, 1989), *target needs*, including *necessities*, *wants* and

lacks, and *learning needs* (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Next, I briefly review these terms in order to understand how needs might be defined in this study.

Felt/expressed and perceived needs

Berwick (1989) distinguishes between felt/expressed and perceived needs. Felt needs, or expressed needs, refer to individual learners' expressions of a desired future state of learning. Perceived needs refer to the judgments of certified experts about the educational gaps in learners' experience. In this sense, perceived needs are learner needs defined by others rather than by the learners themselves. Simply put, they are needs about learners, but not needs from learners. While felt/expressed needs are learner-perceived needs, they involve solely needs about the outcomes or ends of learning, but not those emerging in the learning situation as learners make sense of their language learning.

Objective needs and subjective needs

Brindley (1989, p.63) identifies objective needs and subjective needs. Objective needs refer to "needs which are derivable from different kinds of factual information about learners, their use of language in real-life communication situations as well as their current language proficiency and language difficulties". Subjective needs refer to "the cognitive and affective needs of the learner in the learning situation, derivable from information about affective and cognitive factors such as personality, confidence, attitudes, learners' wants and expectations with regard to the learning of English and their individual cognitive style and learning strategies".

While objective needs are concerned with the end product and current situation of learning, subjective needs involve needs in the learning situation. They are both defined in a learning-centred rather than learner-centred view. In other words, they are not necessarily concerned with the needs perceived by learners themselves. For example, learners and teachers may both have a view as to the learners' subjective needs, and the two perceptions may conflict.

Furthermore, subjective needs are only involved with cognitive and affective factors in the learning situation. However, there might be other factors in the learning situation which affect learners' language learning.

Target needs and learning needs

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.54) make a distinction between “target needs (i.e. what the learner needs to do in the target situation) and learning needs (i.e. what the learner needs to do in order to learn)”. Target needs include “necessities”, “lacks” and “wants”. Necessities are regarded as the type of needs determined by the demands of the target situation. For example, a businessman, or woman, might need to understand business letters. Lacks are seen as the gap between the target proficiency and the existing proficiency of the learners, and wants as what learners want or feel they need.

Just like objective and subjective needs discussed above, learning needs, necessities, and lacks are defined in a learning-centred rather than learner-centred view. They are not necessarily learners' perceptions about their needs. While wants do refer to learners' perceptions, they involve only their needs about the end product of learning, but not those emerging in the learning situation. In this sense, wants can be equated with the previously discussed expressed needs introduced by Berwick.

The terms for “needs” reviewed above are compared in Table 2.1, focusing on what the needs are about and by whom the needs are defined.

About what / By whom	End product of learning	Needs in the learning situation	End product & current situation of learning
Learners	Felt/expressed needs; wants		
Others			Perceived needs
Learning-centred	Necessities	Subjective needs; learning needs	Objective needs; lacks

Table 2.1 Different terms for “needs”

The majority of the terms, including felt/expressed needs, wants, necessities, perceived needs, objective needs, and lacks, relate to the end product and current situation of learning – “the destination” and “the starting point” of learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p.60). Brindley (1989, p.63) refers to this way of defining needs as a “product-oriented” way, which focuses on “the learners’ current and future language use”. By contrast, subjective needs and learning needs are learners’ needs emerging in the learning situation and are referred to by Brindley as “process-oriented” needs. Among the terms listed above, there is not a term to represent learner-perceived needs in a process-oriented way. Two terms – felt/expressed needs and wants – are concerned with learner-perceived needs in a product-oriented way. However, these two terms might be misleading as they involve only part of the needs felt or expressed by learners, or part of what they want.

As stated in Chapter 1, this study focuses on learner-perceived English learning needs. To fill the gap in the literature concerning learners’ needs and address the research focus, I thus coin two terms: “expressed target needs” and “expressed learning needs”. The former refers to learners’ expressions of their desired learning outcomes, and the latter refers to their expressions of what they think are the factors in the learning situation that affect their English learning. By “expressed learning needs”, I by no means only refer to affective and cognitive factors in the learning situation, which are the focus of Brindley’s “subjective needs”, as stated above. Rather, learners’ expressed learning needs may involve any factors which learners think affect their English learning. Learners’ expressed target needs and expressed learning needs can be combined in one term: “expressed needs”.

2.1.2 Purposes of needs analysis

As “needs” are defined as learners’ expressed needs, the NA in this study aims to understand learners’ expressed needs for English learning in order to provide a basis for improving the CE curriculum.

However, this purpose of NA is not discussed in the NA literature. In language programmes, the results of a needs analysis serve as the basis for developing a curriculum in terms of goals and objectives, which, in turn, can serve as the basis for developing tests, materials, teaching activities, and evaluation strategies, as well as for re-evaluating the precision and accuracy of the original needs assessment (Brown, 1995; see also Song et al., 2013). Simply put, NA is used to provide a basis for curriculum design or NA re-evaluation. In particular, NA is more often used in the first way and thus is seen as “a vital prerequisite to the specification of language learning objectives” (Brindley, 1989, p.63), or “a prerequisite for effective course design” (Long, 2005a, p.1). In these statements, NA is viewed as the basis for designing a language course.

Instead of providing the basis for curriculum design or NA re-evaluation, the NA in this study serves as the basis for curriculum improvement. My decision on this purpose of NA depends largely on my review of the context of English education at tertiary level in China. In Chapter 1, I reviewed the criticism facing CE teaching, identified the insufficiency in the NA for designing the CE national curriculum, i.e. *College English Curriculum Requirements* (CECR), and discussed the problems in the implementation of the curriculum after the CECR was put into practice. The review of these backgrounds to English teaching in Chinese higher education suggests that there is concern about both the planning and implementation of the CE curriculum. In particular, learners’ perceptions were not taken into account in the NA for designing the CECR. Therefore, my aim in carrying out this study is to understand the English learning needs perceived by learners and investigate how these needs are met in the CE curriculum so as to provide a basis for improving the curriculum.

2.1.3 Philosophies of needs analysis

The aim of the NA to understand learners’ expressed English learning needs tends to be informed by a democratic philosophy.

According to Stufflebeam (1977, cited in Brown, 1995; Song et al., 2013), four divergent philosophies can arise in a NA: the discrepancy, the democratic, the analytic and the diagnostic. The discrepancy philosophy views needs as differences or discrepancies between desired performance by the students and what they can actually do. The democratic philosophy defines NA as any change that is desired by a majority of the group involved. It would lead to a NA that would gather information about the learning most desired by the chosen group(s). In analytical philosophy, a need is whatever the students will naturally learn next based on what is known about them and the learning processes involved. A diagnostic philosophy proposes that a need is anything that would prove harmful if it was missing.

The NA in this study has a democratic philosophy. It gathers information about the learning most desired by learners themselves. As stated in chapter 1, I take the stance in this study that education is primarily concerned with “developing the individual as a *person*” (McKernan, 2008, p.96). Accordingly, the NA aims to understand the needs of learners as individuals, to allow learners’ voices to be heard by policy makers, curriculum designers, teachers and other parties involved. By contrast, it is less concerned with indentifying gaps, future learning tasks, or necessary language skills in students’ English learning, which are informed by the discrepancy, the analytic, and the diagnostic philosophies respectively. Thus, I adopt a democratic philosophy in the NA and aim to understand learners’ perceptions about their English learning needs.

2.1.4 Types of needs analysis

Corresponding to the various definitions of “needs”, NA has come in a variety of forms. West (1994), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), and Brown (2009) provide lists of different types of NA that overlap with each other considerably. A combination of the three lists would include the following nine types of language NA:

1. *Target situation analysis* focuses on objective, perceived and product-oriented needs. (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998)
2. *Learning situation analysis* focuses on subjective, felt and process-oriented needs. (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998)
3. *Present situation analysis* estimates strengths and weaknesses in language, skills, and learning experience. (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998)
4. *Deficiency analysis* refers to combined target situation analysis and present situation analysis. (Robinson, 1991)
5. *Strategy analysis* focuses on learners' preferences in terms of learning strategies, error correction, group sizes, amount of homework, etc. (Brown, 2009, p.272)
6. *Means analysis* examines those factors in the learning/teaching environment that impede or facilitate curriculum implementation or change. (Purpura & Graziano-King, 2004)
7. *Language audits* take a large-scale view of NA in terms of strategic language policies for companies, professional sectors, government departments, countries, etc. (Brown, 2009)
8. *Set menu analysis* sets out to create a menu of main courses from which the sponsors or learners can select. (Brown, 2009)
9. *Computer-based analysis* is done by computer to match perceived needs to a database of material "...from which the course content can be negotiated between students and teacher..." (West, 1997, p.74)

Of these nine types of NA, three are of particular relevance to this study: target situation analysis (TSA), learning situation analysis (LSA), and means analysis. The NA in this study aims to understand learners' expressed needs for English learning, including their expressed target needs and learning needs, as a basis for improving the CE curriculum. In order to address this aim, the NA should include an analysis of the learners' expressed target needs, which are product-oriented needs perceived and expressed by learners. This analysis relates

to the TSA introduced above. In addition, the NA in this study needs to include an analysis of the learners' expressed learning needs. These needs involve learner-perceived needs defined in a process-oriented way, and thus analysis of them relates to the LSA introduced above. Furthermore, considering that there might be certain factors in the learning environment that affect the CE curriculum, and accordingly accommodation of the learners' expressed needs, the NA needs to also examine the learning environment. This part can be represented by a means analysis.

By contrast, the other six types of NA are less relevant to the NA in this study: present situation analysis and deficiency analysis are more concerned with analysing learners' language proficiency than understanding needs perceived and expressed by learners; strategy analysis focuses on cognitive factors in the learning situation, such as learning strategies, while the learners' expressed needs defined in this study involve any factors identified by learners that affect their English learning; language audits are primarily concerned with language policies, while this NA focuses on curriculum development; set menu analysis and computer-based analysis are concerned with course or material selection rather than identifying language needs.

I thus focus on the existing research on TSA, LSA, and means analysis, in order to highlight and critique the methodologies that inform them and also to inform my own methodological choices regarding the NA in this study.

Target situation analysis

In general terms, target situation analysis studies the learners' language requirements in the occupational or academic situation they are being prepared for (Chambers, 1980). It is the most common form of needs analysis and constituted the dominant focus of early needs analysis in the 1970s (West, 1994). However, NA in the 1970s focused primarily on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programmes (West, 1994). Although the scope of NA has shifted to include

general language learning since the 1980s (West, 1994), needs analysis is rarely carried out in the General English classroom (Seedhouse, 1995).

As suggested by the above definition, TSA is concerned with language use in the target situation, and this perhaps accounts for its prevalence in ESP.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.53), “it might appear on the surface that the ESP course is characterised by its content (Science, Medicine, Commerce, Tourism, etc.)”, and so it seems easier to specify target language use in ESP courses. However, they argue that “there is always an identifiable need of some sort to any course”, even if it is only the need to pass the exam at the end of the school year. Furthermore, the specification of language needs is “only a secondary consequence of the primary matter of being able to readily specify why the learners need English”. In this sense, TSA in General English classrooms can be more concerned with why the learners need English than specific English use in their future careers or studies.

According to West’s (1994) review of the TSAs reported in the literature, questionnaires and surveys are commonly used for collecting the data (e.g. Mackay, 1978; ELTDU, 1970; Stuart & Lee, 1972/1985; Gardner & Winslow, 1983). Long (2005b, p.19) also comments that “too many needs analyses are carried out via semi-structured interviews or, more commonly, written questionnaires”. However, these methodologies tend to be useful in TSA which aims to identify from a large sample the language use in target situations, such as in business or commercial situations.

The most influential model of TSA is John Munby’s Communicative Needs Processor (Munby, 1978), “a complex tool that allowed course planners to build up a profile of a learner’s communication needs, which were then translated into a list of language skills and micro-functions, as the basis of the target syllabus specification” (Song et al., 2013, p.500-501). During the 1970s and 1980s, Munby’s model came under increasing criticism for its complexity and its failure to take account of real life constraints such as the availability of resources (West, 1994). Moreover, it was not considered learner-centred (Nunan, 1988): the

starting point may be the learner, but the model collects data *about* the learner rather than *from* the learner. In this sense, Munby's model can be seen as a "hands-off" approach (White, 1988, p.89).

In China, a quantitative methodology is also commonly used in NAs for English teaching. As stated in Chapter 1, the NAs conducted in independent colleges (e.g. Zhou Su, 2007; Wang & He, 2008; Wang, Y., 2010; Huang, 2013; Yu & Zhang, 2012; Yu et al., 2013) and public institutions (e.g. Wang & Liu, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Liu & Liu, 2008; Zhao et al., 2009; Hu et al., 2011) depend on questionnaires to collect learners' English learning needs. It is also noteworthy that the NA results are primarily concerned with the students' target needs at a semantic level, such as passing CET-4 or improving their practical English ability (e.g. Wang & Liu, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Liu & Liu, 2008). However, the assumptions underlying these target needs – why and how they have developed their target needs, and their attitudes towards these needs – are not discussed.

The TSA in this study aims to not only identify the learners' expressed target needs, but also to understand the assumptions underlying these needs. To address the gaps identified in the literature discussed and the aim of the TSA in this study, I need to adopt a qualitative methodology in this TSA. More specifically, unstructured interviews tend to be suitable for exploring learners' expressed learning needs. Long (2005b, p.36) compares unstructured interviews with structured interviews and questionnaires and argues that unstructured interviews are "exploratory" and "allow in-depth coverage of issues and have the advantage of not pre-empting unanticipated findings". As reviewed above, the underlying assumptions about learners' target needs for English learning remain largely unknown in the NA literature in China, which suggests the TSA in this study should be "exploratory". In addition, this study aims to hear learners' voices in terms of how they make sense of their expressed needs, and so I will need to rely on open-ended interviews to elicit learners' perceptions, rather than using structured interviews or questionnaires, which have the potential limitation of pre-empting unanticipated findings (Long, 2005b).

On the other hand, Long (2005b) argues that questionnaire surveys can produce sizable amounts of focused, standardised, and organised data, and thus be useful for identifying needs from a large sample of respondents. Considering that CE is a course taken by all non-English major students in the institution studied, it might also be useful to conduct a questionnaire in this study to identify target needs from a large sample, as the basis for improving the CE curriculum.

Furthermore, as stated in Chapter 1, College English focuses on General English. Inspired by my review of Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) analysis of carrying out NA in the General English classroom, as described earlier, the information to be collected in this TSA could be primarily concerned with why the learners are learning English.

Learning situation analysis

The second type of needs analysis I review here is learning situation analysis (LSA). The term "learning situation analysis" is introduced by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) to refer to the analysis of learners' subjective, felt and process-oriented needs. However, Dudley-Evans and St John provide little discussion of LSA, as they focus on developments in ESP, with needs analysis being just a small part of them.

Compared with target situation analysis, which focuses on learners' target needs, the analysis of learners' learning needs is much less addressed in the literature on NA in language teaching. Furthermore, such analysis is often related to strategy analysis (e.g. West, 1994; Brown, 2009). However, strategy analysis focuses on learning strategies and thus involves primarily cognitive factors in the learning situation, such as learning styles and correction preferences. In other words, strategy analysis addresses only part of learners' learning needs, as it gives little relevance to other factors in the learning situation, such as learners' emotions or the availability of teaching resources.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) provide a framework for analysing learning needs by identifying questions to ask in the analysis. The questions are mainly

concerned with personal information, learners' needs in cognitive terms, such as their preferred teaching/learning methodology and techniques they do not like, and their needs in contextual terms, such as available resources and surroundings. In addition, an affective dimension is represented by a few questions concerning learners' attitudes toward the course, to English and to the cultures in the English-speaking world. However, this framework was offered over 20 years ago and thus may need to be updated. For example, it does not involve learners' attitudes towards communicating with others, which is particularly important in this era of increasing intercultural communication.

In China, the analysis of learning needs in language teaching is also under-emphasised. Many NAs focus on the analysis of English use in target situations from the perspectives of those who work in the domain (e.g. Ying, 1996; Gu, 1998; Fu et al., 2001; Xia, 2003; Hu, et al., 2011). Among the few studies addressing learning needs (e.g. Yan, 2006; Zhao et al., 2009), the learning needs considered involve cognitive factors, such as preferred/present teaching methods, affective factors, such as students' attitudes towards English teaching, and contextual factors, such as teaching arrangements and materials. Furthermore, the students' learning needs are investigated primarily by means of questionnaires, and the questionnaire covers only the three areas stated above (e.g. Zhao et al., 2009). However, there might be other factors in the learning situation which may affect students' English learning. Thus, the methodology adopted in these studies may somewhat limit the scope of the inquiry.

In the present study, learners' expressed learning needs are defined as their expressions of any factors which they think impact on their English learning. These factors may include, but are not confined to, cognitive (the focus of strategy analysis), contextual and affective factors, as addressed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and those Chinese researchers reviewed above. To address the gaps identified in the literature discussed and the aim of the LSA in this study, I need to adopt a qualitative methodology in order not to limit the scope and dimensions of the LSA.

Means analysis

The third type of needs analysis I review here is means analysis. A means analysis examines those factors in the learning environment that impede or facilitate curriculum implementation or change (Purpura & Graziano-King, 2004).

The means analysis approach was proposed by Holliday and Cooke (1982). Before this approach was proposed, the local features in the learning environment, such as classroom culture and infrastructure, were often seen as practicalities and constraints in implementing needs-based language courses (e.g. Frankel, 1983; Chamberlain & Flanagan, 1978; Hawkey, 1983; Bachman & Strick, 1981). More recently, factors in the learning environment have still been considered as constraints by some researchers (e.g. Brown, 2009). According to Holliday & Cooke (1982), the implementation of the syllabus may fail if it is unable to cope with local constraints.

In the means analysis approach, local features are considered “relevant features”. As West (1994, p.11) puts it, “the course designer or teacher first identifies the relevant features of the situation (the “ecosystem”) and then sees how the positive features can be used to advantage to accommodate what would conventionally be seen as constraints”. Thus, the means analysis approach constitutes a positive way of viewing the learning environment, as it analyses the local features and seeks the means to implement a syllabus or other curriculum innovations.

However, the means analysis approach is absent in the NAs conducted for English teaching in China. This absence is perhaps because, with very few exceptions (e.g. Wang & Liu, 2003; Wang Hai-xiao, 2004), the NA studies on English teaching in China make little or no reference to the development of the CE curriculum, while a means analysis is used to provide a basis for implementing certain changes or innovations in the curriculum. In this study, I draw on a NA to offer approaches to the development of the CE curriculum, in the hope that the curriculum will not only be improved in its planning but also in its

implementation. Thus, I need to conduct a means analysis in this study to examine the learning environment where the CE curriculum is delivered.

This means analysis may need to adopt a qualitative methodology to examine the learning environment, as means analysis is largely neglected in China. With this neglect, there is little information from the NA literature about the learning environment of CE, and so I need to draw on open-ended qualitative methods to explore the issues under study. For example, I may need to observe the physical setting of the learning environment, or to conduct qualitative interviews to elicit the perceptions of those involved in the CE curriculum about the cultural factors operating in the learning environment.

Holliday and Cooke (1982, p.134) identify three types of relevant features in the local situation:

- (1) immutable problems, which we can do little to influence, and which will, sooner or later, necessitate radical changes in our project aims;
- (2) flexible elements – problematic features which can, however, be worked within and around;
- (3) exploitable features, which can be used to our advantage.

However, these features were identified over 30 years ago in the context of ESP and thus may need to be addressed anew in other situations.

More specific local features to be examined in a means analysis are discussed by many researchers. For example, Holliday and Cooke (1982) focus on classroom culture, and the institutional management and infrastructure. Purpura and Graziano-King (2004) discuss teaching/learning resources, and language policies and practices. Kaewpet (2009) takes account of student (e.g. learning backgrounds), societal (e.g. employers' English standards for employment), institutional (e.g. curriculum arrangements), and teacher (e.g. teaching style) factors. These factors involve different aspects of the learning environment which the researcher thinks would impact on the implementation of certain innovations in the curriculum. In this sense, the local features to be studied in a specific means analysis depend largely on the focus of the curriculum innovation.

In this study, the NA is used to provide a basis for improving the CE curriculum, in order to accommodate the learners' expressed needs. Thus, the contextual features to be examined in the means analysis are those which might be relevant to an improvement of the CE curriculum that favours the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs.

So far, I have reviewed the existing research on NA in language teaching. Inspired by the existing literature and bearing its limitations in mind, I have defined "needs" in this study as learners' expressed needs. More specifically, the terms "expressed target needs" and "expressed learning needs" have been coined to refer to the learners' expressions of their desired learning outcomes and of what they think are the factors in the learning situation that affect their English learning respectively. In addition, I have chosen to include three types of NA in this study: TSA, LSA, and means analysis, supported by a qualitative methodology. Furthermore, the focus of the NA has been identified: the TSA is primarily concerned with why the learners are learning English; the LSA addresses any factors emerging in the learning situation which the learners think affect their English learning; and the means analysis focuses on the features in the learning environment that are relevant to an improvement of the CE curriculum that favours the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs.

The NA in this study is used to provide a basis for improving the CE curriculum. In the next section, I review theories of curriculum development.

2.2 Theories of curriculum development

This section reviews theories of curriculum development, in order to understand how the CE curriculum might be interpreted and improved, and how the accommodation of the learners' expressed target needs might relate to theories of curriculum development.

In general, there are three ideologies that underpin curriculum development: curriculum as content and education as transmission; curriculum as product and

education as instrumental; and curriculum as process and education as development (Kelly, 2009). When curriculum is seen as content, it is equated with a syllabus, and curriculum planning is concerned with the content or the body of knowledge to be transmitted to learners (Smith, 1996, 2000). In the second and third approaches, the ideologies of curriculum as product and process are represented in the product and process models of curriculum development, respectively.

I focus on the product and process models of curriculum development, as they are closely related to learners' target needs and learning needs. As Brindley (1989) notes, learners' objective needs³ are related to a means-end view of language teaching, which is the view represented in the "means-end model" (Stenhouse, 1975, p.84), i.e. the product model. Furthermore, the process model focuses on the educational process and learning needs refer to learners' needs emerging in the learning situation, and so the two are closely related to each other.

I review the product and process models of curriculum development, in order to evaluate them as potential models for use in my analysis of the CE curriculum. In addition, I look at how these two models could be used in the CE curriculum to accommodate the learners' expressed needs.

2.2.1 The product model

The product model, also known as the "objectives model" (Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008), or "outcomes-based model" (McKernan, 2008, p.85), is the classic model of curriculum development. In this model, all the educational activities are organised around preset objectives: "objectives are set, a plan drawn up, then applied, and the outcomes (products) measured" (Smith, 1996, 2000). The product model is therefore also referred to as the "means-end model" (Stenhouse, 1975, p.84): "education is a means towards ends" (p.53).

³ "Objective needs" and "target needs" are two terms used to refer to learners' needs concerned with "what the learner needs to do in the target situation" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p.54).

In its modern form, the product model can be traced to the two books by Bobbitt, *The curriculum* (1918) and *How to make a curriculum* (1924). Bobbitt (1918) argues that education which prepares for life is one that prepares for the performance of specific activities in human life. Bobbitt thus introduces the idea of “performance” into educational objectives.

The most lucid and straightforward account of the use of objectives in curriculum development remains that of Tyler (1949). Like Bobbitt, Tyler also places emphasis on the formulation of behavioural objectives:

Since the real purpose of education is not to have the instructor perform certain activities but to bring about significant changes in the students’ pattern of behaviour, it becomes important to recognize that any statements of objectives of the school should be a statement of changes to take place in the students.

(Tyler 1949, p.44)

In this sense, education is based upon behavioural change in students.

Furthermore, Tyler suggests the objectives should include both behaviour and content aspects:

The most useful form for stating objectives is to express them in terms which identify both the kind of behaviour to be developed in the student and the content or area of life in which this behaviour is to operate.

(Tyler, 1949, p.46-47)

The statements of objectives then combine the identification of behavioural change with selection of the content or area of life in which the behaviour is to operate.

Tyler’s account of the use of objectives was translated by Taba (1962) into an orderly procedure for the practice of curriculum development:

Step 1: Diagnosis of needs

Step 2: Formulation of objectives

Step 3: Selection of content

Step 4: Organisation of content

Step 5: Selection of learning experiences

Step 6: Organisation of learning experiences

Step 7: Determination of what to evaluate and of the ways and means of doing it. (Taba, 1962, p.12)

As this procedure shows, the attraction of the product model is that it is systematic and has considerable organising power (Smith, 1996, 2000).

However, the product model has come under much criticism. Stenhouse (1975), McKernan (2008) and Kelly (2009) identify limitations of this model, which overlap considerably with each other. A combination of the objections discussed by the three would include the following four limitations:

1. Emphasis on behavioural objectives but neglect of important outcomes

There are unintended outcomes which emerge in the learning situation and show evidence of individual thinking. However, they cannot be predicted or easily detected. In addition, some important outcomes are translated only rarely into behavioural terms. These outcomes tend to be neglected in the curriculum. By contrast, the objectives that can be defined behaviourally and readily assessed are emphasised.

2. A passive view of humanity and democracy

In the product model, the educational activities are organised around preset behavioural objectives. The purpose of education is to bring about predictable changes in the students' patterns of behaviour. Thus, students are treated as products that need to be moulded and modified. This view of education does not adequately take account of humanity and democracy.

3. A constraining system not allowing creative roles for teachers and students

With pre-specified objectives, the teacher's role is to organise educational experiences in a way that will facilitate the attainment of those objectives. In addition, students' learning is primarily concerned with achieving those preset objectives. Thus, the pre-specification of objectives is not conducive to creative and individual work on the part of either teachers or students.

4. A view of learning as a linear process

As viewed in Taba's (1962) procedure for curriculum planning, learning is a step-by-step exercise: needs are diagnosed, objectives are formulated, content is selected and then organised, learning experiences are selected and then organised, and finally attainment is evaluated. The product model thus fails to take account

of practical teaching and learning experiences which would involve the direction and redirection of the educational process on the part of the teacher, as well as the shaping and reshaping of the learning needs on the part of the students.

Despite the problems with this model, Stenhouse (1975) and McKernan (2008) agree that the product model is appropriate in “instruction” and “training”. In other words, it is suitable “in curricular areas which emphasise information and skills” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.97), as instruction involves the acquisition and retention of information and training is concerned with the acquisition of skills (McKernan, 2008).

This brief review of the product model suggests that this model has considerable organising power, but on the other hand it is problematic because it has insufficient objectives, takes a passive view of humanity and democracy, neglects creative work on the part of both the teacher and the students, and assumes a linear learning process. Nevertheless, it would be useful in curricular areas which emphasise information and skills.

As stated at the beginning of this section, one purpose of reviewing the product and process models of curriculum development is to see how these models can be used in the CE curriculum to favour its improvement, in order to accommodate the learners’ expressed needs. Thus, I discuss here how the product model might be used in the CE curriculum.

CE, as a language course, involves language information, such as information about lexical, grammatical and pragmatic structures, and language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. Since the product model is appropriate in “the curricula areas which emphasise information and skills” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.97), it can be used in the CE curriculum to promote students’ acquisition of language information and skills. More specifically, the curriculum could set behavioural objectives regarding the English information and skills students need to acquire. The teaching and learning practice could have a focus on the instruction of language information and the practice of

language skills. Furthermore, students' acquisition of such language information and skills can be measured by means of "objective" tests.

On the other hand, with its passive view of humanity and democracy, the product model is not conducive to an accommodation of the learners' expressed needs, i.e. the needs of learners as individuals. In particular, with "objective" tests as the measurement procedure, the product model would be considerably problematic in the CE curriculum, as English teaching in China has been criticised by many researchers (e.g. Hu, 2005; Cai, 2006, 2012; Wang, C., 2010) for being test-driven. In this sense, the product model may have only a limited use in the CE curriculum.

2.2.2 The process model

The second model for curriculum planning I review here is the process model. Stenhouse (1975) offers a process model as an alternative to the product model, and this model is further developed by McKernan (2008). Kelly (2009) also gives an important account of curriculum as process and education as development.

Instead of organising around behavioural objectives, which is the logic used in the product model, the process model focuses on the educational process and the experience. It rests upon procedural principles which are derived from broad educational aims and which are to inform and guide the educational activities (Kelly, 2009).

The process model has three parts: i) a statement of the general aim; ii) a statement of the principles of procedure – "the values underpinning the educational process, or procedures"; and iii) a statement of the criteria for assessing/judging student work (McKernan, 2008, p.87).

First, although its focus is on the educational process, the process model has a general aim. According to Stenhouse (1975), the process-based curriculum pursues understanding. Distinct from short-term objectives, the aim of understanding is reflected in the process, as "understanding can always be

deepened” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.94) in the educational process. In this sense, Kelly (2009) argues that the aims in the process model are intrinsic aims, that is, aims intrinsic to the educational process itself. With understanding as the general aim, the process model is particularly useful “in the areas of the curriculum which centre on knowledge and understanding” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.97).

Second, the principles of procedure shape and form the basis of pedagogy (McKernan, 2008). These principles are the standards and values embedded in the very process of education. Kelly (2009, p.98) suggests that the procedural principles “should be derived from the view that the prime concern of the educational process is with human development”. In particular, the development of individual autonomy becomes a major principle of educational practice. Thus, Kelly introduces the idea of “education as development” to the process model.

Third, the process model rests on the teacher’s professional judgements to evaluate student work. As Stenhouse argues (1975, p.95), “the process model is essentially a critical model, not a marking model”. In this model, student work which is “original, surprising, showing evidence of individual thinking” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.82) is valued. The evaluation of student work depends on the professional judgements made by the teacher. The teacher thus has an important role: that of being a judge.

In addition to that of a judge, the teacher has another role: as an action researcher (Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008). In the process model, education is viewed as “a worthwhile *activity* and *process*”, “a genuine *social practice*” (McKernan, 2008, p.95). In this view, “every classroom is unique in its character and needs to be verified, tested and modified by each teacher” (McKernan, 2008, p.94). In other words, teachers should be both critical and reflective of their own practice, constantly updating approaches and methods in the light of student learning and responses. In doing this, the teacher becomes an “action researcher” in the process model.

This review of the teacher’s role in the process model suggests that the teacher being both judge and action researcher of the curriculum work is the key

to the success of the model (McKernan, 2008). As Stenhouse (1975, p.96) notes, “it [the process model] rests upon the quality of the teacher”. However, this is also the major weakness of the process model (Stenhouse, 1975). It is demanding for a teacher to be a good judge and action researcher, and so it is difficult to implement the process model in practice. Moreover, reliance on the teacher’s “subjective” judgements to evaluate student work tends to conflict with “objective” tests, which are commonly used to measure students’ achievements. Thus, the process model could be more challenging to implement.

This brief review of the process model indicates that this model focuses on the educational process and has the general aim of developing students’ understanding. Furthermore, it rests on the quality of the teacher as judge/action researcher. However, there tend to be difficulties in implementing this model in practice, as it is demanding on teachers and cannot be free from the impact of “objective” tests, which are commonly used measurement procedures of student work.

Next, I look at how the process model can be used in the CE curriculum to favour its improvement, which, in turn, would favour the accommodation of learners’ expressed needs.

As the process model focuses on the educational process and experience, with individual thinking being valued, it would be conducive to the accommodation of learners’ expressed needs, i.e. the needs of learners as individuals, in the CE curriculum. Besides, it would favour the development of students’ intercultural understanding. It is generally accepted that language and culture cannot be separated. For example, Hymes (1972) emphasises the inclusion of both “the linguistic and the cultural” spheres in language teaching. Kramsch (2009) goes further and recognises “the linguistic” and “the intercultural” in language education. By introducing the concept of “intercultural communicative competence”, which is discussed in Section 2.3, Byram (2012) emphasises the importance of the relationship between language and culture. Thus, CE, as a foreign language course, would need to involve an intercultural dimension. As the

process model is appropriate to “the areas of the curriculum which centre on knowledge and understanding” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.97), it could be used in the CE curriculum to develop students’ intercultural understanding.

However, it might be difficult to apply the process model in the CE curriculum, as it has high expectations of the quality of the teacher. Moreover, this model relies on “objective” tests to measure student work. As discussed earlier, CE teaching in China is criticised for being test-driven, and more specifically CET-4-driven. According to Cai (2012), every year almost 20 million Chinese students take CET-4, and so the test exerts a strong influence on the society, involving students, teachers, parents, educational authorities, employers, and so forth. Given this, to implement the process model, which relies on teachers’ judgment to evaluate student work, may involve considerable challenges.

Thus far, I have reviewed the product and process models of curriculum development. The major difference between the two models lies in their educational purposes: the product model is organised around behavioural objectives, and the process model focuses on the educational process and pursues the general aim of understanding. The product model could be used in the CE curriculum to promote students’ acquisition of language information and skills. However, it would need to be used cautiously in order not to further stimulate the test-driven English teaching culture in China. By contrast, the process model could be used to develop students’ intercultural understanding. However, there might be considerable difficulties in implementing this model in the CE curriculum due to the implications it has for teachers as “judges” and “action researchers”, and the dominant position held by the national English test, CET-4.

Next I discuss the CE curriculum in the context of foreign language education, as CE is a foreign language course for Chinese students.

2.3 Theories of foreign language education

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, since CE is a foreign language course, both the needs analysis and curriculum development for CE come within the field of foreign language education. I thus review theories of foreign language education in this section. Furthermore, it has emerged from my review of the product and process models of curriculum development that a major difference between the two models is their educational purposes. Thus, I focus on theories regarding the purposes of foreign language education in order to understand how the CE curriculum might be improved in terms of its aims/objectives.

In the past few decades, there has been a shift in what can be considered the appropriate objectives/aims for foreign language teaching. The focus has changed from the development of students' grammatical competence to communicative competence, and recently to intercultural communicative competence. Furthermore, assisting learners to "learn how to learn" has become as important a goal as promoting effective communication (Rubin & Thompson, 1982; Willing, 1985). The development of learning ability, a process-oriented goal, is a key outcome of the development of learner autonomy, which is discussed by many researchers (e.g. Holec, [1979] 1981; Benson, 1997, 2001; Legenhausen, 2009). I thus review here theories of four aims/objectives for foreign language education: i) grammatical competence, ii) communicative competence, iii) intercultural communicative competence, and iv) language learning autonomy.

2.3.1 Grammatical competence

Before the 1970s, language teaching was devoted to developing learners' grammatical competence. Grammatical competence is seen as the ability to produce grammatically or phonologically accurate sentences in the language being studied, as a result of learning a set of forms and rules for the grammar, the lexicon, or the phonology of the language (Tarone & Yule, 1989). Such competence focuses on language usage, involving the acquisition of linguistic

structures and skills to produce grammatically correct structures, and can therefore be seen as a typical behavioural objective of language teaching. More importantly, it has been recognised that simply being able to create grammatically correct structures in a language does not necessarily enable the learner to use the language to carry out various real-world tasks (Nunan, 1988). As a result, the concept of “communicative competence” was developed.

2.3.2 Communicative competence

The American anthropologist Hymes (1972) emphasised that a theory of language should not only include grammaticality but also acceptability. Hymes thus introduced the social dimension into language teaching and learning. As a consequence, Hymes’ definition of “competence” incorporates both knowledge and ability in use (1972, p.283), and he coined and defined the term “communicative competence” as “that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts” (Brown, 1994, p.227).

The most influential formulation of the sub-competences making up an overarching communicative competence was put forward by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). For Canale and Swain (1980) the individual who possesses communicative competence should exhibit four competences: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence (sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse), discourse competence (mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres), and strategic competence (verbal and non-verbal communication strategies for compensating for breakdowns in communication). Compared with grammatical competence, communicative competence embraces social, discourse and interactional dimensions in language teaching and therefore represents a considerable broadening of the conceptual base of second language curriculum and pedagogy (Leung, 2005).

However, concerns have arisen as the theoretical framework of communicative competence is built on empirical descriptions of the competences of monolingual native speakers (Byram, & Mendez Garcia, 2009). To develop communicative competence in learners is to encourage them to model themselves on native speakers, i.e. to be bilingual. However, this assumption can be challenged. First, it is somewhat unrealistic for a foreign language learner to become a native speaker. Lightbown (1983), for example, argues that comparison of first and foreign language learning shows that such bilingualism and biculturalism is not practical because up to the age of six a child devotes between 12,000 and 15,000 hours to the learning of the L1, which far exceeds the teaching hours in the second/foreign language classroom.

Second, the assumption may carry ideological implications, as Widdowson argues:

It also has ideological implications...it can also be seen as the authoritarian imposition of socio-cultural values which makes learners subservient and prevents them from appropriating the language as an expression of their identity.

(Widdowson, 2004, p.361)

With concern about communicative competence, the concept of “intercultural communicative competence” (Byram, 1997) was introduced into foreign language teaching.

2.3.3 Intercultural communicative competence

The concept of “intercultural communicative competence” (ICC) combines the use of the concept of “communicative competence” with “intercultural competence”, the competence which enables people to act as mediators among groups with different languages and cultures or with the same language but different discourses (Byram, 2012). Thus, ICC embraces an intercultural dimension in language teaching and represents an even broader aim of language teaching than communicative competence.

ICC can be further related to the educational purposes of language teaching in that language teaching is a contribution to the education of learners, to the development of their understanding of themselves and their world and others in it (Guilherme, 2002). More specifically, language education can be a contribution to education for intercultural citizenship, which adds an international, intercultural dimension to the more general notion of citizenship education in a particular country (Byram, 2007, 2008; Byram & Mendez Garcia, 2009).

An influential and often-cited model of ICC is proposed by Byram (1997). In this model, ICC consists of knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. As Bredella (2000) notes, Byram extensively proposes the operationalization of the notion of intercultural competence in instructed FL learning. Belz (2007) further states that this detailed explication is no doubt valuable for curriculum planners, teacher educators, teachers, and learners alike to establish concrete instructional objectives. At the same time she also suggests that the degree of operationalisation opens the way to detailed critiques.

One criticism is that offered by Belz (2007), who suggests that the concept of culture used in Byram's model is nationalist. The nationalist position does not adequately recognise or value the diversity of the origin and cultural background of the people who are involved in intercultural communication and therefore simplifies the intercultural communication process.

Kramersch (2009) offers another criticism by suggesting that Byram's model belongs to a structuralist perspective, which disregards the complexity of ICC but assists assessment. She argues that while the lexical, grammatical and pragmatic structures of language can be tested in the usual manner, symbolic competence cannot. Symbolic competence is a notion introduced by Kramersch and it involves the discourse dimension of intercultural competence. It is less a collection of "stable knowledges" and more "a combination of knowledge, experience and judgement" (p.118). Thus, Kramersch questions the testability of intercultural competence.

With reference to this criticism, Byram (2013) makes a distinction between testing and assessment and suggests “assessment need not be only in terms of testing, and can also include self assessment”. While intercultural competence might not be tested, it can be assessed. In addition to the self assessment suggested by Byram, professional judgements made by the teacher in critical incidents along the learning journey, as discussed in Section 2.2, also provide a useful way for evaluating intercultural competence.

Teachers’ judgement and self assessment are characteristic of assessment in the process model of curriculum development, which aims to develop students’ understanding in the educational process (Stenhouse, 1975). What I suggest is that the intercultural dimension of ICC, i.e. intercultural competence, might be assessed by drawing on the assessment in the process model: teachers’ judgement and self assessment on the part of students. And the language dimension of ICC, which is represented in communicative competence, could be evaluated using tests, the measurement procedure adopted in the product model (McKernan, 2008). In short, it would be possible to develop ICC by integrating the product and process models in language teaching.

While grammatical competence, communicative competence and intercultural communicative competence are all concerned with promoting effective communication, the fourth goal of language teaching, i.e. developing students’ language learning autonomy, involves the development of students’ learning ability in the learning process. This approach to learning suggests a process-oriented way of defining language teaching goals.

2.3.4 Language learning autonomy

According to Henry Holec ([1979]1981), autonomy implies that learners take charge of their own learning (Legenhausen, 2009). This definition, however, has invited a host of misinterpretations and misunderstandings. Related and competing concepts include “independent learning”, “self-directed learning”, “self-instruction” and also “self-access learning”. Legenhausen (2009, p.374)

argues that “many misinterpretations seem to have been triggered by the very fact that the notion of learner autonomy is a highly complex and multifaceted construct which cannot as yet be moulded into a unified theory”.

Benson (1997), for example, distinguishes three basic dimensions or visions of autonomy: the technical, the psychological and the political:

1. autonomy as the act of learning on one’s own and the technical ability to do so;
2. autonomy as the internal psychological capacity to self-direct one’s own learning;
3. autonomy as control over the content and processes of one’s own learning.

(Benson, 1997, p.25)

Benson relates the three visions of autonomy to three categories of philosophies of learning: positivism, constructivism and critical theory. In a positivist perspective, knowledge is already given within objective reality. It is either transmitted from the teacher to learners or discovered by learners themselves. Positivism thus supposes “teacher-learner” models of learning or models of discovery learning. Accordingly, there are two versions of learner autonomy in the positivist view. First, autonomy is seen as “learning outside the classroom”, i.e. learning outside of the “teacher-learner” model used in the traditional classroom, and concerned with equipping learners with the technical skills they need to manage their own learning beyond the walls of the classroom. Second, positivism also supports notions of autonomy or independence within the classroom, with learners acquiring knowledge, rather than knowledge being imparted from teacher to learners, being valued.

In a constructivist perspective of language learning, learners construct their own vision of the target language. Constructivists tend to support “psychological” versions of autonomy that focus on the learner’s behaviour, attitudes and personality. Autonomy is seen as an innate capacity of the individual which may be suppressed or distorted by institutional education (Candy, 1989), and is couched in terms of individual responsibility for decisions about what is learnt

and how. Consequently, constructivism tends to support self-directed learning and self-access as a positive means of promoting autonomy (cf. Holec, 1988).

The major concern of critical theory is that individual learners' construction of meaning is subject to social constraints. While it tends to share the view that knowledge is constructed rather than acquired with constructivism, critical theory places a much greater emphasis on the social contexts and constraints within which the process of learning takes place. In this perspective, as Legenhausen (2009) puts it, learner autonomy addresses by implication the power balance between educational authorities, teachers and learners. It is primarily concerned with the negotiation process between the teacher and learners – as well as between the learners themselves – thus allowing for a significant shift of control away from teachers and towards the learners.

It is worth noting that the technological aspect of learner autonomy is frequently mentioned in historical overviews, since the proliferation of the new technologies and the rise of self-access centres have stimulated discussions on learner-centredness and autonomy (cf. Gremmo & Riley, 1995). This is also seen in the national curriculum of CE, i.e. the *CECR* document, which suggests the new teaching model should be built on modern information technology so as to facilitate students' individualised and autonomous learning. Moreover, in the institution being studied, i.e. College X, two self-access centres equipped with computers were established to provide the space for students' autonomous English learning.

However, technology does not necessarily bring a new learning environment which will promote the development of learner autonomy. Whether it is conducive to learner autonomy depends in large part on whether it is used in a way that would allow learners' sufficient control over their own learning and favour the development of their capacity to self-direct their learning. In this sense, the previously discussed technical, psychological, and political versions of learner autonomy (Benson, 1997) would need to be combined in its very conceptualisation in order to better inform language teaching and learning.

Specifically, control over language learning on the part of students (the political version) is the prerequisite. Only when students have sufficient control over the learning content and learning processes are they likely to self-direct their own language learning (the psychological version). Technical support (the technical version), including self-access and learning skills taught by the teacher, is the facilitator. In short, a concept of learner autonomy which takes account of political, psychological and technical perspectives may better inform language teaching and learning.

In this section, I have briefly reviewed the four important goals of foreign language education: to develop students' grammatical competence, communicative competence, intercultural communicative competence, and language learning autonomy. The three types of competences are concerned with the goal of promoting effective communication. This goal tends to be best represented by intercultural communicative competence, as it relates language use to intercultural communication. The goal of developing students' language learning autonomy is more concerned with developing students' ability to learn how to learn, which suggests a process-oriented view of language learning and is conducive to their lifelong learning.

2.4 Formulation of research questions and theoretical framework

The above literature review has aimed to provide a theoretical basis for addressing the three research aims identified in Chapter 1:

1. To understand the English learning needs perceived by learners in the context of Chinese independent colleges;
2. To see how the CE curriculum meets learners' needs, as a basis for improving the CE curriculum;
3. To investigate how the CE curriculum can be improved, in order to accommodate learners' needs.

Inspired by the extant literature and bearing its limitations in mind, I formulate the following three research questions:

1. What are the learners' expressed needs for English learning?
2. To what extent does the College English curriculum meet the learners' expressed needs?
3. What are the relevant features in the learning environment that impact on the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs?

Specifically, the first research question is based on my review of the definitions of "needs" in the literature on NA in language teaching, in order to address the first research aim. As discussed in Section 2.1.1, I have noticed that in the NA literature there are no terms to represent learner-perceived needs in both product-oriented and process-oriented ways. To address this gap and my research aim, I thus coined two terms – "expressed target needs" and "expressed learning needs" – to represent the learners' expressions of their desired learning outcomes, and their expressions of what they think are the factors in the learning situation that affect their English learning. Furthermore, the two types of needs are combined in one term "expressed needs". With this definition of "needs", "the English learning needs perceived by learners" included in the first research aim are stated as "learners' expressed needs for English learning". Thus, the first research question has been formulated. And so has the second research question, as translating the second research aim into a research question also depends on clarification of the definition of needs.

The formulation of the third research question has been inspired by my review of the literature regarding means analysis and the process model of curriculum development. Overall, this study aims to understand how learners experience the CE curriculum and how the CE curriculum accommodates learners' expressed needs, with a view to exposing its current strengths and weaknesses, and thus developing recommendations for how it might be improved. My review of means analysis suggests that there might be relevant features in the

learning environment that impact on the CE curriculum, and accordingly, the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs. In particular, my review of the process model suggests that there might be difficulties in implementing this model in the CE curriculum. In order to assess the capabilities of the learning environment to accommodate curriculum improvement, and accordingly the learners' expressed needs, I have included a means analysis in the NA in this study, and also formulated the third research question.

Furthermore, a theoretical framework has been built in order to address the three research questions, and this is shown in Figure 2.1:

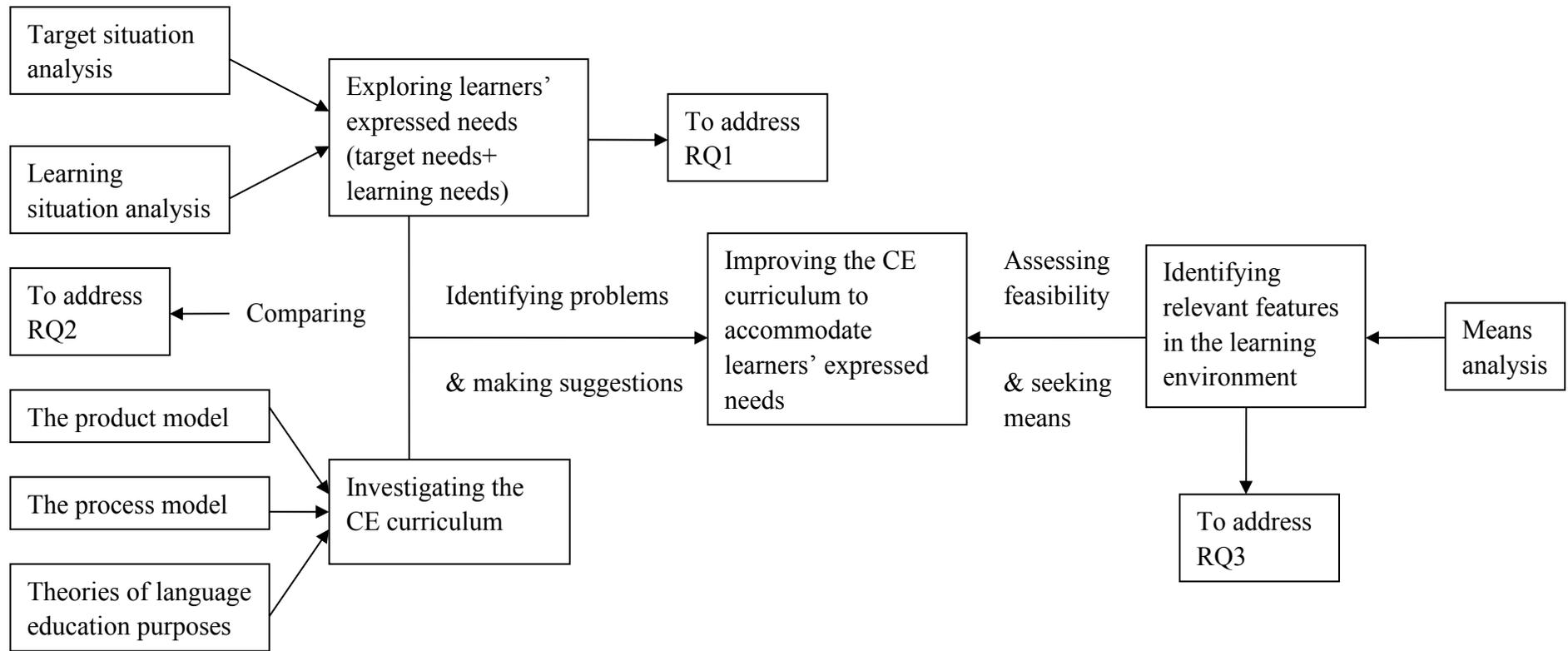


Figure 2.1 A theoretical framework

This study first draws on a TSA and a LSA to explore the learners' expressed needs for English learning, including their expressed target needs and learning needs, in order to address the first research question. The study also investigates the CE curriculum, in a way which is informed by the product and process models of curriculum development and theories concerning the purposes of foreign language education. Following these investigations, the learners' expressed needs identified are compared with relevant issues in the CE curriculum, in order to see how these needs are addressed in the curriculum, thus to answer the second research question. In addition, this comparison is used to identify problems with the CE curriculum, as a basis for making suggestions for improving the curriculum. Moreover, this study also involves a means analysis to assess the feasibility and seek means of improving the CE curriculum in order to accommodate the learners' expressed needs. In doing this, the third research question is addressed.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have provided the theoretical background for the present study. The study aims to understand how the CE curriculum meets learner-perceived needs in order to provide a basis for improving the curriculum. To address this research aim, I first identified three areas of the existing literature to review: i) needs analysis in language teaching, ii) curriculum development, and iii) foreign language education.

In the field of needs analysis in language teaching, there are no terms to represent learner-perceived needs regarding both the end product of learning (product-oriented needs) and the learning process (process-oriented needs). Thus, I coined the terms “expressed target needs” and “expressed learning needs” to refer to learners' expressions of their desired learning outcomes and of what they think are the factors in the learning situation that affect their English learning. Based on this definition of “needs”, the aim of the NA becomes understanding the

learners' expressed needs as the basis for improving the CE curriculum. This aim of the NA, as the basis for curriculum improvement, constitutes a new aim of NA in language teaching, in contrast with the two existing aims: NA as the basis for curriculum design or re-evaluating the original NA. Furthermore, this aim of NA is informed by the democratic philosophy in the NA literature: to let learners' voices be heard by policy makers, curriculum designers, teachers, and other parties involved in the CE curriculum.

Reviewing the types of NA in language teaching, I found three types of NA are of particular relevance to this study: target situation analysis (TSA), learning situation analysis (LSA), and means analysis. Specifically, a TSA can be used to explore learners' expressed target needs, a LSA to investigate their expressed learning needs, and a means analysis to assess the capabilities of the learning environment to accommodate curriculum improvement, and accordingly the learners' expressed needs. In the light of a critical review of previous NAs, these three types of NA in this study can be supported by a qualitative methodology. Furthermore, the focus of the NA has been identified: the TSA is primarily concerned with why the learners are learning English; the LSA addresses any factors emerging in the learning situation which the learners think affect their English learning; and the means analysis focuses on the features in the learning environment that are relevant to the improvement of the CE curriculum to favour the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs.

In the field of curriculum development, I focused on the product and process models of curriculum development, as they are closely related to learners' target needs and learning needs, which are defined in a product-oriented and a process-oriented way respectively. The product model does not seem conducive to accommodating the learners' expressed needs, i.e. the needs of learners as individuals, as it takes a passive view of humanity and democracy. However, it may be useful in the curricular areas which emphasise information and skills. By contrast, the process model should be conducive to accommodating the learners' expressed needs, as it focuses on educational process and experiences and values

the active roles played by the individual learners. Moreover, it will put emphasis on learners' intercultural understanding in foreign language courses. However, there may be considerable difficulties in implementing this model in practice, considering that it has high expectations of the quality of teachers, and relies on teachers' "subjective" judgements to evaluate student work, which may conflict with "objective" tests.

In the field of foreign language education, I focused on the purposes of foreign language education, as the major difference between the product and process models lies largely in their statements of educational purposes. Four major goals of foreign language education were reviewed: to develop: i) grammatical competence, ii) communicative competence, iii) intercultural communicative competence, and iv) language learning autonomy. The first three goals are concerned with promoting effective communication, which is best represented by intercultural communicative competence, as this competence relates language use to intercultural communication. The goal of developing language learning autonomy is more concerned with developing students' ability to learn how to learn, which suggests a process-oriented view of language learning and is conducive to their lifelong learning.

Last, based on the literature review, I have formulated the research questions (see Section 2.4), and built a theoretical framework for conducting this study (see Figure 2.1). In the next chapter, I turn to the methodological approach used in the study.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

This chapter presents my research rationale, methodological choices regarding data collection and analysis, and some important issues emerging in the research process. In reporting how I conducted the study, I also show how I learned to be a “reflexive” thinker throughout this learning journey.

First, I explain why I conducted this study within the social constructionism framework (Section 3.1) and using a case study approach (Section 3.2). Section 3.3 reports on the sources and procedures for data collection, and Section 3.4 introduces the data analysis process. Some important issues emerging in the process of the study are also discussed, including reflexivity (Section 3.5), ethical issues (Section 3.6), and trustworthiness (Section 3.7).

3.1 Rationale for social constructionism

Social constructionism was chosen to provide the macro theoretical framework for this study. This choice was determined as much by my beliefs about the nature of reality and the function of knowledge as by the focus of the study.

Regarding whether there is a “real” reality outside of human experience, Guba and Lincoln (2008) note that there are two different camps: modernist (i.e. Enlightenment, scientific method, conventional, positivist) researchers, and new-paradigm (critical theorists, constructivists, participatory/cooperative) inquirers. The modernists believe there is a “real” reality beyond human apprehension which can be approached only through the utilisation of methods that prevent human contamination of its apprehension or comprehension. By contrast, the inquirers in the second camp take their primary field of interest to be precisely that subjective and intersubjective social knowledge and the active construction and co-creation of such knowledge by human agents. My position is that of the second camp, the loosely-defined constructionist camp.

As Guba and Lincoln (2008) note, both groups and individuals can make sense of social phenomena, which is of central interest to social constructionists and constructivists respectively. “Needs”, a key concept in this study, are often studied within traditional psychology, which looks for explanations for social phenomena within individuals (Burr, 2003). A well-known example is the “hierarchy of needs” proposed by Maslow (1943). The reason I located this study in a social constructionism paradigm rather than constructivism or traditional psychology is that the study focuses on social interactions and processes in which all the parties involved, including policy makers, curriculum designers, teachers and students, engage in and co-construct the College English (CE) curriculum.

As explained in Chapter 1, the focus of this study is on understanding learners’ perceptions of their English learning needs and how these needs are being met and can be accommodated in the CE curriculum. I believe learners develop their English learning needs during the learning process when they interact with others. Furthermore, learners and other parties involved, such as policy makers, curriculum designers, and teachers, engage in and co-construct the curriculum. It is in this co-constructing process that learners’ expressed needs might be addressed by the other parties involved. In short, this study focuses on “interaction and social practices” and “processes”, which are the focus of social constructionism (Burr, 2003, p.8-9). I therefore draw on the theory of social constructionism to provide a macro theoretical framework for this study.

Within this social constructionist perspective, I have adopted a case study approach as my methodological choice for conducting the study.

3.2 Rationale for a case study approach

Definitions of “case study” abound. By referring to a dictionary definition, Flyvbjerg (2011, p.301) discusses four important elements of a case study. First, a case study focuses on an “individual unit” – what Stake (2008, p.119-120) calls a “functioning specific” or “bounded system”. Second, a case study is an

“intensive” analysis which comprises detail, richness, completeness and variance – that is, depth – for the case being studied – what Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.359) call a “thick description”. Third, a case study stresses “developmental factors”, meaning that a case typically evolves over time, often as a string of concrete and interrelated events that occur “at such a time, in such a place” and that constitute the case when seen as a whole. Finally, a case study focuses on “relation to environment”, that is, context.

The above four elements of a case study are embodied in the present study. First, this study needs to be conducted in a specific institution. The study explores how learners’ expressed needs for English learning are met and can be accommodated in the CE curriculum. The CE curriculum consists of the national curriculum and the institutional curriculum offered in the particular institution – a Chinese independent college – within a specific learning environment. In addition, learners’ expressed needs refer to the needs expressed by learners in this particular institution. In short, the institutional curriculum, the learning environment and learners’ needs would be based on an individual unit, i.e. a specific institution. Second, study of the above issues requires a thick description of the institution. Third, an independent college, as a new type of institution of higher education in China, is a developing entity and its evolution has been studied by many researchers (e.g. Zhou, 2003; Zhou, J., 2007; Fei, 2011). Fourth, as suggested earlier, this study relates to the learning environment in a specific institution. Thus, the study has the four characteristics of a case study. I therefore adopted a case study approach.

More specifically, this study is an “instrumental case study” (Stake, 2008). According to Stake (2008), an instrumental case study aims to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation through examining a particular case. The case is of secondary interest in the study. It plays a supportive role and facilitates our understanding of something else. In this study, I focus on the English learning needs expressed by students from a particular independent college and also the CE curriculum in this college, with a view to gaining understanding about EFL

education in Chinese independent colleges and more broadly in Chinese institutions of higher education. In this sense, this case study is an instrumental case study.

This study was conducted in an independent college, referred to as College X, in which I as the researcher had worked for three years and still remain a staff member. College X was co-established by a private enterprise and a public university, referred to as University Y. I studied at University Y for seven years, as a non-English major undergraduate for four years and then as an English major postgraduate for three years. After graduation from University Y, I worked in College X for three years, engaged in administrative work in the English Department and also in English teaching. In particular, I had the experience of both learning and teaching CE.

“Potential for learning” (Stake, 2008, p.130) was my reason for selecting College X as the institution to study. I had easy access to both College X and University Y, which means I had the opportunity to explore more in these institutions. In addition, I had a high level of familiarity with the issues under study, such as the CE curriculum offered in College X and the organisation structure of this independent college. With this familiarity, I could say to myself, “I understand their [the participants’] language” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.13), which would facilitate my exploration of certain issues.

3.3 Data collection sources and procedures

In order to answer the three research questions identified in Chapter 2, a two-year longitudinal study, i.e. from September 2010 to August 2012, was conducted in College X. During the fieldwork process, I drew on three sources of data to enrich my understanding about the issues being studied: documents, observations, and interviews. Table 3.1 shows the data collection procedures and sources, with the main procedures for answering each research question, the key

issues investigated in order to answer each research question, and the specific sources for understanding each key issue.

Procedures for answering research questions	Key issues	Sources	
RQ1: identifying learners' expressed needs	Expressed target needs & expressed learning needs	Unstructured interviews in the initial stages with 11 students, 3 employees, 1 manager, focusing on expressed target needs; In-depth interviews throughout the fieldwork process with 4 students, focusing on expressed learning needs	
RQ2: reviewing the CE curriculum, then comparing learners' expressed needs with relevant issues in the CE curriculum	The national curriculum	Document: <i>College English Curriculum Requirements (CECR)</i>	
	The institutional curriculum	The General English teaching plan	Document: the General English teaching plan
		The General English teaching practice	Observations in a first-year accounting class; All interviews, including semi-structured interviews in the later stages
		The English of Specialty curriculum	Documents: undergraduate programme plans; Teaching timetables
RQ3: identifying relevant features in the learning environment	Relevant features in the learning environment	Documents, observations, and all interviews, with semi-structured interviews in the later stages with 2 teachers and 2 excellent students focusing on negative and positive factors in the learning environment	

Table 3.1 Data collection sources and procedures

First, I drew on unstructured interviews and in-depth interviews to identify the learners' expressed needs, including their expressed target needs and learning needs, so as to answer the first research question. The unstructured interviews were conducted in the initial stages of the data collection and focused on the learners' expressed target needs, with 11 students, 3 employees, and 1 manager as the participants. I included the employee/manager participants with a view to enriching my understanding about English use in the workplace, which I believed would be relevant to the learners' expressed target needs. The in-depth interviews were conducted throughout the two-year fieldwork process with four students, focusing on their expressed learning needs.

Second, I drew on documents, observations and interviews to understand the CE curriculum. Following this, the students' expressed needs were compared with relevant issues in the CE curriculum, so as to answer the second research question. The CE curriculum consists of the national curriculum and the institutional curriculum of College X, which are further divided into the General English teaching plan, the General English teaching practice, and the English of Specialty curriculum, as stated in Chapter 1. The CECR document was used to understand the national curriculum, and the teaching plan document was used to understand the General English teaching plan in College X. To understand the General English teaching practice, I drew on observations in a first-year accounting class and all the interview data, including semi-structured interviews in the later stages, as explained below. Further, two types of documents – undergraduate programmes and teaching timetables – were used to understand the English of Specialty curriculum in College X.

Third, I drew on documents, observations and interviews, to identify relevant features in the learning environment, in order to answer the third research question. In particular, semi-structured interviews with two teachers and two students with excellent English proficiency were conducted in the late stages of data collection, with a view to understanding negative and positive factors in the

learning environment that impact on the CE curriculum, and accordingly, the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs.

Next, I report the data collection process, focusing on how I used the three sources of data: i) documents, ii) observations, iii) interviews. My reflections on the fieldwork process are also reported.

3.3.1 Documents

Four types of documents were used in this study: i) *College English Curriculum Requirements*, ii) a General English teaching plan in College X, iii) undergraduate programme plans in College X, and iv) teaching timetables in College X. The CECR was the document for the CE national curriculum and therefore was used to understand the national curriculum. The other three types of documents were used to understand the institutional CE curriculum in College X. In this college, the CE course system consisted of General English and English of Specialty. A General English teaching plan was used to understand the planning of General English. Furthermore, undergraduate programme plans and teaching timetables used in all the non-English majors were used to understand the planning and implementation of English of Specialty in this college.

Next, I report how the above listed documents were identified in this study. First, the CECR document was identified when I chose the research topic. After I decided on my research topic of tertiary level EFL education in China, I identified the CE course, as it was the English course offered in all Chinese colleges and universities. I also identified the national CE curriculum, and the CECR, which was the document for the national curriculum. The CECR document was issued by Chinese Ministry of Education in 2004 for trial implementation, and in 2007 in both Chinese and English for full implementation. I chose the English version issued in 2007, as the study is reported in English.

Second, I identified the General English teaching plan soon after the fieldwork began. In College X, General English is under the charge of the English Department and is offered intensively in the first two years of the four-year

undergraduate programme. The teaching plan was drawn up by the director of General English, under the guidance of the head of the English Department, to provide teachers with guidelines for General English teaching. I therefore drew on the teaching plan to understand the planning of General English.

Third, as the fieldwork unfolded I identified documents for understanding English of Specialty. In contrast to General English, in most programmes provided in College X English of Specialty is offered for only one term of the last two years of the undergraduate programme⁴. The course is provided and managed independently by individual departments without unified teaching planning or any coordination during teaching practice. As a result, I felt it would be difficult to investigate the English of Specialty curriculum. It seemed unrealistic to attempt to explore the teaching planning and teaching practice for this course in all the programmes. Moreover, it might be unnecessary to investigate the course in all the programmes, as English teaching in College X was primarily concerned with General English.

As the fieldwork unfolded, I learnt that in the undergraduate programme plan there was a general plan for the English of Specialty course, which included the course name, course type, term to be offered, credits and teaching hours. The undergraduate programme plans were then used to understand the planning of this course in College X.

The idea to include teaching timetables was inspired by an interview with a former student who was not impressed by the English of Specialty course at all. I then checked the undergraduate programme plan for his major and found the course was included in it. I began to doubt if it was implemented in teaching practice. After checking the teaching timetable, I found the course was absent from it. I therefore drew on the teaching timetables to understand the implementation of the plans for offering English of Specialty in this college.

⁴ An academic year in China consists of two terms.

Table 3.2 lists the documents used in this study and the main purposes for using them.

Documents	Purposes
The CECR	To understand the national curriculum of CE
A teaching plan of General English	To understand the planning of General English in College X
Undergraduate programme plans	To understand the planning of English of Specialty in College X
Teaching timetables	To understand the implementation of the planning for offering English of Specialty in College X

Table 3.2 Sources and main purposes of documents

3.3.2 Observations

The classroom observations had the aim of investigating the General English teaching practice in College X. I conducted classroom observations in a first-year accounting class between September and December 2010, i.e. during the first term of the first academic year. Below, I report the selection of this class, my entry in it, the focus of the classroom observations, my role in the observations, and the dates and times of the observations.

I chose to observe a first-year accounting class for two main reasons. First, accounting was the programme which had the most students in College X. In the academic year 2010/2011, which was the first year of the fieldwork period, accounting students amounted to around one fifth of the students enrolled in the 32 programmes. Second, the English teacher showed willingness to accept me as an observer in this class and said she would support me during my fieldwork process. Gaining her support was particularly important, as Chinese teachers are often sensitive to the presence of others, particularly other teachers or researchers, who may make possible judgements of their teaching. I therefore decided on this class for classroom observations.

Throughout the observing process, I paid particular attention to establishing a good rapport with the class. Rapport with students is crucial in classroom observation, given that there is usually a hierarchical structure in Chinese schools, especially in primary and secondary schools. I thus took into account any possible power imbalance between me and the students during the observing process. I went to their first English session soon after the students entered College X, which enabled me to get acquainted with them just as they were getting acquainted with each other. When the teacher introduced me to the class, I explained my research and my role as a researcher, but also emphasised my role as a friend and learner. Each time I went to the class, I dressed like a student, and chatted with the students during the break between sessions. Moreover, I attended some of their social gatherings. These efforts were not only conducive to a good rapport with the class, but were also intended to reduce “reactivity effects (the effects of the researcher on the researched, changing the behaviour of the latter)” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.465) during the classroom observations.

As defined in Chapter 1, the General English teaching practice refers to the implementation of the General English teaching plan. Thus, a major focus of the classroom observations was to see how the teaching plan was implemented in the classroom. It was based on this teaching plan that I identified the issues I would focus on during the observations (Appendix 1), including the textbooks, the teaching and learning tasks, and the CET-4 training.

During the observation process, I took two roles: those of “observer-as-participant” and of “complete participant” (Gold, 1958). During the sessions, my role was observer-as-participant. I focused on observing how the issues addressed in the teaching plan were implemented in classroom teaching and kept field notes. In addition, I participated a little or peripherally in the class’s activities. During the break between sessions, I was a complete participant, chatting with the students, with a view to establishing a good rapport with them.

The dates and approximate durations of the classroom observations, and the sessions and breaks observed are described in Table 3.3.

Date	Sessions/breaks	Duration
26/09/2010	3 sessions, 2 breaks	140 mins
29/09/2010	2 sessions, 1 break	90 mins
03/11/2010	2 sessions, 1 break	90 mins
29/12/2010	2 sessions, 1 break	90 mins
		Total: 410 mins

Table 3.3 Dates and durations of classroom observations

3.3.3 Interviews

The interviews conducted in this study took three forms: i) unstructured interviews, ii) in-depth interviews, and iii) semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were conducted using Mandarin Chinese, which is the mother tongue of the interviewer and all the interviewees. The face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded. I present here the purposes of the three types of interviews and how I went about them, including participant recruitment.

(1) Unstructured interviews

I conducted unstructured interviews with 11 students, 3 employees, and 1 manager in the initial stages of the fieldwork process, i.e. between October and December, 2010.

The unstructured interviews aimed to obtain a general idea of the learners' expressed needs, particularly of their expressed target needs, with a broad coverage of different perspectives. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.269) argue that the unstructured interview is useful when the interviewer "*does not know what he or she does not know*" and must therefore rely on the respondent to tell him or her". To avoid projecting my own experience and allow various voices to emerge, I drew on unstructured interviews in the initial stages of data collection.

In recruiting the participants for the unstructured interviews, I took into account their backgrounds to collect views from a range of different perspectives.

During the recruitment of student participants, I took into account their major, year, gender, and English level. These factors tended to have a certain influence on students' English learning. First, some subjects like international business and trade, and tourism management, seem to be more concerned with using English than other subjects like accounting and management science. Second, as stated earlier, first and second year students in College X take intensive General English courses, while the third and fourth year students on most programmes take the English of Specialty course in one term of their last two undergraduate years. Third, it is a common view in China that female students generally learn a foreign language better than male students do. Fourth, students' English level may affect their attitudes towards English learning and also their needs for English learning. In recruiting the students, their English level was roughly rated as below average, average, above average, or excellent, based on their own comments, their teacher's comments, and test results.

The profiles of the 11 student participants are shown in Table 3.4, showing their major, year, gender, and English level.

Participants	Major	Year	Gender	English level
S1	Accounting	1	F	Average
S2	Accounting	1	F	Above average
S3	Accounting	1	F	Below average
S4	Accounting	1	F	Average
S5	Accounting	1	F	Above average
S6	Accounting	1	F	Average
S7	Accounting	1	F	Average
S10	Accounting	1	M	Above average
S11	Management science	2	F	Average
S12	Information management & information systems	3	M	Below average
S13	Financial management	4	M	Excellent

Table 3.4 Profiles of the student participants for the unstructured interviews

Among the 11 student participants, eight students – S1 to S7 and S10 – came from the first-year accounting class observed. I believed that students from this class could be “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002) or “knowledgeable people” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.97) for the interviews, as I could learn about them in many other ways, such as from their teacher’s comments, peer’s comments, and observations. I therefore expressed my intention of recruiting some participants from this class soon after I began the class observations. Shortly afterwards, S4 contacted me and expressed her willingness to participate in my study. She also introduced me to six other female participants – S1, S2, S3, S5, S6 and S7. S5, S6 and S7 were her roommates and they became participants too. In order to address my concern about the gender imbalance, I selected a male student, S10, who had a relatively good English level, to participate in the unstructured interviews.

S11 and S12 were identified by my colleagues in College X, based on the criteria that the student participants would need diversified backgrounds, including different majors, years, genders, and English levels.

I identified S13 myself. He was well known in this college for his excellent performance in a prestigious English speech competition. In addition to the unstructured interviews, I also included him in the semi-structured interviews conducted in the later stages of data collection – to be described later – with a view to identifying positive factors in the learning environment which might have contributed to his successful English learning experience.

In recruiting the employee/manager participants, I took into account their undergraduate major, work area, and work experience. These factors would have a certain influence on their careers and their perceptions about English use in the workplace. Employees who were also former students of College X seemed to be a particularly useful source, as they might have understanding not only about English use in the workplace but also about the CE curriculum in the college. However, since College X was a newly established institution, it was difficult to find former students who had more than 3 years of work experience⁵. Considering that College X depended on University Y's teaching resources, including its CE teachers, and even copied the way University Y organised CE teaching in its early days, former students from University Y were another choice.

Taking into account the above factors, I relied on my colleagues in College X to recommend a pool of potential participants with varied backgrounds of undergraduate majors, work areas, and work experience. I selected four from that pool, including three employees and one manager. Their profiles are shown in Table 3.5.

⁵ College X was established in 2002 but only had a few dozen students in that year. College teaching was suspended in 2003, and the college re-opened in 2004. Students who were enrolled in 2004 graduated in 2008 and had had only two years of working experience when I started this research in 2010.

Participants	Status	Graduated from	Undergraduate major	Work area	Work experience	Gender
E1	Employee	College X	Network engineering	Internet marketing	2 years	M
E2	Employee	College X	International business & trade	Post office	2 years	F
E3	Employee	University Y	Agronomy	Foreign trade transportation	7 years	M
E4	Manager		Petroleum exploitation	Digital video development & production	Over 10 years	M

Table 3.5 Profiles of the employee/manager participants for the unstructured interviews

Two interview guides were used in the unstructured interviews: one for the student interviews and the other for the employee/manager interviews. In this study, CE was primarily considered as being General English in both the national curriculum and the institutional curriculum of College X. As discussed in Chapter 2, the primary purpose of doing needs analysis in General English teaching is “to readily specify why the learners need English” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p.53). Thus, in the interview guide for the student interviews (Appendix 2) the questions were concerned with why the learners learnt English and what they thought of English learning. The interview guide for the employee/manager interviews (Appendix 3) focused on English use in the workplace and English requirements in employment.

Table 3.6 summarises information about the unstructured interviews, covering the participants, interview dates, interview formats, and the approximate duration.

Participants	Interview date	Interview format	Duration
S1, S2, S3, S4	11/10/2010	Face-to-face, group	45 mins
S2, S4, S5, S6, S7	03/12/2010	Face-to-face, group	50 mins
S6	24/12/2010	Face-to-face, individual	75 mins
S7	27/12/2010	Face-to-face, individual	75 mins
S10	29/12/2010	Face-to-face, individual	30 mins
S11	22/10/2010	Face-to-face, individual	30 mins
S12	18/11/2010	Face-to-face, individual	35 mins
S13 (1 st time)	22/11/2010	Face-to-face, individual	25 mins
E1	08/10/2010	Online via QQ, individual	70 mins
E2	17/10/2010	Online via QQ, individual	45 mins
E3	20/10/2010	Online via QQ, individual	50 mins
E4	23/10/2010	Online via QQ, individual	40 mins
		Total: F-to-F: 365 mins; Online: 205 mins	

Table 3.6 Information about the unstructured interviews

In total, there were 12 unstructured interviews, including 8 interviews with students, 3 interviews with employees, and 1 interview with a manager. The student interviews consisted of 2 group interviews and 6 individual interviews, carried out face-to-face. The employee/manager interviews were all individual interviews and took the form of online interviewing via QQ (腾讯QQ), which is the Chinese counterpart of Skype.

The two group interviews were unplanned interviews. The first came when S4 introduced me to three other students and then we had dinner together in the dining hall. The second happened when I visited S4's dormitory when her three roommates, S5, S6 and S7, and a classmate, S2, were present. I felt I could take advantage of these situations to investigate the students' perceptions of their English learning needs more and so conducted two group interviews.

The employee/manager interviews were conducted online by using QQ as the interview medium. This was because these participants were working in other Chinese cities far away from the city where College X and my home were. It was therefore not realistic to interview them face to face. Considering that they all belonged to the Internet generation and felt comfortable communicating with other people via QQ, I used QQ as the medium to interview them online. I used synchronous interviews, which "mirror a traditional interview in that they take place in real time but in an online environment" (James & Busher, 2012, p.179). In addition, I had some informal online conversations with them before the formal interview began, with a view to establishing good rapport with them.

Last, I report an important issue emerging in the initial stages of data collection which was closely related to the unstructured interviews. This study adopted an "emergent design" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2007), which developed and adapted as the fieldwork unfolded. In the original research design, I had planned to administer a questionnaire and some follow-up interviews after the unstructured interviews, with a view to collecting expressed target needs from a broad coverage of students.

However, after conducting the unstructured interviews, I abandoned the idea of the questionnaire and follow-up interviews. The findings from the unstructured interviews showed that it was unrealistic and undesirable to administer a questionnaire. First, the findings showed that it was difficult for pre-experience students to provide a clear picture about their English use in target situations, e.g. in their future studies or careers. Second, the findings indicated that there was a consensus among the students regarding their desired learning outcomes, i.e. to pass the CET, to use English in future work, and to speak English. Third, the findings showed that there were inconsistencies between the surface meanings of the students' expressed needs and the assumptions underlying them (two examples are provided in Appendix 9). Such inconsistencies, however, could hardly be captured in closed-question surveys. Thus, I decided to abandon the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews in the fieldwork.

(2) In-depth interviews

In-depth interviewing is also known as unstructured interviewing or qualitative interviewing (Berry, 1999). Compared with unstructured interviews in the usual manner, in-depth interviews are “intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents” (Boyce & Neale, 2006) to seek in-depth understanding and interpretation by asking open-ended questions (Guion et al., 2011).

In this study, the in-depth interviews were closely related to the unstructured interviews reported above. They were actually intensive individual unstructured interviews with four students from the class observed. I relied on these interviews to trace the process of their two-year General English learning, in order to gain in-depth understanding about their expressed needs, particularly their needs emerging in the learning situation (learning needs). I had several interviews with the participants at different stages of their English learning process, on an individual basis, which required establishing a good rapport with them.

Four students from the observed accounting class, S4, S5, S8 and S9, were recruited as the participants for the in-depth interviews, as I had already established a good rapport with the class during my observations. S4 and S5 were also involved in the unstructured interviews reported above, and their recruitment has already been described. S8, another female student from this class, contacted me and expressed her willingness to participate and then became another participant for the in-depth interviews. I recruited S9, a male student, as one more participant, but only in the second year of the two-year General English learning process. At that time, I had to give up a potential male participant who showed willingness to be interviewed but could not make it to the interview three times for different reasons. To address my concern about the gender imbalance, I then selected S9, who had a relatively poor English level, as another participant for the in-depth interviews. The profiles of these students, with their major, the college year when interviewed, gender, and English level, are shown in Table 3.7.

Participants	Major	College year when interviewed	Gender	English level
S4	Accounting	1 & 2	F	Average
S5	Accounting	1 & 2	F	Above average
S8	Accounting	1 & 2	F	Average
S9	Accounting	2	M	Below average

Table 3.7 Profiles of the student participants for the in-depth interviews

As the in-depth interviews were quite individual, the interview guide (Appendix 4) only specified the topics, rather than the questions, to be used in the interviews. These included personal information, English learning experience, and perceptions about the General English teaching practice and the learning environment.

In total, 14 in-depth interviews were conducted, including 6 interviews with S4, 4 with S5, 3 with S8, and 1 with S9. Table 3.8 provides information about

these interviews, including the interview date, the time in the college year, format, and approximate duration.

Participants	Interviews	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
S4	Date	11/10/2010	03/12/2010	26/12/2010	27/05/2011	08/07/2011	15/03/2012
	Time in college year	Beginning of 1 st term, group interview with S1, S2, S3, S4	Mid 1 st term, group interview with S2, S4, S5, S6, S7	Late 1 st term	Late 2 nd term	Soon after final exam in 2 nd term	Not long after 1 st CET experience, result known
	Format	Face-to-face	Face-to-face	Face-to-face	Online via QQ,	Face-to-face	Reflections on CET-4 via email
	Duration	45 mins	50 mins	30 mins	70 mins	30 mins	
S5	Date	03/12/2010	18/12/2010	03/12/2011	16/03/2012		
	Time in college year	Mid 1 st term, group interview with S2, S4, S6, S7	Late 1 st term	Mid 3 rd term	Not long after 1 st CET experience, result known		
	Format	Face-to-face	Face-to-face	Face-to-face	Reflections on		
	Duration	50 mins	40 mins	40 mins	CET-4 via email		
S8	Date	10/01/2011	11/05/2011	19/12/2011			
	Time in college year	End of 1 st term	Contacting me via QQ, inquiring about CET-4	Two days after 1 st CET-4 experience			
	Format	Face-to-face	Online via QQ	Face-to-face			
	Duration	45 mins	35 mins	55 mins			
S9	Date	20/08/2012					Total: Face-to-Face (not including group interviews): 300 mins; Online: 105 mins; 2 written reflections
	Time in college year	Soon after 4 th term					
	Format	Face-to-face					
	Duration	70 min					

Table 3.8 Information about the in-depth interviews

Of the 14 interviews, three interviews, i.e. the first two with S4 and the first with S5, were unstructured group interviews including S4 or both as the participants. Two interviews, i.e. the fourth with S4 and the second with S8, were online interviews via QQ. Two other interviews, i.e. the last with S4 and the last with S5, were open-ended written reflections on CET-4 via email. These four interviews were conducted online as I was not in the field but in the UK doing my doctoral programme when the interviews took place. Since we kept in touch via Internet, we could communicate with each other throughout the fieldwork process.

(3) Semi-structured interviews

I used semi-structured interviews in order to combine the advantages of unstructured and structured interviews. As discussed earlier, unstructured interviews can be used to explore certain issues when the interviewer does not know much about them. By contrast, structured interviews are useful when the interviewer “*knows what he or she does not know* and can therefore frame appropriate questions to find it out” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.269). As the fieldwork unfolded, I gained a certain understanding about the curriculum. I then wanted to explore why it was arranged as it was and how it could be improved, with a viewing to identifying relevant features in the learning environment that impact on the CE curriculum, and accordingly the accommodation of the learners’ expressed needs. In order not to limit my inquiries, I chose to use semi-structured interviews rather than structured interviews.

I considered teachers and excellent students as potential participants for the semi-structured interviews. By drawing on teachers’ perceptions, I might be able to understand the negative factors in the learning environment which might lead to the present arrangement of the CE curriculum. On the other hand, I believed there might also be positive factors in the learning environment which might contribute to some students’ successful English learning experiences. I thus included two teachers, including the director of General English at College X, and two students who showed excellent English proficiency in the semi-structured interviews. Their

profiles are shown in Table 3.9, with gender, the students' major, and the position of the teachers.

Participants	Status/position	Gender
S13	Student majoring in financial management	M
S14	Student majoring in English	F
T1	General English teacher	F
T2	Director of General English	F

Table 3.9 Profiles of the teacher/student participants for the semi-structured interviews

The student participant S13 was also involved in the unstructured interviews, and I have already reported how he was recruited. Like S13, S14 was also well-known in College X for her excellent performance in prestigious English competitions. Unlike the other student participants, S14 was an English major student who did not take the CE course. I recruited her as a participant with a view to understanding how English major students made sense of their English learning, which would shed light on non-English major students' English learning, as well as hoping to identify positive factors in the learning environment. Concerning the two teachers, both were colleagues of mine in College X and were willing to participate in my study. In particular, I chose T2 as a participant for the reason that she was involved in the decision-making process for General English courses as well as in classroom teaching, and therefore might understand better about the practicalities of the learning environment.

There were interview guides for the semi-structured interviews with each of the two groups of interviewees, students and teachers. The questions to guide the student semi-structured interviews are provided in Appendix 5, and they focus on the students' learning experiences and the factors in the learning environment which influenced their English learning. In Appendix 6, I present the questions used in the teacher semi-structured interviews, with a focus on the teachers'

perceptions about the present arrangement of the CE curriculum in College X. The questions cover autonomous English learning, oral practice in class, cultural issues in English teaching, English of Specialty, final exams, and CET-4.

Table 3.10 presents the date, format and approximate duration for the two teacher interviews and the two student interviews.

Participants	Interview date	Interview format	Duration
S13 (2 nd time)	18/11/2011	Face-to-face	25 mins
S14	22/11/2011	Face-to-face	30 mins
T1	07/08/2012	Face-to-face	50 mins
T2	20/08/2012	Face-to-face	35 mins
		Total: 140 mins	

Table 3.10 Information about the semi-structured interviews

3.3.4 Limitations of the data collection

Reflecting on the data collection process, I realised the fieldwork contained several limitations. First, the classroom observations involved only the first term of the two-year General English course. Although I gained a certain understanding about how the issues addressed in the teaching plan were implemented in the classroom teaching, it would have been better if I had been able to observe a few sessions in the third or fourth terms, focusing on the implementation of the plans for CET-4 training. The students in College X begin to take CET-4 from the third term and there is intensive CET-4 training in class. However, I was in the UK following my doctoral programme when the class observed was in its third and fourth terms. I thus had to rely on the interview data to understand how CET-4 was addressed in teaching practice.

Second, there was a gender imbalance in the student participants recruited from the observed class. In total, ten student participants came from this class: eight females but only two males. While the female participants emerged during the observing process (S4 and S8 contacted me and expressed their willingness to

participate, and the other six were introduced to me by S4), I myself had to identify and had difficulty in recruiting male participants. Perhaps my own female identity had a considerable influence on my access to female and male students. Furthermore, there were 34 female students but only 16 male students in this class, which might also account for the gender imbalance among the participants. Giving English learning may relate to gender, as discussed earlier, this gender imbalance in the participants from the observed class constituted a limitation of this study.

Third, I only interviewed S9 once, in contrast with 3 or more interviews with the other three in-depth interview participants, which was unfavourable to gaining understanding about his expressed learning needs. This limitation was related to the second one. Only when I had to give up on a potential male participant in the second year of my fieldwork did I select S9 as another participant for the in-depth interviews. On the other hand, however, by the time I interviewed S9 I had already established a good rapport with his class and gained a certain understanding about their English learning. Thus, my failure to interview S9 at different learning stages was without serious consequences.

Fourth, the first group interview, the one with S1, S2, S3 and S4, was not audio-recorded. As reported earlier, this interview happened spontaneously in the fieldwork process when S4 introduced me to three other students. However I had not taken my voice recorder with me on that day. I took notes during the interview and tried to recall other information immediately after the interview finished. I thus learnt the lesson that I had to be well prepared at any time in the field.

Last, there was a failure of the voice recorder in the initial stages of data collection. When I listened to the audio recording soon after having interviewed S8 for the first time, I noticed that the recorded conversation was not complete. I then recalled some information from memory. I also replaced this voice recorder with a Sony digital music player which functioned very well as an audio recorder, and had no further failures in the following interviews.

3.4 Data analysis process

To analyse the data in this study thematic analysis was adopted. This section explains why and how this method was used, and covers the major issues involved in the data analysis process.

3.4.1 Rationale for a thematic analysis approach

The thematic analysis approach is a foundational and useful method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. As Braun and Clarke (2006) note, it offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. Its flexibility can be seen in three respects: theoretical or epistemological positions, coding approaches, and the forms of themes.

First, thematic analysis is a method that is essentially independent of theory and epistemology, and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches, including both essentialist and constructionist paradigms (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Second, thematic analysis can be used in an inductive, or “bottom up”, way (e.g. Frith & Gleeson, 2004), or in a theoretical or deductive, or “top down”, way (e.g. Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997) to identify themes or patterns in data. In an inductive approach, the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 1990), i.e. they are data-driven. A theoretical thematic analysis is driven by the researcher’s theoretical or analytical interest and is thus more explicitly theory-driven or analyst-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Third, the themes identified using the thematic analysis approach can be in the form of either semantic or latent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the former are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data, while the latter are involved with underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualisations and ideologies that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data.

It was because of its flexibility that I adopted the thematic analysis approach to analyse the data in this study. First, the study was conducted within a constructionist paradigm. Second, the research purpose to allow students' voices to be heard suggested I should identify themes among the students' expressed needs in a data-driven way in order to represent their perceptions. By contrast, the aim of the study – to see how learners' needs are met and can be accommodated in the CE curriculum – suggested that I should analyse the data about the curriculum and learning environment paying particular attention to those issues relevant to learners' expressed needs, that is, in a theory-driven way. Third, the needs analysis was concerned with not only the identification but also understanding of the learners' expressed needs, which means that I needed to look for both semantic and latent themes in the data analysis. All these assumptions about analysing the data in this study can be addressed by way of a thematic analysis and I therefore adopted this approach.

3.4.2 Issues in data analysis

The important issues emerging in the data analysis process included transcribing, translating, coding, and member checking.

(1) Transcribing

The audio recording of an interview has to be transcribed into textual data in order for it to be analysed. Many argue that transcription is inherently representational and interpretative and therefore calls for a more explicitly reflexive stance (Mishler, 1991; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Kvale, 1996). This statement provided the guideline for transcribing the interviews in this study.

An important question is: who is going to transcribe the interview? Poland (2002) notes that the divisions of labour among the interviewer, the transcriber and the analyst have potential for ruptures in understanding to occur in the process of translating data across media, and such ruptures also bring about a loss of intimacy with the fullness of the context of the data for the analyst. This means

there would be two advantages if these roles are performed by one person: consistency in the understanding of the data throughout the data analysis process, and familiarity with the data on the part of the analyst.

In this study, I transcribed all the face-to-face interviews, as the interviewer, transcriber, data analyst, translator and thesis writer. Soon after an interview, I started the transcribing work, and this helped me recall many non-verbal aspects of the interview context and thus make better sense of what the interviewee had said. When there was ambiguity in what the participants had said, I went back to them for member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Miller, 2000). The interviews were transcribed verbatim in the original interview language, that is, Mandarin Chinese.

(2) Translating

The raw data was in Chinese, except for the national CE curriculum, i.e. the CECR, which is in English. However, the findings need to be reported in English. With the difference between the languages of the data and the report, two questions arose. How much data should I translate? When should I translate? There seemed to be two options for me. One was to translate all the Chinese raw data into English, and then analyse the English data and report the findings. The other was to analyse the raw data in their original language, and then translate into English only those findings to be reported in the thesis.

My decision on which language to use in the data analysis was based on my understanding about translation. Many believe that it is almost impossible to translate a meaning perfectly from one language to another because of differences of implicit or explicit cultural meaning attached to the linguistic form (Chen, 2009). For instance, Berreman (2004) argues that culture and language shape people's experience; thus, it is impossible to literally translate words between cultures:

People of different cultures and different languages categorise their experiences and the world around them differently, and they verbalise

them in different ways. Liberal translation of words for objects, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs is often impossible.
(Berreman, 2004, p.184-185)

In this sense, compared with a full translation of the data set, translating only those to be reported in the thesis would reduce the loss or misinterpretation of the participants' original meanings which would occur in translation. I thus chose to translate only the findings that I needed to present in this thesis.

(3) Coding

In this study I analysed the data manually without using any software. Before the data analysis, I went to an NVivo workshop and gained a general idea about using this software. I also consulted a few PhD graduates. They suggested I could analyse data manually if the data set was not so big, as this would allow me to get to know the data very well and therefore analyse it better, in the sense that I could more clearly see the relationships among all the factors. Armed with information from these perspectives, I decided on manual data analysis.

The data analysis was guided by the research questions. All the data relevant to a certain research question were coded and reported together, in order to answer that question. During the data analysis process, I followed the step-by-step guide for doing thematic analysis provided by Braun and Clarke (2006), drawing on the following phases:

1. Familiarising myself with my data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

In phase 1, I became familiar with my data by transcribing them all myself, printing them out for reading and re-reading, and noting down initial ideas.

In phase 2, I coded my data by writing notes in the margins and by using coloured pens to indicate potential themes. In total, there were three rounds in the coding process. In the first round, I coded the data from the unstructured and in-depth interviews in a data-driven approach. The content of all the data was coded and equal attention was given to each data item. A code was treated as “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.63) regarding the students’ English learning. In doing this, I aimed to represent the students’ original meanings concerning their expressed English learning needs, in order to let their voices be heard.

In a second round, I coded the data set, including documents, observations, and all the interviews, in a theory-driven way, by specifically looking at issues relevant to the students’ expressed needs which had been identified in the previous data analysis, and the product and process models of curriculum development. Thus, a code was seen as the most basic segment of the raw data regarding these issues. This coding approach enabled me to identify those issues in the CE curriculum which were relevant to the students’ expressed needs, and thus to see how their needs were addressed in the curriculum (the second research question). In addition, I was able to gain an understanding about the CE curriculum approach.

In the third round, I also coded the data set in a theory-driven way. This time, I paid particular attention to issues in the learning environment of College X which were relevant to the CE curriculum approach, and accordingly, the accommodation of the learners’ expressed needs. More specifically, I looked at local features relevant to the perspectives used in the product and process models of curriculum development. In doing this, I aimed to answer the third research question: what are the relevant features in the learning environment that impact on the accommodation of the learners’ expressed needs?

Stages 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the data analysis were intertwined with each other. This was a recursive rather than a linear process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During

this process, I worked back and forth among the data. For example, after interpreting and reporting a theme, I might find that this theme could be combined with another theme to form just one theme. At one point I even removed a whole section from the report of the findings as it did not seem to be relevant to the research question.

The whole process of data analysis turned out to be complex and demanding. It happened gradually, but eventually the phenomena and the issues in question became clear through the processes described above, which led to the development of the three chapters (chapters 4, 5, 6) of this thesis to answer the three research questions.

(4) Member checking

After the data analysis, I sent the findings about the learners' expressed needs to the student participants, and those about the CE curriculum and the learning environment of College X (Chapters 5 and 6) to the two teachers and the two students who participated in the semi-structured interviews in the final stages of data collection. The participants were invited to compare the excerpts from the interviews they participated in with my interpretation of these excerpts, so as to check if I had misinterpreted their original meanings. When inconsistencies occurred, I reflected on my analysis and sometimes was able to recognise my misunderstanding and then made changes in the report. Sometimes I had to have more discussions with the participants until we were in agreement on a particular issue. I then made necessary changes in the report, based on our agreement.

3.5 Reflexivity

According to Berger (2013), reflexivity is commonly viewed as a process of continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher's positionality in relation to the research process and outcome, as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the

research process and outcome (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Pillow, 2003; Stronach et al., 2007).

Berger (2013) argues and illustrates that reflexivity in qualitative research is affected by whether the researcher is part of and shares the experience of the participants. This argument is of particular relevance to this study. As stated in Section 3.2, I, as the researcher, was an English teacher in the institution studied, i.e. College X, and had the experience of both studying and teaching the CE course. I therefore attached great importance to the issue of reflexivity in this study.

Throughout the research process I remained reflexive by interrogating the positions I brought into the research or developed in the field, as well as my choices and decisions for doing the research. I paid particular attention to two issues: first, my role as a teacher, and second, my English learning and teaching experience.

First, during the fieldwork process I kept questioning my role as a teacher in College X. As argued by Berger (2013), the researcher's positioning may shape the nature of the researcher-researched relationship, which, in turn, affects the information that participants are willing to share. I believed my role as a teacher would have a certain influence on the student interviews and classroom observations. However, this influence might not be so great since I had already been on leave from my job for a year by the time I started the fieldwork and would remain with this status in the following few years while undertaking my doctoral research. In addition, the student participants were not my students and did not know me until I recruited them. Thus, they might feel comfortable to share their perceptions about English learning with me. More importantly, as stated in earlier sections, I made great efforts to establish a good rapport with them.

Second, I remained constantly alert to avoid projecting my own experience and using it as the lens through which to view and understand the participants' experience (Berger, 2013). Cloke et al. (2000) caution that sharing the participants' experience carries the danger of self-involvement on the part of the

researcher to the degree that it blocks hearing other voices. Before I conducted the study, I had a relatively negative view about English learning in higher education: the students were learning English, to a large extent, under the pressure of CET-4 and by following the curriculum arrangements. I then realised my perceptions were based on my own English learning experience in a public university over 10 years ago when the learning environment was quite different.

In order to permit the learners' voices to be heard, I made efforts in several ways. First, as stated in Chapter 1, this study takes a learner-centred view in order to understand learners' perceptions about their English learning. Second, I drew on open-ended interviews to invite my participants' perceptions (see Section 3.3). Third, I analysed the data about the students' expressed needs in a data-driven way, in order to represent their original meanings to the greatest degree (see the section above). During this process, my supervisor helped me become more reflexive by encouraging me to draw conclusions from the data rather than make claims based on my own knowledge, and to think about possible alternatives. Last, after the data analysis, I sent the findings chapters to the participants for member checking in order to avoid possible misinterpretations of their original meanings (see the section above). When I looked back, I found my original understanding about college students' English learning was somewhat negative and simplistic. It was during the research process that I learnt how to become a reflexive thinker.

3.6 Ethical issues

The ethical issues in this study were addressed as "situated ethics". This term has recently been adopted by a number of authors in the research context (e.g. Simons & Usher, 2000; Piper & Simons, 2005; Danaher & Danaher, 2008; Calvey, 2008; Heggen & Guillemin, 2012). According to Simons and Usher (2000), situated ethics places the focus on the local and the specific rather than at the level of universal principles. Heggen and Guillemin (2012) argue that this is

not to suggest that principles are not helpful, but rather that they are mediated by the local and the particular. In this study, three ethical principles were considered within the local situation: informed consent, reciprocity, and confidentiality.

(1) Informed consent

Informed consent is defined as participants' understanding and their voluntary decisions to participate in a research activity or to reveal themselves without being harmed, manipulated or deceived (Berg, 1995). In this study, before conducting the fieldwork, I obtained ethical approval for my proposed research from the Ethics Advisory Committee of Durham University. Before an interview, I carefully explained my research aims and interview purposes to the participants, and showed them a written information sheet about my research project (Appendix 7). I also showed and explained to them a consent form (Appendix 8) which was provided by Durham University and which the participants were asked to sign before the interview.

However, as Marshall and Rossman (2011, p.128) argue, "Formulaic completion of the required forms evades the deeper issues of cultural biases embedded in the documents and procedures". In particular, concerns may arise when international students doing fieldwork in their countries of origin must follow the requirement of a Western university to ask their participants to sign certain forms, as was the case in this study. In this study, I did my fieldwork in China, where the cultural beliefs and values tend to be collectivist and hierarchical. My role in the study was not only that of a researcher but also of a teacher in the institution studied. Given these circumstances, to ask my participants, especially the student participants, to sign the consent form may suggest power inequality, or cast the interview in a cold legalistic tone which may damage the rapport between the researcher and the researched (Marzano, 2012).

I thus let my participants decide whether to sign the written consent form or not, after I had shown and explained it to them and obtained their verbal consent. Most of them did not sign it. Many students just stated that they understood what I

was doing, and one student even put it very simply, “I trust you”. I think the participants’ responses might be related to the good rapport between us and also my “empathetic” stance (Fontana & Frey, 2008) in the interviews. As my participants trusted me, they tended to think that I would take into serious consideration their rights and benefits.

(2) Reciprocity

As Marshall and Rossman (2011, p.121) note, “Qualitative studies intrude into settings as people adjust to the researcher’s presence”. Thus, the researcher should feel greatly indebted for the participants’ participation in his/her research. Discussing interviewing children, Eder and Fingerson (2002, p.185) go further and argue that “the researcher’s desire to gain information from child participants without giving something in return reflects an underlying sense of the adult researcher’s privilege”. As in the adult-child relationship, there is also a power imbalance in the teacher-student relationship, which needed to be addressed in this research. Thus, reciprocity in this study was addressed as a response to a possible power imbalance between me and the students, as well as by my indebtedness to the participants for their involvement in my study.

Specifically, I addressed the issue of reciprocity by giving something to the students in return, and sharing their concern about English learning. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I had many social events, including dinner in restaurants and karaoke, with some of the students from the observed class in order to establish a good rapport with them. The custom in China on such occasions is that one person would pay for all the people. Considering that my participants were unemployed students, I paid the bill most of the time. I also gave them some small gifts I brought from England to show my indebtedness to them. Moreover, I had some female-to-female conversations with a few female students and was also involved in consultations on their English learning.

(3) Confidentiality

Heggen and Guillemin (2012, p.470) suggest that “confidentiality be understood as a dynamic concept rather than as a one-off consideration when informed consent is gained”. In this study, the issue of confidentiality was taken into account throughout the research process. For example, when I recruited my participants, I realised that in order to avoid easy identification of the informants the sample could not be too small. Another example is that I transcribed all the interviews myself, as I believed that the use of external transcribers may pose a threat to confidentiality.

Confidentiality as an ethical issue is most apparent in the reporting of the findings. In this thesis, anonymity, non-identifiability and non-traceability are addressed. The names of the participants and the institution studied are replaced by codes. Any identifiable information about them has been removed from the report, for example the region where the institution belongs. However, I have to admit that the institution is not completely untraceable, as in this report I need to provide a thick description of it in order to allow future researchers to decide if the findings can be transferred to other settings. This raises a key question: “how to protect participants’ privacy and anonymity without compromising the integrity of the findings” (Heggen & Guillemin, 2012, p.472). There seems to be no easy answer. In this study, while I pursued “trustworthiness”, as described in the following section, I tried my best to protect my participants’ privacy and anonymity through the above ethical procedures.

3.7 Trustworthiness

The nature of qualitative research makes the quality of the study rely on trustworthiness, which is judged by the criteria of “credibility”, “transferability”, “dependability” and “confirmability” – the naturalist’s equivalents for the conventional terms “internal validity”, “external validity”, “reliability”, and “objectivity” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure the trustworthiness of a

qualitative study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer a set of procedures, which include *prolonged engagement*, *persistent observation*, *triangulation*, *peer debriefing*, *member checks*, and *thick description*.

Subsequent writing on the canons of trustworthiness often invokes their work and uses both their terminology and their procedural recommendations (e.g. Maxwell, 1996; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell, 2013). However, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) constructs and procedures for guaranteeing trustworthiness were proposed almost thirty years ago, and much has happened in the world of qualitative methods during the last three decades. As Marshall and Rossman (2011, p.41) argue, "What is now contested is how these key terms are to be defined, by whom, for which research project, and for what audience".

I endeavoured to conduct a trustworthy case study in the following three ways, addressing or readdressing the procedures recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). First, in collecting data, as shown in Section 3.3, I had prolonged engagement in the field, conducted persistent observations and in-depth interviews. I remained reflexive throughout the data collection process, and adopted multiple sources and methods to enrich my understanding about the issues I was investigating. However, I prefer not to use the term "triangulation", which suggests some rigidity of method and thus a lack of flexibility. For example, in the triangulation by *sources* or triangulation by *methods* in needs analysis discussed by Long (2005b), sources or methods are held constant while the other variable is changed to cross-check the data collected. In this study, by drawing on multiple sources and methods, I focused on gaining a rich understanding from multiple perspectives. One example is that when I conducted the unstructured interviews to explore the students' perceptions about their target needs, I also invited the perceptions of a few employee/manager participants regarding English use in the workplace and the requirements of the job market, in order to enrich my understanding about the students' expressed target needs.

Second, I used peer debriefing and member checking. I took advantage of seminars in my university and international conferences to present my research

work in order to get feedback not only from peer research students but also senior researchers. As described in Section 3.7, I used member checking after transcribing the interviews, and also showed the findings to all the participants for their comments, in order to avoid any misinterpretations of their original meanings.

Third, I attached great importance to a thick description of this case study, looking at the rich details of the context of the institution studied and sorting out the complex layers involved in conducting the fieldwork. As will be seen in the following three findings chapters, I provide much information about the context of this research and the institution studied. And in this chapter, I provide a detailed report of how I conducted this study. In doing so, I have aimed to allow other researchers to make decisions regarding the transferability (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 2013) of the study, that is, how the outcomes of this study can be transferred to other settings.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have first discussed my macro theoretical framework of social constructionism and my choice of a case study as the over-arching research approach. Then, I have presented my methodological choices regarding data collection and analysis, reporting my rationale, justifications, how I operationalised them, and my reflections on them. Furthermore, I have discussed the important issues emerging in the research process, including reflexivity, ethical issues, and trustworthiness. Thus, I have provided a thick description of how I operated in the field and how I conducted this study.

This thick description of the research process will permit other researchers to determine the trustworthiness of the research findings, which are presented in the following three chapters – Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 introduces the learners' expressed needs. Chapter 5 presents a critical review of the CE curriculum and then compares the learners' expressed needs with relevant issues in the

curriculum. Chapter 6 then identifies relevant features in the learning environment which would impact on the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs.

Chapter 4 Learners' Expressed Needs

The three findings chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) aim to answer the three research questions respectively. This chapter focuses on the first research question identified in Chapter 2:

What are the learners' expressed needs for English learning?

As defined in Chapter 2, the learners' expressed needs consisted of their expressed target needs, i.e. their expressions of their desired learning outcomes, and their expressed learning needs, i.e. their expressions of what they think are the factors in the learning situation that affect their English learning.

I drew on unstructured and in-depth interviews to invite learners to express their needs. In the unstructured interviews I also included three employees and one manager, with a view to enriching my understanding about English use in the workplace, which I believed would be relevant to the learners' expressed target needs. The interview data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach in a data-driven way, in which the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 1990) in order to represent the ways in which the participants expressed their perceptions.

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 present the themes concerning the student participants' expressions of their target needs and learning needs respectively. The chapter concludes with a summary of these two sections.

4.1 Learners' expressed target needs

This section presents the target needs expressed by the student participants, both target needs at a semantic level, i.e. the explicit or surface meanings of the students' perceptions about their target needs, and target needs at a latent level, i.e. the assumptions underlying their target needs at a semantic level. I sought themes at both levels as I analysed the data within a social constructionism paradigm. In this perspective, whatever personal needs learners may express are

“a function of the particular cultural, historical and relational circumstances in which they are located” (Burr, 2003, p.35).

4.1.1 Target needs at a semantic level

At a semantic level, I uncovered three major themes to represent the students’ expressions of their target needs for English learning: i) to pass College English Test Band 4 (CET-4), ii) to use English in future work, and iii) to speak English.

To pass CET-4

College English Test Band 4 and Band 6 (CET-4 and CET-6) are nationwide tests supervised by the Chinese Ministry of Education (CMOE) to evaluate English teaching and learning in Chinese colleges and universities (the CET Committee, 2013). CET-6 is at a higher level than CET-4.

All the student participants expressed the need to pass CET-4. Many of them tended to treat it as their primary target need for learning English in college. For example, S9 saw it as an important goal for English learning throughout his college career.

[4-1] *毕业前拿到四级证书就好了。(S9)*
(*How I wish I could get the CET-4 certificate before graduation.*)

S10 made it plain that his main purpose for learning English was to pass CET.

[4-2] *最主要还是为了考级吧，另外也可以作为自己的知识储备这样。(S10)*
(*The main purpose is for passing the CET. Besides, it may as well contribute to my reserve of knowledge.*)

A common idea among the first year participants was that their graduation was related to the CET-4 certificate, as S1, S2, S3 and S4 stated:

[4-3] *听学长和学姐们说，英语四级考试与毕业挂钩，不通过四级不能毕业。(S1-S4)*

(According to senior students, CET-4 is related to graduation. We can't graduate if we don't pass CET-4.)

However, this statement proved to be merely hearsay. The CET-4 certificate used to be related to the graduation of undergraduate students in University Y, the public university on whose teaching resources College X depended, and many other Chinese universities. Although it was a desired English learning outcome, passing CET-4 was not linked to graduation in College X. However, the prevalence of the rumour suggested that the influence of CET-4 should never be underestimated.

Another prevailing opinion among the students was that the CET-4 certificate was necessary for employment, as S6 stated:

[4-4] 真的是要过才得。不然的话，很多用人单位不管，出去工作的那些学姐跟我讲过，不管那本证书，四级证书，对他们单位有没有用，都要先看，都要问你有没有计算机跟英语。(S6-2)

(You really have to pass it. Otherwise, those in-service female seniors told me, many employers don't care whether the CET-4 certificate is useful for them. They just want to see it first, to ask you if you have computer and English [certificates].)

S6's statement was confirmed by S13, a final year student who had passed both CET-4 and CET-6 and just found a job in a local bank.

[4-5] [证书]发挥了点作用的。主要是因为找工作的时候，人家看得重。(S13-1)

([The certificates are] of some help. It is mainly because those employers value them for employment.)

The employee and manager participants also confirmed the role of the CET-4 certificate in employment. According to E4, the manager participant, his company depended on CET certificates to evaluate candidates' English proficiency.

[4-6] 除了在奥运会的时候我们做了一个项目是全部三十三个场馆的中英文翻译系统，在这个项目的招聘中有考试，其它的招聘主要是证书。这个考试主要是口语考试。(E4)

(We depend on [CET] certificates in recruitment, except when we had a project to design the Chinese-English translation system for all the 33 stadiums during the Beijing Olympics. For the recruitment of this project, we had tests, mainly an oral test, for the candidates.)

When asked about a choice between two applicants, one who had the CET certificate and one who did not have it but might be slightly better in other respects, E4 replied:

[4-7] 我应该会选择有证的人员。(E4)
(*I think I would choose the one with the certificate.*)

E3, an employee participant, also related the CET certificate to employment.

[4-8] 过级只是为了一个证书, 增加求职的砝码而已。(E3)
(*To pass CET is just for the certificate so as to stand out among other candidates in employment.*)

From the above, to pass CET-4 was a major target need expressed by all the students. They mainly related the CET-4 certificate to graduation and employment. The role of the certificate in employment was also confirmed by the employee and manager participants. Understanding the students' need to pass CET-4, to a large extent depends on an understanding of the CET-4 test. The test is examined in the next chapter.

To use English in future work

The second theme “to use English in future work” was used to represent the student participants' need to learn English for future use in their careers. Many of the students expressed this need.

Some students had only a rough idea that they would benefit from their English proficiency in future work, as S10 stated:

[4-9] 因为现在自己也不确定将来要进入什么类型的企业, 如果将来需要使用到自己的英语的话, 那现在持续学习英语就有用了。(S10)
(*As I am not sure what kind of company I am going to work in, I could just assume that if I need to use English in the future, it will be helpful that I keep learning English now.*)

S9 also tended to think that English would be useful in his future work but had no clear idea about it.

[4-10] 对我感觉就是说以后工作什么都很有帮助。(S9)
(*I feel [English] will help a lot in my future work and such like.*)

Other students expressed more specific ideas, including understanding information in their areas of specialisation, communicating face to face with overseas customers, and an all-round ability to use English in the workplace. The students' perceptions were compared with those of the employee and manager participants. For example, S12, a student who thought he was poor at English, gave priority to understanding subject-related information.

[4-11] 可以看得懂我运用的软件上的英文就行。我英文不好，四级就320分左右的。(S12)

(It's enough as long as I can understand English in the software I use. My English is not good, and I only got 320 in CET-4⁶.)

E1, an employee participant, confirmed S12's view in a more specific way.

[4-12] 因为遇到的瓶颈在国内只有少数几家公司遇到，比如腾讯、百度之类的公司。但是在中国这些技术信息又都非常封闭，不像Google, Facebook 那些大气的公司那样，将所遇到的技术难点都共享出来，这个时候会英文的人就吃香了。(E1)

(The difficult problems we meet are only facing a few other domestic companies such as Tencent and Baidu. They are put in a closed state condition in China. In contrast, major international companies such as Google and Facebook tend to share how they deal with technological difficulties. Therefore, those who understand English are favoured.)

S11, another student participant, hoped that she could communicate freely in English with international customers in her future work.

[4-13] 就是希望以后在工作的时候，遇到了外国顾客，也可以很流畅的和对方交流。(S11)

(Just hope that, in future work, when I meet international customers, I can communicate with them fluently.)

S11's wish to use English in face-to-face communication with international customers was exactly what E3, an employee participant who worked in a foreign trade transport company, was doing in his job.

[4-14] 我负责进出口货物的码头现场装卸，经常会上外轮，有时候需要和船员进行一些沟通，只是简单的交流，看一些相关的证件。(E3)

(I am in charge of the loading and unloading of imported and exported goods in the dock. I go to ships from other countries quite often. Sometimes I

⁶ Since the year 2005, the full mark in CET-4 has been 710, and the pass mark is 425.

need to communicate with the crew, just simple communication, and check their documents.)

With internship experience in several big cities in China, S12 tended to have a better understanding of English requirements in the workplace. He thought that an all-round English ability, including both written and spoken abilities, was needed in the workplace.

[4-15] 但是社会上就业岗位就需要你有英语能力。比如我去过北京的公司，他们的客户订单，大一点的都是英文的客户需求，需要自己去翻译，如果没有英语能力就很难生存了。而且那边的人喜欢用英语去表达自己的行为或思想，英语不好给人家一种不好沟通的印象，我深受体会过。

(S12)

(English ability is required by your job. For example, in companies in Beijing I went to, the orders from customers, especially big orders, are in English. You have to translate them yourself. You can't survive there without English ability. Moreover, people there tend to express themselves in English. If your English is not good, they will think that it's difficult to communicate with you. I was deeply impressed by it.)

S12's statement was confirmed by E4, the manager participant. E4 explained the use of English in his company and suggested that an all-round ability to use English in a specific domain was needed in doing business with overseas people. This ability combined abilities in English reading, listening, speaking, writing and translating with knowledge of the products and the field of work.

[4-16] 就是和外国人做生意，你觉得是不是所有的形式都要用到.....我们是系统集成项目，卖东西给他们，首先你的软件界面要是英文的，其次你的报价资料是英文的，完了之后你的所有的施工人员要和甲方沟通也要会简单英文。施工人员对英文要求是简单英文，还有培训人员要求精通。还有就是现在我们的产品多半在非洲，他们的英文还不太一样，有差异化的英语应用的需求。(E4)

(In doing business with overseas people, an ability to use English in a well-rounded way is needed. Don't you think so? ... We do system integration projects. To sell products to them, first the user interface should be in English, and also the quote. In addition, builders are required to have basic English ability as they will communicate with Party A in the field. Trainers are required to have English proficiency. Moreover, nowadays our products mainly go to Africa where their English is different, and so we have a need for a differentiated application of English.)

The above examples illustrate how the student participants expressed the need to use English in their future work. Some students had only a rough idea that English would be helpful in their future careers. Others expressed more specific needs, including understanding subject-related information, communicating face-to-face with international customers, and a combination of written and spoken abilities in the workplace. The students' views were confirmed by the employee and manager participants.

These findings indicate that to use English in the workplace requires an ability to use English in specific fields to accomplish real tasks. In the College English curriculum, the course designed to prepare students to use English in specific fields is English of Specialty. In order to see how the students' need to use English in future work was met in the curriculum, I therefore had a focus on the English of Specialty course when reviewing the CE curriculum. The results are presented in the next chapter.

To speak English

The third theme "to speak English" was used to represent the student participants' need to use English in spoken communication. Quite a few students expressed this need.

For example, in a group interview with S1, S2, S3 and S4, all four participants wished they could use English in daily communication, as exemplified by S1:

[4-17] *我希望我有良好的英语听说能力，能用英语进行日常交流。*

(S1-S4)

(I hope I have good English listening and speaking abilities so that I can use English in daily communication.)

The students had developed this need for different reasons. For example, S12 felt a serious weakness in spoken English and therefore wanted to improve it.

[4-18] *我英语交流不行，看见老外不敢打招呼，很无奈。有一次我面对老外，就微笑而已。我不敢说英语，怕自己听不懂。其实当时恨不得自己好好学英语，和人家交流思想。(S12)*

(My spoken English is poor. I feel so helpless that when I meet overseas people, I don't have the guts to just say hi. Once, I met a foreigner⁷ face to face. I only smiled and didn't dare to speak English. I'm afraid that even myself couldn't understand what I'm saying. How I wished I had learnt English well so that I could exchange ideas with him.)

S8 tended to see the speaking ability as the most important part of English proficiency.

[4-19] S8: 英语, 我想学好。学好英语也很好。

R: 你认为是英语很好的标准是什么? 是通过四六级还是什么别的?

S8: 可以说的, 能够进行真正的沟通。(S8-1)

(S8: I want to learn English well. It is also good to learn English well.

R: To you, what is the standard for good English? Is it about passing CET or something else?

S8: The ability to speak, to achieve effective communication.)

S13 showed great interest in English, particularly oral English.

[4-20] 首先我蛮喜欢英语的, 特别是口语, 当初比较注重对口语的练习就是因为觉得说英语好很帅, 呵呵。(S13-1)

(First of all, I like English very much, especially spoken English. That I paid much attention to oral practice at that time was just because I thought it was very cool to speak good English. Hehe.)

As can be seen from the above, many students expressed the need to speak English. They developed this need for different reasons: feeling a serious lack in oral English, thinking highly of it, or having a great interest in it.

The students' expressed need to speak English made great sense given the situation of English education in China. As stated in Chapter 1, there has been extensive reporting of poor levels of spoken English among college and university students, it having been referred to as "deaf" English, "dumb" English, or "deaf-dumb" English (e.g. Cen, 1998; Dai, 2001; Zhang, 2002; Cai, 2006; Wang, C., 2010). After over ten years of English learning, most students still cannot understand what they hear or express themselves in English, which then invites

⁷ Chinese people generally use 'lao wai (foreigners)' to refer to people from other countries including English-speaking countries, sometimes referring to people from English-speaking countries in particular. This carries no negative meanings, see also <http://hanyu.iciba.com/wiki/5076137.shtml>.

the criticism of “inefficiency” in English teaching (e.g. Jing, 1999; Dai, 2001; Nie & Li, 2008; Wang, C., 2010; Cai, 2006, 2012). This situation suggests an urgent need for college and university students to improve their spoken English. The findings reported here of the students’ expressed need to speak English support these scholars’ claims.

The students’ expressed need to speak English also made much sense given the increasing intercultural communication in China in the 21st century. As China became a member of the WTO in 2001, hosted the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 and the World Expo in Shanghai in 2010, the country has become unprecedentedly open in the political, economic, cultural and many other areas. There are increasing interactions between Chinese people and overseas people in the workplace and in social life. Consequently, there is an increasing need for spoken English ability. For example, based on a survey of the management of 126 companies and 320 employees in Zhejiang Province, Fu et al. (2001) found that 84.7% of the employees thought they needed to improve their English listening and speaking abilities. In 2010, Hu et al. (2011) sent 1000 questionnaires to several hundreds of companies to investigate the English requirements in these companies. The findings showed that 71.2% of the respondents thought a spoken ability was the most important. In short, there is an increasing social demand for spoken English ability in China, and the students’ expressed need to speak English identified here reflected this demand.

In summary, the students expressed three target needs: i) to pass CET-4, ii) to use English in future work, and iii) to speak English. To understand the students’ need to pass CET-4 depends largely on an understanding of CET-4. The CET-4 test is examined in the next chapter. The students’ need to use English in future work was also confirmed by the employee and manager participants. Furthermore, the findings indicate that to use English in the workplace requires an ability to use English in specific fields to accomplish real tasks. In the CE curriculum, English of Specialty is the course to develop this ability. I report a review of this course in the next chapter. The students’ need to speak English

makes good sense given the situation of English education and intercultural communication in China.

4.1.2 Target needs at a latent level

Two themes were uncovered in the data analysis to represent the students' expressed target needs at a latent level, i.e. the assumptions underlying their expressed needs at a semantic level. The two themes are: i) "requirements", and ii) "wants".

Requirements

The term "requirements" was used to represent the assumptions underlying two target needs expressed by the students: to pass CET-4 and to use English in future work. The students' need to pass CET-4 can be considered a need to meet academic requirements, as CET-4 is an English test set by the CMOE to evaluate English teaching and learning in Chinese colleges and universities (the CET Committee, 2013) and thus represents an academic requirement in the CE curriculum. Furthermore, the students' need to use English in future work can be considered a need to meet vocational requirements. I therefore used the term "requirements" to refer to needs underpinned by academic or vocational requirements.

"Requirements" could be seen as "imposed requirements" or "internalised requirements" for students, according to their attitudes towards meeting these requirements: reluctance or readiness.

(1) Imposed requirements

Imposed requirements refer to academic or vocational requirements viewed by students as "I **have to** do this in order to perform well in academic work or in a future career".

Many students tended to think that the reason they had to learn English was that they had to pass CET-4, as exemplified by S11:

[4-21] 现在学习英语的主要目标与动力就是过了四级。所以心里有点像是被逼迫一般的学习英语。(S11)

(Now my major goal and motivation for learning English is to pass CET-4. I feel that I am forced to study English.)

In addition, some students tended to think that employment pressure was another reason for them to learn English, as S4 said:

[4-22] 很多学生读书, 不是喜欢不喜欢的问题, 而是就业等其它压力。(S4-3)

(For many students, their study has nothing to do with willingness. It is under employment pressure and so forth that they learn English.)

(2) Internalised requirements

In contrast to imposed requirements, internalised requirements refer to academic or vocational requirements that had been recognised by students, transformed into learning goals, and viewed as “I **want to** do this in order to perform well in academic work or in a future career”.

A few participants had internalised these academic and vocational requirements and showed readiness to meet them. For instance, S2, a first year student, declared in front of her parents that she would aim to pass CET-6 if other students aimed to pass CET-4.

[4-23] 我曾向父母表态, 如果其他同学要过四级, 我就要过六级。(S1-S4)
(I once made it clear to my parents that if other students aimed to pass CET-4, I would aim to pass CET-6.)

To pass CET-6 tended to be an internalised requirement for S2, as she viewed it not so much as an academic requirement imposed on her, but what she wanted to achieve. S2's attitudes towards academic requirements could be related to her previous English learning experience.

[4-24] 我初一的暑假曾去桂林参加夏令营向外教学习英语。当时的英语学习很狂热, 喜欢学。我数学不好, 心想总该有门好吧, 就把更多的精力投入到英语学习当中去……我高中在柳州一中读的, 英语课是全英文授课, 那时我的英语水平中上……我很早就听说大学英语等级考试了。(S2, S4-S7)

(I went to an English camp in Guilin during the summer vocation when I was in Grade 1 of junior high school, learning English from native English

teachers. I was crazy about English learning at that time. As I was not good at mathematics, I thought I should have at least one course at which I was good. I therefore invested more in English learning... My senior high school was Liuzhou No.1 Middle School⁸. The English course was taught exclusively in English⁹, and my English level was above average then... I heard of CET a long time ago.)

The previous experience, especially the English Camp experience, had a positive influence on S2's English learning. She became enthusiastic and confident about English learning, and her attitudes towards English learning, in large measure, would account for her attitudes towards meeting the academic requirement of passing the CET tests.

S8, another first year student, took CET-6 into serious account after she read and was much inspired by a book about learning English.

[4-25] 我就是最近看了一本书,《英语非学好不可》,台湾的。所以我就想英语非学好不可,所以我还想考六级呢。如果我想我那样的话,我学好我就会考六级。(S8-3)

(I read a book from Taiwan recently, "You have to learn English well". It dawned on me that I must learn English well, and I even think about taking CET-6. I think, if so, if I learn it well, I will take CET-6.)

After reading the book, S8 made up her mind to learn English well, and she even hoped that she could take the CET-6 test¹⁰. Thus, S8 tended to view the academic requirement of passing CET-6 as something she wanted to achieve rather than she was forced to do.

S13, a final year student, thought that to learn English and to use English in future careers was a necessity in this era.

[4-26] 你想走高层,肯定要学英语,全球通用的语言,那是毫无疑问的。你想要把生意做大,中国想要把生意做大,想做国外的,想挣外国人的钱,那你肯定要学嘛,除非有天中文成为全球语言。(S13-1)

(Without doubt, if you want to get to higher positions, you have to learn English, the global language used worldwide. If you want to do big business, if China wants to do big business, to do business overseas, to make money from international customers, you have to learn English, unless Chinese becomes a global language one day.)

⁸ A key senior middle school in the region.

⁹ In many schools in China, both Chinese and English are used by the teacher in an English class.

¹⁰ Chinese students have to pass CET-4 first in order to take the CET-6 test.

S13 thought that to learn and to use English was to adapt to this era of international trade. This suggested a more positive way of viewing vocational requirements than viewing them as imposed requirements.

In summary, many of the students tended to see the needs to pass CET-4 and to use English in future work as academic and vocational requirements imposed on them. Such requirements, however, constituted internalised requirements for a few students. These students developed positive attitudes towards English learning as they made sense of their learning experience and social contexts.

Wants

The students tended to have developed their need to speak English free from external pressure, such as academic and vocational requirements. I therefore used the term “wants” to represent the underlying ideas implicit in this need.

For instance, S13 enjoyed watching English movies and gradually felt a strong desire to speak English.

[4-27] 我的英语从初中开始好了，我也不知道为什么会好，可能是看电影多的缘故。然后对英语就很感兴趣，觉得说英语是一件蛮新潮的事情，就慢慢开始喜欢上它。我喜欢英语很简单的一个原因就是，我觉得说英语很帅的，很酷的。(S13-1)

(My English has been good since junior high school. I don't know why. Maybe it is because I watch English movies quite often. I then become very interested in English. To me, speaking English is something in the trend, and so I gradually become fond of English. I like English for the simple reason that I feel it is cool to speak English.)

S13's desire to speak English was not so much influenced by academic or vocational requirements, but related to his experience of watching English movies. In addition, the “English fever” in China also contributed to his need to speak English.

[4-28] 就是那个时候学英语越来越火，谈话看点电影就开始喜欢上
来.....然后我练口语的方法就是看电影，模仿人家怎么说话，我特别喜欢詹姆斯邦德的说话方式，慢慢的英语就说得好一些。(S13-1)

(It was at that time an “English fever” emerged. I gradually became interested in English, particularly oral English, as I spoke English and

watched movies... The way I practise speaking is watching movies, imitating how they speak. I particularly like the way James Bond speaks. Gradually I can speak English well.)

In S13's case, his desire to speak English cannot be separated from his life experience and the social contexts of "English fever" in China, but might be free from the influence of external requirements and pressure.

S5 related her need to speak English to a role model.

[4-29] 我觉得啊，就是晨读这个嘛，我觉得这个是我学的那一块，主要想，比如说能像陈妙剑老师啊，能在课堂上脱口而出，说些英文的东西。我不是想把它当成主要的方向.....我是想至少我能把英语说得不错。(S5-3)

(I feel reading English in the morning is what I want to do. Basically, I hope I can have a ready tongue to speak English in class, just as Miss Chen¹¹ does. I'm not going to spent most of my time and energy on English learning...I am just thinking at least I will be able to speak good English.)

S5 did not treat English learning as her focus in her college studies. She just felt that speaking English was what she wanted to do, and she wanted to speak as good English as her teacher Miss Chen did. Thus, her need to speak English had little to do with external requirements, but was much concerned with a role model.

S12 and S8 also developed their need to speak English free from the influence of academic or vocational requirements. Specifically, S12 was very dissatisfied with his spoken English and wanted to be able to communicate face to face with international people (see Excerpt [4-18]). S8 considered oral English the most important part of English proficiency (see Excerpt [4-19]).

From the above, quite a few students had developed their expressed target need to speak English in their social experience and within social contexts, but not so much under the influence of external requirements, such as academic or vocational requirements.

In summary, "requirements" and "wants" were the assumptions underlying the students' expressed target needs at a semantic level. According to the students' attitudes towards academic and vocational requirements, these

¹¹ Miss Chen was a business teacher who had a master's degree from the UK and spoke very good English.

requirements can be considered either “imposed requirements” or “internalised requirements”. The requirements represented a function of the social circumstances in which the students were located. Even the students’ wants to speak English emerged from their social experience rather than originated from or resided within themselves as individuals.

4.1.3 Conclusions

The students expressed three target needs: i) to pass CET-4, ii) to use English in future work, and iii) to speak English. The underlying ideas implicit in these needs are imposed/internalised *requirements* and *wants*. Both requirements and wants represented functions of the social circumstances in which the students were located.

However, these assumptions underlying the students’ expressed target needs are not reported in the literature on needs analysis in language teaching in China. Existing NAs in English teaching (e.g. Wang & Liu, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Liu & Liu, 2008) focus on students’ target needs at a semantic level, such as passing CET-4 or improving practical English ability.

The failure to address these assumptions underlying students’ expressed target needs can, to a large extent, be related to methodological choices in the NA. As stated in Chapter 1, the existing NAs conducted in either independent colleges (e.g. Zhou Su, 2007; Wang & He, 2008; Wang, Y., 2010; Huang, 2013; Yu & Zhang, 2012; Yu et al., 2013) or public institutions (e.g. Wang & Liu, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Liu & Liu, 2008; Zhao et al., 2009) depend on the questionnaire method to collect students’ English learning needs. In this study I had also planned to conduct a questionnaire. However, as reported in Chapter 3, after I conducted some unstructured interviews in the initial stages of data collection, I realised that there were inconsistencies between the surface meanings of the students’ expressed needs and the assumptions underlying these needs, and that such inconsistencies would not be elicited in closed-question surveys. Thus, I designed my study to capture these assumptions using open-ended methods, i.e.

qualitative interviews. The findings, presented here, illustrate the importance of my methodological approach in understanding the assumptions underlying the students' expressed target needs.

In addition to their target needs, the students also expressed their learning needs, as presented below.

4.2 Learners' expressed learning needs

This section illustrates the themes uncovered in this study as representing the students' expressed learning needs, i.e. their expressions of what they think are the factors in the learning situation that affect their English learning.

4.2.1 Four dimensions of learning needs

During the data analysis, four main themes were identified to represent the learners' expressed learning needs, involving affective, cognitive, political, and contextual dimensions. In each dimension, the students expressed their specific learning needs.

Affective dimension: Affective needs

Many of the students expressed their feelings about the learning environment, as well as their emotions relating to English learning. Such feelings and emotions were the affective factors which affect their English learning and so can be represented by the term "affective needs".

The students tended to value fairness, respect and trust in the learning environment. However, they tended to think that such elements were not well addressed in the CE curriculum and in College X.

Fairness in the learning environment was commented on by many students. For instance, S9 suggested that test scores or degrees should not be the universal criteria for judging a person. He tended to think that emphasis on scores, but

neglect of learners in the English learning process, especially when they failed in tests, would harm learning achievements.

[4-30] 不应该什么都以成绩,或者说,以学历来看人。因为,很多,小时候,怎么说呢,有些同学一开始是,我记得上初中有些学生是蛮爱学习的,但是又因为考试考砸了,老师就开始不重视他,那他就开始防卫,就上不去。(S9)

(Test scores, or degrees shouldn't always be the criterion for evaluating a person. How shall I put it? I remember in junior high school, some students enjoyed learning very much at the beginning. However, the teacher began to neglect them after they failed in exams. Consequently, they began to resist studying, and their performances lag behind.)

S4 also commented on testing. She doubted that CET-4 could measure one's English ability well and hoped that real ability rather than the certificate would be valued in real life.

[4-31] 我认为四级总的来说只能衡量英语方面的一小部分能力……所以我并不认为考试能很好的测量一个人的英语水平。但因为中国的国情和一些制度的关系,可能考试是目前相对来说最公平的方式。但我希望在实际工作或生活中大家能够注重的是真正的实力问题而不是一纸评书。(S4-6)

(I think CET-4, in general, can only measure a small part of one's English ability...so I don't think a test can measure one's English proficiency well. Due to China's national conditions and social systems, testing might be the fairest way at present. But I hope real ability rather than a paper certificate will be valued in real work and life.)

S8 tended to think that College X failed to provide a fair testing environment. She found the way of testing in this college invited opportunities to cheat.

[4-32] 还有考试的内容都是考书上的,书上都要背,就是讲要考哪些地方。就是因为这样,我发现作弊的可能更多一些。(S8-1)

(What's more, what is to be tested is all from the textbooks. We are told what will be included in the test, and so have to memorise those language points and exercises. Just because of this, I found there are more chances to cheat.)

S8 expressed her strong opposition to cheating and commented that the college did not seem to compare with her senior high school because of cheating.

[4-33] 我觉得现在大学好象比不上高中了,觉得好象作弊很流行。大家还有讨论怎么作弊,比如传到QQ上啊。我很反对这种行为。(S8-1)

(It seems that college doesn't compare with senior high school. I feel cheating is quite common. Students even discuss how to cheat in the exam, for example, uploading answers to QQ¹². I strongly oppose it.)

S13 and S5 tended to think that it was unfair that all students were required to learn English and expected to pass CET but many of them might not need to use English after graduation.

In Excerpt [4-5], S13 reported that employers valued his CET certificates when he was seeking a job. He finally got that job but seldom used English in it. S13 then commented that it was certainly unfair that English was required even when it would not be used in the workplace.

[4-34] 我的工作跟英语接触不多,工作中尽量找机会用上英语,要不很容易就荒废了.....不公平是肯定有的,英语是一个技能,多了好,少了人家就会觉得缺点能力。(S13-1)

(I seldom use English in my work, but try to seek opportunities to use it. Otherwise, the English ability will be easily lost... There is certainly unfairness. English is a skill. It's good to have it. If you don't have it, people will think you lack some kind of competence.)

S13's statement was echoed by S5. S5 thought she would not use English in future work and therefore felt it was not fair that she had to take CET.

[4-35] 其实我很不喜欢这样的等级考试,因为我觉得就算我考得了,难道我还要用英语来工作?我需要用英语交流才能工作?除非我进的是外企,那可能需要。(S5-4)

(In fact, I hate CET. I feel even if I pass it, must I use English in my work? Do I need to communicate in English to do my job? Unless I go to a foreign company, I may need English.)

Furthermore, a lack of respect and trust in the learning environment was reported by S9. He strongly opposed the practice of putting a camera in the classroom. The camera was used to monitor the CET test. Since the examination rooms were also classrooms, students had been having their classes with a camera in the classroom. Thus, S9 tended to think that the college did not take into account the students' feelings, and more specifically did not respect and trust them.

¹² QQ is the most popular social network in China.

[4-36] 平时的期末考试不知道他们开不开，反正放在这里就觉得对你不尊重。这个就是因为学校不相信学生了，所以说我觉得学校完全不尊重我们。他相信我们，可以完全不用这样搞。(S9)

(I don't know whether the camera is turned on or not during final exams. Anyway, the camera being put here shows a lack of respect. Because the college doesn't trust us, doesn't respect us. If they do trust us, they definitely don't need to do this.)

The students also expressed their emotions regarding English learning. Many students lacked a sense of achievement in the learning situation. For instance, when S5 failed in CET-4, she was so frustrated that she felt lost.

[4-37] 这次很遗憾差6分没有过，对我打击很大，完全让我对英语没有了兴趣，信心就更没有了，调整了好多次都调整不过来。对于这次四级，我真不知道该怎么办，很迷茫。(S5-4)

(It's a great pity that I didn't pass it by six points¹³. This is a heavy blow for me. Now I have no interest in English at all, still less confidence. I tried several times to adjust my mood but failed. For CET-4, I have no idea what to do, feeling so lost.)

S9 put it more directly. He could not feel a sense of achievement and so he did not want to learn English.

[4-38] 现在就是说想学都没有见有效果，就不想去学。(S9)

(Now the situation is, even if I want to learn it well, I can't achieve any results, and so I lose my interest to learn it.)

Some students showed a lack of confidence and courage during the learning process. For example, S4 began to doubt herself when she found her English pronunciation was different from others'.

[4-39] 我一来这边发现我的发音和他们不同。如果人家都是那样读，我一个人这样读，我就会觉得是我错了。(S4-3)

(When I came to this region I found my English pronunciation was different from others'. If they all read it that way and only I read it this way, I tend to feel that I am wrong.)

Coming from another region to study with many local students in College X, it might not be surprising for S4 to have a different pronunciation. However, instead of trying to learn more about it, she began to doubt herself. This suggested a lack of self-confidence.

¹³ Since the full mark is 710 points, it is a great pity that she failed by only 6 points.

S5 showed a lack of courage in speaking English in front of many people.

[4-40] 我是真的胆子有点小, 不敢在大大庭广众之下说英语。(S5-3)
(*I am too timid to speak English in public.*)

S12 tended to shrink back from speaking English if people beside him could not understand him.

[4-41] 当我说某个单词或一段英文的时候, 我身边的人一说听不懂我说什么英文, 我会自卑的, 下次就不会轻易说出口了。
(*When I speak a certain word or read an English paragraph, if those who are beside me say they can't catch what I am saying, I will feel inferior and try to avoid speaking English in front of others next time.*)

The students' emotions during the learning process, however, were not well addressed by the teacher or the institution.

According to S12, his affective needs in the learning situation were not sufficiently addressed by the teacher.

[4-42] 的确有很大的压力, 会怕老师上课提问自己.....老师还算可以, 不强求自己做什么, 但是有时候还是强求, 我希望更加自由, 别给英语成绩差的同学造成太大的压力。(S12)
(*Indeed, I was under great pressure. I was worried that the teacher might ask me questions... The teacher was all right. She wouldn't force me to do certain things, but she did push me sometimes. I want more freedom, but not much pressure for those with poor English achievement.*)

S9 thought that the classroom layout failed to address their affective needs. In his classroom, there were around one hundred immobile tables installed in rows, and a platform in the front for the teacher. S9 tended to think that this layout was inflexible and therefore not responsive to students' moods and emotions in the learning situation.

[4-43] 不够自由.....太死板了.....但是起码说, 比如说我今天心情好, 想学习, 我想坐第一桌, [如果桌子是活动的], 我就自己把桌子移过来, 然后老师又在这里, 肯定都是想学习的在这里。(S9)
(*Now the Tables in the classroom are fixed in rows and we can't move any of them. At least it should be like this: If I am in a good mood and want to study today, I can move my table to the first row, where the teacher and those*

students who want to learn are.)

In summary, many of the students expressed their affective needs during the learning process, including their feelings about the learning environment and their emotions in terms of English learning. The students reported that their affective needs were insufficiently addressed by the teacher or other parties concerned. Specifically, they felt disappointed with the existing learning environment as they thought it failed to address fairness, respect and trust. Furthermore, they felt a lack of sense of achievement, confidence and courage during the learning process.

Cognitive dimension: teaching/learning strategies

A second dimension I identified in the students' expressed learning needs was the cognitive dimension. In this dimension, the students expressed their perceptions of the teaching strategies applied by their English teachers, the learning strategies they adopted in their English learning, and their preferred teaching methodology.

In College X, both CE teaching and learning tended to be CET-4 driven, involving excessive preparation for CET-4. S5 described and commented on CE teaching in her class:

[4-44] *现在我们班是属于比较应试的那种。我们现在是经常听写单词啦，基本上一个星期会练一套听力.....我们现在做了两三套四级模拟题了，然后下个星期准备练一套真题。(S5-3)*

(Now English teaching in our class is test-driven. We now have dictations quite often, and do listening practice regularly, a set of questions every week... We now have had three mock tests, and will try a previous test paper next week.)

Preparing for CET-4 was also the learning strategy adopted by many students, as exemplified by S10:

[4-45] *我是以通过四级考试为首的，所以我会以基础英语为主.....我平时的学习是以记单词和听力练习为主。(S10)*

(My primary goal is to pass CET-4, and so I focus on General English... My English learning is mainly about memorising words and doing listening exercises.)

However, quite a few students tended to be frustrated by the CET-4 driven teaching and learning. They felt it was very hard for them to memorise English words, as S4 mentioned:

[4-46] 我也不爱记单词，记单词很头痛，今天记了之后明天就忘。(S4-3)
(I don't like memorising words either. It is a headache for me. I tend to forget it tomorrow even if I have remembered it today.)

S9 agreed with S4 and further stated that he did not want to learn English if he repeatedly failed to memorise English words.

[4-47] 但是就是说每次，在遇到，比如说我决定要看书，但是老是记不住单词，老是记不住单词以后就不想学了。但是我又知道它非常的重要，但是我就是学不下。(S9)
(But whenever, for example, I decide to study the book, I always can't remember the words. I'm so frustrated that I don't want to learn English any more. I know it is very important, but I just can't do it.)

Many students also expressed their frustrations with test questions. For instance, S4 felt she had no idea about how to deal with English exam questions.

[4-48] 考试有关的东西，就算你自己不会，但你有那个心理去钻——而且，比如说一种题型做了，举一反三，这种类似的题你都会做，会觉得很有成就感，而且觉得见效很快。而英语，你在那里看英语背英语，你说吧，我摊开一篇快速阅读去做，做完了之后再给我拿一篇新的，我照样不会。因为英语不像数学，就说你懂了做一道题你就会做别的了，因为它牵涉到语法。(S4-3)
(Generally, as far as exam questions are concerned, even if you don't know how to do them, if you work hard, [you can still figure them out]. Once you have figured out a certain question, you grasp the method for questions of this type. You may have a great sense of achievement and think that the method is really effective. With respect to English, it's different. For example, after I answer the questions for one fast-reading passage, I still can't figure out those for another passage. English is not like maths. It's not that you can answer other questions once you figure out one question, as it is related to grammar.)

S5 tended to be annoyed by questions concerning reading comprehension. She felt she could understand the passage, but just could not give the right answers.

[4-49] 关于阅读理解, 我很纳闷, 前几天我还在想这个问题。快速阅读我是得满分的那种, 但是后面的阅读吧, 文章我基本看得懂, 但全部选项都不对。(S5-3)

(I have been wondering about reading comprehension. I was thinking about it just a few days ago. Usually I can get a full mark in the fast reading section. As to those follow-up readings, although I can understand the passages, my answers to the comprehension questions might be all wrong.)

S12 and S9 also expressed their perceptions of desired teaching strategies.

S12, a student who was not good at English, wanted a free and comfortable teaching environment in which the teacher would not put much pressure on weak students (see Excerpt [4-42]).

Concerning assessment, S12 thought highly of an open-book final exam which he had in the English of Specialty course and from which he felt little pressure.

[4-50] 我们专业英语的老师给我一种期末基本没压力的测试, 叫我们一人翻译一篇文章, 给我们时间准备。我觉得对我用的编程上有一定的帮助, 使我一看就像中文一样的效率, 蛮激动的。结果我请教英语专业的同学, 我得了89分, 还蛮开心的。(S12)

(Our teacher of English of Specialty introduced a pressure-free final exam by asking each of us to translate an English article into Chinese. As I thought the article would be of some help to my programming work, I read it just as efficiently as I read Chinese, quite excited. I consulted English-major students, and I got 89 in this exam. I felt so happy.)

S9 made suggestions about how a good classroom environment might be achieved and how weak students' needs might be accommodated. He suggested that the classroom teaching could be organised around meaningful activities in which the teacher guided the process, the students worked together in a team, and weak students could get peer support.

[4-51] 多搞一些活动, 比如说用英文来做辩论, 这样的话, 能调动气氛。其实不懂的话可以分组, 可以把东西提前发出来, 让大家去找资料, 然后每一组放一到两位那种英语不太好的, 然后叫他们查好资料, 大家一起查好资料, 教他们什么时候说些什么, 我觉得这样子比较好。(S9)

(More activities should be introduced, for example, debates in English, so as to boost the learning mood. Taking into consideration weak students, the class can be divided into several groups, and each group may include one or two low-achievement students. Handouts can be given out in advance so that

students have time to look up information. The group members collect information together, and tell those poor students what to say on certain occasions. I think this is a good way.)

S9 stressed the teacher identifying learners' needs during the learning process. He suggested that the teacher should pay attention to students' learning needs and the classroom layout should serve this purpose.

[4-52] 像这种东西[用手指敲着课桌],本来上课就不应该这样子,要活动的那种。我觉得应该老师在中间,同学围坐周围。大家一起念,老师围在中间,或者老师就在附近,他就可以知道哪些学生念了,哪些没念。没念的时候,他就可以私下问一下,你为什么没念,是不会还是什么,这样子比较容易了解学生。(S9)

(The layout of classroom shouldn't be like this [he knocked on the table fixed on the floor]. We need mobile tables and chairs. I think the teacher should be in the centre, surrounded by students. When the students read together, if the teacher is in the middle, or close to them, he will know who is reading, and who isn't. For those who don't read, he can ask in private, "Why don't you read it, you don't know how to read it or have other reasons?" In this way, the teacher is more likely to understand students better.)

S9 also made suggestions about improving assessment, by recalling and commenting on two innovations in assessment introduced by his Chinese teacher in junior high school. In the first innovation, a student took responsibility for his/her own achievement in the assessment.

[4-53] 我们语文老师一共出了6份试题,每份都不一样。就6种试题,但是就从一本书里出。我们那时候,就给你一张白纸,就拿回去记,记完你就带那张进来考试,就是那样……这种时候,你为了要高成绩,那你自己就要花心思去搞通这本书,把你觉得重要的东西记下来,那就无形中增加了学生总结归纳。(S9)

(My Chinese teacher once set six different test papers, but the questions were all from one book. At that time, we were only given a blank piece of paper to write down the main points we summarised from the book, but were allowed to take it to the exam. That's it. In this situation, if you wanted to get a high score, you had to dig into this book, and make notes of what you thought important, and this would substantially improve students' ability to summarise.)

S9 thought that such an innovation could develop students' abilities to learn, more precisely, to summarise. The assessment process thus became part of the learning process. In Eleanore's (2005) words, students were "taking some control

of their own learning and assessment and turning assessment into a learning event”. In the second innovation, students in a team worked together to show responsibility for their achievements in the assessment.

[4-54] 或者说是，比如说我给你题量很大的试题，我们也试过那种，不过那是语文。开学时候就已经分好组，等到考试时候，这张试题一个组人做完。你自己去分工合作，两个小时之内或者一个小时之内，要做完这份试题才算完，成绩多少分就大家一起多少分。所以我就觉得团队精神马上可以体现出来，如果说你都是一盘散沙，你不做，我也不想做，那这种时候大家都不及格。(S9)

(Another innovation we tried was setting a large number of questions in the Chinese exam. We had been grouped into several teams since the beginning of the term. During the exam, team members worked together to complete the test paper. We were expected to divide the work by ourselves and cooperate with each other. We had to finish it within two hours or maybe one hour. The score for the team would also be the score for the team members. So, I think there would be an immediate team spirit. If we didn't work together, you didn't do it, and I didn't want to do it either, none of us would pass the test.)

S9 thought that such innovations would promote cooperation between students.

In summary, many of the students expressed their frustrations with the CET-4-driven teaching and learning strategies. Some of them also expressed their perceptions of their desired teaching strategies. They tended to value a free and comfortable teaching environment in which students' learning needs, especially those of the weak students, would be accommodated by the teacher, and learner autonomy and cooperation between learners would be developed.

Political dimension: Autonomy

A third dimension I identified in the students' expressed learning needs was the political dimension. Many of the students thought that they did not have enough control over their English learning, college studies, and more broadly college life. This lack of control is closely associated with the political perspective of learner autonomy discussed by Benson (1997, p.25): “autonomy as control over the content and processes of one's own learning”. Benson (2012) argues, “Personal autonomy entails learner autonomy and that learner autonomy, in turn,

entails language learner autonomy”. I therefore used the term “autonomy” to represent the students’ needs for autonomy as an English learner, a learner, and an individual.

Many students felt a serious lack of control over their autonomous English learning. In College X, first and second year students were required to do autonomous English learning in a newly-established autonomous learning centre which was equipped with computers. The Internet access was cut off there, and a system bound up with the listening and speaking textbook was used. Students registered to do listening exercises from their textbook and the system would keep a record of their learning time. The teacher could monitor student behaviour from the control desk.

Many students felt that they had little autonomy in the autonomous learning centre, as exemplified by S4:

[4-55] 那里什么都不能用……完全都没联网……你要是看电影的话，过不了几分钟，就是你要不停的动鼠标，页面静止时间太长了的话，就会有对话框出来，“你已被老师监控，自动退出学习”。(S4-5)
(*You can't do anything else there...It's completely off the Internet...If you watch a movie and the current page stays still, after a few minutes there will be a dialog box saying "you are being monitored by the teacher and you are logged off automatically". You have to move the mouse frequently to show that you are learning.*)

S4's statement was confirmed by S8. She felt reluctant to do these listening exercises from the textbook. However, this was the only thing they were expected to do there. If they did not do it, they would be logged off automatically.

[4-56] 去那里就是很勉强听啦，是课本的。然后去了就一直听着一直听着这些题目，看着原文听……什么都没有，就只有那个东西，那一个《视听听说》的。而且，你不能做其它的，要不然它就会自动关闭什么的，必须在那里听它的。(S8-3)
(*I went there to listen to the textbook reluctantly. I have to keep listening to those exercises, reading the text...nothing else, only the audiovisual textbook. And, you can't do anything else, just listen. Otherwise, you will be logged off automatically.*)

According to the technician, the reason why students might be logged off automatically was that he used a certain function of the learning system to prevent

cheating on the part of the students. However, countermeasures were taken by some students to continue cheating.

[4-57] 系统可以设置学生停止键盘和鼠标操作的间隔时间,我们是设置5分钟,也就是如果鼠标和键盘在五分钟后没有任何操作系统就自动退出不再计时。学生就是钻这个空子,拿东西压住键盘或鼠标,系统就会认定学生在学习所以记录学习时间,实际上学生并不在电脑前。

(Technician)

(A time interval for not manipulating the keyboard or mouse can be set in the system. We set five minutes. This means the system will exit automatically and not keep a record of the learning time any more if the keyboard or mouse has not been used for five minutes. Some students exploit an advantage by pressing the keyboard or mouse with little things¹⁴. In this case, the system accepts that the student is learning and will keep a record of the time. In fact, that student is not in front of the computer.)

In taking anti-monitoring measures, the students showed their dissatisfaction with the highly controlled autonomous learning. In other words, they wanted control over their English learning, as S5 made explicit:

[4-58] 我觉得没有必要强制学生去做那个,去了也是去刷时间……我觉得真想练的话,在宿舍现在基本都有电脑,他们会自己听。(S5-3)
(I think there is no need to force students to do that. When they do go there, they do nothing but kill time...I think if they really want to practise their English, they will do it by themselves, since almost all of them have a computer in the dormitory.)

In addition to a lack of control over their autonomous English learning, some students also tended to think that they had insufficient control over their college studies, and the Internet use in the dormitory.

For example, S9, a first year student, felt a lack of autonomy in his after-class time and learning. In College X, all the first year students were required to study in designated classrooms five nights a week, and to read English aloud before the first session in the morning. S9 tended to think there should not be such requirements, and students could take responsibility for their own study.

¹⁴ One example, which is given by S5, is that some students squeezed small pieces of paper under the space key and then the system accepted that the student was learning and continued to keep a record of the learning time.

[4-59] 自己想来你就来。不用再像高中那样子，又要早读，又要晚修。这一个真的太浪费时间了，有些人……早读不是读多久的问题，真的是有时候早起来那三十分钟和晚起来那三十分钟，精神状态就不一样。然后晚上的话也是，本来大一来这里就应该跟外界交流，外地的学生来这里晚上就应该多了解了解XX[城市名]。你这样一约束了，学生也不得了解XX，就整天困在学校啊。(S9)

(You can go to study if you like. There is no need to require all students to do morning reading and night study as the senior high school does. It's such a waste of time for some students...Problems of morning reading are not about how long we are required to read. Sometimes, getting up 30 minutes earlier or 30 minutes later makes a difference to our mental states. Night study is also unnecessary. As first year students, we should communicate with the outside world, and those who are from other regions should learn more about XX [the name of the city] at night. With this requirement, students are confined to the college with little chance to know about this city.)

In College X, there were also restrictions over Internet use in dormitories. To begin with, first-year students were not given access to the Internet. Second, the Internet was cut off at 11.30pm every night. These restrictions tended to be opposed by many students, and some students just put their opposition into action. Regarding the first rule, many students found a countermeasure, as S11 told:

[4-60] 其实大一都可以带电脑，只要你能弄到网号。学校不给大一的开帐号的，不过在电信的话可以偷偷去开。(S11)

(Even if you are in the first year, you can also take your computer to college if you can get an Internet account. The college won't provide an account for first year students, but you can get it secretly from China Telecom.)

Regarding the second rule, some male students even took violent action to show their opposition, as S9 described:

[4-61] 十一点半就开始闹……男生，就我们那两栋楼的……宿舍外面不是有消防栓吗，灭火器吗？拿灭火器当水枪来打水仗，打完丢下楼，然后拿汽油泼到那些树上点把火。(S9)

(They began to give vent to their fury immediately after 11.30pm...Boys, those in the two buildings one of which I live in...There are fire hydrants and extinguishers outside the dormitory. They took the extinguishers as water guns to have a water fight, and threw them down from upstairs after the fight, and then splashed gasoline on those trees to light a fire.)

Despite their protest, the restriction on Internet use at night remained.

From the above, it can be seen that the students tended to think that they had little control over their autonomous English learning and insufficient control over their after-class time and study, as well as over Internet use in the dormitory.

Contextual dimension: Learning environments

A fourth dimension I identified in the students' expressed learning needs was the contextual dimension. Many of the students expressed their needs for after-class learning environments where they could learn English comfortably together with other students. These needs were categorised into the contextual dimension.

Quite a few students felt they lacked a learning environment where they would feel comfortable to learn English or speak English. For instance, S9 tended to think that his surroundings – his dormitory – lacked the right atmosphere for learning English.

[4-62] S9: 我觉得就是说如果可以的话肯定是一直学, 但就是首先环境不行。

R: 你说的环境是指?

S9: 周围。

R: 周围没有外国人, 没有人讲英语?

S9: 不是, 不一定是外国人。但就是说, 比如说一回宿舍, 第一句话问你, “去哪里吃饭?”, 第二句话, “等下玩电脑吗?”, 第三句, “等下看电影吗?”, 第四句“有球赛吗?” 基本上都跟英语无关啊! (S9)

(S9: *I feel if I can I will definitely keep studying. However, first of all, the environment is not suitable.*

R: *What do you mean by environment?*

S9: *Surroundings.*

R: *No overseas people surrounding you? No people speaking English around you?*

S9: *No, not necessarily overseas people. But, for example, when I go back to my dormitory, all we gonna ask about are “When are you going to have dinner”; “Will you play computer games later”; “Will you watch movies later” and “Any ball games?” Our conversations generally have nothing to do with English!)*

S8 also stated she did not watch English programmes in the dormitory, although she enjoyed them in the classroom.

[4-63] 其实有些英文的那些节目也好看，老师给我们看那是什么，《美国偶像》也给看一点，还有那个《舞魅天下》，跳舞的。听那个主持人讲的那种英语，很好，在教室看比较——返回[宿舍]去就不会看了。(S8-3)
(*In fact, some English programmes are quite good. The teacher showed us some, like American Idol, and So You Think You Can Dance. It's nice to listen to the English spoken by the presenter. I'm quite in the mood when I watch them during class – I won't watch them when I go back to the dormitory.*)

S5 felt it might be weird to speak English in the dormitory with her roommates. She thought an English corner – an English speaking activity in many Chinese colleges and universities in which all participants communicate with each other in English – would provide a good opportunity for students to practise oral English.

[4-64] 不可能像我这样回宿舍，活生生又跟她们说英语啊！她们也不会跟我说的，对吧？英语角，我觉得不一定要跟那些外国人，至少两个都去说，也是一样啊。然后你去到那里，每个人都要说，有那个氛围了，就算不是那个外籍的跟我们说，至少我们也有那个氛围让我们去说吧，敢说出来，就算说不对，大家都是不对的，又怎么笑我呢，是吧？(S5-3)
(*I am not likely to speak English with them [my roommates] when I go back to my dormitory. They won't speak English to me either, will they? Going to the English corner isn't all about talking to overseas people. We two may just as well speak to each other. When I go there, everyone is expected to speak English, and so we have the mood. Even if there are no overseas people speaking to us, we at least have the atmosphere to speak, and we dare to speak. Even if I can't speak it right, we are almost at the same level. Who will laugh at me?)*

However, there was no English Corner or similar speaking activities in College X. There was only a reading activity organised by a student society called “English Learning Association” in this college. All the members of the society gathered together early in the morning to read English aloud. S5 tended to think that this morning reading scheme provided a secure and comfortable environment for students to read English freely, comparing the scheme to the reading experience of a boy who could ignore the outside world.

[4-65] 像英协早上的活动，我觉得真的很不错。就放声的读吧！我早上起来早读的时候，我碰到一个男生，我真的很佩服他，他每天早上很早起来，一边走，一边塞着耳塞听，很大声的读，还加上动作……我感觉

他跟一般人不是很搭……他可能是比较孤僻的那种，我觉得什么都是他一个人，完全没有别人……我是真的胆子有点小，不敢在大庭广众之下说英语。(S5-3)

(I think the morning reading organised by the English Learning Association is really good. Just read it aloud without any restraint! When I went out to read English in the morning, I met a boy. I was really impressed by him. He got up very early every morning, listened to English with earplugs as he walked, and read it aloud afterwards with different gestures. I feel he is odd. He seems to be eccentric and always does things alone without any company...Unlike him, I am too timid to speak English in public.)

On the other hand, S5 realised that the morning reading scheme could not provide a suitable environment for real-life English communication.

[4-66] 他们只是早上有晨读。我觉得晨读是，怎么说呢，只是读而已，你没有真正的去跟那些人接触，面对面的。(S5-3)

(They only have the Morning Reading Scheme in the morning. I think, the morning reading, how I shall put it, is just about reading. You have no real, face-to-face, interaction with those students.)

Nevertheless, S8, a member of the English Learning Association, had benefited much from the morning reading scheme. First, she felt she was under a positive influence of the other members, which encouraged her to persist in reading English aloud in the morning, even on very cold winter days.

[4-67] R: 那时候听说是一大清早天还没亮就要去?

S8: 嗯，对啊。那时候很冷我都去。

R: 怎么看得见啊，点蜡烛吗?

S8: 不是点蜡烛，点蜡烛风会吹。是拿个小台灯，电充的那种。

R: 很冷的冬天也去吗?

S8: 是啊，其他人也去。(S8-3)

(R: They say that you went to the reading programme quite early in the morning when it was still dark, did you?

S8: Yes. I went to it even when it was very cold.

R: How can you see clearly? With a candle?

S8: No, a candle would be blown out by the wind. We took a lamp, one powered by rechargeable batteries.

R: Did you still go to it on very cold winter days?

S8: Yes, others went to it as well.)

In particular, one female student she met at the reading activities even became a role model for her.

[4-68] 有个学姐，她出过国，在学院英语演讲比赛中得了一等奖。之前她也来参加我们英协的晨读，让大家出题目给她，她当场做演讲。我很佩服她。(S8-1)

(There is a senior girl student who has been abroad before and got the first prize in the speech competition in the college. She came to take part in our morning reading and asked others to give her topics to make impromptu speeches. I admire her very much.)

Furthermore, S8 took advantage of the morning reading scheme to push herself to speak in front of many people. She gradually became more confident in speaking in public.

[4-69] S8: 那时候会给我们自己自我介绍嘛，上去了可以练一练胆.....刚开始的时候还不是很认识，然后就要做一个自我介绍什么的，然后带领读一下，就自己读，然后就叫人上去读，给大家听，看看谁自愿啦，这样子。

R: 你有没有上去读过?

S8: 有过。其实也很纠结的，有时候，怕，后来就上去，现在胆子大一些。(S8-3)

(S8: We got a chance to introduce ourselves at that time. I think speaking in front of many people is a good opportunity to build up confidence... We didn't know each other very well at the beginning, and so we had to introduce ourselves, and then we read English by following the chief reader, and then we read it by ourselves. After this, we were expected to volunteer to read in front of everybody.

R: Have you ever tried this?

S8: Yes. I actually hesitated a lot, sometimes. I didn't dare to read out loud sometimes, but finally made it later. I have more courage now.)

In general, the morning reading scheme promoted S8's personal growth: she persisted in reading English; she was inspired by a role model; and she gradually became confident at speaking in public.

In summary, quite a few students tended to think that they did not have suitable learning environments where they could learn and particularly speak English comfortably with other students after class. While the morning reading scheme organised by a student society tended to provide a good environment for English reading, it did not involve oral communication. Nevertheless, it seemed to have promoted the personal development of one of my participants.

4.2.2 Conclusions

In the above section, I have presented the four learning needs expressed by the students, i.e. their affective needs, and their needs regarding teaching/learning strategies, autonomy, and learning environments. These findings indicate four dimensions in the students' expressed learning needs: affective, cognitive, political, and contextual dimensions.

The findings contribute to existing research on needs analysis in language teaching, more specifically on the analysis of learning needs. First, in the few reports which have made reference to the affective dimension (e.g. Brown, 1995; Brindley, 1989), the affective dimension relates to motivation, self-esteem and attitudes, and therefore involves mainly learners' emotions regarding language learning. However, learners' feelings about the learning environment, which I have identified in this study as part of the learners' affective needs, are not mentioned in the literature. Second, the contextual dimension is usually concerned with an analysis of the learning environment, i.e. "means analysis" (e.g. Holliday & Cooke, 1982; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) rather than an analysis of learning needs in terms of affect. Third, the political dimension is hardly ever reported in the NA literature and so constitutes a new dimension in the analysis of learning needs.

The analysis of learning needs in language teaching is also underemphasised in China; instead, the majority of the NA literature focuses on an analysis of target needs (e.g. Gu, 1998; Fu et al., 2001; Wang & Liu, 2003; Shu, 2004; Hu et al., 2011). Among the few studies which involve learning needs (e.g. Yan, 2006; Zhao et al., 2009), the affective and contextual dimensions are underemphasised, and the political dimension is not mentioned. It is noteworthy that these studies depend on questionnaires to collect learners' learning needs. It would seem that a closed-ended questionnaire survey perhaps has limited the scope of inquiry concerning NA.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented the students' expressed needs for English learning, comprising their target needs and learning needs.

The students expressed three major target needs at a semantic level: i) to pass CET-4, ii) to use English in future work, and iii) to speak English. At a latent level, the first two needs were categorised into "requirements", including academic and vocational requirements. According to the students' attitudes towards these requirements, they were viewed by the students as either "imposed requirements" or "internalised requirements". The students' need to speak English was categorised into "wants", which referred to their expressed target needs developed free from the influence of external requirements.

However, the students' expressed target needs at a latent level which I have identified here are not reported in the literature in China. To a large extent, this gap can be related to the methodological choices in existing NAs: using the questionnaire method as the primary or only method.

The students also expressed four major learning needs: affective needs, and their needs regarding teaching/learning strategies, autonomy, and learning environments. They ranged over four dimensions: affective, cognitive, political, and contextual. The affective dimension involved the students' feelings about the learning environment as well as their emotions regarding English learning. The cognitive dimension was concerned with their perceptions about the existing teaching/learning strategies and their preferred teaching methodology. The political dimension referred to the students' perceptions of their control over their English learning, college studies, and college life. The contextual dimension involved their perceptions about after-class learning environments in College X. In expressing their learning needs, the students suggested that these needs were not well met in the CE curriculum in College X.

These findings about the students' expressed learning needs contribute to the analysis of learning needs in the NA literature. The affective and contextual

dimensions are insufficiently addressed and the political dimension constitutes a new dimension in the analysis of learning needs in language teaching. In China, such analysis is also underemphasised. The questionnaire is used as the primary or only method in the NA in English teaching in China, and this methodological choice has limited the scope of inquiry.

In the next chapter, I compare the students' expressed needs for English learning with the CE curriculum in order to see how these needs are addressed in the curriculum.

Chapter 5 Meeting Learners' Expressed Needs through the Curriculum

Chapter 4 has presented the learners' expressed needs for their English learning. This chapter aims to answer the second research question identified in Chapter 2:

To what extent does the College English curriculum meet the learners' expressed needs?

As stated in Chapter 1, the CE curriculum consists of the national curriculum, i.e. the document *College English Curriculum Requirements (CECR)*, and the institutional curriculum of College X. During the data analysis process, I reviewed the CECR and compared it to the institutional curriculum of College X. I then looked at how the learners' expressed needs were addressed in both the CECR and the institutional curriculum.

My review of the *CECR* and the institutional curriculum focused on five issues: i) College English Test Band 4 (CET-4), ii) English of Specialty, iii) the development of students' speaking ability, iv) a product-oriented perspective, and v) a process-oriented perspective. I focused on these issues because the review was driven by my analytic interest in the students' expressed target needs and two models of curriculum development: the product and process models.

More specifically, the first three issues identified above are issues relevant to the students' three expressed target needs, as identified in Chapter 4: to pass CET-4, to use English in future work, and to speak English. I specifically looked at these issues in order to understand how the students' expressed target needs were addressed in the curriculum. The reason I did not look at their expressed learning needs, the other part of their expressed needs, was because when expressing their learning needs, the students had already suggested that these needs were not well addressed in the curriculum, as stated in Chapter 4.

Furthermore, I drew on the product and process models of curriculum development in my analysis of the CE curriculum in order to understand the assumptions underlying the extent to which the curriculum meets learners' expressed needs. As suggested in Chapter 2, learners' expressed target needs and learning needs are closely related to the product and process models respectively. I introduced two terms, "a product-oriented perspective" and "a process-oriented perspective", to refer to the perspectives used in the product and process models in order to clarify my analysis of the curriculum.

Section 5.1 and Section 5.2 present a review of the national curriculum and the institutional curriculum of College X respectively. Section 5.3 provides a comparison between the students' expressed needs, both target needs and learning needs, with relevant issues in the CE curriculum. The product and process models provide the theoretical basis for understanding the CE curriculum and how the students' needs are addressed in it.

5.1 A review of the national curriculum

The national curriculum of CE used in China is described in the CECR document issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education (CMOE) for trial implementation in 2004 and for full implementation in 2007, in two languages: Chinese and English. In this study, I used the English version issued in 2007, as this research is reported in English.

The CECR consists of six sections: i) character and objectives of CE, ii) teaching requirements, iii) course design, iv) teaching model, v) evaluation, and vi) teaching administration. This content of the CECR is similar to that of the General English teaching plan of College X, and therefore its General English teaching practice, both of which are reviewed in Section 5.2. In order to compare a certain section of the CECR to its counterpart in the General English teaching plan or its application in teaching practice, I review the six sections of the CECR consecutively. I look at how each section relates to the five issues: i) CET-4, ii)

English of Specialty, iii) the development of students' speaking ability, iv) a product-oriented perspective, v) a process-oriented perspective.

I. Character and objectives of College English

The first section of the CECR is the statement of the character and objectives of CE. This section relates to three issues: the development of students' speaking ability, a product-oriented perspective, and a process-oriented perspective.

CE has three major objectives: to “develop students' ability to use English in a well-rounded way, especially in listening and speaking”, to “enhance their ability to study independently” and to “improve their general cultural awareness” (p.23). Accordingly, CE has three main components: “knowledge and practical skills of the English language”, “learning strategies” and “intercultural communication” (p.22-23).

In the first CE objective, by particularly emphasising students' ability in “listening and speaking”, as underlined above, the CECR attaches great importance to the development of students' speaking ability.

The first objective, and accordingly, the first component of CE, is expressed in terms of “behaviours of students stated as what student [*sic*] will know, or do”, a characteristic of behavioural objectives in the product model (McKernan, 2008, p.85). Thus, they represent a product-oriented perspective.

The second objective of CE is concerned with developing students' autonomous learning ability in the learning process. It is related to the development of individual autonomy in the educational process, which, according to Kelly (2009), is a key element of the process model. Furthermore, the third objective of CE shows a cultural dimension in CE, and the third component “intercultural communication” goes further than this objective and suggests an intercultural dimension. As understanding, which is the general aim of the process model (Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008), is crucial in the cultural dimension and the intercultural communication process, the third objective and the third component of CE represent a process-oriented perspective.

II. Teaching requirements

The second section of the CECR presents the teaching requirements for CE. These teaching requirements involve quantitative and qualitative standards for the five language abilities, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, and vocabulary, at three levels, i.e. basic requirements, intermediate requirements, and higher requirements. For example, at the basic level, the standards for listening ability are as follows:

Students should be able to follow classroom instructions, everyday conversations, and lectures on general topics conducted in English. They should be able to understand English radio and TV programs spoken at a speed of about 130 to 150 words per minute (wpm), grasping the main ideas and key points. They are expected to be able to employ basic listening strategies to facilitate comprehension. (p.24)

Four relevant issues were identified in reviewing this section on teaching requirements. First, CET-4 originates from the basic requirements. The CECR suggests that “the basic requirements are the minimum level that all non-English majors have to reach before graduation”. According to Cai (2006), a member of the CET committee, the basic requirements are actually the requirements for the CET-4 level and the intermediate requirements are those for the CET-6 level. In this sense, the CET-4 level is the minimum level that all non-English majors are required to achieve. The extensively reported “test-driven” CE teaching (e.g. Jing, 1999; Hu, 2005; Wang, C., 2010, Cai, 2006, 2012) can therefore be traced back to the CECR.

Second, English of Specialty is neglected in the teaching requirements. In other words, the teaching requirements are oriented towards General English. Phrases such as “general topics”, “everyday topics” and “familiar topics” can be found across the three levels of requirements, while phrases like “areas of specialty”, “specialisation”, “field” and “specialised topics” only appear at the intermediate and advanced levels. Since it has been extensively suggested in the literature (e.g. Hu, 2005; Cai, 2006; Jiang, 2008) that to pass CET-4 is a demanding task for many students, the basic requirements are quite challenging

for average students, let alone the intermediate and advanced requirements. In this situation, teachers and students are likely to focus on the basic requirements in their teaching and learning practice. Consequently, English of Specialty, which is involved in the intermediate and advanced requirements, might be neglected.

Third, the development of students' speaking ability is emphasised in the teaching requirements, as the CECR suggests that colleges and universities "should place more emphasis on the cultivation and training of the listening and speaking abilities" (p.28).

Fourth, the teaching requirements represent a product-oriented perspective. According to the CECR, "non-English majors are required to attain to one of the three levels of requirements after studying and practicing English at school" (p.23). In this sense, the teaching requirements are desired outcomes that students have to attain at the end of course learning. Furthermore, as indicated in the listening requirements cited above, the learning outcomes are stated as what students will be able to do, which is typical of the outcomes-based model, i.e. the product model (McKernan, 2008). Thus the teaching requirements represent a product-oriented perspective.

III. Course design

The third section of the CECR is a statement about designing the CE course system. CE is a course system which is "a combination of required and elective courses in comprehensive English, language skills, English for practical uses, language and culture, and English of specialty" (p.29).

Four important issues were identified in this section on course design. First, English of Specialty is relatively neglected, as all the other courses included in the CE course system, as listed above, are located in the context of General English.

Second, the development of students' speaking ability is emphasised, as it is suggested that colleges and universities fully consider "requirements for cultivating competence in listening and speaking" in designing CE courses (p.29).

Third, a product-oriented perspective dominates this section on course design. This perspective is represented by the language dimension of CE, which is interpreted as follows:

A course system...should ensure that students at different levels receive adequate training and make improvement in their ability to use English...College English is not only a language course that provides basic knowledge about English... It not only serves as an instrument... (p.29)

In the language dimension, CE relates to “training”, serves as an “instrument”, and aims to develop students’ ability to “use” English and provide them with “knowledge” of the English language. “Training” and “instrument” are typical terms used in the product model (Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008; Kelly, 2009). Furthermore, to “use” English and to acquire basic “knowledge” about English are related to “what student [*sic*] will know, or do” (McKernan, 2008, p.85), which are learning outcomes in behavioural terms pursued in the product model. The language dimension in the course design therefore represents a product-oriented perspective. Since all the courses in the CE course system except “language and culture”, as listed earlier, fall into the language dimension, a product-oriented perspective dominates the course design section.

Fourth, a process-oriented perspective is under-emphasised and poorly interpreted in the course design section. As discussed regarding the first section of the CECR, i.e. the section on the character and objectives of CE, the (inter)cultural dimension of CE suggests a process-oriented perspective. Since the cultural dimension relates explicitly to only one course in the previously listed CE course system, i.e. “language and culture”, a process-oriented perspective receives little emphasis in the course design section.

Furthermore, a process-oriented perspective is poorly interpreted, as the cultural dimension is poorly addressed in the course design section. It is interpreted as follows:

When designing College English courses, therefore, it is necessary to take into full consideration the development of students’ cultural capacity and the teaching of knowledge about different cultures in the world. (p.29)

The cultural dimension relates to “the development of students’ cultural capacity”, which is equated with “the teaching of knowledge about different cultures in the world”. This interpretation of cultural capacity focuses on cultural knowledge, which suggests a narrow perspective of viewing cultural issues. For example, in Byram’s (1997) intercultural communicative competence model, “knowledge” is only one of the five elements involved in intercultural communication, the other four elements being skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness. Moreover, the reference to “different cultures in the world” suggests a solid notion of culture which may lead to interpretations and understandings of culture as essentialist, and then the application of stereotypes. Such an interpretation oversimplifies the intercultural communication process. Consequently, the cultural dimension, and thus a process-oriented perspective, is poorly interpreted in the course design section of the CECR.

IV. Teaching model

The fourth section of the CECR is the statement of the teaching model. Two relevant issues were identified in this section: the development of students’ speaking ability, and a process-oriented perspective.

First, the CECR suggests that “colleges and universities should explore and establish a Web-based listening and speaking teaching model” (p.31). Thus, the development of students’ speaking ability is emphasised.

Second, the CECR suggests that “colleges and universities should remould the existing unitary teacher-centred pattern of language teaching by introducing computer/ classroom-based teaching models” (p.30). This reform of the teaching model is “to promote the development of individualised study methods and the autonomous learning ability on the part of students” (p.31). Thus, the CECR attaches great importance to learner autonomy. Since learner autonomy is part of personal autonomy (Benson, 2012), and personal (individual) autonomy is valued in the process model of curriculum development (Kelly, 2009), reform of the

teaching model aiming to promote learner autonomy would fall within a process-oriented perspective.

However, this aim to promote a process-oriented perspective in the teaching model would seem to be poorly addressed in the computer-based English learning model recommended by the CECR, shown below:

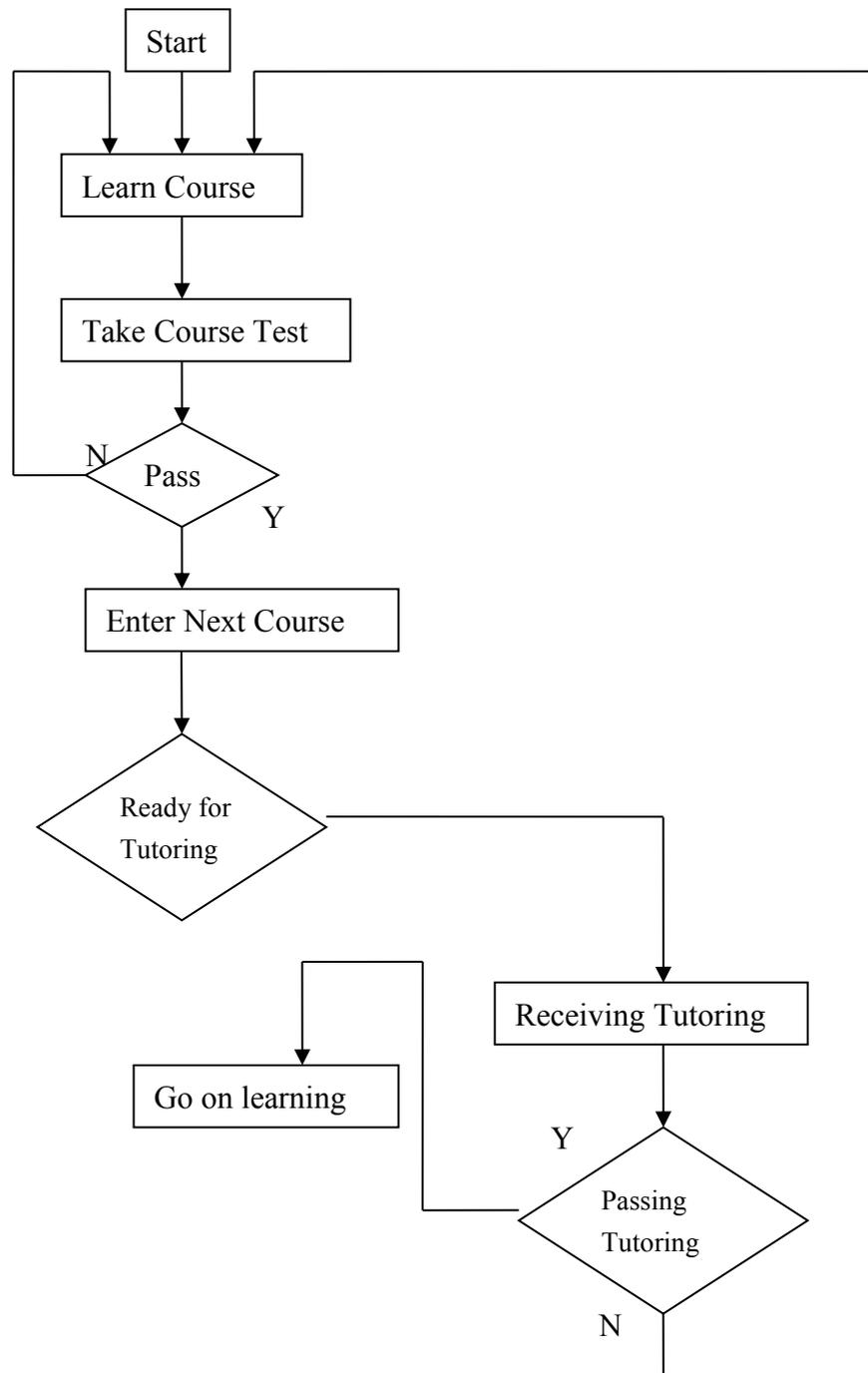


Figure 5.1 Process of computer-based English Learning (p.38)

In this model, students have to follow “teachers’ arrangements” (p.39) to follow a set of fixed procedures to do pre-specified course learning. They have insufficient control over their own learning in terms of what to learn, when to have tutoring, and so forth. Although this model claims to be a combination of students’ “self-learning” and “tutoring” (p.37), it is essentially teacher-directed rather than self-directed by the students. In other words, this model is not student-centred or geared towards students’ individualised and autonomous learning. Thus, this computer-based English learning model is little conducive to learner autonomy, and so cannot be seen as taking a process-oriented perspective.

V. Evaluation

The fifth section of the CECR involves evaluation in the CE course. Three relevant issues were identified in this section: the development of students’ speaking ability, a product-oriented model, and a process-oriented model.

According to the CECR, “the evaluation of students’ learning consists of formative assessment and summative assessment”. (p.32)

Formative assessment is defined in this way:

Formative assessment refers to procedural and developmental assessment conducted in the teaching process, i.e. tracking the teaching process, providing feedback and promoting an all-round development of the students, in accordance with the teaching objectives and by means of various evaluative methods. (p.32)

As “procedural and developmental assessment”, formative assessment is conducted “in the teaching process”, which accords with the process model, which focuses on the educational process (Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008; Kelly, 2009). Furthermore, formative assessment aims to promote “an all-round development of the students”, which accords with Kelly’s (2009, p.98) view that “the prime concern of the educational process is with human development”. Thus, formative assessment in the CECR represents a process-oriented perspective of curriculum development.

Summative assessment is defined as follows:

Summative assessment is conducted at the end of a teaching phase. It mainly consists of final tests and proficiency tests, designed to evaluate students' all-round ability to use English.

In this definition, summative assessment is equated with tests, more specifically “objective” (p.32) tests. Since “objective” tests are the measurement procedure used in the product model (McKernan, 2008, p.85), summative assessment therefore represents a product-oriented perspective. In China, CET-4 is the most important English test for college and university students. As a test, CET-4 thus represents a product-oriented perspective. As discussed earlier in the section on teaching requirements, the CET-4 level is the minimum level for all non-English major students to reach before graduation. Great importance is therefore attached to it, and thus to a product-oriented perspective. Consequently, a process-oriented perspective tends to be subordinate to a product-oriented one in the evaluation of CE.

Furthermore, the CECR suggests that the “tests aim to assess not only students' competence in reading, writing and translation, but also their competence in listening and speaking” (p.33). Thus, development of students' speaking ability is emphasised in the evaluation section of the CECR.

VI. Teaching administration

The section on teaching administration discusses issues of documentation, administration, credit system management, and faculty development. Faculty development is particularly relevant to my analytical interest in reviewing the CECR.

In this section, it is suggested that “the quality of teachers is the key to the improvement of the teaching quality, and to the development of the College English programme” (p.34). The CECR therefore suggests that colleges and universities improve the quality of their teachers by a variety of means, including building a proper faculty team, laying emphasis on the training and development

of CE teachers, and encouraging them to conduct teaching and research with a focus on the improvement of teaching quality.

According to Stenhouse (1975, p.96), the process model “rests upon the quality of the teacher”. More specifically, it relies on the teacher’s professional judgements of student work in order to enhance students’ understanding (Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008). In this sense, if teachers are to develop and refine their criteria of judgement, they must have time and opportunity for professional development (Stenhouse, 1975). Thus, the great emphasis placed on faculty development by the CECR is conducive to a process-oriented perspective.

In this section, I have reviewed all six sections of the CECR. How the CECR addresses the five issues stated at the beginning of the section can be summarised as follows. First, *CET-4* originates from the teaching requirements of the CECR, as the basic requirements are the requirements for the CET-4 level (Cai, 2006); second, *English of Specialty* is neglected in favour of General English, as shown in the sections on teaching requirements and course design; third, *the development of students’ speaking ability* is emphasised in five parts of the CECR: teaching objectives, teaching requirements, course design, teaching model, and evaluation; fourth, *a product-oriented perspective*, which is represented by the CE objective to develop students’ ability to use English, is emphasised throughout the CECR and therefore dominates the CECR; last, *a process-oriented perspective* is insufficiently addressed, as it relates to developing students’ learning autonomy and cultural capacity, but these two CE objectives are inadequately addressed in the CECR.

The CECR “has been drawn up to provide colleges and universities with the guidelines for English instruction to non-English major students” (p.22). In this sense, how the CECR addresses the five issues stated above may have a certain influence on the way the institutional curriculum of College X addresses these issues. In the next section, I review this institutional curriculum and compare it to the CECR.

5.2 A review of the institutional curriculum

As stated in Chapter 1, the institutional curriculum of College X has three parts: i) the General English teaching plan, ii) the General English teaching practice, and iii) the English of Specialty curriculum. I review these three parts here and compare them to the CECR in order to see how the CE curriculum develops from the national curriculum to the institutional curriculum of College X.

5.2.1 A review of the General English teaching plan

In College X, a General English teaching plan has been designed by the director of General English, under the guidance of the head of the English Department, to provide all CE teachers with guidelines for English teaching. It consists of six sections: teaching objectives, teaching methodology, teaching schedule¹⁵ (textbooks, teaching and learning tasks, and teaching hours), teaching model and environment, evaluation, and teaching administration.

Intensive General English courses are offered in College X in the first four terms of the undergraduate programme¹⁶. There is a teaching plan for each of the four terms. However, the four teaching plans are exactly the same in terms of teaching objectives, methodology, teaching model and environment, assessment, and teaching administration. The difference lies in the teaching schedule section: different volumes of the textbook are used in different terms; and the teaching plan used in the fourth term includes CET-4 training. I analysed this teaching plan in order to understand how it addresses both CET-4 and other issues.

In order to compare the General English teaching plan to the CECR, I analyse its six sections consecutively. I specifically look at how each section addresses the five issues: i) CET-4, ii) English of Specialty, iii) the development of students' speaking ability, iv) a product-oriented perspective, v) a

¹⁵ I added this heading for the convenience of reference. The original heading is given in parentheses.

¹⁶ An undergraduate programme in China lasts four years and in each year there are two terms.

process-oriented perspective, in order to evaluate the extent to which the General English teaching plan meets the learners' expressed needs.

I. Teaching objectives

The first section of the teaching plan is a statement of the teaching objectives. These objectives are stated in terms of what “students will be able to do at the end of the term” for the five skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. For example, the objectives regarding listening are:

Students will be able to understand English lectures and everyday conversations, identify the main points and details in short dialogues, understand short passages of around 120 words and grasp the main ideas and key points.

In this section of teaching objectives, two relevant issues were identified. First, as the teaching objectives address the five language skills, with the speaking skill being one, the development of students' speaking ability is emphasised. Second, teaching objectives stated as what students will do are characteristic of behavioural objectives as pursued in the product model (McKernan, 2008), and so these objectives represent a product-oriented perspective.

Compared with the objectives for CE set in the CECR, which address learner autonomy and cultural capacity in addition to the development of language skills and therefore represent both process-oriented and product-oriented perspectives, the objectives in the teaching plan become much narrower.

II. Teaching methodology

The second section of the teaching plan is a statement about teaching methodology. This section consists of eight principles that teachers are expected to follow in their teaching practice.

Three relevant issues were identified in this section: i) the development of students' speaking ability, ii) a product-oriented perspective, and iii) a

process-oriented perspective. The first and second issues are addressed in the fourth teaching methodology principle:

Teachers should help students to have a solid foundation in the English language while developing their ability to use English, especially their ability to listen and speak in English.

First, as particular emphasis is placed on students' "ability to listen and speak in English", the development of students' speaking ability is emphasised in this principle.

Second, the reference to "a solid foundation in the English language" and "their [students'] ability to use English" refers to "knowledge and practical skills of the English language" (CECR, 2007), which is a main component of CE in the CECR. As discussed in the review of the CECR in Section 5.1, this component represents a product-oriented perspective. Accordingly, the fourth teaching methodology principle stated in the General English teaching plan represents this perspective as well.

The other seven principles support a process-oriented perspective by attaching much importance to the learning process, students' needs in the learning process, or students' personal development in terms of learning autonomy, learning awareness and reflexivity. They are: "promoting individualised study methods and autonomous learning ability", "adopting student-centred and teacher-led patterns", "suiting the teaching to students' ability", "enhancing formative assessment", "raising learning awareness", "encouraging students reflect on their learning methods" and "helping students expand their learning". As seven out of the eight principles tend to support a process-oriented perspective, this perspective is therefore much more emphasised than a product-oriented one in the methodology section.

III. Teaching schedule (textbooks, teaching and learning tasks, and teaching hours)

The third section of the teaching plan provides a detailed teaching schedule for General English teaching in College X. It consists of specifications of the textbooks, teaching and learning tasks, and the teaching hours for each unit in the textbooks. The teaching and learning tasks cover how many units in the textbooks need to be taught or learnt by the students themselves, and how a certain unit can be taught by the teacher. Furthermore, another teaching task is “intensive training for CET-4”, including dictations of CET-4 words, analyses of test papers, and test-oriented listening and writing practice.

Two relevant issues were identified in this section on the teaching schedule. First, CET-4 is emphasised, as “intensive training for CET-4” constitutes an important teaching task, as stated above. Furthermore, during their classroom teaching teachers are instructed to definitely analyse the exercises in the “Test Zone” section of the textbook. These exercises are ones which mirror questions in the CET-4 test paper.

Second, this teaching schedule represents a product-oriented perspective. This can first be seen in the textbooks. Three books are used: i) a “comprehensive English book”, used to develop students’ comprehensive English ability, including listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating abilities; ii) a “listening and speaking book”, focusing on the development of students’ listening and speaking abilities; and iii) a “fast-reading book”, focusing on the development of students’ reading ability. The three books suggest that CE teaching and learning is primarily concerned with the development of students’ language abilities, which, based on my analysis of the CECR reported in Section 5.1, represents a product-oriented perspective. Furthermore, this perspective is seen in the specifications of teaching tasks. When using the comprehensive English book, it is suggested that teachers focus on “text analysis”, “exercises”, “vocabulary”, and “reading skills”. This way of teaching is concerned with “instruction” and

“training”, which are characteristic of the product model (Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008), and so represents a product-oriented perspective.

What is also noteworthy is that compared with the CECR the General English teaching plan envisages a narrower course system. In the CECR, the “language and culture” course makes explicit reference to a cultural dimension. By contrast, the textbooks specified in the teaching plan, as listed above, are only concerned with the language dimension. Thus, the course system of the General English teaching plan in College X is narrower than that in the CECR.

IV. Teaching model and environment

“Classroom teaching: multimedia classroom.”

This is the only information provided in the teaching model and environment section.

In the CECR, great importance is attached to reform of the teaching model, with a view to promoting “the development of individualised study methods and the autonomous learning ability on the part of students” (p.31). As discussed in Section 5.1, this reform of the teaching model makes explicit reference to a process-oriented perspective, although this perspective is poorly addressed in the computer-based English learning model recommended by the CECR. However, very little information is provided in this section of the College X General English teaching plan. Therefore, it is difficult to gauge whether the General English teaching model supports a process-oriented perspective or not.

V. Evaluation

The section on evaluation specifies how the final score for course learning is produced. It consists of “a formative score” and “a final exam score” – the score in the exam at the end of a given term – accounting for 40% and 60% respectively. “Oral tests, autonomous learning, classroom performance and assignments, and attendance”, which are four forms of formative assessment,

contribute equally to the formative score, each accounting for 25%, i.e. 10% of the final score.

First, this section on evaluation is relevant to the development of students' speaking ability. As stated above, since an oral test has been included in the formative assessment, the development of students' speaking ability is considerably emphasised.

Second, this section relates to both the product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives of curriculum development. As discussed in my analysis of the CECR reported in Section 5.1, summative assessment, i.e. tests, represents a product-oriented perspective and formative assessment a process-oriented one. The final exam in College X therefore represents a product-oriented perspective. However, the above listed four forms of formative assessment might represent either a product-oriented or a process-oriented perspective. For example, in the oral test the recommended form of "giving a speech on a given topic" may invite "creative", "unique" and "unanticipated" responses from students, which are characteristic of the process model (McKernan, 2008, p.85). By contrast, "reciting from memory preselected paragraphs from the textbook" involves "retention of information", and therefore relates to "instruction" (McKernan, 2008, p.98), which is characteristic of the product model (McKernan, 2008). Thus, the oral test, and accordingly the formative assessment, seems to involve elements of both a product-oriented and a process-oriented perspective.

Overall, a product-oriented perspective is more emphasised than a process-oriented one in this evaluation section, for two main reasons: first, summative assessment accounts for 60% while formative assessment accounts for only 40% of the final score; second, summative assessment involves solely a product-oriented perspective, while formative assessment might represent either a product-oriented or a process-oriented perspective.

VI. Teaching administration

The section on teaching administration consists of two regulations concerning eligibility for final exams and leave of absence. These regulations do not seem to be relevant to the students' expressed target needs or the two perspectives of curriculum development and are therefore not discussed here.

In this subsection, I have reviewed six sections of the General English teaching plan. How this teaching plan addresses the five issues stated at the beginning of this chapter can be summarised as follows. First, *CET-4* is emphasised in the teaching schedule section; second, *the development of students' speaking ability* is emphasised in the sections on teaching objectives, teaching methodology, and evaluation; third, *a product-oriented perspective* is dominant since it is represented by the teaching objectives and teaching schedule, included in the teaching methodology, and emphasised in evaluation; fourth, *a process-oriented perspective* is neglected, as it is not addressed in the teaching objectives or teaching schedule, although it is emphasised in the teaching methodology and included in evaluation.

Compared with the CECR, a process-oriented perspective is less present in the General English teaching plan, as the teaching plan makes no explicit reference to the cultural dimension and less reference to learner autonomy, both of which represent a process-oriented perspective. In the next section, I review the General English teaching practice and compare it to the teaching plan.

5.2.2 A review of General English teaching practice

As defined in Chapter 1, General English teaching practice is the implementation of the General English teaching plan of College X. Thus, I investigated the teaching practice by focusing on the six issues addressed in the teaching plan (see Section 5.2.1 above), which are: i) teaching objectives, ii) teaching methodology, iii) teaching schedule, iv) teaching model and environment, v) evaluation, and vi) teaching administration. For the data analysis, I drew on the observation and interview data in order to enrich my understanding

of how the General English teaching plan was implemented in the teaching practice at College X.

I. Teaching objectives

CET-4 and the development of students' speaking ability were two relevant issues identified in the teaching objectives.

The objective of General English in the teaching plan is to develop the students' five language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. However, both student and teacher participants tended to agree that the development of students' speaking ability was neglected in teaching practice. For example, according to S11, a second year student, oral practice was rarely addressed in General English teaching. Written English constituted the teaching focus, but it could hardly be used in practice.

[5-1] 大学英语[基础英语]的教学中, 也没有专门的口语训练, 所以学到的基本都是一些书面上的东西, 很少能够运用到实际中去, 所以没办法完全达到日常交流的目标。(S11)
(*There is no special oral practice in CE [General English]¹⁷ teaching. What we learn is generally written knowledge which can hardly be used in practice, and so I can by no means fully achieve the goal of communicating in daily life.*)

T2, the director of General English, reported that the teaching of listening and speaking was organised around the textbook. Although it was a textbook for both listening and speaking practice, listening became the focus while speaking was largely neglected.

[5-2] 听说里面也是以教材为主嘛, 基本上90%都在教材。虽说是听说教程, 但是说的比较少, 还是听的占80%。(T2)
(*The teaching of listening and speaking is also textbook-based, about 90% based on the textbook. Although it is a textbook for both listening and speaking practice, speaking is involved less, while listening accounts for 80%.*)

¹⁷ As stated in Chapter 1, General English is usually referred to as College English. In this study, CE consists of General English and English of Specialty. S11 referred to General English as “大学英语(College English)”.

T1 and T2, the two teacher participants, agreed that organising oral practice in the classroom was a hard and thankless job, and therefore they gradually paid less attention to it, as T1 stated:

[5-3] 我觉得现在上口语课是个很大的瓶颈, 然后到了后面, 我基本上课堂上不组织口语练习。(T1)
(*I think it's really challenging to give an oral class. Gradually, I basically don't organise oral practice in class.*)

These three examples illustrate that the development of students' speaking ability is neglected in teaching practice. This general tendency was also supported by my fieldnotes from the classroom observations:

[5-4] 师生之间英语口语交流主要形式为学生回答老师提问, 基本没有学生与学生之间的英语对话。(27/09/10)
(*Teacher-student communication in English is only seen when the students answer the teacher's questions. There are few conversations in English among the students.*)

An objective which is not included in the teaching plan but was pursued by teachers in their teaching practice was to prepare students for CET-4, as T1 stated:

[5-5] [基础英语教学]只是停留在培养他们考过四级。(T1)
(*[General English teaching] merely aims to help students pass CET-4.*)

According to T2, raising the CET-4 pass rate would even be written into College X's future teaching plan as the primary objective of CE.

[5-6] 我们下学期我做的那个计划就是提高四级的通过率, 这个是最主要的目标。(T2)
(*In the teaching plan I designed for next term, the primary objective is to raise the CET-4 pass rate.*)

My observation data also provide evidence of the great emphasis placed on CET-4 in this college. During my classroom observations, the English teacher related the content of a lecture given in College X by a CET expert to the class, as illustrated by the following fieldnote:

[5-7] X老师听了汪教授[著名四六级辅导专家]讲座, 在班上传递其精神。(03/11/2010)
(*The English teacher attended Prof. Wang's [a well-known expert on CET training] lecture and conveyed Wang's views to the class.*)

By relating Wang's lecture, the teacher emphasised CET-4 in her teaching practice. This lecture also reminded me of another lecture by Wang which was given in College X in 2009 and which I had attended. I thus checked my notes and found the two lectures had the same content and focused on the CET tests. Given that the same professor was invited to give the same lecture about CET repeatedly, College X clearly attached great importance to CET-4.

To sum up, CET-4 constituted a primary objective pursued in the General English teaching practice. By contrast, the development of students' speaking ability was neglected by teachers.

II. Teaching methodology

The methodology in the teaching practice reflected various aspects of the General English curriculum, such as the teaching objectives (I), teaching schedule (III), teaching model and environment (IV), evaluation (V), and teaching administration (VI). Since these aspects are all reviewed here, I do not restate these specific issues. A central feature of the teaching methodology was that General English teaching was test-driven, and more specifically CET-4-driven.

III. Teaching schedule (textbooks, teaching and learning tasks, and teaching hours)

As stated in Section 5.2.1, the teaching schedule of the General English teaching plan covers the specifications of the textbooks, teaching and learning tasks, and teaching hours for each unit in the textbooks. In my classroom observations, the teacher generally followed the planned teaching schedule, including using the given textbooks, teaching the given units, focusing on text analysis, exercises and vocabulary in classroom teaching, and analysing the exercises in the "Test Zone" in the comprehensive English book. Furthermore, the teacher depended on the course software (PowerPoint Slides) designed by the General English faculty in her classroom teaching. In this sense, the classroom

teaching tended to be transmission of preselected teaching content, which would lead to convergence in learning outcomes.

From the above description, the General English teaching practice was organised into “units” focusing on “instruction” of the English language and “training” in English skills (text analysis, exercises, and vocabulary), emphasised preparation for “tests”, and was conducive to “convergence” in the learning outcomes, all of which are characteristics of the “outcomes-based model” (McKernan, 2008, p.85), i.e. the product model. This classroom teaching based on the teaching schedule set out in the teaching plan therefore represented a product-oriented perspective.

IV. Teaching model and environment

In the General English teaching practice, an important issue relevant to the teaching model and environment was autonomous English learning.

College X had introduced a computer-based autonomous learning model to the General English curriculum by following the guidelines for reforming the teaching model provided by the CECR. According to the CECR, this teaching model aims to “promote the development of individualised study methods and the autonomous learning ability on the part of students” (p.31), which supports a process-oriented perspective, as discussed in Section 5.1.

However, as presented in Section 4.2 in Chapter 4, students’ autonomous English learning in College X becomes highly controlled course learning: the learning content is preset by teachers and confined to listening exercises from the textbook, and the learning time is recorded by the computer as an indicator of learning performance. Such practice is not likely to promote students’ learning autonomy, and accordingly a process-oriented perspective, in the General English curriculum.

V. Evaluation

In evaluation, three relevant issues were identified: i) neglect of a process-oriented perspective, ii) over-emphasis on a product-oriented perspective, and iii) CET-4-driven General English teaching.

First, a process-oriented perspective was neglected in evaluation as the formative score was trivialised in the teaching practice. As a teacher in College X, I knew that an unwritten rule for marking among teachers was that the formative score might be used to balance a low score in the final exam to raise the final score. To avoid using my own experience as the lens through which to view and understand my participants' experience, I drew on a statement by T1, a teacher participant, to explain how a formative score might be produced. T1 tended to think that to a considerable extent the scoring was based on the teacher's impression of the student.

[5-8] 其实很多老师都不严格的。就是靠印象分，说实在的。就是说，大纲上制定很严格，出勤率啊，然后……但这些都是字面上给领导看的。(T1)
(*In fact, many teachers are not strict with the formative score. Frankly speaking, they just rely on their impression of the student. Although there are strict requirements in the teaching plan such as attendance and ... but they are just words for leaders to look over.*)

However, T1 also suggested that this impression-based formative score was to a large extent reliable.

[5-9] 但是这平时分[印象分]也基本上不会有很大的误差，这个学生只要他/她保持好的话，肯定会给老师留下好的印象的。(T1)
(*But this formative score [impression-based score] is generally accurate. If a student keeps performing well, he/she will certainly make a favourable impression on the teacher.*)

Furthermore, T1 stated that the formative score might be used by the teacher to balance a low exam score in order to raise the final score to the pass mark.

[5-10] 实际上有时候你为了照顾他，比如说，他/她差几分就及格了，那你只好把平时分打高来拉他/她及格。平时分就是作为拉学生及格的一个——(T1)

(In fact, in order to show consideration for a student – for example, he/she may fail by a few marks – you have to give a high formative score to let him/her pass. The formative score is used to bring about a passing score.)

According to this, the formative score is a trivial score in the teaching practice. As discussed in the review of the teaching plan reported in Section 5.2.1, the formative assessment which generates the formative score contains a process-oriented perspective, and this perspective is subordinate to a product-oriented one in evaluation. In the teaching practice, with the formative score being trivialised, a process-oriented perspective is further neglected in evaluation.

Second, a product-oriented perspective is over-emphasised in evaluation, as testing, including the final exams and CET-4, becomes high-stakes testing. According to Berliner (2011), high-stakes testing will lead to the inevitable responses of cheating, excessive test preparation, changes in test scoring and other forms of gaming to ensure that test scores appear high. In this study, all these responses could be found in College X. For example, cheating (see excerpts [4-32] and [4-33]) and excessive preparation for CET-4 (see excerpts [4-44] to [4-49]) have been reported in Chapter 4, and changes in test scoring have been reported here. I present here two more responses to the testing: excessive preparation and a lowered standard for the final exam.

During my classroom observation conducted on 29th December 2010, the end of the first term for the accounting class observed, the teacher provided a detailed programme for the final exam (Appendix 10) to help the class do intensive preparation for it. This provision of the final exam programme was also confirmed by T1:

[5-11] 就是说我们划定范围的原则是确保学生能够拿60分，60分是出书上的，然后40分出课外的……而且我们60分范围内就是三本书的内容，一个是综合，一个是听力，还有一个是快速阅读。所以说，划是划了，范围还是很广的，60分要看完三本书。(T1)

(The purpose of setting a programme for the final exam is to ensure that students can get 60. 60% of the questions are from the textbooks, and 40% from other sources... The 60% is from three books, namely the

comprehensive English book, the listening and speaking book, and the fast reading book. Although we give a programme, it is quite a broad programme. To get 60, students have to revise all these books.)

According to this comment, English final exams in College X were textbook based to a considerable extent. This textbook-based testing would certainly invite excessive preparation and cramming before the final exam.

Furthermore, the standard of the final exam might be lowered to ensure a high pass rate. According to T1, the teachers were urged by the Academic Affairs Office to lower the final exam standard to ensure that the majority of students passed the exam.

[5-12] 因为我们以前大学英语出的题目比较难嘛，然后很多都不及格。然后教学部还批评我们，说什么“你们出题太难了啊”，然后什么现在又——反正越到后面就标准就放得越松啦。(T1)

(The questions in our test paper used to be difficult, and so many students couldn't pass the exam, and then the Academic Affairs Office criticised us, saying that "The questions you set were too difficult", and now ... Anyway, the standard becomes lower and lower.)

This brief description of harmful responses to the testing, including CET-4 and the final exam, suggests that the tests are overemphasised in the General English teaching practice. Since tests represent a product-oriented perspective, as discussed in sections 5.1 and 5.2.1, this perspective is overemphasised in the teaching practice.

Third, the General English teaching practice tends to be CET-4 driven. The over-emphasis placed on the tests illustrated above suggests that the General English teaching practice of College X is test-driven. Furthermore, the final exams mirror CET-4, as T1 stated:

[5-13] [期考试卷和四级试卷]差不多，没有100%一样，适当地降低难度。比如说dictation，四级有的是听写句子的，我们的都没有句子，全是单词，降低难度啦。(T1)

([The final exam paper and the CET-4 paper are] almost the same, but not 100% the same. The final exam paper is made easier to some extent. For example, dictations in CET-4 may involve sentences, but ours involve only words.)

As a result of this comment, I then compared a final exam paper to a CET-4 paper and found that they were almost the same in terms of question types and the percentage of each question type. In this sense, the final exams are used to prepare for CET-4. Thus, the test-driven teaching practice is largely CET-4-driven.

VI. Teaching administration

Teaching administration in the teaching practice refers to implementation of the two regulations set out in the teaching plan. As stated in the review of the teaching plan (Section 5.2.1), these regulations are not relevant to my analytic interest in the data analysis, and so I do not discuss them here.

This subsection has reviewed the General English teaching practice in College X. How the teaching practice addresses the five issues stated at the beginning of this chapter can be summarised as follows. First, CET-4 receives so much emphasis in College X that General English teaching tends to be CET-4-driven; second, the development of students' speaking ability is neglected by teachers during their teaching practice; third, a product-oriented perspective is overwhelmingly dominant, as tests, the instruction of language knowledge, and the practice of language skills are highly emphasised; fourth, a process-oriented perspective that might encourage learner autonomy and intercultural communication is largely neglected in the teaching practice.

5.2.3 A review of the English of Specialty curriculum

As stated in Chapter 3, I drew on two types of documents – undergraduate programme plans and teaching timetables for all non-English programmes – to understand the English of Specialty curriculum in College X. According to my review of the CECR (Section 5.1), this course is neglected in the CECR. Thus, my review of the English of Specialty curriculum here focuses on how this course is valued in College X.

The findings are summarised in Table 5.1, showing how English of Specialty was planned and implemented in College X in the academic year 2010/2011, the

first year of my fieldwork period. The table gives information about the programmes in which the course was offered, course name, course type, terms, credits, teaching hours, and whether or not it was offered in teaching practice.

Programmes	Course name	Course type	terms	Credits	Teaching hours	Offered or not
Law	Legal English	Basic elective	5	2	36	No
Business administration	Cambridge Business English 1-3	Major elective	5-7	2.5*3	45*3	Yes
International business & trade	Cambridge Business English (intermediate 1, 2)	Major required	5, 6	3*2	54*2	Yes
	Business English Listening & Speaking	Major required	7	3	54	Yes
Marketing	Business English	Major elective	5	3	54	Yes
	English Listening & Speaking 1, 2		5, 6	2*2	36*2	Yes
Financial management	English of Specialty	Major elective	6	2	36	Yes
Accounting	English of Specialty	Major elective	5	2	36	Yes
Public administration	Western Culture (bilingual)	Basic elective	5	2	36	No
	English of Specialty		6	2.5	45	Yes
Social work	English of Specialty	Major core	6	2	36	No
Applied psychology	No					
Property management	English of Property Management	Major elective	7	2	36	N/A (newly established)
Tourism management (internationally oriented)	Oral English 1, 2	Basic elective	1, 2	2*2	36*2	N
	Tourism English		5	2	36	N/A (studying abroad)
	Hotel English		5	2	36	N/A (studying abroad)
	Business English (not planned but offered)	Major elective	7	2	36	Yes
Management Science	No					
Information management & information systems	English of Specialty	Major elective	5	2.5	48	Yes
	Sci-tech English		5	2.5	48	No
Chinese linguistics & literature	Practical English	Basic elective	6	2	36	No
Chinese as a foreign language	Comprehensive English 1, 2	Major required	5, 6	3*2	54*2	Yes
	Advanced English	Major required	6	3	54	Yes

Fine arts (education-oriented)	N/A (newly established, plan not available)					
Advertising	Advertising English	Major required	6	2	36	Yes
Journalism	Media English	Major required	6	2	36	Yes
Radio & TV journalism	Media English	Major required	6	2	36	Yes
Japanese	English Writing 1-4	Basic elective	1-4	2*4	36*4	No
	English Communication 1-4 (not planned but offered)	Basic elective	1-4	2*4	36*4	Yes
	English Listening & Speaking1-3	Major elective	5-7	2*3	36*3	N/A (newly established)
Computer science & technology	English of Specialty	Major elective	5	2	40	Yes
Network engineering	English of Specialty	Basic elective	4	2	40	No
Electronic commerce	English of Specialty	Major elective	5	2	36	No
Industrial design	English of Specialty	Major required	7	2	36	Yes
Art & design	English of Specialty	Major elective	2	3	54	No
Landscape architecture	English of Specialty	Major elective	5	2.5	45	Yes
Communication engineering	English of Specialty	Major elective	5	2	36	Yes
Transportation	English of Specialty	Major elective	7	2	36	No
Automation	No					
Electrical Engineering & Automation	Circuit Theory 1, 2 (Bilingual)	Basic elective	3, 4	3*2	54*2	No
Bioengineering	No					
Digital media technology	N/A (newly established, plan not available)					
Electronic science & technology	N/A (newly established, plan not available)					

Table 5.1 The planning and implementation of English of Specialty in the academic year 2010/2011

I compared English of Specialty to General English to show how English of Specialty was valued in College X. Table 5.2 gives information about General English, including the programmes in which the course is offered, course type, terms, credits, teaching hours, and whether or not it was offered in teaching practice.

Programmes	Course type	Planned terms	Credits	Teaching hours	Offered or not
All non-English programmes	Basic required	1-4	16	280	Y

Table 5.2 The planning and implementation of General English in the academic year 2011/2012

As illustrated in Table 5.1, in the majority of undergraduate programmes, English of Specialty is an elective course offered in one term of the last two years of the four-year undergraduate programme. It carries only 2 credits and lasts 36 teaching hours. By contrast, as shown in Table 5.2, General English is a basic required intensive course offered in the first two years, i.e. for four terms, to students in all non-English programmes. It carries up to 16 credits and lasts 280 teaching hours. This comparison suggests that, compared with General English, English of Specialty is largely neglected in College X.

Furthermore, in 12 programmes (e.g. law, public administration, and social work), the planned courses entitled “English of Specialty” or with other more specific names such as “Western Culture” were not implemented in the teaching practice. By contrast, in two programmes, i.e. tourism management and Japanese, unplanned courses were offered in the teaching practice. It thus emerges that English of Specialty is neglected in teaching practice even more than in the undergraduate programme plan.

In short, English of Specialty, compared with General English, is largely neglected in College X, especially in teaching practice. This neglect of English of Specialty can be traced back to the CECR. As shown in Section 5.1, this course

receives insufficient attention in the CECR. This situation might be related to CET-4, which is the most important English test in China and which is a General English-based test without specific purposes (Cai, 2012).

5.2.4 Conclusions

In this section and the above section, I have reviewed the CE curriculum, looking at the national curriculum, i.e. the CECR, and the institutional curriculum of College X by examining the General English teaching plan, General English teaching practice, and the English of Specialty curriculum. The findings show that a product-oriented perspective dominates in the CE curriculum while a process-oriented perspective is neglected. The CE curriculum approach is therefore more related to the product model. Three major problems associated with the product model were identified in the CE curriculum: important outcomes being insufficiently addressed, curriculum narrowing, and high-stakes testing.

First, three important outcomes were insufficiently addressed in the CE curriculum, despite being emphasised in the CE objectives in the CECR. These are the development of students' learning autonomy, cultural competences, and speaking ability. First, in the computer-based English learning model recommended by the CECR (Figure 5.1) and implemented in College X, autonomous English learning becomes highly controlled course learning, and this is not conducive to learning autonomy. Second, the development of students' cultural competences is equated with "the teaching of knowledge about different cultures in the world" in the CECR (p.29), which suggests a narrow perspective of viewing cultural competences and over-simplifies the intercultural communication process. Further, this outcome is not mentioned in the General English teaching plan in College X, and is rarely addressed in teaching practice. Third, the development of students' speaking ability is highly emphasised in both the CECR and the General English teaching plan, but is largely neglected in teaching practice.

This insufficiency in addressing the three important outcomes stated above can be related to one objection to the product model: “Trivial learning behaviours are the easiest to operationalise, hence the really important outcomes of education will be under emphasised” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.72). Learning autonomy and cultural competences are important outcomes “which are detected only with great difficulty and which are translated only rarely into behavioural terms” (Atkin, 1968, p.28), and so they have tended to atrophy in the CE curriculum. It is also noteworthy that the CECR attempts to operationalise these two outcomes, but only trivialises them into computer-based controlled course learning and the teaching of cultural knowledge.

The neglect of the development of students’ speaking ability in teaching practice might be related to operational difficulties in testing. It may be too demanding a job to test the speaking ability of a huge number of students, considering the workload for teachers and the facilities needed. This may also account for the lack of an oral component in CET-4, the most important English test for college and university students in China. As English teaching tends to be CET-4-driven in College X, the development of students’ speaking ability would seem to be further neglected by teachers.

The second problem which is associated with the product model and found in this study is curriculum narrowing. This problem is closely associated with the first problem discussed above. Along all the steps from the CECR to the General English teaching practice in College X, a product-oriented perspective receives more emphasis. By contrast, important outcomes such as developing students’ learning autonomy, their cultural competences and speaking ability tend to atrophy. In other words, a focus on the learning process, a cultural dimension, and the speaking part in the language dimension are neglected or lost in the teaching practice at College X. Thus, the CE curriculum becomes narrower in its translation from the national curriculum to the institutional curriculum. This problem of curriculum narrowing associated with the product model, however, is not reported in the literature, and so adds to the existing objections to this model

(e.g. Stenhouse, 1975; Clark, 1985, cited in Nunan, 1988; McKernan, 2008; Kelly, 2009).

The third problem is an over-emphasis on a product-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum, which is strongly present in the over-reliance on testing, leads to high-stakes testing and the harm that follows. In the CECR, CET-4 is combined with the minimum level of teaching requirements for all non-English major students and therefore becomes a high-stakes test. The final exam is geared towards CET-4 and thus becomes another high-stakes test. These risk many harmful consequences in the CE curriculum, including “cheating, excessive test preparation, changes in test scoring and other forms of gaming to ensure that test scores appear high” (Berliner, 2011). This high-stakes testing and its harmful consequences can be related to the product model, as this model rests on “objective” tests as measurement procedures (McKernan, 2008, p.85). Like the second problem, this problem is also not discussed in the literature and therefore adds to the existing objections to the product model (e.g. Stenhouse, 1975; Clark, 1985, cited in Nunan, 1988; McKernan, 2008; Kelly, 2009).

In summary, the CE curriculum approach is primarily concerned with the product model. Consequently, three problems associated with the product model have been identified in the CE curriculum: i) important outcomes being insufficiently addressed, ii) curriculum narrowing, and iii) high-stakes testing. The second and third problems are not reported in the existing literature concerning the limitations of the product model (e.g. Stenhouse, 1975; Clark, 1985, cited in Nunan, 1988; McKernan, 2008; Kelly, 2009).

5.3 Meeting learners’ expressed needs through the curriculum

The learners’ expressed needs were presented in Chapter 4, and the CE curriculum has just been reviewed. In this section I compare the learners’ expressed needs, both target needs and learning needs, with relevant issues in the

CE curriculum in order to see how the CE curriculum meets the learners' expressed needs.

5.3.1 Meeting target needs through the curriculum

As reported in Chapter 4, the student participants expressed three major target needs: i) to pass CET-4, ii) to use English in future work, and iii) to speak English.

To pass CET-4

As shown in sections 5.1 and 5.2, CET-4 originates from the CECR and is highly emphasised in the institutional curriculum of College X. Thus, my focus here is not on how the students' need to pass CET-4 is addressed in the CE curriculum. Instead, I examine the CET-4 test in order to understand this need better.

Tables 5.3 and 5.4 respectively show the components and question types in the CET-4 paper, with a comparison between the situations before and after 2006, when there was a reform of the CET-4 paper.

	Listening	Reading	Vocabulary /grammar	Cloze	Writing	Translating (C-E)
Before 2006	20%	40%	15%	10%	15%	
After 2006	35%	35%		10%	15%	5%

Table 5.3 Components of the CET-4 paper

	Multiple choice questions	Writing	Translating	Dictation, filling in the blanks, error correction, answering questions
Before 2006	85%	15%		
After 2006	50%-60%	15%	5%	20%-30%

Table 5.4 Question types in the CET-4 paper

The CET-4 paper is composed of listening, reading, writing, translating (since 2006), vocabulary/grammar (before 2006), and cloze. The first four

components, listening, reading, writing and translating, are concerned with communication skills and account for a very large percentage of the total score: 75% before 2006 and 90% after 2006. In particular, reading accounts for the largest percentage (40% before 2006 and 35% after 2006). Listening has attracted increasing attention and also accounts for a considerable percentage (20% before 2006 and 35% after 2006). The other two components, vocabulary/grammar (15%, before 2006) and cloze (10%), are used to evaluate students' grammatical competence.

The question types used in the CET-4 paper include multiple choice questions, writing, translating, and other types such as dictation, filling in the blanks, error correction and answering questions. The test largely depends on multiple choice questions to measure students' language proficiency. These accounted for 85% of the total score before 2006 and still over half even after the reform.

According to the CECR, summative assessment, with CET-4 being an important part, is designed to determine the attainment of one of CE's objectives, which is stated as follows:

...to develop students' ability to use English in a well-rounded way, especially in listening and speaking, so that in their future studies and careers as well as social interactions they will be able to communicate effectively... (p.23)

However, it seems that CET-4 is not able to evaluate the above objective of CE. First, CET-4 fails to sufficiently evaluate students' ability to use English. Liu (Wang Hua, 2004) argues that CET-4 and CET-6 measure only students' ability to recognise and manipulate trivial language items rather than an ability to use English. As indicated in Table 5.4, CET-4 largely depends on multiple choice questions to test students' English proficiency, and this question type might involve recognising and identifying certain language items from others and measures ability to manipulate them.

Jin (2004, cited in Cai, 2006, p.239) also suggests that the inability of CET to evaluate students' practical English ability is related to the content of the test. According to Jin, a major problem is the focus of CET: it focuses on knowledge of the language rather than ability to use it, and on receptive skills, such as listening and reading, rather than productive skills, such as writing and speaking. As shown in Tables 5.2 and 5.3, the problems pointed out by Jin remain even after the 2006 reform, although they are alleviated to some extent.

Second, CET-4 fails to evaluate students' English ability in a well-rounded way. As shown in Table 5.3, CET-4 does not have a speaking component and therefore constitutes a written test. While a very small number of students who get a very high score – over 550 out of 710 – in this written test get a chance to take an oral test which is also organised by the CET committee, the majority of students do not have their speaking ability measured in CET-4. Without the oral part, CET-4 therefore fails to measure students' English ability in a well-rounded way.

Third, CET-4 does not assess students' ability to use English for future studies and careers. As Cai (2012) notes, CET is a General English test without any specific purpose, and therefore cannot evaluate students' ability to use English to study or work in specific fields.

From the above, CET-4 focuses on language knowledge and skills but does not address speaking skills. In addition, it fails to evaluate students' practical English ability. Overall, the design of CET-4 is considerably problematic.

To use English in future work

The findings in Chapter 4 show that using English in the workplace requires an ability to use English in specific fields to accomplish real tasks. In the CE curriculum, the development of such abilities is focused on the English of Specialty course. In addition, a general ability to use English should contribute to these abilities. I thus checked how the English of Specialty course and the development of students' ability to use English are addressed in the CE

curriculum, in order to see how the students' need to use English in future work is addressed in the curriculum.

First, English of Specialty is neglected in the CECR. In College X, this course is neglected in the undergraduate programme plan and further neglected in teaching practice.

Second, the development of students' ability to use English is strongly emphasised in the CECR and the General English teaching plan in College X. In General English teaching practice, however, the development of students' speaking ability is largely neglected by teachers. In addition, the development of students' practical ability to use English also tends to be under-emphasised, as teaching practice tends to be CET-4-driven but CET-4 is not able to evaluate students' practical ability to use English, as discussed earlier. Consequently, the development of students' ability to use English is insufficiently addressed in the General English teaching practice in College X.

Under these circumstances, the students' expressed target need to use English in their future work is insufficiently addressed in the national curriculum, i.e. the CECR, and even more unsatisfactorily addressed in the institutional curriculum of College X.

To speak English

In the CE curriculum, the issue relevant to the students' expressed target need to speak English is the development of students' speaking ability. The CECR and the College X General English teaching plan are primarily concerned with the development of students' five language abilities, especially listening and speaking abilities. Thus, the students' need to speak English is well addressed in these two documents. However, it tends to be underemphasised in the General English teaching practice, as the development of students' speaking ability is neglected by teachers in College X.

To sum up, CET-4 has considerably problematic aspects in its design, and the students' two target needs – to use English in future work and to speak

English – are generally far from sufficiently addressed in the CE curriculum. Superficially, this unsatisfactory situation is closely associated with the tests in the CE curriculum, especially CET-4. As an academic requirement set by the CMOE, CET-4 has created the students’ need to pass CET-4. Furthermore, since CET-4 is a General English test without specific purposes (Cai, 2012) and lacks an oral test, the students’ needs to use English in future work and to speak English are then under-emphasised in the CET-4-driven teaching practice.

More essentially, the situation concerning the students’ expressed target needs largely depends on over-emphasis on a product-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum, as “objective” tests are measurement procedures used in the product model (McKernan, 2008, p.85). The product model has preset behavioural objectives and draws on tests to assess the attainment of these objectives. If a product model is adopted, testing will be adopted as the measurement procedure. In the Chinese context, with such a huge number of students, more importance is attached to “objective” tests. Consequently, testing and the harm that follows, as discussed earlier, becomes a typical limitation of the product model used in the Chinese context.

5.3.2 Meeting learning needs through the curriculum

The conclusion drawn from Chapter 4 is that when expressing their learning needs, the students already suggested that these needs were not well met in the CE curriculum in College X. In other words, the reason they developed such learning needs, to a large extent, was that they felt that the issues relevant to these needs were insufficiently or poorly addressed by teachers, the administration or other parties concerned in College X.

I refer to the findings reported in Chapter 4 to check how the students’ four expressed learning needs, i.e. their affective needs and their needs concerning teaching/learning strategies, autonomy, and learning environments, are addressed in the CE curriculum in College X.

Affective needs

Regarding their affective needs, the students felt there was a lack of fairness, respect and trust in the learning environment. They also showed a lack of sense of achievement, confidence and courage during the English learning process. However, their emotions during the learning process were rarely addressed by teachers. These emotion-related shortcomings suggest that the students' affective needs were poorly addressed in the CE curriculum in College X.

Teaching/learning strategies

Concerning teaching/learning strategies, many students were frustrated by the excessive preparation for CET-4. They tended to value a free and comfortable teaching environment in which their learning needs, especially those of weak students, would be accommodated, and in which learner autonomy and cooperation between learners would be developed. However, the existing CE teaching was CET-4-driven. Consequently, the students' need for appropriate teaching/learning strategies is poorly met in the CE curriculum.

Autonomy

As regards their need for autonomy, the students felt a lack of control over their English learning, college studies, and more generally college life. Their autonomous English learning was actually highly controlled listening practice. In addition, there were requirements for morning reading and evening study and restrictions on the use of computers and the Internet in the dormitory. Consequently, the students had insufficient autonomy during their learning process. In other words, their expressed learning need for autonomy is inadequately addressed by teachers, the administration and other parties concerned in College X.

Learning environments

Regarding learning environments, the students wanted to have suitable after-class learning environments in which they could learn English, and in particular speak English comfortably with other students. The morning reading scheme organised by a student society in College X was the only environment mentioned by the student participants. However, it merely involved reading activities early in the morning and therefore was not likely to become a beneficial learning environment for the majority of students. In general, the students' expressed learning need to have suitable learning environments was far from sufficiently met in the CE curriculum in College X.

To sum up, the students' expressed learning needs are unsatisfactorily addressed by teachers, the administration, and other parties concerned in College X. Their affective needs and their needs for appropriate teaching/learning strategies, autonomy, and suitable learning environments suggest their needs for personal development in affective, cognitive, and political terms, as well as for suitable contexts which would facilitate their English learning and personal development. These needs can be associated with the process model, which is primarily concerned with "human development" in the educational process (Kelly, 2009, p.98). Since a process-oriented perspective is largely neglected in the teaching practice in College X, the students' expressed learning needs tend to be poorly addressed in the CE curriculum.

5.3.3 Conclusions

My comparison of the students' expressed target needs and the CE curriculum suggests that the students' target needs being insufficiently addressed in the curriculum can to a large extent be related to over-emphasis on a product-oriented perspective, and accordingly on tests. Meanwhile, my comparison of the students' expressed learning needs and the curriculum suggests that the students' learning needs being neglected or perhaps not understood by teachers, the administration, and other parties concerned can largely be related to

neglect of a process-oriented perspective in the curriculum. Thus, any changes towards accommodating the students' expressed needs would need to address the current use of the two perspectives in the CE curriculum.

Although overemphasis on a product-oriented perspective is not conducive to the accommodation of the students' expressed needs, this perspective can be used in the CE curriculum in some measure. First, as discussed in Section 2.2 in Chapter 2, the product model could be used in the CE curriculum to promote students' acquisition of language information and skills. Second, the findings about the students' expressed target needs also to some extent support a product-oriented perspective. The students' two expressed target needs – to use English in future work and to speak English – relate to learning outcomes concerning “performance” or “behaviour”. Such learning outcomes are emphasised in the product model (e.g. Bobbitt, 1918, p.42; Tyler, 1949, p.44), and so these two target needs expressed by the students represent a product-oriented perspective of curriculum development. In other words, in a student-centred view, a product-oriented perspective addresses CE learners' expressed target needs and should therefore be included in the CE curriculum.

By contrast, since a process-oriented perspective emphasises “the well-being of the individual” (McKernan, 2008) and “individual empowerment” (Kelly, 2009), it would be conducive to the accommodation of the English learning needs held by individual learners, i.e. learners' expressed needs for English learning. The findings reported in Section 5.3.2 also suggest that the neglect of a process-oriented perspective proves to be harmful to the accommodation of the students' expressed learning needs. Furthermore, as discussed in Section 2.2 in Chapter 2, the process model could be used to develop students' intercultural understanding. Thus, this perspective would need to be promoted in the CE curriculum in order to accommodate learners' expressed needs.

On balance, and in relation to the findings on the participants' expressed target needs and learning needs, I propose the integration of product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives in the CE curriculum. A product-oriented

perspective can be used to promote students' acquisition of language information and skills, and a process-oriented one can be used to develop students' intercultural understanding. Furthermore, any changes towards accommodating learners' expressed needs in the CE curriculum would need to address the current emphasis placed on a product-oriented perspective and promote a process-oriented one.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have reviewed the CE curriculum, covering the national curriculum, i.e. the CECR, and the institutional curriculum of College X. The findings show that a product-oriented perspective is dominant while a process-oriented one is neglected in the CE curriculum. The over-emphasis on a product-oriented perspective, and particularly on testing, leads to three problems associated with the product model: i) important outcomes being insufficiently addressed, ii) curriculum narrowing, and iii) high-stakes testing. The second and third problems have been identified in this study but are not reported in the literature concerning the limitations of the product model (e.g. Stenhouse, 1975; Clark, 1985, cited in Nunan, 1988; McKernan, 2008, Kelly, 2009).

I have also compared the students' expressed needs, which were presented in Chapter 4, with relevant issues in the CE curriculum. The findings show that CET-4 is considerably problematic in its design. The students' target need to use English in future work is generally insufficiently addressed in the CE curriculum. Although their target need to speak English is strongly emphasised in the CECR and the General English teaching plan of College X, it is neglected by teachers in their teaching practice. Furthermore, the students' expressed learning needs are largely neglected in the CE curriculum of College X.

The unsatisfactory situation concerning the lack of accommodation of the students' expressed needs can to a large extent be related to over-emphasis on a product-oriented perspective, and particularly on testing, and neglect of a

process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum. Given this, any changes towards accommodating students' expressed needs would need to improve the CE curriculum approach, and more specifically to address the emphasis placed on a product-oriented perspective and promote a process-oriented perspective in the curriculum.

In the next chapter, I examine relevant features in the College X learning environment that impact on the CE curriculum, and accordingly on accommodation of the learners' expressed needs.

Chapter 6 Relevant Features in the Learning Environment

In the previous chapter I concluded that accommodation of the students' expressed needs depends on an improvement of the approach of the College English curriculum: to address the emphasis placed on a product-oriented perspective, especially testing, and to promote a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

This chapter examines the relevant features in the learning environment of College X that impact on the CE curriculum approach and which, in turn, may affect the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs. The chapter aims to answer the third research question identified in Chapter 2:

What are the relevant features in the learning environment that impact on the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs?

In analysing the data set of this study, I identified three main relevant features in the learning environment that impact on the CE curriculum approach in College X. The three themes are: the national curriculum (Section 6.1), the physical environment (Section 6.2), and cultural factors (Section 6.3). In my analysis, I have looked at how product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives are represented in the three themes elucidated.

6.1 The national curriculum

The first relevant feature I identified in the learning environment of College X was the national curriculum of CE, i.e. the document *College English Curriculum Requirements* (CECR). The CECR was drawn up to provide colleges and universities, including independent colleges, with guidelines for English instruction. In addition, the findings presented in Chapter 5 show that the use of product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives in the CE curriculum in

College X can be traced back to the CECR. The CECR therefore constitutes a relevant feature that impacts on the CE curriculum in College X.

In this section, I focus on the assumptions underlying the use of product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives in the CECR in order to understand how the CECR could be improved, so that the learners' expressed needs can be accommodated in the curriculum.

6.1.1 The use of a product-oriented perspective in the CECR

The conclusion drawn from Chapter 5 is that a product-oriented perspective is dominant in the CECR. During the data analysis, I first investigated the assumptions underlying the use of this product-oriented perspective in the CECR, and then explored the feasibility of addressing the emphasis placed on it.

As discussed in Chapter 5, a product-oriented perspective is represented by the objective of CE to “develop students’ ability to use English in a well-rounded way, especially in listening and speaking” (p.23). This objective is translated into gaining “knowledge and practical skills of the English language” (p.22) in terms of teaching content and constitutes the primary focus of the teaching requirements. Concerning assessment, this objective provides the sole basis for designing the tests, including the nationwide English test for college and university students – College English Test Band 4 (CET-4).

It is CET-4 that has led to more emphasis being placed on the above objective of CE and therefore the dominance of a product-oriented perspective in the CECR. First, CET-4 is much valued in the CECR, although in an implicit way. It is required in the CECR that “the basic [teaching] requirements are the minimum level that all non-English majors have to reach before graduation”. According to Cai (2006), a member of the CET Committee, the CET-4 level represents the basic requirements. Great importance is therefore attached to CET-4 in this national CE curriculum. Second, CET-4 has attracted considerable attention from Chinese society. The test is the English test on the largest scale in China and is taken every year by almost 20 million students (Cai, 2012). It thus

has exerted a strong influence on the society, involving students, teachers, parents, educational authorities, employers, and so forth. Consequently, as Wang Chu-ming (2010) argues, CE teaching becomes CET-4-driven and students tend to be forced to learn English for the purpose of passing the test. In other words, learning is geared towards teaching and teaching towards testing. However, Wang argues that testing should serve teaching, which should serve learning. In this sense, CET-4 has become an obstacle to CE teaching. Therefore, any changes towards improving CE teaching and addressing the emphasis placed on a product-oriented perspective would need to deal with CET-4.

Coping with CET-4

Many have discussed the way out for CET (e.g. Gao, 2003; Cai, 2006, 2012; Zhang, 2008; Wang, C., 2010). There are generally two different views (Cai, 2006): to abolish it; or to reform it. According to Cai's (2006) analysis, many students, teachers, educational authorities, institutions and employers do not want to abolish CET. It exists not only for social reasons, including employment and marketing, such as the marketing of test training or teaching materials, but also for political reasons, involving social mobility and social stratification. As a result, it is not realistic or the right time to abolish CET.

Meanwhile, CET reforms have attracted considerable attention from the CMOE (Chinese Ministry of Education). The reforms focus on the content and method of testing. Since 2006, a new CET paper has been used. Compared with previous papers, a noticeable change is that more attention is paid to listening while slightly less emphasis is placed on reading comprehension. However, the test still lacks an oral part. In recent years, a computer-based testing model has been introduced in a CET reform (Zhang, 2008) which enables students' spoken ability to be evaluated. The problem is that even if such reforms lead to an improvement of the test quality, they are not likely to change the high status of CET-4 in the CE curriculum or therefore address concerns with high-stakes

testing. What is needed is a radical change which would put an end to the test-driven teaching of CE.

Educational authorities and institutions have made certain efforts to address the impact of CET on CE teaching. Since 2005, the CET Committee has not issued CET certificates to students but only provided them with test results. Many colleges and universities no longer relate students' CET-4 scores to their successful graduation or award of their bachelor's degree. However, the test has already penetrated into Chinese society and a pass is still valued by many concerned, such as students, teachers and institutions.

Given this situation, Wang Chu-ming (2010) and Cai (2012) suggest that CET should be separated from CE teaching and developed into a test run by social agencies rather than educational authorities and institutions, just like IELTS and TOEFL. However, this suggestion also leads to concerns, such as the accessibility of the test to all students, and therefore justice and equality for all students. If it remains a large-scale test, it will still be a high-stakes test and will still have a negative influence on CE teaching. If only some students take the test, employers may need other evidence to evaluate the English proficiency of graduates. Given these concerns, much rethinking would be needed before separating CET from the CE curriculum.

From the above, it is clear that addressing the influence of CET-4 on CE teaching remains a controversial issue, and the issue needs future research. Consequently, there are also difficulties in addressing the emphasis on a product-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum, since "objective" tests are the measurement procedures used in the product model.

6.1.2 The use of a process-oriented perspective in the CECR

As suggested in Chapter 5, a process-oriented perspective is represented in two of the CE objectives: to "enhance their [students'] ability to study independently" and to "improve their general cultural awareness" (p.23), which relate to the two concepts of learner autonomy and cultural capacity. However,

these concepts are poorly interpreted in the CECR, and consequently a process-oriented perspective is insufficiently addressed. Here I investigate the assumptions underlying the conceptualisations of learner autonomy and cultural capacity, reinterpret these concepts, and explore the means of readdressing them in the CECR.

The conceptualisation of learner autonomy and cultural capacity

The concept of learner autonomy receives much attention in the teaching model section of the CECR. It is suggested that the new teaching model should be built on modern information technology to enable English language teaching and learning to be free of the constraints of time or place (p.30) and to “enable students to select materials and methods suited to their individual needs, [and] obtain guidance in learning strategies” (p.31). The words underlined focus on technical support and students’ control and self-direction of their own learning and therefore represent respectively the technical, political, and psychological aspects of the concept of “learner autonomy” discussed by Benson (1997), as reviewed in Chapter 2.

However, learner autonomy is poorly realised in the computer-based learning model (see Figure 5.1 in Chapter 5) recommended by the CECR. As discussed in Chapter 5, this model prescribes units, tests, starting levels and follow-up stages for students. Thus, students are more the recipients of pre-specified course learning rather than autonomous learners who make their own decisions concerning different aspects of their English learning. In other words, an active role for students in the learning process is largely neglected. When students have limited control over their learning, they have little chance to self-direct their learning. In Benson’s (1997) terms, there is a lack of the “political” and “psychological” aspects of learner autonomy in this recommended model. While its use of information technology suggests a “technical” perspective, it is not an adequate interpretation of learner autonomy.

Furthermore, the concept of cultural capacity is also insufficiently interpreted in the CECR. “The development of students’ cultural capacity” is equated with “the teaching of knowledge about different cultures in the world” (p.29). As discussed in Chapter 5, this is a partial and oversimplified view of intercultural communication, as it focuses only on the students’ acquisition of cultural knowledge and risks stereotyping people in different parts of the world by introducing the idea of “different cultures”. In addition, the teaching of cultural knowledge suggests a passive view of the teacher’s role in helping students to develop their cultural capacity as it is much concerned with the prescription of cultural information and then its transmission on the part of the teacher.

Furthermore, the teacher’s role in developing students’ cultural capacity is not made explicit in the CECR, as can be seen in the CE course system. Among the courses which compose the course system of CE, i.e. “comprehensive English, language skills, English for practical uses, language and culture, and English of specialty” (p.29), only the course “language and culture” would connect cultural issues with language teaching, while the other courses have an evident focus on the language dimension. The separation of the two dimensions suggests teachers are expected to focus on language teaching in most courses and on the teaching of cultural knowledge in one course. In other words, teachers are not assumed or encouraged to integrate cultural teaching with language teaching. The teacher’s role in helping students to develop their cultural capacity is therefore limited.

The insufficient interpretation of the two concepts of learner autonomy and cultural capacity are not conducive to a process-oriented perspective, and so any changes towards strengthening this perspective would need to reinterpret these two concepts.

Reinterpreting learner autonomy and cultural capacity

Regarding learner autonomy, as discussed earlier, its representation in the computer-based teaching model is inconsistent with its conceptualisation in the objective of the teaching model reform. Therefore, any changes towards

reinterpreting learner autonomy would need to remove the inconsistency in interpreting this concept. A concept which takes into account all three of the perspectives discussed by Benson (1997) – the technical, psychological and political perspectives – would more sufficiently foster learner autonomy in language teaching. Only when students have sufficient control over the learning content and learning processes (political perspective) are they likely to self-direct their own language learning (psychological perspective). Their autonomous learning can also be facilitated by technical support (technical perspective), including self-access learning centres and learning skills taught by the teacher. If the concept of learner autonomy integrated the three perspectives, the development of students' learning autonomy would be better represented in the CECR, which in turn would be more conducive to a process-oriented perspective.

Regarding cultural capacity, a useful alternative might be the concept of “intercultural competence”, seen as the competence that enables people to act as mediators among groups with different languages and cultures or with the same language but different discourses (Byram, 2012). Intercultural competence goes beyond the recognition of cultural knowledge, which is the focus of the cultural dimension in the CECR, as it emphasises an active role that people may play in intercultural communication, i.e. as mediator. If this concept were introduced into the CE curriculum, an intercultural dimension would be introduced into language teaching.

The concept of intercultural competence can further be combined with the concept of “communicative competence” – with emphasis on the ability to use a language not only with correct application of knowledge of its grammar but also in socially appropriate ways (Savignon, 2004) – to form the concept of “intercultural communicative competence” (Byram, 2012). Intercultural communicative competence thus involves a language dimension as well as an intercultural dimension. This concept therefore combines two of the objectives of CE: to “develop students' ability to use English in a well-rounded way” (a language dimension) and to “improve their general cultural awareness” (a cultural

dimension). Moreover, intercultural communicative competence better represents the two objectives by introducing an intercultural dimension to CE teaching.

Furthermore, the concept of “competence” suggests both product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives of curriculum development. As Fleming (2009) says, the term “competence” has had a chequered history but can usefully be adopted to refer to observable behaviours as well as to the implicit understandings underlying them. He illustrates the flexibility of the concept thus: “the need for understanding may not always be spelled out, but the assumption is that it can be unpacked from the performance statement”. Since “behaviour” or “performance” is pursued in the product model (e.g. Bobbitt, 1918; Tyler, 1949) and “understanding” is emphasised in the process model (e.g. Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008), the concept of “competence” represents both product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives. Accordingly, the concept of “intercultural communicative competence” represents these two perspectives as well.

Readdressing learner autonomy and cultural capacity

The promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CECR would not only depend on a reinterpretation of learner autonomy and cultural capacity but also on readdressing these two concepts. Here, I discuss how they can be readdressed in the sections on teaching requirements, course design, the teaching model, and evaluation in the CECR.

First, I relate the two concepts to teaching requirements and summative assessment – one component of evaluation, the other being formative assessment. The teaching requirements refer to desired learning outcomes regarding the five language abilities, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. The summative assessment, including CET-4, is the measurement of students’ attainment of such learning outcomes. Both of them only involve students’ language competence. An important issue thus arises: is it possible to address learner autonomy and intercultural competence in the teaching requirements and summative assessment? If so, then how?

Concerning learner autonomy, this can hardly be stated as a learning outcome in behavioural terms or measured in summative assessment. Learner autonomy implies that “learners take charge of their own learning” (Legenhausen, 2009, p.373), that is, learners have and hold “the responsibility for *all* the decisions concerning *all* aspects of learning” (Holec, 1981, p.3). In this sense, learner autonomy is concerned with the learners’ decision-making experience in the learning process. Such experience tends to be individual, dynamic, and unpredictable, and thus can hardly be translated into pre-specified learning outcomes and then measured in tests.

However, students’ autonomous English learning might be captured by the teacher in procedural and developmental assessment conducted in the learning process, i.e. formative assessment, such as tracking the learning process, encouraging self-assessment, and providing feedback. Thus, formative assessment provides a useful way to allow students’ autonomous learning to be subject to observation, evaluation and supervision, and thus to develop students’ learning autonomy.

Concerning intercultural competence, this also seems difficult to translate into a learning outcome in behavioural terms or to measure in summative assessment, such as in CET-4. As Kramsch (2009, p.107) notes, “The notion of intercultural competence has to do with the recognition and acceptance of other people’s cultural beliefs and values, and the willingness to relativize one’s own. But these are moral and psychological goals.” This may account for why intercultural competence is not addressed in the teaching requirements or summative assessment in the CECR. Moreover, it would seem ever harder to measure such competence in large-scale tests like CET-4. As Cai argues (2006, p.260), the reason CET, including CET-4 and CET-6, depends on “objective” multiple choice questions can largely be related to the difficulties in operationalising “subjective” skills, such as writing and speaking, in large-scale tests. Attempting to test intercultural competence with “objective” questions is bound to miss the mark.

Nevertheless, difficulties in testing students' intercultural competence do not mean that such competence cannot be assessed in the CE curriculum. Byram (2013) argues that "assessment need not be only in terms of testing". Formative assessment can provide a useful way of assessing students' intercultural competence. Such assessment implies the students' learning process being subject to observation, evaluation and supervision, and so is conducive to assessment of their intercultural understanding in the learning situation.

Next, I relate learner autonomy and cultural capacity to the teaching model and course design in the CECR. As discussed earlier in this section, the recommended computer-based learning model fails to give students an active role in managing their own learning, and the course design suggests a neglect of the teacher's role in developing students' cultural capacity. Consequently, learner autonomy and cultural capacity are inadequately addressed in the CECR. Therefore, if students' control over their own English learning could be considerably increased, and the teacher's role in developing students' cultural competences were made explicit and emphasised in the CECR, the development of students' learning autonomy and intercultural competence would be better addressed in the CECR.

From the above analysis, the reason a process-oriented perspective is neglected in the CECR is related to the way the CECR attempts to approach the two concepts of learner autonomy and cultural capacity, that is, by applying rigidity, simplification and operationalisation. Any changes towards strengthening a process-oriented perspective would need to reinterpret the two concepts. Specifically, CE can be reoriented towards the development of students' intercultural communicative competence and learning autonomy, taking into account the technical, psychological and political aspects of the latter. Formative assessment would provide a useful way of assessing students' intercultural competence and learning autonomy. The development of these competences in the students would also be promoted by the teacher and students playing an active role in the teaching and learning process.

In summary, the dominance of a product-oriented perspective in the CECR is closely related to its overemphasis on CET-4. As reform of CET-4 remains a controversial issue and needs future research, it is difficult to address the emphasis placed on CET-4, and accordingly on a product-oriented perspective. The neglect of a process-oriented perspective is largely related to the insufficient interpretation of two concepts: learner autonomy and cultural capacity. In order to strengthen this perspective of curriculum development, the two concepts would need to be reinterpreted and readdressed in the CECR, as elucidated above.

6.2 The physical environment

A second relevant feature in the learning environment of College X that impacts on the CE curriculum approach, and accordingly on the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs, is the physical environment. More specifically, there is a shortage of teaching resources in College X.

6.2.1 Shortage of teaching resources

In College X, there is a shortage of teaching resources, including teachers, computers, and accommodation. This insufficiency in teaching resources is unfavourable to the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

First, there are far from enough CE teachers in College X. In the academic year 2010/2011, there were over 4000 first and second year non-English major students who took the CE course. By contrast, there were only 13 CE teachers in this college. This shortage of teachers had three consequences. The first was that College X had to depend on teachers from University Y, the university which co-established College X with the private investors, to provide CE courses to students. Since these teachers came to do extra work in College X after finishing their work in University Y, the teaching quality was unlikely to be guaranteed. In addition, they were not under the administration of College X, which means

College X may have difficulty in carrying out any innovations to improve the CE curriculum.

The second consequence was that the CE class size was quite large. Table 6.1 shows the size of the classes formed in the academic year 2010/2011, which was also the size of the CE classes:

Class	Number of students
Law 101	40
Law 102	50
Law 103	50
Business administration 101	44
Business administration 102	50
Business administration 103	50
International business & trade 101	50
International business & trade 102	44
International business & trade 103	43
International business & trade 104	43
Marketing 10	50
Financial management 101	60
Financial management 102	58
Financial management 103	56
Accounting 101	51
Accounting 102	51
Accounting 103	50
Accounting 104	46
Accounting 105	48
Accounting 106	51
Accounting 107	53
Accounting 108	45
Accounting 109	44
Public administration 10	36
Social work 10	27
Applied psychology 10	24
Tourism management (internationally oriented) 10	40
Management Science 10	31
Information management & information systems 10	36
Chinese linguistics and literature 101	60
Chinese linguistics and literature 102	52
Chinese as a foreign language 10	23

Fine arts (education-oriented) 10	40	
Advertising 10	50	
Journalism 10	58	
Radio & TV journalism 10	60	
Japanese 10	30	
Computer science & technology 10	54	
Network engineering 10	31	
Electronic commerce 10	29	
Industrial design 10	27	
Art & design 101	29	
Art & design 102	29	
Landscape architecture (design-oriented) 10	35	
Communication engineering 101	38	
Communication engineering 102	38	
Transportation 10	30	
Automation 10	38	
Electrical Engineering & Automation 101	45	
Electrical Engineering & Automation 102	45	
Electrical Engineering & Automation 103	43	
Bioengineering 10	23	
Digital media technology 10	32	
Electronic science & technology 10	29	
Class: 54	Students: 2289	Average No. of students /class: 42

Table 6.1 Class sizes in the academic year 2010/2011

In the 54 classes, the average number of students was 42. Several classes had over 50 and even up to 60 students. Notably, those which had fewer than 30 students were generally the only class in that subject. That is, the class size might have been bigger if more students could have been enrolled in that subject.

Promoting a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum would mean the teacher needing to pay more attention to the students' learning process and their needs in the learning situation. However, a large class size is clearly unfavourable to the accommodation of students' learning needs on the part of the teacher. The following comments by T2, a teacher participant, indicate how teachers might end up neglecting many students' needs simply because the class is too large.

[6-1] 现在的话, 上课人数多嘛。老师对学生, 对他的学习不是很了解。
(T2)

(Now the problem is we have many students in a class. The teacher doesn't know much about individual students and their learning situation.)

T1, another teacher participant, gave a more simple answer when she was asked if teachers considered the learners' learning needs in their teaching practice:

[6-2] 老师基本没有考虑过。(T1)
(By and large, teachers don't consider them.)

The teacher participants' view was also echoed by a student participant, S12, who thought that the large class size was a reason for there being little communication between the teacher and the students.

[6-3] 基础英语可能同学多, 老师顾不过来。老师得按着她的教学计划走, 我们平常也不提什么意见。(S12)
(Perhaps because there are so many students in the General English class, the teacher can't manage individual opinions. She has to follow the teaching schedule, and we seldom make comments as well.)

The third consequence of the insufficient number of teachers was that many CE teachers had a very heavy workload. Most of the teachers taught up to four or five classes a week, five sessions for each class. The workload became even heavier when they were required to perform other tasks, as T1 stated:

[6-4] 我觉得自从10年, 09、10年以后, 就除了教学以外的事情很多, 论文啊, 然后还有搞科研啊, 或者是培训学生参加这个比赛那个比赛啊, 这些很花时间的。(T1)
(I feel, since 2010, after 2009 and 2010, apart from teaching, there have been many other jobs for teachers, such as dissertation supervision, research work, or training students to take part in various competitions. They are very time-consuming.)

With a large workload, teachers might not have enough time for professional development. According to Stenhouse (1975), the process model is committed to teacher development as it rests upon the quality of the teacher. More specifically, this model rests on teachers' professional judgements to enhance students' understanding along the learning journey. In addition, it rests upon teachers' action research to provide the basis for teaching and professional development

(McKernan, 2008). Since a shortage of teachers leads to a heavy workload for teachers and is thus unfavourable to teacher development, it would have a negative influence on the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum in College X.

Second, there was a shortage of computers in College X. In the autonomous learning centre there were only 120 computers. However, over 4000 first and second year students were required to study there. At the end of the term, so many students who had not spent the minimum time on autonomous English learning rushed to study there that there were even stampedes, as S5 stated:

[6-5] 前段时间还有踩踏事件呢, 就前两周.....发生了几次。然后现在就规定哪一周哪一周是哪个学部去。(S5-3)
(*There were even stampedes not long ago, just two weeks ago... It has happened several times. Now different weeks are assigned to different departments.*)

As a response to the stampedes, a timetable was made for students from different departments to study there at different times. However, the students from a single department still far outnumbered the computers. Consequently, some students had to get a ticket in the morning in order to learn there in the afternoon, as S8 related:

[6-6] 整个学部人也很多, 要去领票才能去, 早上要去领票。(S8-3)
(*There are still too many people in a department, and so one has to get a ticket in the morning in order to learn there.*)

This situation means that students do not have much control over their autonomous learning time. Autonomous English learning becomes very inconvenient and inflexible, which is disadvantageous to the development of language learner autonomy, which, according to Benson (2012), is part of learner autonomy, which in turn is part of personal autonomy. Kelly (2009) argues that the development of individual autonomy is a central feature of the model of curriculum as process and development. In this sense, the shortage of computers in College X has a negative influence on the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

In contrast with the lack of computers in the autonomous learning centre, almost all the students in College X had personal computers. If personal computers could be used to facilitate students' autonomous English learning, the previously illustrated problems linked to a shortage of computers in the autonomous learning centre could be much alleviated. S5, a student participant, also suggested that students could use their own computers to practise English.

[6-7] 我觉得真想练的话自己会练的, 在宿舍现在基本都有电脑, 他们会自己听的。(S5-3)

(I think if some students really want to practise their English, they will do it on their own. Since almost all students have computers in the dormitory, they will listen to English by themselves [instead of being forced to learn English in the autonomous learning centre].)

However, in the existing autonomous learning scheme, students are required to do their autonomous English learning in the learning system which can only be accessed in the autonomous learning centre, as T2 stated:

[6-8] 但是现在我们学校, 当时它又不开放, 不对那个开放, 只在那两个教室开放那个网络, 它在那个校园网络里面登陆不了。本来我觉得真正的学习应该是在校园网络的任意一个地方登陆得了, 什么时候想学, 我半夜十二点想学我也可以学。就是学生也提出这个要求嘛。(T2)

(But in this college, the learning system can't be accessed on the campus network. It can only be used in those two rooms. I think real [autonomous] learning should be accessed anywhere on the campus network. Whenever I want to learn, in case I want to learn at midnight, I can learn. Even students express this idea.)

Third, there are not enough dormitories in the college to ensure that each student can have his/her own room. Instead, four students have to share a bedroom. This may have a negative influence on the development of learner autonomy and personal autonomy. Every night at half past eleven the institution cuts off the Internet in the shared dormitory. This is because individual activities might have a disruptive influence on other students in the same dormitory. However, the restriction might also remove the students' chance to study or work on the Internet late at night, or to learn how to manage their own time and how to live together with others. In other words, it is unfavourable to the development of

learner autonomy and personal autonomy, which is much valued in the process model (Kelly, 2009). In this sense, the shortage of accommodation could be indirectly disadvantageous to the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

In summary, there are insufficient teaching resources in College X, including teachers, computers and accommodation. The shortage of teaching resources would seem to have a negative influence on the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum. However, this insufficiency in teaching resources may begin to be alleviated as this independent college develops, as discussed below.

6.2.2 A developing institution

As suggested in Chapter 1, the shortage of teaching resources in College X could be related to two characteristics of independent colleges: that they are newly established and privately funded. Independent colleges have only emerged since 1999, when the policy of enrolment expansion in higher education was issued by the CMOE. With such a short history, an independent college is not likely to have sufficient teaching resources – indeed, it depends on the teaching resources of a public university – as it takes time to build a proper faculty and facilities.

Moreover, the investment made by the private investors may also affect the condition of the teaching resources in independent colleges. Yang and Qian (2009) analyse the way private investors may invest in an independent college. To establish a college requires a heavy investment in the initial stages, but this cost will only be recovered from the tuition fees over a very long period. During this period, there are external variables operating which cannot be controlled by the investors, such as educational policies or market factors. The recovery of the cost is therefore somewhat unpredictable, and the risk is evident. Therefore, the investors are likely to adopt phased investment. This means an independent college may be put into operation before it is fully established, and the initial tuition fees may be invested in later construction. Consequently, there tend to be

insufficient teaching resources in the early days of an independent college, involving both teacher recruitment and infrastructure construction.

The above situation was the case of College X. This college was established in 2002 and therefore had a short history of only eight years when I started to conduct the fieldwork in 2010. Phased investment and profit making could also be seen there. The institution was put into operation in 2002 but did not have its own campus until 2006. During this period, it relied on a teaching building and then a branch campus rented from University Y. It also depended on University Y for teachers and other teaching resources. In contrast with the lack of resources and therefore its limited capacity, the student enrolment underwent a continuous rapid growth, jumping from 235 students majoring in 5 subjects in 2002 to 9178 students majoring in 38 subjects in 2010. In short, the characteristics of College X as a newly-established and privately funded independent college can account for the insufficient resources in this institution.

However, as this independent college developed the shortage of teaching resources became less serious. On the one hand the increase in student enrolment slowed down and the total enrolment started to stabilize. In the academic years 2010/2011, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013, the student enrolment was 9178, 9603 and 10049 respectively. Compared with the dramatic growth in the previous few years, there was only a slight increase. On the other hand, the faculty and infrastructure were being continuously developed. For example, the number of CE teachers had grown from 13 in the academic year 2010/2011 to 38 by September 2013. All these changes suggest that the insufficiency of the teaching resources in College X may be largely alleviated as this independent college proceeds to develop. Accordingly, the negative influence of a lack of teaching resources on the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum might possibly also largely decrease.

In summary, there was a shortage of teaching resources in College X, and this shortage tended to have negative influence on the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum. However, as this independent

college develops, the insufficiency in the teaching resources may begin to be alleviated, thus favouring an improvement in the CE curriculum approach.

6.3 Cultural factors

A third relevant feature in the learning environment of College X that impacts on the CE curriculum approach is cultural factors. These factors include views, beliefs, attitudes, conventions and practices which are favourable or unfavourable to the CE curriculum approach, and accordingly to the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs.

6.3.1 Unfavourable cultural factors

Unfavourable cultural factors in the learning environment of College X refer to those cultural factors which may strengthen a product-oriented perspective, particularly testing, or those which are not conducive to a process-oriented perspective of curriculum development. More specifically, such cultural factors include overemphasis on CET-4 and neglect of learner autonomy.

Overemphasis on CET-4

In College X, all the parties involved in the CE curriculum – teachers, students and managers – tend to have put too much emphasis on CET-4. For example, T1, a CE teacher, considered CET-4 to be a “baton” for teachers to direct students' English learning.

[6-9] 反正这个指挥棒有也是好事。那没有，如果真的假设没有的话，我觉得肯定大家都不想学了。因为我们有了指挥棒，我们就可经指挥学生听我们的。(T1)

(Anyway it's good to have this “baton”. If we don't have it, I think students would certainly not learn English. Since we now have the “baton”, we can ask them to follow our instructions.)

According to S5, a student participant, CET-4 was treated by her class as so important that the student representative in charge of studies even suggested the teacher spend more time on CET-4 exercises in class.

[6-10] 她讲课本的，可能还会讲一些文化类知识什么的，后面那个学习委员就跟她说，要她让我们多练一下，搞一些听写单词啊。(S5-3)
(*She [the teacher] explains things in the textbooks, and may also include cultural knowledge and the like. The student representative in charge of studies then suggested she organise more [CET-4] exercises, such as dictations.*)

The head of the English Department related the CET-4 pass rate to the reputation of the college, as T2 reported:

[6-11] 因为她说，那个四六级现在虽然有很多人质疑，目前看来也是唯一一个比较能够体现学生的那个水平的一个考试。她说，虽然是三本啊，但是毕竟我们是本科，我们还是要看重这个东西。如果你的四级通过率高的话，也能够证明学校的英语教学水平比较好。(T2)
(*Because she said although CET-4 and CET-6 are questioned by many people, it seems to be the only test which is able to measure students' proficiency to a certain extent. She said although College X is a third-class institution of higher education¹⁸, it provides undergraduate education after all. We still have to value CET. If the CET-4 pass rate is high, it can be evidence of good teaching quality in this college.*)

The college management also paid great attention to CET-4. One example is the well-known CET expert from a key Chinese university who was invited to College X twice in two years, in 2009 and 2010, to give lectures about CET, with all the English teachers being required to attend.

The above comments and practices suggest that CET-4 is overemphasised in College X by different stakeholders of the CE curriculum stakeholders, including teachers, students and management. As discussed in Chapter 5, this overemphasis placed on testing represents an overemphasis on a product-oriented perspective, which is not conducive to the accommodation of learners' expressed needs. However, the conclusion drawn from Section 6.1 is that it would be difficult to address the emphasis placed on CET-4, as reform of CET-4 remains a controversial issue and needs future research. Thus, CET-4 would seem to remain an obstacle to improving the CE curriculum approach, and accordingly to accommodating the learners' expressed needs, in College X.

¹⁸ The independent college is ranked as a third-class institution of higher education in China.

Neglect of learner autonomy

In College X, learner autonomy is largely neglected. There are restrictions and regulations set by teachers and the administration on the students' autonomous English learning and other aspects of their college studies and life. These restrictions and regulations tend to be disadvantageous to the development of learner autonomy.

The neglect of learner autonomy in College X is ironically represented by the autonomous English learning scheme. In this college, first and second year students are required to do autonomous English learning in a newly-established autonomous learning centre which is equipped with computers. As explained in Chapter 4, in the autonomous learning centre students have no access to the Internet. They are required to do listening exercises in a textbook-based learning system. What they do is monitored by the teacher via the control desk, and the learning system keeps a record of their learning time. This learning time is used as a basis for teachers to score their autonomous learning.

T1, a teacher participant, explained why the Internet should be cut off in the autonomous learning centre:

[6-12] *[如果联网的话]简直成网吧, 绝对成网吧, 那种不可能的。(T1)*
([If there is access to the Internet] It will simply become an Internet cafe, absolutely. The access can't be given.)

She thought that students would indulge in online entertainment rather than learn English if Internet access was given to them. In other words, she thought that students would take little responsibility for their own English learning.

T2, the director of General English, confirmed this view and made it more explicit that the students in this college had a low level of learning autonomy.

[6-13] *现在的话, 反正我们的学生有98%, 如果你没有规定说要去那里自主学习, 他们都不乐意去。现在就是说把它当成一个重要任务去, 然后老师又督促, 然后又说又是占了多少分数又怎样, 如果不去怎样怎样, 他们才很不情愿的去。所以就是说我们的学生学习自主意识不强。(T2)*
(If we don't set requirements to urge them to study in the autonomous learning centre, 98% of our students are not likely to learn there. Now they may go there unwillingly for reasons that the autonomous learning is set as

an important task and insisted on by the teacher, that it accounts for a certain percentage of the final score, and that failure to do it will lead to penalties. This is to say, our students don't have much learning autonomy.)

According to T2's comments, it was because students had little learning autonomy that teachers had to set restrictions on their autonomous English learning. However, a lack of learning autonomy among the students would also justify developing learner autonomy in the college.

T2 also explained why they had adopted the previously-described learning system rather than including other learning materials and resources.

[6-14] *我们之前也想过，但造成一个问题，老师检查不知道怎么检查，因为它不在那个系统里面，它没有记录。(T2)*
(We considered it. The problem is teachers don't know how to check the work done by students, as other materials are not included in the system and so there won't be any records about such work.)

This comment suggests that the teachers felt that students' autonomous learning should be assessed by teachers. Whether or not students' learning could be assessed by the teachers to a considerable extent decided the selection of the learning content.

From the above comments, the two teacher participants seemed to agree that teachers had to be in control of students' autonomous English learning as the students had little learning autonomy. However, in a political perspective, learner autonomy is considered to be student control over the content and processes of their own learning (Benson, 1997). When students have little control over their learning, they are unlikely to develop "the internal psychological capacity to self-direct" (Benson, 1997, p.25) their own learning. In this sense, attempts by teachers to monitor students' autonomous learning are not conducive to learner autonomy. Since learner autonomy is part of personal autonomy (Benson, 2012) and the development of individual autonomy is a central feature in the model of curriculum as process and development (Kelly, 2009), the above teacher belief is not conducive to the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

In addition to the restrictions on students' autonomous English learning, in College X there are also restrictions and regulations set by the administration on the use of personal computers for first year students, Internet use in the dormitories, morning reading and evening study, all of which have been described in Chapter 4. These restrictions and regulations are unfavourable to the development of learner autonomy and personal autonomy, and further the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

To sum up, CET-4 is given too much emphasis by teachers, students and managers in College X. This overemphasis on CET-4 is not conducive to improving the CE curriculum in College X. However, it would seem to be difficult to address the emphasis placed on this test, as reform of CET-4 remains a controversial issue in China. By contrast, learner autonomy is neglected in this college. There are restrictions and regulations set by teachers and the administration on students' autonomous English learning and other aspects of their college studies and life. These restrictions and regulations are disadvantageous to learner autonomy, and accordingly to the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum. Therefore, any changes towards strengthening a process-oriented perspective would need to address these restrictions and regulations and the underlying assumptions.

6.3.2 Favourable cultural factors

Favourable cultural factors in the learning environment of College X refer to cultural factors which promote a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum. These factors include emphasis on teacher development and the students' recognition of personal development in the educational process.

Emphasis on teacher development

College X has attached great importance to teacher development. First, the institution provided a range of programmes for teacher education. In 2006, soon after the college recruited its own English teachers, the Academic Affairs Office

engaged some senior English lecturers from University Y to supervise the young teachers who had just joined the faculty of this college. English teachers were also sponsored by the institution to go on academic visits to key Chinese universities or universities in English-speaking countries. For example, every year a few of them had the opportunity to spend half a year on an academic visit to a university in Canada. Others were sent to universities in the UK and the USA. Second, English teachers are encouraged to engage in research work and teaching competitions. Third, regular meetings are organised by the head of the English Department or the director of General English for the teachers to discuss important issues in classroom teaching and other academic affairs. In short, there is progressive teacher development in College X.

The great importance attached to teacher development in College X would favour a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum, as “the process model is committed to teacher development” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.96). More specifically, the teacher being “the evaluator/researcher of the curriculum work” is the key to the success of the process model (McKernan, 2008, p.94): teachers make professional judgements to enhance students’ understanding along the learning journey, and teachers study the problems raised by their teaching and curriculum. Thus, it is of great importance to improve the quality of the teacher in the process model. In this sense, the great emphasis placed on teacher development by College X is likely to promote a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

In teacher development towards strengthening a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum, one focus could be the development of teachers’ intercultural understanding and sensitivity. As suggested above, the process model rests on teachers’ professional judgements to enhance students’ understanding in the educational process. In social studies, McKernan (2008) relates teachers’ professional judgements to the enhancement of students’ multicultural understanding and their acceptance of and respect for various groups in society. Cushner and Mahon (2009) argue that language teachers need to attain an

intercultural sensitivity and competence in order to be able to develop their students' intercultural competence. Thus, any changes towards improving the quality of CE teachers would need to improve their intercultural understanding and sensitivity.

Another focus of teacher development for strengthening a process-oriented perspective could be on action research. According to McKernan (2008, p.95), “education is viewed as a worthwhile *activity* and *process*” in the process model. And the essential principle is that good practice is bound up with concrete situations in the educational process (McKernan, 2008). In this sense, educational activities are unique to a certain class. Thus, the teacher engaged in the educational process of this class, compared with outsiders such as researchers or linguists, is more likely to understand better the problems raised by his/her teaching, and thus become a suitable candidate to conduct action research to solve practical classroom problems. In this sense, teacher development of CE teachers in College X would need to have a focus on action research, so as to favour a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

Students' recognition of personal development in the educational process

Many of the students showed recognition of personal development in the educational process, involving the development of the mind, their way of learning, citizenship, and learner autonomy.

For example, by drawing on the views of the president of the class committee, S7 felt that the value of undergraduate education lay in the development of one's mind rather than in learning outcomes.

[6-15] 我们班长说，大学不是用来学技术学知识的，是来改变思想的。
(S7-2)

(According to the president of our class committee, undergraduate education is not for obtaining skills or absorbing knowledge, but for changing our minds.)

“Changing our minds” relates to the development of “understanding”, which is the key element in the process model (Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008),

while “obtaining skills” and “absorbing knowledge” are learning outcomes pursued in the product model. In this sense, S7 showed recognition of a process-oriented perspective for curriculum design.

E2, a former student of College X and employee participant, agreed with S7 and further stated that even in the social market perspective it was problematic to relate one’s study to future work. By contrast, education was successful if one could develop one’s way of learning and thinking in the learning process.

[6-16] 有时候把学习和未来的规划联系起来反而不是一件很好的事情，因为落差太大了。没有多少个人后来的工作和他/她当时在学校的专业或者获得的技能是一致的。换句话说，如果能够通过学习的过程，达到培养一种学习的方式，或者思维，那就已经是很理想了，我觉得。(E2)
(Sometimes it is not a good thing to relate school study to future plans, as there is a big gap. Few people use exactly the same skills they obtain from school, or work in the same domain they major in. In other words, if we can develop a way of learning or thinking through the learning process, I think it is already ideal.)

S11, another student participant, related educational purposes not only to the way of learning but also to the way to live together with other people in society.

[6-17] 其实我觉得在大学里面培养的就是学习的方式，还有些为人处世的道理，锻炼自己在社会生存所要有的一些态度，一些沉稳。主要还是学习的方法。我们毕业的学长和我说了，你现在不要觉得你学管理科学，出去工作就一定是管理的，不要把自己当成是学管理的。(S11-1)
(Actually I feel what matters in the college career is to learn how to learn and how to live together with other people, and to develop attitudes to living in society in a steady way. It is primarily concerned with study methods. Some graduates suggested to me that I should not see myself merely as a management student as I won’t necessarily work in this field after graduation.)

The above comments suggested a broader perspective on the purpose of undergraduate education, that is, undergraduate education contributes to the education of learners, to the development of their understanding of themselves and their world (Guilherme, 2002). More specifically, where English education is concerned, it would “bring to the usual emphasis on citizenship in a particular country, an international, intercultural dimension which takes into account the economic and social changes in the contemporary world” (Byram & Mendez

Garcia, 2009). Since broad or general educational aims are pursued in the process model (McKernan, 2008; Kelly, 2009), S11's recognition of such educational aims suggested her recognition of a process-oriented perspective for curriculum design and development.

Furthermore, many students showed recognition of learner autonomy. For example, S14, a participant with excellent English proficiency, related her learning achievements to autonomous learning.

[6-18] 我感觉还是和个人努力关系比较大, 在学校学习的课程大家接受能力都是差不多的, 自己课后对时间的规划和学习目标的确定对自身的提高有很大影响。(S14-2)

(I feel it is more related to personal efforts. Our comprehension of school courses is almost the same. After-class time management and goal setting by myself have a great influence on my achievements.)

A few weak students also tended to value autonomous learning. In this study, S9 and S12 were considered to be two weak students in terms of English learning, based on their self-evaluations, teacher comments and test results. As shown in Excerpts [4-51] and [4-54], S9 thought teachers could introduce group work into classroom teaching and assessment which could be organised and coordinated by group members. In such activities, the group would take responsibility for their work. In Excerpt [4-53], he valued open-ended tests in which individual students would be responsible for their achievements in the test. As shown in Excerpt [4-50], S12 enjoyed and performed well in an open-ended measurement procedure which permitted after-class preparation such as consultations with others. This procedure encouraged individual students to take active and creative roles, and thus was conducive to learner autonomy.

Since learner autonomy contributes to personal autonomy (Benson, 2012), and the development of individual autonomy is a central feature of the model of curriculum as process and development (Kelly, 2009), the students' recognition of learner autonomy suggests a recognition of a process-oriented perspective in the curriculum. This recognition would favour the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum in College X.

In contrast to their recognition of learner autonomy, the students tended to have a low level of learning autonomy, as was agreed by the teacher participants (see excerpts [6-12], [6-13]) and also suggested by some students, as in S14's comments:

[6-19] 当时有这么个说法, 男生带电脑是玩游戏, 女生带电脑是看电视, 呵呵。(S14-2)
(*There is a saying: boys use computers for games and girls for TV plays. Hehe.*)

The students' lack of learning autonomy merely underlines their need to develop learning autonomy. Any changes towards strengthening a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum would need to address the students' low level of learning autonomy.

As shown above, many of the students related undergraduate learning, including English learning, to personal development in the educational process, involving development of the mind, ways of learning, citizenship, and learner autonomy. This recognition on the part of the students tends to be well represented by a process-oriented perspective of curriculum development, in which "the prime concern of the educational process is with human development" (Kelly, 2009, p.98). In other words, the students showed willingness to learn in a curriculum which includes a process-oriented perspective. This willingness is likely to favour the use of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

In summary, there are two main cultural factors in the learning environment of College X that may impede improvement of the CE curriculum approach: an overemphasis on CET-4 and a neglect of learner autonomy. While CET-4 would seem to remain unfavourable to improving CE teaching, learner autonomy might be strengthened by addressing the restrictions and regulations on students' autonomous English learning and other aspects of their college studies and life, and the underlying assumptions. Meanwhile, there are also two factors in the learning environment that may promote curriculum improvement: the great emphasis placed on teacher development, and students' recognition of personal

development in the educational process. In particular, teacher development towards developing teachers' intercultural competence and promoting action research by them would be likely to favour a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

6.4 Conclusions

In Chapter 5, I proposed that the product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives should be integrated in the CE curriculum. The findings reported in this chapter reinforce this proposal. More specifically, the findings show that there would be considerable difficulties in implementing a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum in College X, including the impact of CET-4 on CE teaching (Section 6.1), a shortage of teaching resources (Section 6.2), and prevailing cultures which favour CET-4 or impede the development of learner autonomy (Section 6.3). In this situation, although a process-oriented perspective would be conducive to accommodating the learners' expressed needs and developing their intercultural understanding, as discussed in Chapter 5, it may not be sufficiently implemented in the CE curriculum. In other words, the curriculum would need to draw on other perspectives in addition to a process-oriented one to favour English teaching and learning. As suggested in Chapter 5, a product-oriented perspective can be used in the CE curriculum to some extent. Therefore, any changes towards improving the CE curriculum would need to combine a product-oriented perspective with a process-oriented one.

Furthermore, the findings about the three relevant features in the learning environment of College X – the national curriculum, the physical environment, and the cultural factors – can enrich the understanding about means analysis in language teaching in the existing literature.

First, the findings illustrate the three types of “relevant features” in the local situation identified by Holliday and Cooke (1982): immutable problems, problematic features (flexible elements), and exploitable features, as reviewed in

Chapter 2. All these features have been identified in this study. For example, CET-4, as a controversial issue, tends to remain unfavourable to the improvement of the CE curriculum approach and thus can be viewed as an immutable problem, the problem which curriculum designers or innovators “can do little to influence and which will, sooner or later, necessitate radical changes in project aims” (p.134). The restrictions and regulations which are disadvantageous to learner autonomy may be seen as problematic features, the features “which can, however, be worked within and around” (p.134) and addressed. In College X, use of personal computers is likely to facilitate students’ autonomous English learning, and teacher development should be conducive to the quality of teachers. Thus, they could be used to favour curriculum improvement and therefore be considered to be exploitable features.

Second, a new relevant feature, not discussed by Holliday and Cooke (1982), was also found in this study, i.e. in the context of English education in Chinese independent colleges. As stated in Section 6.2, in the physical environment of College X, there is a shortage of teaching resources and this shortage is not conducive to improving the CE curriculum approach, and accordingly to accommodating the learners’ expressed needs. However, as the independent college develops, this insufficiency in teaching resources should be largely alleviated and therefore become less disadvantageous to curriculum improvement. During this process, the curriculum designers or implementers or other parties involved in teaching affairs can do little to influence the condition of the teaching resources. Instead, the investors who invested in this independent college make decisions on their investment in teaching resources. I have therefore coined the term “independent features” to refer to those features in the learning environment which are independent of the influence of those who introduce curriculum innovations but depend on decisions made by those who invest in the institution.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have discussed three major features in the learning environment of College X: the national curriculum, the physical environment, and cultural factors. These are relevant features that impact on the CE curriculum approach, and thus on the possibility of accommodating the learners' expressed needs in the curriculum.

In the national curriculum, i.e. the CECR document, CET-4 is overemphasised and consequently a product-oriented perspective becomes dominant. As a reform of CET-4 remains controversial, it would be difficult to address the emphasis placed on this test, and accordingly on a product-oriented perspective. Meanwhile, the concepts of "learner autonomy" and "cultural capacity" are insufficiently interpreted in the CECR, and consequently a process-oriented perspective is downplayed. Thus, any changes concerning strengthening a process-oriented perspective would need to reinterpret learner autonomy and cultural capacity. This, however, is possible. The two concepts can be reinterpreted and integrated into the objectives of CE, which could be oriented towards developing students' intercultural communicative competence and learner autonomy in its technical, psychological and political aspects. Formative assessment and an active role being played by both the teacher and students in the teaching and learning practice may also be conducive to the promotion of a process-oriented perspective.

In the physical environment, there is a shortage of teaching resources, meaning teachers, computers and accommodation. This lack of sufficiency in teaching resources tends to have a negative influence on the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum. However, as College X develops, the insufficiency in teaching resources is likely to be alleviated and thus become less disadvantageous to an improvement of the CE curriculum approach.

Where cultural factors are concerned, the overemphasis on CET-4 and the neglect of learner autonomy in College X impede the improvement of the CE

curriculum approach. By contrast, the emphasis on teacher development and the students' recognition of personal development in the educational process favour curriculum improvement. Any changes towards strengthening a process-oriented perspective would need to address the restrictions and regulations on the students' autonomous English learning, college studies and life, and the underlying assumptions. Furthermore, teacher development towards developing teachers' intercultural competence and promoting their researching the problems raised by their teaching and curriculum would favour a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum.

The findings show that there would be considerable difficulties in implementing a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum of College X, and thus reinforce my proposal that the product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives should be integrated in the CE curriculum, as stated in Chapter 5. Furthermore, the findings contribute to the means analysis approach proposed by Holliday and Cooke (1982). First, they provide evidence of the three relevant features identified by Holliday and Cooke – immutable problems, problematic features, and exploitable features – in the context of English education in Chinese independent colleges. Second, a new type of relevant feature was found in this study, which I refer to as “independent features”.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

In this last chapter, I conclude the study with the following six sections. First, I summarise the main findings of this research to see if they have substantially answered the research questions (Section 7.1); second, I highlight the contributions of this study to existing theories and studies on needs analysis in language teaching and curriculum development (Section 7.2); third, pedagogical implications are offered to improve English teaching and learning in Chinese institutions of higher education (Section 7.3); fourth, methodological implications are provided for conducting needs analysis in language teaching, particularly NA in English teaching in China (Section 7.4); fifth, the limitations of this study are discussed (Section 7.5); and last, directions for future research are identified (Section 7.6).

7.1 Summary of main findings

The present study has focused on understanding how learner-perceived needs are being met and can be accommodated in the College English curriculum in China, as a basis for improving the curriculum. This research focus has been represented by three research questions, and the key findings related to these questions are summarised below.

Answer to RQ1 (What are the learners' expressed needs for English learning?)

The data in Chapter 4 represent the students' expressed target needs and learning needs. The students expressed three major target needs: i) to pass College English Test Band 4 (CET-4), ii) to use English in future work, and iii) to speak English. Regarding the students' first need, CET-4 is a curriculum requirement set by the CMOE. The students' second need was also confirmed by the employee and manager participants. And their need to speak English makes great sense given the situation of English education in Chinese education institutions, and

intercultural communication in the workplace, and in society more generally, in China.

Regarding the assumptions underlying the needs stated above, the students' needs to pass CET-4 and to use English in future work were considered by many students as academic and vocational *requirements* imposed on them, and so they showed reluctance to meet these requirements. By contrast, a few students tended to have internalised these requirements, transformed them into learning goals, and showed readiness to achieve these goals. The need to speak English was developed by many students in their social life, free from the influence of external pressure such as academic or vocational requirements, and therefore I termed this need *wants*.

In addition, the students expressed four learning needs, in the affective, cognitive, political, and contextual dimensions respectively. The students' affective needs referred to their feelings about the learning environment as well as their emotions during the English learning process. More specifically, they felt there was a lack of fairness, respect, and trust in the learning environment, and they also showed a lack of sense of achievement, confidence, and courage during the English learning process. In the cognitive dimension, they expressed their frustrations with CET-4-driven teaching/learning strategies, and outlined their desired teaching methodology. In the political dimension, they tended to think that they had insufficient control over their English learning, college studies, and college life. Finally, they felt that there was a lack of suitable after-class learning environments in College X in which they could learn, and particularly speak, English comfortably with other students. In expressing their learning needs, the students already suggested that these needs were not well addressed in the CE curriculum in College X.

Answer to RQ2 (To what extent does the College English curriculum meet the learners' expressed needs?)

Overall the data in Chapter 5 suggest that the students' expressed target needs were insufficiently addressed in the CE curriculum, and their learning needs were largely neglected in the teaching and learning practice.

With respect to target needs, all the students expressed the need to pass CET-4. However, the CET-4 test has considerably problematic aspects in its design. The students' need to use English in future work is emphasised but not sufficiently addressed in the document *College English Curriculum Requirements* (CECR) and the General English teaching plan. It was also insufficiently addressed in the teaching practice of College X for two main reasons: first, the English of Specialty course was neglected by College X; second, teachers did not adequately provide oral practice during their teaching practice, largely due to the impact of CET-4, which does not have an oral component, and the obligation that they felt to prepare students so that they could pass this test. The students' expressed need to speak English is repeatedly emphasised in the CECR and the General English teaching plan of College X, but was neglected by teachers during their teaching practice.

The students' expressed learning needs were generally poorly addressed in the teaching and learning practice of College X, as teachers and other parties involved did not pay much attention to these needs.

The unsatisfactory situation concerning the lack of accommodation of the students' expressed needs can largely be related to the CE curriculum approach: a product-oriented perspective, particularly CET-4, was over-emphasised, while a process-oriented perspective was largely neglected. Thus, any changes towards accommodating learners' expressed needs would need to address the emphasis placed on a product-oriented perspective and particularly CET-4, as well as to promote a process-oriented perspective.

Answer to RQ3 (What are the relevant features in the learning environment that impact on the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs?)

The data in Chapter 6 show that there were three relevant features in the learning environment of College X that are likely to impact on the CE curriculum approach, and accordingly on the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs: i) the national curriculum, ii) the physical environment, and iii) cultural factors.

In the national curriculum, i.e. the CECR, a product-oriented perspective is dominant while a process-oriented one is insufficiently addressed. This approach to the CE curriculum is largely due to the overemphasis on CET-4 and the poor interpretation of “learner autonomy” and “cultural capacity”, which is equated with “the teaching of knowledge about different cultures in the world” (p.29). As a reform of CET-4 remains controversial, it is difficult to address the emphasis placed on this test, and accordingly, on a product-oriented perspective. On the other hand, a process-oriented perspective can be promoted by addressing the issues of learner autonomy and cultural capacity. The two concepts can be reinterpreted and integrated into the objectives of CE, which could be oriented towards the development of students' intercultural communicative competence, and learner autonomy in its technical (involving technical support such as self access centres), psychological (involving learners' capacity to self-direct their learning) and political (involving learners' control over their learning) aspects. Formative assessment and active roles for the teacher and students in the teaching and learning practice would also be conducive to the promotion of a process-oriented perspective.

In the physical environment, there was a shortage of teaching resources, including teachers, computers and accommodation. This insufficiency in teaching resources had a negative influence on the promotion of a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum. However, as College X develops, the insufficiency in teaching resources is likely to be largely alleviated and thus become less disadvantageous to an improvement of the CE curriculum approach.

Where cultural factors are concerned, the overemphasis on CET-4 and the neglect of learner autonomy in College X were not conducive to the improvement of the CE curriculum approach. On the other hand, the emphasis on teacher development and the students' recognition of personal development in the educational process are likely to favour curriculum improvement. Any changes towards strengthening learner autonomy, and thus towards a process-oriented perspective, would need to address the restrictions and regulations on students' autonomous English learning, college studies and life. In addition, developing teachers' intercultural competence and promoting their performance of action research, their studying of "the effects and problems thrown up by implementing some designed lines of teaching" in a specific classroom (McKernan, 2008, p.94), would be likely to favour a process-oriented perspective.

Overall, by addressing the above-mentioned possibilities, it would be feasible to improve the CE curriculum approach in the learning environment of College X.

7.2 Theoretical contributions

The findings in this study contribute to existing theories and studies in two areas: needs analysis in language teaching, and curriculum development.

7.2.1 Contributions to theories of needs analysis in language teaching

The NA conducted in this study has focused on understanding the English learning needs expressed by students in a Chinese independent college, as a basis for improving the CE curriculum. In doing this, the research has contributed to research on NA in language teaching, particularly NA in English teaching in China, in several ways. First, as stated in Chapter 1, the NA aimed to provide a basis for improving the CE curriculum, which is different from the two common purposes of needs analysis in language teaching: NA as the basis for designing a curriculum or for re-evaluating the original needs assessment (Brown, 1995; see

also Song et al., 2013). Second, the NA has been applied to offering approaches to the development of the CE curriculum, which has been rarely attempted in NAs previously conducted on English teaching in China. In particular, the NA adopted a learner-centred view, and in this way related the learners' perceptions of their English learning needs to the development of the CE curriculum. This approach has not been reported in the NA literature in China. Third, the NA was conducted in a Chinese independent college; to date, few NAs in China have been done in such institutions. Fourth, the NA was located mainly in the context of General English; NAs reported in the literature have rarely been conducted in General English classrooms (Seedhouse, 1995).

More specifically, the findings of this NA have contributed to research on and the practice of target situation analysis (TSA), learning situation analysis (LSA), and means analysis. As described in Chapter 4, the NA explored the assumptions underlying the learners' expressed target needs and related the learners' needs to their attitudes towards English learning. For example, a student may express the need to pass CET-4, but see it as an academic requirement imposed on him/her, and feel reluctant to meet this requirement. Understanding these underlying assumptions would help teachers and other parties involved accommodate learners' expressed target needs. Thus, future TSA research would need to consider the value of investigating the assumptions underlying learners' expressed target needs.

Regarding LSA, as stated in Section 7.1, this study has identified four dimensions of learning needs: affective, cognitive, political, and contextual dimensions. The affective dimension refers not only to the students' emotions during the English learning process, but also to their feelings about the learning environment. However, learners' feelings about the learning environment are not reported in the NA literature (e.g. Brown, 1995; Brindley, 1989). Furthermore, the political dimension is not mentioned in the NA literature and therefore constitutes a new dimension in the analysis of learning needs in language teaching.

In addition, as presented in Chapter 6, the findings about the learning environment have contributed to the means analysis approach proposed by Holliday and Cooke (1982). Specifically, the findings have added empirical evidence to the three relevant features identified by Holliday and Cooke – immutable problems, problematic features, and exploitable features – in the context of English education in Chinese independent colleges. All three of these features were found in this study. Moreover, a new type of feature was identified which I refer to as “independent features”, that is, those features in the learning environment which are independent of the influence of those who introduce curriculum innovations but depend on the decisions made by those who invest in the institution.

Last, this study has contributed to the definition of “needs”. As stated in Chapter 2, my review of the definitions of “needs” in the NA literature suggests that there are no terms to represent learner-perceived needs addressed in both product-oriented and process-oriented ways, i.e. needs about the end product of learning and needs emerging in the learning situation. The terms “expressed needs” (Berwick, 1989) and “subjective needs” (Brindley, 1989) tend to be misleading as they only focus on one side of learner’s needs: expressed needs on the end product and subjective needs on the learning process. I thus created the terms “expressed target needs” and “expressed learning needs” to represent learners’ expressions of their desired learning outcomes, and of what they think are the factors in the learning situation that affect their English learning respectively. The findings reported in Chapter 4 have added empirical evidence to my definition of learner needs. Specifically, the students’ expressed needs to pass CET-4, to use English in future work, and to speak English are their needs constructed in a product-oriented way, while their expressed needs in affective, cognitive, political, and contextual terms are those constructed in a process-oriented way.

7.2.2 Contributions to theories of curriculum development

First, in the review of the CE curriculum reported in Chapter 5, I identified three major problems with the product model of curriculum development: i) important outcomes being insufficiently addressed, ii) curriculum narrowing, and iii) high-stakes testing. The second and third problems are not reported in the literature concerning the limitations of the product model (e.g. Stenhouse, 1975; Clark, 1985, cited in Nunan, 1988; McKernan, 2008; Kelly, 2009). The emergence of these problems in this study might be related to the particular English education context in China: CET-4 is the English test on the largest scale in the world, and Chinese society generally attaches great importance to this test (Cai, 2006).

Second, in Chapter 5, I have suggested that the product and process models can be integrated in the CE curriculum in order to accommodate the students' expressed needs in the curriculum. As discussed in Chapter 5, any changes towards improving the CE curriculum approach would need to promote a process-oriented perspective. However, a product-oriented perspective can still be used in the CE curriculum, in some measure. It would be useful in curricular areas which emphasise language information and skills. Meanwhile, the target needs expressed by the students also tended to support a product-oriented perspective of curriculum development. Furthermore, the findings about the learning environment reported in Chapter 6 suggest that there would be considerable difficulties in implementing a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum, including the impact of CET-4 on CE teaching, a shortage of teaching resources and the prevailing cultures. On balance, I have proposed that the product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives could be combined in the CE curriculum approach.

This proposal, however, is different from those accounts of the process model reported in the literature (e.g. Stenhouse, 1975; McKernan, 2008; Kelly, 2009). Stenhouse (1975) offers a process model, which is supported by McKernan (2008), as an alternative to the product model, although he states that it is largely

on logical grounds that this model is more appropriate than the product model in curricula areas which emphasise knowledge and understanding. Kelly (2009) provides an account of curriculum as process and education as development, and argues that the “two approaches [the product and process models] are quite different from, and indeed incompatible with, each other” (p.97). However, based on the findings of this study stated above (the students’ expressed target needs tended to support a product-oriented perspective, and there would be difficulties in implementing a process-oriented perspective), an approach which integrates both product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives would be more appropriate for the CE curriculum in the context of Chinese independent colleges.

7.3 Pedagogical implications

This study makes suggestions for the CMOE, institutions of higher education, and CE teachers in China to improve the planning and implementation of the CE curriculum, as well as suggestions for college and university students to improve their English learning.

7.3.1 Implications for the CMOE

The CMOE is the educational authority which designs the national curriculum of CE, i.e. the CECR.

The findings reported in Chapter 5 show that the CE curriculum approach embodied in the CECR, to a considerable extent, accounts for the students’ expressed needs being unsatisfactorily addressed in the curriculum. In the CECR, a product-oriented perspective is dominant, as the language dimension, which relates to the development of students’ ability to use English, is highly emphasised. In particular, this perspective is reinforced by CET-4, which only involves evaluation of students’ ability to use English, and to which Chinese society generally has attached great importance.

By contrast, a process-oriented perspective is insufficiently addressed, as the two concepts “learner autonomy” and “cultural capacity” are inadequately interpreted and represented in the CECR. Specifically, in the computer-based English learning model recommended by the CECR, autonomous learning becomes highly controlled course learning, which is not conducive to learner autonomy. In the course design part, the cultural dimension is represented in only one course, i.e. “language and culture”. Moreover, the development of students’ cultural capacity is equated with “the teaching of knowledge about different cultures in the world”. As discussed in Chapter 5, this is a partial and oversimplified view of intercultural communication, as it focuses only on the acquisition of cultural knowledge on the part of the students and attempts to stereotype people in the different parts of the world by introducing the idea of “different cultures”.

Furthermore, English of Specialty is neglected in the CECR. This course is the course in the CE course system which aims to develop students’ ability to use English in specific subject areas. As stated in Chapter 4, the student, employee, and manager participants generally agreed that this ability was desirable in the workplace. Therefore, the neglect of English of Specialty in the CECR is not conducive to addressing the students’ expressed need to use English in future work.

Thus, the CMOE would need to address the above limitations in order to design a national curriculum which would favour the accommodation of the learners’ expressed needs in the curriculum. The objective of CE could be oriented towards developing students’ intercultural communicative competence, and learning autonomy, taking account of the latter’s technical, psychological, and political aspects (Benson, 1997, reviewed in Chapter 2). In addition, I suggest the following four recommendations as a way forward to address the major problems identified in the CECR:

- (1) A way out from CET-4-driven teaching should be explored;
- (2) The computer-based English learning model should be rebuilt, in order to allow students to have sufficient control over their learning content and process;
- (3) The teaching of cultural knowledge in the course “language and culture” should be developed into the development of students’ intercultural competence throughout all CE courses;
- (4) English of Specialty should be reinforced.

7.3.2 Implications for institutions of higher education

An institution of higher education is in charge of the planning of the CE curriculum in its specific institution. In addition, it provides the learning environment in which the curriculum is delivered, involving the physical environment and cultural factors.

As reported in Chapter 5, the review of the institutional curriculum of College X suggests that, compared with the CECR, a product-oriented perspective is more emphasised while a process-oriented one is further neglected in the General English curriculum. In addition, English of Specialty is neglected in this institution. This curriculum approach is not conducive to the accommodation of learners’ expressed needs. Thus, College X, and those institutions which adopt a similar CE curriculum approach, would need to address the problems stated above when designing a new syllabus or teaching plan for CE. The suggestions made for improving the national curriculum, as presented above, may also be applicable in these institutions. An institution could take account of these suggestions while considering its own circumstances.

Regarding the physical environment, the findings reported in Chapter 6 show that on the one hand there was a shortage of computers in the autonomous learning centre in College X; while on the other hand all the students had personal computers. Therefore, it is suggested that institutions which have insufficient

numbers of computers encourage students to use their personal computers to facilitate their English learning.

Concerning cultural factors, the findings show that College X played an important role in shaping the cultural environment. As shown in Chapter 4, by allowing chances for cheating in exams and putting a camera in the classroom, College X failed to address the students' needs for a learning environment of fairness, respect and trust. In addition, by making regulations and restrictions on morning reading, evening study, computer and Internet use in the dormitory, the college inadequately addressed the students' needs for autonomy. Furthermore, there was a lack of after-class learning environments for students to learn, and particularly speak, English in College X. On the other hand, with its emphasis on teacher development, College X would be able to play a positive role in promoting a process-oriented perspective in the CE curriculum. In particular, as discussed in Chapter 6 and also in Section 7.3.1, developing teachers' intercultural competence and promoting their action research of practical classroom problems would favour a process-oriented perspective.

In order to create a cultural environment which would favour improvement of the CE curriculum approach and the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs, it is suggested that College X and other institutions of higher education follow the following practical strategies:

- (1) To have ongoing negotiations and dialogues with students regarding the value and importance of current practices, and the possibility of introducing new practices to the institution;
- (2) To help students to create after-class learning environments where they would feel comfortable to learn and speak English;
- (3) To introduce teacher development projects, especially those which have a focus on developing teachers' intercultural competence;
- (4) To encourage teachers to carry out action research to study the uniqueness and complexity of their classroom teaching.

7.3.3 Implications for CE teachers

The findings of this study show that the teachers in College X did not sufficiently address students' learning needs during their teaching practice, largely because of the large class sizes. In addition, they felt they had to set restrictions on students' autonomous English learning, as the students tended to show a low level of learning autonomy. They also adopted test-driven teaching strategies, under the societal and institutional pressure to ensure their students were adequately prepared for CET-4. Furthermore, they did not adequately address spoken communication in class, partly because they faced difficulties in organising oral practice, and partly because there was not an oral component in the CET-4 test.

While the teaching practices stated above were not conducive to accommodating the students' expressed needs, these practices were delivered in a learning environment in which certain factors were operating and had considerable influence on teachers' views and decisions. Thus, teachers tended to be faced with a dilemma of whether or not to accommodate the students' expressed needs. However, a more productive way forward might be to encourage teachers to consider how they could address these problems in their teaching practice to try and accommodate the students' expressed needs.

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 6, teachers could play a more positive role in accommodating learners' expressed needs by developing their intercultural competence and studying the effects and problems thrown up in their classroom teaching.

7.3.4 Implications for college and university students

The findings concerning the cultural factors in the learning environment in College X, as reported in Chapter 6, suggest that developing learner autonomy would be of great important for English teaching and learning. According to the teacher participants, the reason why they set regulations controlling the students' autonomous English learning was that the students showed a low level of learning autonomy. This statement was also confirmed by the student participants.

Moreover, S14, a student participant with excellent English proficiency, related her English achievements to her autonomous learning: after-class time management and setting her own goals (see Excerpt [6-18]).

Furthermore, developing learner autonomy would enhance the CE curriculum approach. According to Benson (2012), learner autonomy is part of personal autonomy. Kelly (2009) argues that developing individual autonomy is a central feature of the process model of curriculum development. In this sense, developing learning autonomy accords with promoting a process-oriented perspective, which is an important aspect of improving the CE curriculum approach, as discussed in Chapter 5.

It is therefore suggested that college and university students develop their learning autonomy, including learning how to manage their time and emotions, identifying their preferred learning styles, setting their own objectives, and exploring useful learning resources, including online resources. During this process, they may consult with teachers and peer students.

7.4 Methodological implications

In order to understand learners' perceptions of their English learning needs, this study has drawn on qualitative interviews, in contrast with the questionnaires which constitute either the only or the primary method used in the NA studies conducted for English teaching in China (e.g. Wang & Liu, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Liu & Liu, 2008; Zhao et al., 2009). The findings emerging concerning the students' expressed English learning needs indicate the value of a qualitative methodology.

First, the findings show that qualitative interviews were useful for understanding the assumptions underlying the students' expressed target needs. As reported in Chapter 4, the NA conducted in this study has explored the assumptions underlying the students' expressed target needs, something which has not been attempted in the NAs conducted for English teaching in China. This gap

in investigating students' expressed target needs can largely be related to the methodological choice made in the NA. As stated in Chapter 1, the existing NAs conducted in either independent colleges or public institutions have depended on questionnaires to collect students' English learning needs. In this study I also planned to conduct a questionnaire. However, as reported in Chapter 3, after conducting some unstructured interviews in the initial stages of data collection, I realised that there were inconsistencies between the surface meanings of the students' expressed target needs and the assumptions underlying these needs. Such inconsistencies could be captured in qualitative interviews but might not necessarily be in closed-ended questionnaires. Thus, I dismissed the questionnaire and relied on qualitative interviews to understand the students' expressed target needs.

Second, the findings show that qualitative interviews were useful in identifying the students' expressed learning needs. As stated earlier, the affective dimension of the students' learning needs identified in this study is insufficiently addressed and the political dimension is not reported in the NA literature in language teaching. In China, this insufficiency in identifying students' expressed learning needs may also be related to the methodological choice of using questionnaires to collect data in the NA, as stated above. If the researcher does not know what he/she does not know, the closed-ended questionnaire would limit the inquiry. By contrast, qualitative interviews permit the learners themselves to express their own needs, and therefore are likely to identify more factors in the learning situation which may affect their English learning.

In short, the findings of this study indicate the value of a qualitative methodology in understanding learners' expressed needs. Future NA research ought to consider the value of this methodology.

7.5 Limitations of the study

Inevitably, this study has limitations, in addition to the contributions and implications discussed in the previous sections.

First, the focus of this study has been on understanding learners' expressed English learning needs as a basis for improving the CE curriculum. Although I have made suggestions for improving both the planning and implementation of the CE curriculum, the suggestions are made to improve the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs in the CE curriculum. There certainly would be other aspects to improving the CE curriculum, for example improving the teaching methodology or accommodating teachers' needs. Thus, the findings of this study do not provide a sufficient basis for the planning and implementation of the CE curriculum. However, by identifying learners' expressed needs, the long neglected students' voice in EFL education in China has been heard.

Second, this study is a case study conducted in a Chinese independent college. It therefore does not constitute a "generalisation" which is "defined in the usual sense of nomic generalisation, based upon data representative of some population" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.120). In naturalistic inquiry, however, generalisation can be interpreted as "transferability", which is addressed in a thick description of the research project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.125). This study provides detailed information about the context of the study and the fieldwork process, and so future researchers can decide if the outcomes of the study can be transferred to other settings and cultures.

Third, regarding the independent college studied, I, as the researcher, spent 3 years teaching English in this college, and 7 years studying English, which included studying for the CE course, in the public university on whose teaching resources the independent college depends. In this situation, the researcher has shared the participants' experience. Although such familiarity with the participants' experience may enable better in-depth understanding of their

perceptions and interpretation of their English teaching/learning experience, the outcomes of this study will inevitably in some respects be subjective.

Specifically, my role as a teacher may have led to a possible power imbalance between me and the student participants, despite my attempts to establish a good rapport with them. In addition, my role as a teacher, to some extent, may have blocked the teacher participants' voices, although I made it clear that my interviews were not to evaluate their teaching, but to understand the CE curriculum from their perspectives. Moreover, my own learning and teaching experience might influence the way I framed the interview questions. On the other hand, I adopted multiple methods (documents, observations, and interviews) and invited the perspectives of different stakeholders (students, teachers, employees, and a manager) in this study, in order to enrich my understanding of the issues studied. In particular, open-ended qualitative interviews were used to elicit the participants' perceptions, which helped me to avoid projecting my own experience. Furthermore, I remained reflexive throughout the study.

Last, the study has methodological limitations, as reported in Chapter 3. The classroom observations involved only the first term of the two-year General English course, and therefore I did not observe how the teacher organised the CET-4 training for the class, which happened in the third and fourth terms and which constituted a part of the General English teaching practice. In addition, there are concerns regarding the interviews: there was a gender imbalance in the student participants recruited from the observed class; there was only one in-depth interview with a male student (S9); the first group interview was not recorded; there was a failure of the audio-recorder during one interview. Although I attempted to remedy these situations, through a wide range of data collection approaches, as explained in Chapter 3, there will inevitably be some loss of information in the interview data.

7.6 Directions for future research

The findings of this study suggest that product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives should be integrated in the CE curriculum. This, however, is a new perspective in curriculum development, different from the accounts of the process model made by Stenhouse (1975) and Kelly (2009), as discussed in Section 7.2. Therefore, it is open to future research and discussion. Furthermore, how the two perspectives can be integrated into language programmes should also be studied in future research.

This study also suggests directions for future research regarding the CE curriculum. As suggested in the limitations, this study focuses on understanding and accommodating learners' expressed needs and so does not provide a sufficient basis for designing either the national curriculum or an institutional curriculum. In future research, more NAs for CE teaching from other perspectives should be conducted, such as analysis of English use in target situations, analysis of students' learning needs from the perspectives of teachers or linguists, and means analyses to seek the feasibility and means of implementing other curriculum innovations. In particular, more studies should be conducted in the context of Chinese independent colleges. From these further NA studies, a more robust basis for redesigning the national and institutional CE curriculum could be established.

Furthermore, future research would need to address the specific issues emerging in the implementation of the CE curriculum, including reform of CET-4, the promotion of English of Specialty, the enhancement of teachers' intercultural competence and action research, and the development of learners' English learning autonomy.

Conclusion to the study

By providing a detailed description of students' English learning experiences within the CE curriculum, this study has focused on understanding learners' expressed needs as a basis for improving the curriculum. In doing so, it has

contributed to research and practice in several ways. First, this study has enriched understanding about conducting needs analysis, particularly target situation analysis, learning situation analysis, and means analysis, in language teaching, and has also contributed to the definition of “needs”. Second, the study has proposed the integration of product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives in the CE curriculum, which constitutes a new perspective on curriculum development. Third, this study has made suggestions for improving English teaching and learning practice in Chinese institutions of higher education. Fourth, the study has indicated the value of a qualitative methodology in understanding learners’ expressed English learning needs. Finally, this study has explored the development of the CE curriculum in the context of independent colleges and from the learners’ perspectives, a neglected context and perspective in English education research in China, and thus the research outcomes shed light on possibilities for developing English language education in China (specifically within CE), and a potential future research agenda.

Appendix 1: Observation Issues

I focused on the following issues during the classroom observations in order to see how the General English teaching plan was implemented in the teaching practice. However, I did not confine my observations to these issues and also paid much attention to unanticipated findings.

1. The development of the five language abilities: listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, especially listening and speaking;
2. Teaching tasks: units and sections of the textbooks covered in the classroom teaching;
3. Teaching content;
4. Teaching hours per unit;
5. Formative assessment (oral tests, autonomous learning, classroom performance and assignments, and attendance) and summative assessment (final exams, CET-4)

Appendix 2: Unstructured Interview Guide for Students

1. Why are you learning English?
2. Do you need English? If yes, then why?
3. Will you use English? If yes, then how will you use it?
4. Can you describe the target situation in which you will use English?
5. What are your objectives/desired outcomes for learning English?
6. How do you relate English learning to higher education?
7. How do you relate English learning to future life, careers, and/or studies?
8. What is your attitude towards English?
9. What is your attitude towards learning English?
10. What was it like when you first began learning English?
11. What is your current English learning like?
12. How does your English learning in college compare with high school?

- 1、你为什么学习英语呢？
- 2、你需要英语吗？如果需要英语，为什么需要呢？
- 3、你会用到英语吗？如果会用到，会怎么用到呢？
- 4、你能描述一下将来使用英语的场景或情况吗？
- 5、你学习英语的目标或者是期望的结果是什么呢？
- 6、你觉得英语学习与高等教育有什么关联呢？
- 7、你觉得英语学习与未来的生活、工作或者学习有什么关联呢？
- 8、你对英语的态度如何？
- 9、你对英语学习的态度如何？
- 10、你能描述一下刚刚开始学习英语的情况吗？
- 11、你能描述一下现在的英语学习情况吗？
- 12、你能比较一下大学的英语学习与高中的英语学习吗？

Appendix 3: Unstructured Interview Guide for Employee/Manager Participants

1. Can you describe your job?
 2. Do you use English in your job? If yes, then how do you use it?
 3. How do you relate English ability to career development?
 4. What do you think is the desired level of English proficiency in the workplace?
 5. How do you think college students can prepare for their future use of English?
 6. How do you relate English proficiency to employment?
 7. How do you evaluate candidates' English proficiency during recruitment?
(for the manager participant only)
 8. What do you think of your English learning experiences in College X/University Y? (for former student and employee participants only)
 9. What do you think of the College English curriculum in College X/University Y? (for former student and employee participants only)
-
- 1、你能描述一下你的工作吗？
 - 2、你在工作中用到英语吗？如果用到，怎么用的？
 - 3、你认为英语能力与职业发展有什么关联？
 - 4、你认为在工作中理想的英语水平是怎样的呢？
 - 5、你认为大学生应该如何为将来使用英语做准备？
 - 6、你认为英语水平与求职有什么关联？
 - 7、在招聘过程中你怎样衡量求职者的英语水平？
 - 8、你如何看待在 XX 学院/XX 大学的英语学习经历？
 - 9、你如何看待 XX 学院/XX 大学的大学英语课程？

Appendix 4: In-depth Interview Guide for Students

These interviews were intensive individual interviews undertaken at different learning stages, including at the beginning of the undergraduate programme, after final exams, after the CET-4 test, and at the end of General English learning. The focus of the interview varied according to the stage and the participant. A list of general topics is given below.

1. Personal information and family background:
 - Place of origin
 - Impact of the family on studies and particularly on English learning
 - Personality

2. Previous learning experiences
 - Previous schools
 - English learning starting time
 - Attitude towards English at the start of English learning
 - The impact of teachers on English learning
 - Important times in the English learning journey
 - English learning in senior high school

3. Current teaching and learning experiences
 - Personal concept of teaching and learning
 - Preferred teaching/learning styles
 - Current teaching/learning strategies
 - Curriculum arrangements
 - Attitudes towards English, English learning, intercultural communication

4. Experiences of final exams and CET-4

- Final exam experiences
- Attitude towards/comments on final exams
- CET-4 experiences
- Attitude towards/comments on CET-4
- The impact of final exams/CET-4 on English learning and undergraduate learning

5. The learning environment

- Aids
- Opportunities for out-of-class activities
- The Autonomous English learning centre

Appendix 5: Semi-structured Interview Guide for Students

1. I know that your English is much better than other students'. Can you share your English learning experience with me?
 2. As you know, many college and university students don't speak English well. However, I notice that you speak very good English. How do you develop your listening and speaking abilities?
 3. You and other students are all learning English in this college, but your learning achievements are different. So, how does your English learning compare with others, like your roommates or classmates?
 4. Have you taken CET-4? What do you think of this test? What effect does it have on your English learning?
 5. What factors in the learning environment do you think affect your English learning? How do these factors affect your English learning?
 6. How do you think your English learning can benefit from the current learning environment?
-
1. 我知道你的英语比其他同学好很多,你能跟我分享一下你的英语学习经历吗?
 2. 你也知道很多大学生说不好英语。但是我发现你的英语说得很好。你是怎么培养你的英语听说能力的呢?
 3. 你和其他同学都在这个学院学英语,但是你们的学习效果不一样。你能把你的英语学习情况与其他同学的比较一下吗,比如说你的舍友或者同班同学?
 4. 你有没有参加过四级考试?你怎么看待这个考试?这个考试对你的英语学习有什么影响吗?
 5. 周围环境中有什么因素会影响到你的英语学习呢?这些因素对你的英语学习有什么影响呢?
 6. 你觉得周围环境中有什么因素会促进你的英语学习呢?

Appendix 6: Semi-structured Interview Guide for Teachers

The questions, which cover themes emerging from the data collected in the previous stages of data collection, are formulated to invite teacher participants to explain or comment on the current curriculum arrangements in College X.

1. I know that there are some restrictions on the students' autonomous English learning in College X, including no Internet access, a minimum learning time, and limiting learning content to listening exercises from the textbook. Can you explain why there are these restrictions? What do you think of them?
2. Some students have mentioned that their English learning needs, such as their feelings during the learning process and their preferred learning styles, are not well addressed in teaching practice. Do you agree? Do you pay much attention to accommodating these needs in your teaching practice? Why or why not?
3. I have noticed that CE has a cultural dimension in the national curriculum, i.e. *College English Curriculum Requirements*. However, this dimension seems missing in the General English curriculum in this college. Do you agree? Do you address cultural issues in your teaching practice? Why or why not?
4. I know that English of Specialty is separated from General English courses in College X. In your opinion, what might be the reasons for this separation? What do you think of this separation?
5. Some students have mentioned that they don't have many chances to speak English in class. Do you organise much oral practice in your class? Why or why not?
6. Many students have emphasised the importance of CET-4. What do you think of this test? What's your perception of its role in General English teaching practice?

7. I know that teachers give a final exam programme to students for them to prepare for the exam. Can you tell me some more about it? What do you think of it?
8. I know that there is an unwritten rule among teachers that a formative score might be used to balance a low final exam score. Do you agree? Can you explain how a formative score might be produced in this college? How do you give formative scores to your students?
9. What do you think of the current CE curriculum in College X? How do you think it can be improved?
10. I am still interested in the factors that impact on the current teaching arrangements and then the accommodation of students' English learning needs. Can you think of any now?

- 1、 我知道学校对学生的英语自主学习做出了一些限制，比如自主学习教室不联网，规定了一个最低学习时间，学习内容限定在课本的听力练习等等。你能解释一下为什么要有这些规定吗？你怎么看待这些规定呢？
- 2、 有些学生提到他们的英语学习需求在教学过程中没有得到很好的满足，比如说他们学习过程中的感受以及喜欢的学习风格啊。你同意这种说法吗？你在教学过程中是否非常关注学生的这些需求？为什么呢？
- 3、 我注意到国家的教学大纲，也就是《大学英语课程要求》，涉及到文化层面的东西。可是 XX 学院的普通英语教学中好象没有涉及到这些东西。你是怎么看的呢？你在教学过程中有没有关注文化方面的问题？为什么呢？
- 4、 我知道专业英语和普通英语在这个学院是分开的。你觉得两者分开的原因是什么呢？你怎么看待把它们分开的做法呢？
- 5、 有些同学提到他们在课堂上没有多少机会说英语。你在课堂上有没有组织很多口语练习呢？为什么呢？
- 6、 很多学生都强调了四级的重要性。你怎么看这个考试？你觉得四级在普通英语教学中扮演了什么角色呢？

- 7、 我知道老师在期末考试之前会给学生划范围，以便让他们按照划定的范围进行复习。你能给我详细讲讲吗？你是怎么看待这一做法的呢？
- 8、 我知道关于打分老师们有个心知肚明的做法，就是把平时分打高用来平衡较低的期考分数。你同意我的说法吗？你能给我讲讲在这个学校平时分可能是怎么产生的吗？你是怎么给学生评定平时分的呢？
- 9、 你对X X学院现行的大学英语课程有什么看法？你觉得能怎样改进呢？
- 10、 我想知道还有什么其它因素可能影响到现行的教学安排，进而影响到学生需求的满足。你现在能想到什么吗？

Appendix 7: Information Sheet (teachers)

Dear teacher,

I am a postgraduate research student in Durham University, United Kingdom. I am doing my research project on EFL education in Chinese independent colleges. In order to accomplish this project, I would like to invite you to join my interviews. The information about my study is presented as follows:

The title of the study is:

A case study of EFL education in a Chinese independent college: How does the College English curriculum meet learners' expressed needs?

This study explores the English learning needs expressed by independent college students, and how these needs are being met and can be accommodated in the College English curriculum, as a basis for improving the curriculum.

The purpose of the interview is to learn about your experiences of working as an English teacher in this independent college. Please note that the interview is NOT to evaluate your teaching, but to understand College English teaching from your perspective. In this study, your name, college name, and all of the responses and information you provide will be kept anonymous and all of the data will contribute solely to the academic research.

I would be grateful if you are able to spend an hour in a face-to-face interview with me in the near future. To schedule an interview, please feel free to contact me by phone or email. If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to let me know.

My phone number: 187xxxxxxx

My email: xxx@xxxx.xxx

Kind regards,

Jingyan Peng

16 July 2012

亲爱的老师：

我是英国杜伦大学研究生，正在进行一项关于独立学院英语教育的研究，特邀请您来参加访谈。

研究的主题是：独立学院英语教育的个案研究——大学英语课程在何种程度上满足了学生所表达的需求？此项研究调查独立学院学生的英语学习需求，以及大学英语课程在何种程度上满足了学生的需求，如何才能更好的满足学生的需求，以期改进大学英语课程教学。

本访谈的目的是了解贵校的英语教学情况，您的经验和回馈将对这项研究带来极大贡献，访谈「并非」教学评估。您所提供的资料，包括人名，校名等，都将匿名处理，并仅供学术研究使用。

若您近期愿意抽出约一小时来参加访谈，我将不甚感激。欢迎以电话或电子邮件与我联系，让我与您联络并安排访谈时间。若有其它任何问题，也随时欢迎您与我联系，谢谢您的合作！

联系电话：187xxxxxxxx

电子邮箱：xxx@xxxx.Xxx

此致

敬礼！

彭晶艳

2012-7-16

Appendix 8: Consent Form

TITLE OF PROJECT:

A case study of EFL education in a Chinese independent college:

How does the College English curriculum meet learners' expressed needs?

Please cross out as necessary

Have you read the Participant Information Sheet? YES / NO

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss the study? YES / NO

Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions? YES / NO

Have you received enough information about the study? YES / NO

Have you been informed that the interview will be recorded and of the intended use of the recordings? YES

/ NO

Do you consent to the use of the recordings for the desired purpose of the study?

YES / NO

Who have you spoken to? Ms Jingyan Peng

Do you consent to participate in the study? YES/NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:

* at any time and

* without having to give a reason for withdrawing and

* without affecting your position in the University?

YES / NO

Signed **Date**

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)

Appendix 9: Two Fragments from the Unstructured Student Interviews

These two fragments suggest that there were inconsistencies between the students' expressed needs and the assumptions underlying them.

1. A fragment from the interview with S8

采访者：那你现在对英语感觉怎么样，我是说感不感兴趣？

S8：感兴趣，我要学好。

采访者：现在比以前感兴趣了？

S8：嗯，我要学好。

采访者：你这种感兴趣是说我要学好，还是真正特别喜欢学特别享受这个学习？

S8：享受？没有特别享受。但是想学好。想到学到可以自由使用的程度。

采访者：就是不是这种情况——我真的特别喜欢啊，就是我的爱好啊？你没有这种感觉是吧？

S8：没有那种爱好的感觉。所以我就想培养这种兴趣。因为那本书，我看的书都说兴趣是第一的，做什么要有兴趣才能做好。

Interviewer: So what do you feel about English? I mean are you interested in it?

S8: Yes, I am interested in it, and so I want to learn it well.

Interviewer: So you are more interested in it than before?

S8: Er, so I want to learn it well.

Interviewer: So, by “interested in it”, do you mean that you want to learn it well, or that you really like it and enjoy the learning experience?

S8: Enjoy? Not really enjoy, but want to learn it well to the extent that I am able to use it freely.

Interviewer: Not that you really love it, and it is a habit? You do not feel this, right?

S8: Not really feel it a habit, but I would love to build on it. Just like that book, and all the books I have read, suggests that the most important thing is being interested, and that whatever you do being interested in it will help you do it well.

Notes: As seen from the underlined statements, S8 felt she was interested in English. But this interest does not mean that she enjoyed English learning. Rather, she thought an interest in English was the key to learning it well, and so she wanted to build an interest in it.

2. A fragment from the interview with S10

采访者：前面有提到你学英语的一个目标是想用来作为知识储备，那么你认为大学阶段的英语课程应该涵盖什么呢？以基础英语为主，还是专业相关的英语学习比较重要？或者其它？

S10: 我认为是专业相关的英语，因为是为了将来所做的准备。

采访者：可是刚刚提到，你也不是很确定将来会从事什么工作呢。

S10: 嗯，但这并不与我想要储备专业的英语知识相冲突。

采访者：能说得具体一些吗？

S10: 噢，对了，我说的不确定是指我不确定会加入中外合资企业还是国内的企事业单位。

采访者：也就是说还是很可能从事本专业工作，但不知道具体单位类型，会计专业英语是可能会用到的，但不知道用得更多还是少？

S10: 嗯，对，所以我想储备的也就是会计英语方面的知识。

采访者：我在采访中了解到，有些同学说基础英语的有些东西高中就学过了，现在还在重复。你是怎么看待这个课程设置的呢，有没有觉得要分更多的时间精力在专业英语的教学上？

S10: 这倒不会，因为我是以通过四级考试为首的，所以我会以基础英语为主。

Interviewer: As you have mentioned earlier, one of your goals in learning English is to acquire knowledge. So, in your opinion what should be covered in the College English curriculum? Should it focus on General English, specialised English, or anything else?

S10: I think specialised English is more important, as it helps to prepare for future work.

Interviewer: But you have just mentioned that you are not sure what kind of job you are going to do yet.

S10: Er, but this should not conflict with my goal of acquiring knowledge of specialised English.

Interviewer: Could you please explain that more specifically?

S10: Oh, yes. When I said “I am not sure”, I mean I am not sure whether I am going to join a Sino-foreign joint venture or a Chinese enterprise or institution.

Interviewer: OK, so that means you are likely to work in a field relevant to your degree course, but you are not sure about the exact company type you will work for? And specialised accountancy English should be useful, but you don't know the extent to which it will be useful?

S10: Oh, yes. So that is why I want to acquire knowledge of specialised accountancy English.

Interviewer: In my previous interviews, some students mentioned that part of the General English course was already covered at high school. What do you think of the course design of College English? Do you think it needs to be more concerned with specialised English?

S10: I don't think so. As my primary goal is to pass CET-4, I will concentrate on General English.

Notes: As seen from the underlined statements, S10 first thought that the CE curriculum should focus on specialised English, to help prepare for future work. However, he then stated that he would concentrate on General English in order to meet the requirements of the CET-4 test. Thus, he did not think CE needed to be more concerned with specialised English.

Appendix 10: A Final Exam Programme

During my classroom observations on 29 December 2010, the teacher gave this outline of the coverage of the final exam to the students for them to prepare for the final exam.

2010-2011年度第1学期大学英语（一）期考题型与范围

题型	分值	范围
1、写作	15分	课外
2、快速阅读	10分	大学实用英语快速阅读教程1所有单元
3、听力 1) 短对话10个 2) 长对话两个 3) 短文1篇 4) 复合式听写 (十个单词)	共25分 10分 7分 3分 5分	1) 短对话、长对话和短文出自“大学实用英语视听说教程1”1-5单元及两个 Model Test; 2) 复合式听写出自“大学实用英语综合教程1”1-5单元 passage A 要求背诵的段落。
4、仔细阅读 1) 选词填空 2) 两篇短文阅读	共30分 10分 20分	1) 选词填空出自“大学实用英语综合教程1”1-5单元 passage A 课后练习; 2) 短文阅读选自课外。
5、完形填空	10分	出自“大学实用英语综合教程1”1-5单元 passage C课后Test Zone部分的练习。
6、翻译（5题）	10分	出自“大学实用英语综合教程1”1-5单元 passage A课后练习。

Question types and coverage of the CE (1) final exam paper:

Term 1, academic year 2010/2011

Question type	Percentage	Coverage
1. Writing	15%	Not from the textbooks
2. Fast-reading	10%	All the units of the fast-reading textbook
3. Listening 1) 10 short conversations 2) 2 long conversations 3) 1 short passage 4) compound dictations (10 words)	25% (10%) (7%) (3%) (5%)	1) Items 1-3 from units 1-5 & two model tests in the listening and speaking textbook 2) Item 4 from the paragraphs which the students were required to recite from passage A in units 1-5 of the comprehensive English textbook
4. Intensive reading 1) Choosing words to fill the blanks 2) 2 passages	30% (10%) (20%)	1) Item 1 from the follow-up exercises to passage A in units 1-5 of the comprehensive English book; 2) Item 2 not from the textbooks
5. Cloze	10%	From the exercises in the Test Zone section of passage C in units 1-5 of the comprehensive English book
6. Translation (5 items)	10%	From the follow-up exercises to passage A in units 1-5 of the comprehensive English book

Appendix 11: Sample Interview Transcript

20 August 2012

Interview with T2

采访者：我看了一下国家的那个《教学要求》，在课程设置方面，它讲到大学英语是一个课程体系，应该包括，比如说综合英语类、语言技能类、语言应用类、语言文化类、专业英语类。按这个课程体系来的话，你觉得我们XX学院基本上是包含了哪些？综合英语应该是有的吧？

T2：有。

采访者：语言技能也体现到了吧？

T2：你是说大学英语¹⁹吗？

采访者：对。大学英语。

T2：嗯，就是综合英语里边就包括听说读写。

采访者：对，其实也算是语言技能嘛。

T2：嗯。

采访者：应用方面怎么样？语言应用方面有没有突出，或者是有没有涉及到？

T2：应用方面就是以前的那些教材好像突出的不是很明显。现在就是那个新院长来了以后，这个应用型大学英语这套教材就是突出了应用性啊。比如说里面有很多论文，求职信怎么写，还有合同还有报关演讲啊什么的。它每个单元都有一个应用性很强的主题，就是一个练习，还有一个范文，给那些学生嘛。

采访者：这样说来，大学英语教学其实还是以教材为纲，是吗？

T2：嗯。

采访者：就是说不是教师或者同学自己去搞一些应用的？

T2：嗯嗯。

采访者：以教材为纲的话，那教材就起着很大的作用呢。

T2：是。所以就要选教材，因为老师，我们的院长说啊，我们的那个学生啊，本来我们那个独立学院的学生嘛，定位就是培养那些应用型人才，所以她就选了这套教材，就是跟那个培养人才的目标那里也是一致的。就是，以前²⁰的话都是比较笼统，就是说什么综合技能的提高啊，就是很笼统。

采访者：就是说以前在应用英语这方面涉及得不是很多？

¹⁹ 大学英语在这里指普通英语（General English）。

²⁰ 这次采访在数据收集阶段的末期，“以前”就包括了本项研究开展的时期。

T2: 嗯。

采访者: 语言文化类呢? 文化类我看了以前的教材, 基本上每课后面都有一些文化知识介绍, 是吧?

T2: 嗯嗯。

采访者: 是不是教学过程中就是说, 文化类就是让学生了解西方国家英语国家的一些风俗习惯, 文化背景知识? 还是什么别的? 文化类在教学中是怎样定义的?

T2: 那文化, 教材里边体现的也比较少, 就是还是靠老师。就是有的任课老师啊, 他/她比较注重这些, 他/她觉得让学生学习文化对于促进英语学习有帮助, 他/她就会在讲课的过程中自己就是找资料, 自己做课件, 然后就加入这些内容进去。其实那文化方面的输入还是靠任课老师。就是说, 哪个任课老师比较重视这些, 也比较善于来传播这种文化的话, 他/她可能在那个班级给学生教的这个方面就多, 这方面学生了解到就多。如果有的老师不涉及的话, 那学生在这方面就了解得不多。

采访者: 那文化方面考试的时候有没有要求, 然后呢, 像你们教研室平时开会讨论有没有强调一定要注重这个东西?

T2: 没有。那个考试当中也没有, 文化在里面好像体现的很少很少, 基本上没有, 还是语言技能方面多。

采访者: 对。语言技能方面、语言知识方面。

T2: 还有我们的那个, 你刚才说的教研室会议, 目前来看的话, 像强调这方面的也很少。其实我们也想, 下个学期我也想在这方面就是多注重一些, 就是来讨论, 老师来讨论一下看怎么样在那个教学过程中, 把那个文化的那种知识传达给学生。

采访者: 在国家《教学要求》里, 专业英语类, 就是比如说法律专业的法律英语啊, 也可以算作是大学英语的一个部分。但是像XX大学和XX学院……

T2: 分开了。

采访者: 分开了, 不归大学英语管了?

T2: 是啊。

采访者: 就是归那些学部或者是专业管吗?

T2: 嗯, 是啊。它都不归[大学英语管]。所以就是说脱节, 跟我们没有什么关系, 他们也没跟我们来交流, 也不交流。就是说学生英语知识怎么样, 或者怎样, 我们也不知道他们的专业英语学得怎么样。然后, 学生学起来到底困不困难, 我们都不了解。

采访者：它也算是选修课，而且我也注意到有时候它列在那个培养计划上面，但实际上这门课又没上。也就是说，会有学生四年来从来都没上过专业英语课。当然这种情况很少啦，虽然比较少，但是有。

T2：这个我倒不了解，我以为是每个学生必须要上。

采访者：有的专业也有两三门的。

T2：有的专业是要求必修的，对吧？

采访者：嗯。但是为什么这个专业英语会这样定位？比如说为什么没有纳入到大学英语的管辖范围之内？是不是因为照搬了XX大学，XX大学没有这样子，我们也就把它分开了，还是有没有其它的原因？

T2：这个我，我就不太清楚。一开始就是这样。但是呢，我们大学英语老师，有的老师也觉得不是很合理。有的学生也觉得不是很合理，有的学生总问，就是到了大二以后总问下学期我们的那个专业英语是不是你还上之类的，意思就是说本来它还是一个延续的过程嘛。但是现在呢完全拆开来，然后由各个学部自己来管理。这样定的话，原因是什么我也不清楚。就是，可能就是说从一开始就这样认为，这是理所当然的。

采访者：嗯。

T2：所以就照这样子下去了。

采访者：XX大学也是这样子的。

T2：嗯。

采访者：这样看来，像有的专业吧，它可能就一个英语专业老师，所以弄什么他/她就一个人说了算，也没有监督啊？

T2：嗯，对对。

采访者：也没有交流啊，反正他想怎么样上就怎么样上，想怎么样考核就怎么样考核，是吗？

T2：是。然后效果怎么样也不知道。

采访者：对。

T2：嗯，也是。这也是一个问题。

采访者：但是，到现在为止，领导或者是学院里面有没有想过，就是要把专业英语纳入到大学英语，领导层有没有什么想法？

T2：没有。领导层也没人提过，老师也没人提过。

采访者：就是刚才说到少数老师可能有一些想法，认为这样分开可能不合理？

T2：就是有想法，就是学生也有想法。学生问，很多老师都被学生问到嘛，他/她说为什么是英语的却不是英语老师来上或者什么，学生也有这个质疑。

采访者：嗯，好。第二个方面就是听说的训练，主要就是听说这一块。

T2: 听说的话我们有, 就是我们那个教材啊, 主要是两种嘛: 一种是综合教程, 一个是听说教程。

采访者: 对。

T2: 叫做视听说教程。

采访者: 对, 视听说。就是新风尚, 就是我们独立学院编的那套书?

T2: 新风尚也有, 然后我们现在用的这个应用型大学英语也有, 视听说, 以前是听说, 现在就变成了视听说。然后呢, 它虽然分作两个教程, 但是呢, 我们也没有分, 就是说哪节是听说。

采访者: 哦, 没有分?

T2: 反正就是由任课老师自己来调。

采访者: 一般就是那个课都是在那个多媒体教室上的?

T2: 嗯, 都是的。

采访者: 它有那个语音设备?

T2: 对。然后也是同一个老师上, 我们没分出哪个老师上听说。然后听说里面, 就是视听说里面, 也是以教材为主嘛, 基本上90%都在教材。但是教材里面呢, 就是有的内容比较难, 加上内容也多。就是挑选一些认为学生能够接受的, 就是能听得懂的一些材料来给他们做练习, 也就是播放了那些音频或者视频材料以后给学生做练习。然后呢, 学生哪里做得不对的, 又解释, 找原因。比如说哪个单词听不懂, 还是说语速太快还是什么的。然后呢, 又再重新播放一遍啊。就是那种传统的啦, 你以前也了解过。

采访者: 嗯, 我知道。但是, 就是学生的反映啊, 我问你英语方面有哪些需求, 他们就是有一个共同的而且比较主流的需求, 就是说希望自己能够用英语自由的交流。学生是反映上课时没有多少说的机会, 听可能还能听一些。但是实际上呢, 不管是我以前自己上课, 或者是其它老师也讲过, 在上课的时候你如果想, 你给机会给学生去说, 然后有些学生站出来又冷场, 有些又害羞。

T2: 嗯。

采访者: 有一些愿意说的呢, 不能节节课都让他们说。有老师也说, 不能老是总点他们出来说嘛。

T2: 对。

采访者: 可能就会有各种各样的情况, 导致可能是说啊在课堂上很少体现, 你是怎么看的呢?

T2: 是, 就是听得多。虽然说听说教程, 但是说得比较少, 还是听的占80%。这个教材方面啊, 说的话就像刚才你说的一样, 就是班里面有40个人,

就是有那么五六个人就是很想说，很踊跃，基础又好，口语又好。就是每次一问就是那些人站出来说，然后呢，你点其他人的话，有的人他 / 她……有的人是态度问题。那个说就是，其实跟你刚才描述的一样。为什么造成这种现象，也跟那个学生的整体水平有关，也就是说基础不一样啊。有的学生成绩好，有的成绩差，班里面水平不一致嘛。就是说如果我们能按照他们的那种水平来重新分班的话，可能……比如这个班水平低一点的，我们给他们的话题啊，或者是我们提示多一点，可能就会好一点。

采访者：噢，对。

T2：就是那种为什么成绩好的总站出来。但如果你总说那种，比如说那种打招呼那种东西啊，那些成绩好的就很烦。我觉得很大的原因还是跟这个有关，就是说我们没能够因材施教。

采访者：嗯，你的意思是说，可能有一个潜力，或者是有一个方向可以考虑，就是按水平分班，可能会好一些？

T2：是啊。

采访者：是不是也与考试没有口试有关系？或者是有多大的关系？

T2：这个也有关系。没有[口试]的话，就算平时学生练得多，他 / 她也觉得无所谓啊，反正我讲不讲对我影响也不大。

采访者：但是你们平时测评中不是也有口试嘛？

T2：也有口试，但是那个口试是纳入平时分的，不是特别占分的。所以，加上我们那个平时给他们的打分好像也宽松了一点。反正有的人也无所谓，他 / 她总觉得最后总会过的，他 / 她总抱这种心理，学生没有压力啊！

采访者：对，事实上就是全班大部分，绝大部分都会过。

T2：嗯，都会过。可能只有那种，最差最差的那种，不来上课的那种才可能不过。

采访者：嗯，呵呵。还有一项内容就是那个自主学习，基于网络的或者是基于计算机的自主学习。因为它是自主学习嘛，从理论上讲就是应该是说学生到那里去学习，有很多内容他 / 她可以自己选择，或者是时间他 / 她可以自己安排，或者是他 / 她的方式可以自己选择，比如说我想听还是想看，还是想读。但是现在就我了解到的情况，现在基本上就是统一规定了呢。

T2：听。

采访者：安排的时间也统一吗？

T2: 内容也统一, 要求也统一。这个也就是为什么换教材的一个原因。因为我们这个新风尚它没有配套的那个平台, 然后后面我们就要那本听说教程的, 就只要听说教材的那个, 那个也不叫自主学习平台, 就是把听说教材里的音频就拷在那里。就造成了我们不知道怎么样去要求学生, 就是没有真正地进行网络自主学习。

采访者: 对, 事实上网络都没有用。

T2: 也有, 有一点点, 就是只能在那网上记录你的学习时间, 你的答题情况, 就这样。然后现在呢, 我们用的应用型啊, 下个学期用的话它就有很多内容, 就是听说读写都有。各个任课老师也可以自己去要求学生, 比如说布置作业, 布置什么就不像以前那样要求你听够多少个小时就达标。所以就是现在我们的还不叫做那个网络自主学习。

采访者: 或者有没想过把自主范围放得更大一点, 有更多的内容? 不一定是教材配套的, 可以是电影啊, 或者是演讲, 或者是其它什么视频啊?

T2: 我们之前也想过, 但造成一个问题, 老师检查不知道怎么检查, 因为它不在那个系统里面, 它没有记录。比如说你叫学生看这个电影片段, 叫他模仿或者什么, 他做了没有你不了解。因为老师毕竟那个时间有限, 有些一个老师上四个班。如果布置的任务不是那个配套的东西的话, 就很难检查, 很难评估, 就是不知道他们做了没有, 效果怎样。

采访者: 从另一个方面来说, 你是不是指学生的自主性不够?

T2: 不强。

采访者: 所以你们对学生不够放心?

T2: 对。

采访者: 如果是对学生足够放心的话, 学生任何时候都是学习, 我不用检查你, 你自己都检查你自己的。

T2: 现在的话, 反正我们的学生有98%, 如果你没有规定说要去那里自主学习, 他们都不乐意去。现在就是说把它当成一个很重要的一个任务去, 然后老师又督促, 然后又说又是占了多少分数, 又怎样, 如果不去又怎样怎样, 他们才很不情愿地去。所以就是说我们的学生的自主学习意识不强。

采访者: 我也听说自主学习中有刷分啊, 有什么按那个键啊。

T2: 他们就搞那个, 那个作弊。

采访者: 搞各种手段?

T2: 嗯。

采访者: 后来到期末的时候, 又有踩踏啊, 这种啊?

T2: 嗯, 是。

采访者：就表明他们不愿意学习，一定要压着学？

T2：嗯。

采访者：如果换了新教材的话，老师有没有时间看他们的完成情况呢？

T2：看啊！那个老师的话在家在网上就可以看得到，就不像以前……

采访者：不只是看他们有没有学完这个时间，还可以看到……

T2：不只是学完时间，就比如说你这个练习，比如说词汇的练习啊，有十道题这样，然后他答对了多少道了啊，还有哪题答不对啊，或者什么，你都可以看得到。

采访者：就是说有一个任务量，你整个学期必须完成这么多任务，有吗？有没有任务量？

T2：任务量的话，总的量可能没有。可能就是有一个单元，比如有单元测试，要求他做第一单元的单元测试他就做。然后他得多少分，你那里都有记录。这样可能好一些，任课老师也比较了解一些。

采访者：但是这样子做基本上就是说老师根据自己所了解的学生的情况而制定出来的这些策略？

T2：嗯。

采访者：就是说，到底学生是怎么想的，或者是说学生……

T2：对，那个我对于这个，我以前写一篇论文，关于自主学习，我做了个问卷调查，就是有很多东西，学生的回答，跟我们以前预设的有很大出入。就是他们的真实想法跟我们老师的想法有很大的矛盾的。

采访者：你那一次调查的学生的真实想法大概是怎样的？

T2：就是说，一个是学生认为能取消这个就取消。他〔们〕不愿意去那里，因为他〔们〕觉得那里根本学不到什么，就为了应付那个时间，就是要达到多少个小时。

采访者：理论上他们自己也有这个设备，因为他们在宿舍如果想听想看也可以，很多人都有电脑嘛，是吧？

T2：嗯，是啊，但是现在我们学校，当时它又不开放，不对那个开放，只在那两个教室开放那个网络〔学习平台〕，它在那个校园网络里面登陆不了。本来我觉得真正的学习应该是在校园网络的任意一个地方登陆得了，什么时候随时想学，我半夜十二点我想学我也可以学。就是学生也提出这个要求嘛。

采访者：嗯。学生的意见，还有呢？

T2：我想一下，我拿那个问题来，我也可以给你，我去拿来。

采访者：噢，好的好的，谢谢

T2：就是反正就是说，那些问题在里面，结果的话我看这里，我可能想起来。

采访者：或者现在大概讲一下。

T2：我先大概讲嘛，然后，学生就是觉得就是学校的硬性要求他们才去学习。然后他们认为，我们之前那个平台上的那些东西没有趣味性，90%都认为。因为确实，我自己也认为以前的那种啊……然后就是说资源不足，然后就是学生对英语学习，他们都以为在课堂上学就够了，课外他们都没去学。

采访者：那么有没有学生认为就是说把自主度放得更开，就是我自己去选择，我想学什么，不一定要用这个配套的教材，这些东西？

T2：有啊，也有蛮多的学生。然后就是说，还有一个就是管理不到位。学生认为我们老师也就是监控和管理啊不到位。其实，有的学生也蛮想学。但是呢，别的学生有时候在那玩游戏啊，自己带那种游戏，或者有的人在那看电影啊，有的看那种粤语版的电影啊，不是英文版的。所以就是说，对于想学习的人，旁边的人这样做，肯定也能影响到他/她嘛。就是监控啊管理不到位，还有评估也不到位啊。就像以前我们的评估就看你那时间，就像你说的有人会作弊。就这样，那你都一样对待，那真正学的，那他/她的得分或者什么的跟那些作弊的又一样，那评估也是有问题的。

采访者：也就是说现行的做法基本上就是说，不是特别针对学生的想法来制定的，而是老师认为这样做比较合适？

T2：嗯。

采访者：哦，也不是说某个老师啦，就是说整个学院。

T2：嗯，是学院，是大家认为，共同讨论认为是这样。

采访者：整个大学英语教学部？

T2：嗯，对。嗯，就是说以前，在那个设定规定之前，应该跟学生，就是搞个问卷调查。

采访者：或者说，不一定要全部按照学生的需求去定，但是至少要知道，学生是怎样想的？

T2：至少大部分学生嘛。

采访者：最后一个方面就是讲那个考试评估之类的。按照国家出台的那个大纲来讲一般就有两种评估，一种是形成性评估，一种是终结性评估。我觉得在《教学要求》里还是终结性评估比较重要。

T2：我们的终结性评估占很多。

采访者：形成性评估的话是不是就相当于平时成绩？

T2：对，就是平时成绩。这个叫做形成性嘛，我们以前的话是70%的终结性评估和30%的形成性评估，后面我们也调了。

采访者：60%和40%？

T2：调成了60%和40%。但是虽然这样，还是给人感觉那个终结性评估占太多，也就是说，不能够真正地客观地评价学生的学习，那个能力，我觉得还达不到那种。

采访者：但是这个形成性评估，也就是这个平时成绩，是怎么进行的呢？

T2：就是一个出勤是10%啊，然后那个回答问题，那个课堂表现和作业完成情况10%，还有这个自主学习10%，还有那个口试10%，就这样来。但是我们的期末考试要考的是教材里面我们讲过的70%。

采访者：70%是讲过的？

T2：嗯。

采访者：还有30%的那些是课外的？

T2：嗯，是。所以就是说有时候啊造成，反正一些学生英语基础很好，我觉得他们在课堂上表现各方面都很好，但是由于他们不认真复习，不去看那些课本里面的即将考的那些答案什么的，他们的考试得分啊，比那些突击的人要低得多。

采访者：甚至比那些中等的要低？

T2：很差的。一般的他/她努力背一下他/她就得。所以就是说我觉得还是有点不公正。嗯，有问题。我也想改革，但是呢，又怕，怕什么呢？因为如果都不过……

采访者：就是担心通过率，是吧？

T2：对，如果都不过的话，那个问题就大，你那个大学英语考试有那么多人挂科，就是一个大问题。所以就是说，对于这种的话，是一个矛盾啊。

采访者：嗯。你挂科的人太多了，就觉得太难了？

T2：你就出了教学事故。

采访者：像我们那边，挂的话，甚至大部分人都挂掉，有这种情况。

T2：都有，是吗？

采访者：对，但很少。比如十多个人，两个人通过，也有这种情况。

T2：有时候改完卷后，我就自己替那些成绩好的抱不平。确实有些平时口语又很好，上课又活跃，反正各方面都好。然后口试啊，他/她上去啊，就像演讲一样什么的。但是他/她考试的话，由于……可能，一个他/她觉得没意思去背这些啊。第二个呢，有时候他/她可能就有抵触情绪啊，有的就是说啊，反正基础这么好，我也不怕。或者他/她什么也不去看。所以造成这样。

采访者：而且是不是还有那种，像考试成绩比较低的嘛，没有低的太离谱的话，就通过他/她的平时成绩来拉分啊，拉上来？

T2: 是的。

采访者: 这样一来, 所以就是说大部分同学, 甚至是绝大部分同学, 都没有太大的压力, 或者……

T2: 没有那种危机感。

采访者: 危机感, 然后就是说我反正也能过, 就不是特别用功?

T2: 反正他 / 她就说, 我能过就行, 我又不要那么高分来干什么。然后, 他 / 她就不用功了。

采访者: 那个期末考试, 现在的题型也是跟四级基本是一样的?

T2: 基本一样, 一样。

采访者: 我看到在教学计划里面, 最初新视野那个教学计划里面有提到, 通过四级考试是一个目标, 现在已经没有这种字眼, 没有这种表达了, 你能介绍一下现在的情况吗?

T2: 我跟你讲, 以前没有, 后面新院长来了以后就有了。我们下学期我做的那个计划就是提高四级的通过率, 这个是最主要的目标。因为她说, 那个四六级现在虽然有很多人质疑, 目前看来也是唯一一个比较能够体现学生的那个水平的一个考试。她说, 虽然是三本啊, 但是毕竟我们是本科, 我们还是要看重这个东西。如果你的四级通过率高, 也能够证明学校的英语教学水平比较好。

采访者: 那现在是学生也没有被强制要求一定要参加四级考试, 但是学生都会自己去参加?

T2: 没有, 都会。

采访者: 毕业也没有与这个四级考试挂钩?

T2: 没有。其实学生, 刚才你说的学生的需求, 除了你提到的那个应用, 还有一条就是通过四级考试。其实这个, 他们可以说把这个放第一位, 应用放第二位。那个什么, 随时可以交流的, 他 / 她倒无所谓。

采访者: 你怎么看这个四级考试呢?

T2: 四级考试的话, 就像我们的院长说的, 那是很多年来那种教育体系啊, 好像很难一下子就能够改变啊, 改革啊。虽然说什么要怎样怎样, 取消是肯定取消不了。

采访者: 就像里面有一个大问题, 我觉得就是没有口试。

T2: 有啊。

采访者: 现在有口试啦?

T2: 有口试啊, 但是就是卷面成绩要达到好像是580。

采访者: 但是, 对绝大多数同学来说, 就是一般的院校普通院校的学生, 第一次考试不过的可能, 甚至占到大部分嘛, 那他们基本上与口试无缘嘛。

T2: 所以, 学生就不重视啊。

采访者: 四级证书也只是针对笔试的证书吧?

T2: 嗯嗯, 所以他 / 她就觉得哑巴英语没关系, 只要我拿到那个四级证书, 主要是跟那个就业又有很大的联系嘛。

采访者: 对。

T2: 很多用人单位, 反正他不管, 因为反正人才多嘛, 他一拿到你这个简历他就看你如果有四级的他就放在一边, 没过的放在一边, 那些没过的他就不看了。可能有能力, 你就没希望了。所以就是说学生还是很看重, 家长也看重这个。

采访者: 嗯。

T2: 他们很着急, 特别是大二的学生经常问, 为什么我不能参加, 我今年不能参加四级考试? 然后到大二的那些学生又总问, 老师, 你不是说你要讲那个四级的题型啊, 要给我们订那个资料啊, 什么时候拿到? 他还是很关注的, 学生很关注。

采访者: 其实它的积极作用就是相当于有一个目标?

T2: 就业, 对对。

采访者: 像有的老师或者学生也反映, 如果没有这个考试, 更加没有动力, 都不想学了。

T2: 对, 可能学生都不想学了。

采访者: 但是, 如果这个考试能改革一下, 或者是说这个考试考的东西真的是实际中要应用的……

T2: 以前说的机考啊, 你听说过吗?

采访者: 我听说过机考, 但是也没有口语, 有视啊, 听啊, 是吧? 没有说吧?

T2: 说有, 有说。但是说也少一些, 说的话是, 那是叫做模仿。就是你录进电脑里面去, 然后到评卷员到时候听, 然后第二个还有复述吧, 复述故事内容。

采访者: 但是现在是在做试点?

T2: 试点, 嗯。提了几年, 本来按照以前的说法, 像现在的话, 应该早就全国普及了, 但是后面不知道为什么又停了, 可能是遇到什么问题之类的。

采访者: 或者有这种情况, 是不是人力不够?

T2: 设备啊。

采访者: 设备?

T2: 设备, 学校的设备跟不上, 每人一台电脑, 你要购买多少台电脑啊!

采访者: 哦, 而且可能教师的压力也大, 你一个个都去听。

T2: 嗯嗯。但是就是说，如果这个改革的话，就真正能够，就是相比现在的，能够照顾到听说读写各方面的技能啊。

采访者：嗯，最后一个方面啊是关于学生需求的。就是学生的需求一般分为两大类，第一就是叫做目标需求，就是说，这个学生，学大学英语这门课程要实现什么目标？学生要掌握什么样的知识和技能？这样子，他/她能够在将来的生活和工作中用到英语。还有一个就是学生在学习过程中产生的那种动态的即时的那种需求。比如说我想用什么样的方法可以学得更好，然后我最近又有什么情感的问题啊，然后或者是我最近又感觉没有动力呢，等等的这些动态的学习过程中间产生出来的需求。XX学院的话，一般是比较注重哪一方面？

T2: 反正是最不引起重视的，很少过问的就是学生学习中间的那个需求，刚刚你说的那个。

采访者：能不能说得详细点？

T2: 没有要求，学院对老师在这方面的怎么做没有具体要求。

采访者：你做就做，不做就不做？

T2: 嗯。

采访者：但是像那些你要达到什么样目标，比如说，像要通过四级啊，像这些就会讨论，并加以强调？

T2: 嗯嗯。

采访者：为什么会出现这种情况呢？

T2: 出现这种情况，一个是工作量大，就是说老师精力不够嘛，人力不够。第二就是因为学生众口难调。学生，我们的学生构成太复杂了。

采访者：嗯，有时一个老师有60个学生，你比如说假设一个老师上10多个，那有可能会考虑……

T2: 对啊对啊，现在的话，上课人数多嘛。老师对学生不是很了解，对他/她的学习，就是说没能跟他/她聊过，也不知道他/她需求什么，这个人到底是内向的原因他/她不说，还是说他/她的基础差还是发音差还是什么。所以就是说对学生没能够真正地了解。就是老师没有精力去做那种很细的东西。然后还有，就是刚才我说众口难调就是学生不一致嘛，来自不同的地方。

采访者：嗯。我想了解的你都谈得差不多了。非常感谢你的配合。

T2: 不客气。如果还有什么我能做的，尽管联系我好了。

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