

题 目 Chinese Non-English Majors' Beliefs

Concerning EFL Motivation

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摘 要

在第二语言习得中, 学习动机是影响学习成败的一个重要因素。动机包括人类行为的努力方向和强度两个方面。二语学习动机不仅包括学习语言的愿望, 还包括为此付出努力并坚持不懈。为了确定影响动机强度的成分, 研究者们从不同的视角提出了动机理论框架。其中, 学习者的目标设置、效价、自我效能、归因、以及教师的反馈和权威类型已在理论和实证上被确立为影响二语学习的重要动机成分。因此, 为了提高学生的英语学习动机, 教师应当重视这些动机成分对动机行为的影响, 而不能只是简单地规劝学生用功学习。

为了帮助中国大学英语教师了解学生动机行为背后的深层原因, 了解学生关于动机成分的观念, 以及这些观念对动机行为的影响, 作者对150名非英语专业大学生进行了一次问卷调查, 旨在发现不利于动机提高的负面观念。结果表明: 很多学生认为英语学习付出的代价较大; 他们常将学习失败归于一些不可控因素; 学习目标多以通过考试为主; 对听说读写四项基本技能的自我效能有着较大的差距。此外, 很多学生认为老师未能给予他们自主学习的有效反馈。随着年级的上升, 自我效能、兴趣、远期目标和掌握目标呈下降趋势, 英语学习代价大的观念呈上升趋势。性别差异主要在于男生没有女生对英语的兴趣高。文章最后根据调查结果就如何改进学生的负面观念、提高学生的动机提出了建议。

关键词: 动机; 成分; 观念; 非英语专业大学生

Abstract

In the field of second language acquisition, motivation has been considered to be one of the main factors in determining learning outcomes. Motivation concerns the direction and magnitude of human behavior. Language learning motivation not only includes choosing language learning, but also involves sustaining efforts and persistence. Researchers have proposed various motivational constructs from different perspectives in order to establish motivational components that influence the intensity of language learning motivation. Among them, learners' goal-setting, valence, self-efficacy, attribution of previous performance, teachers' authority type and feedback have been theoretically and empirically confirmed to be important motivational components. For the purpose of improving students' motivational strength, teachers should attach emphasis to these established components rather than simply persuading students into applying more time and energy to English learning.

In order to help Chinese College English teachers have a good understanding of students' beliefs concerning EFL motivational components and the influence of their beliefs on their motivational behavior, the author has conducted a survey among 150 non-English major undergraduates to find out their beliefs that negatively influence the increase of motivation. Results of the survey show that existing problems include students' high perception of EFL cost, imbalanced expectations of four basic language skills, attributing previous failure to uncontrollable factors, ignoring long-term and mastery goals, and perceiving teachers as controlling and less informative. This study has also uncovered different beliefs among students of different grades and genders: with the increase of school grades, students' interest, self-efficacy, long-term goals and mastery goals decrease while perception of EFL cost increases; male students are less interested in English than female students. Finally, the author provides some suggestions as to how to alter students' negative motivational beliefs and enhance students' level of motivation.

Key words: motivation components beliefs non-English majors

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, there has been a prominent shift in the field of L2 (second language or foreign language) education research, with less emphasis on teachers and teaching and greater emphasis on learners and learning. Learning a second language is a difficult time-consuming process, during which, a number of variables concerning learners' individual differences are found to influence learning outcomes. Only by acquiring a deep understanding of the language learners can effective teaching methods be developed. To date, research has focused on individual difference characteristics of the student such as personality, intelligence, language learning aptitude, language learning strategies, motivation, and cognitive style. In this paper, the author intends to focus on motivation because many of these other variables are dependent on motivation for their effects to be realized (Gardner, 2001). For example, language learning strategies probably will not be used if the individual is not motivated to learn the language, and there is little or no reason to take risks using the language if there is little intention to learn it, etc. Motivation is considered to be one of the main determining factors in success in developing an L2 (Oxford and Shearin, 1994). It determines the extent of active, personal involvement in L2 which enables learners to develop their potential L2 skills. The most extreme statement about the importance of motivation in language learning is probably Corder's noted statement "Given motivation, anyone can learn a language" (cited in Skehan, 1989: 49). This statement suggests that a motivated learner can overcome any unfavorable condition in language learning. The important role of motivation in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) has also been supported by a considerable amount of empirical evidence (Gardner, 2001).

L2 learning motivation research was started by Gardner and Lambert (1972) in Canada. Their research was grounded in a social psychological framework, which links L2 motivation with attitudes toward the community of the target language speaker, with an interest in communicating with target language speakers, with some degree of self-identification with the target language community. Gardner (1985) identifies two types of motivation: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. A learner is said to be integratively motivated when the learner wishes to identify with another ethnolinguistic group. An integrative motivation involves an interest in learning an L2 because of a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group. In contrast, instrumental motivation occurs when the learner's goals for learning the L2 are functional. For instance, learning directed at furthering a career, improving social status or meeting an educational requirement are all examples of instrumentally motivated learning. Deci & Ryan (1985) also classify motivation into two types: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation comes from the desire to get a reward or avoid punishment; the focus is on something external to the learning activity itself. With intrinsic motivation the learning experience is its own reward. As Deci & Ryan (1985: 245) put it, "Intrinsic motivation is in evidence whenever students' natural curiosity and interest energize their learning". Intrinsic motivation comes from the desire to get a reward or avoid punishment; the focus is on something external to the learning

Gardner has been a most important influence in the Western research about language learning motivation and his dichotomy of motivation has been taken as a starting point in much subsequent work in the area. In the past three decades, a large amount of work following Gardner's social-psychological model has been done in order to investigate L2 motivation. This model of L2 motivation has greatly added to people's understanding of how and why students learn an L2, and has received many positive reviews (Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

However, since the 1990s criticism has been raised with reference to Gardner's L2 motivation theory because empirical evidence shows that this theory cannot cover all possible kinds of L2 motivation and learning a second language is far too complex to be explained through just one dichotomy of Gardner, especially in the case of foreign language learning context (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). In order to promote a comprehensive understanding of the L2 motivation, Western scholars have attempted to expand the field of L2 motivation research by encompassing many new theories since 1990. Studies with multiple perspectives including neurobiology, behaviorism, psychology, cognition, and social constructivism have been carried out to explore the nature of motivation.

L2 motivation research started rather late in China. This is partly due to misunderstanding of some Chinese teachers who take it for granted that the contribution of motivation to L2 learning is self-evident (Qin, 2002), without knowing about the complex mechanism of how motivation plays its role in EFL learning. As a result, L2 motivation research has not received as much attention in China as other learners' individual differences such as language learning strategy in the area of second language acquisition.

Another problem that impedes the development of Chinese L2 motivation research is its narrow perspective. Many Chinese scholars still base their L2 motivation research on Gardner's social-psychological model (Qin & Wen, 2001) while neglecting new Western research results concerning motivation. Although their finding that the dominant L2 motivation of Chinese students is instrumental motivation rather than integrative motivation (Shu, 1996) shed first light on the Chinese L2 motivation research, the narrow perspective cannot well explain the intricate L2 motivation.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, motivation research has gained increasing attention among many Chinese researchers. More and more researchers have started to broaden their view and borrow new Western motivational theories to investigate EFL motivation in Chinese context. Shi (2000) finds that certificate motivation is the most important one among Chinese college students. Gao (2003) examines Chinese college undergraduates and postgraduates' motivational types and finds seven types of English-learning motivation: intrinsic interest, learning situation, individual development, going abroad, communication medium, external requirement and test score. It seems that Chinese scholars are fascinated by examining the types of L2 motivation. However, the intensity of the motivation is more important than the type (Ellis, 1994). As Gardner (2001) states, when students first enter the language class, they are often motivated by dreams of learning the language quite well; no matter what types of motivation they hold, quite often they are very excited about learning another language and begin the study with enthusiasm; however, this often doesn't last very long. So, questions are raised for L2 researchers and practitioners: what accounts for the decline of students' motivational strength? To maintain students' motivation at a high level, the English teacher should first examine what are the components of students' language learning motivation and then know as much as possible about students' beliefs with regard to these motivational components and how these beliefs influence their motivational intensity. However, there is not much research on the students' beliefs concerning EFL motivation in China in the available literature. Although Qin (1998) studies several motivational components, he does not probe further into students' thoughts about these components and look into problems that lie with students' beliefs which impede the increase of their motivational strength.

Because of the problems discussed above, the L2 motivation research in China is far from enough though some achievements have been made in the field. Therefore, this study is undertaken for several purposes: firstly, to raise Chinese teachers' awareness of L2 motivation; secondly, to examine non-English majors' beliefs concerning EFL motivation and find out existing problems; finally, to provide useful suggestions on how to motivate non-English majors based on the findings of the study. In order to fulfill the purposes, the author has conducted a survey among 150 subjects to investigate their motivational beliefs about English learning and teaching.

This thesis is composed of five chapters. Chapter One deals with what is motivation. Chapter Two elaborates which components influence L2 motivation and how they influence L2 motivation. Chapter Three reports the survey study and analyzes the results of students' motivational beliefs. Chapter Four discusses the implications of this study and offers some suggestions for improving non-English majors' motivation. Chapter Five is the conclusion.

Chapter I Definition of Motivation

The important involvement of motivation in learning English as a second /foreign language (L2) has been established for some time. Motivation has been widely accepted as one of the key factors that influence the success of L2 learning. Most people agree that learning is most likely to occur when people are motivated to learn (Williams & Burden, 1997).

Although motivation is a term frequently used in both educational and research contexts, there is little agreement as to the exact meaning of this concept. The term has a number of different interpretations, and it has come to be used in different ways by different people.

A simple definition is provided by Keller (1983) in current psychology: "motivation refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect" (cited in Crookes and Schmidt, 1991: 481). This definition gives readers an initial idea about what motivation is. By this definition, readers may know that motivation includes making choices and exerting efforts.

Kanfer and Ackerman (1989) develop the definition of motivation further by indicating that motivation refers to “the direction of attentional effort, the proportion of total attentional effort directed to the task (intensity), and the extent to which attentional effort toward the task is maintained over time (persistence)”. With respect to persistence, Maehr and Braskamp (1986) suggest that when a person attends to a task for an extended period of time, observers are likely to infer that the individual is motivated. Effort generally refers to the amount of energy expended (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986) and is somewhat distinct from persistence. For example, an individual can spend much time at a task (persistence) but work at a low rate of effort. Given such consideration it seems reasonable to assess motivational behavior using measures of effort, attention, and persistence (cited in Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). Compared with Keller’s definition, Kanfer & Ackerman’s definition goes deeper into the conception of motivation. It includes persistence as one of the key elements of motivation and emphasizes that persistence should not be neglected or equated with effort.

D?/FONT>rnyei’s definition (1998) lays more emphasis on the dynamic nature of motivation. He defines motivation as a “process whereby a certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action, and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it and thereby terminate action or until the planned outcome has been reached”. This definition views motivation as a process and suggests that motivation may not be static and can be weakened or terminated during the process of realizing the final outcome. However, this definition is not lucid enough in pointing out the key elements of motivation.

Williams and Burden (1997) have attempted to achieve a synthesis of conception of motivation by defining it as “a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (goals)”. This definition fits within a social constructivist framework. A number of points arise from this definition. In the first place, people are aroused in some way. The initial arousal may be internal ones such as interest or curiosity, or external ones such as another person or event. When the person’s enthusiasm is activated, he will make a conscious decision to act in certain ways in order to achieve a particular goal (or goals). Once the activity has begun, the individual needs to exert his effort and persist. William and Burden’s definition implicitly presents three stages of motivation. To make the three stages of motivation clear, they (1997) propose a model of motivation as follows:

The first two stages of this model are concerned with initiating motivation while the last stage involves sustaining motivation. However, as Williams and Burden (1997) realized later, the three stages are non-linear. Reasons for doing something will affect persistence; the very act of sustaining effort can give rise to further reasons for action. Therefore, they have modified the above figure to illustrate the interactive relationship of the three stages of motivation. The modified one is shown as follows:

By reviewing various definitions proposed by different researchers, we can conclude that there has been no general agreement on definitions of motivation. This is because the concept of motivation is complex in nature, involving various elements. Besides, motivation research is an area of ongoing debate and therefore definitions are continuing to mature as more discussion takes place. Although there has been no consensus on definition of motivation, it can be seen from the above review that most researchers agree that it concerns the direction and magnitude of human behavior, that is, 1) the choice of a particular action, 2) the effort expended on it, 3) the persistence with it. Hence the author holds that L2 motivation is responsible for 1) why people decide to learn a language; 2) how hard they are going to pursue it; 3) how long they are willing to sustain the activity.

This definition is more concise and points out the most important elements of motivation, and it helps us gain insight into the nature of motivation. The three elements of motivation are interrelated to one another. Motivation starts with learners’ choice of a particular action. Without a choice in the first place, there will be no motivation. Does choice-making guarantee a high level of motivation? No. Motivational behavior needs other elements —effort and persistence. Without effort, persistence will make little sense and motivation will be greatly weakened; without persistence, motivation will be terminated and can no longer make any contribution to learning outcomes. Therefore, both effort and persistence are meaningful elements of motivation and should receive as much attention as reasons for action.

Chapter II Identification of Motivational Components

Since we have adopted the definition of motivation in terms of choice, effort, and persistence, then what determines these elements? Both effort and persistence are meaningful concept of descriptors of motivational behavior. Why do some students make efforts to study while others do not? Why do some students persist in study in the face of difficulty or failure while others give up? In order to get a better understanding of the L2 motivation and help learners exert greater motivational behaviors toward learning an L2, researchers have attempted to explore motivation from various perspectives including neurobiology, behaviorism, cognition, and social constructivism. Researchers have been following two trends: on the one hand, various motivational constructs have been proposed to discuss components influencing the level of motivation theoretically (D?/FONT>rnyei 1994; Oxford & Shearin 1994; Williams & Burden, 1997; Schumann 1998); on the other hand, empirical studies have been conducted to assess and confirm the proposed motivational components (Tremblay & Gardner 1995; Schmidt 1996). However, researchers seem to be more interested in theoretical studies than in empirical studies (Qin 2003).

Among various theoretical studies of motivational components in recent years, D?/FONT>rnyei’s (1994) extended framework is quite influential. He has attempted to synthesize previous studies and conceptualize L2 motivation within a framework of three levels: language level, learner level, and learning situation level. The language level encompasses various variables related to aspects of the L2, such as the culture and the community, as well as the intellectual and pragmatic values and benefits associated with it. The language level is actually borrowed from Gardner’s integrative and instrumental dichotomy, and has been extensively discussed by numerous previous studies. The learner level involves individual characteristics that the learner brings to the learning process. The learning situation level is associated with situation-specific motives rooted in various aspects of language learning within a classroom setting. The role of English teacher is considered to be an important factor at learning situation level.

D?/FONT>rnyei’s identification of motivational components is comprehensive and acceptable theoretically, but when these motivational components are operationalized, some modifications are needed. In the present study, the research focus will be on motivational components of the learner level and the teacher-specific motivational components of the learning situation level. The following sections will discuss previous motivational researches to identify several motivational components from the perspectives of learners and teachers. The author will elaborate on how these components affect motivational strength, and review some empirical findings concerning these identified components.

2.1 Learner-specific motivational components

Most theories of motivation attempt to explain motivational process at the individual level because people’s motivation is greatly affected by factors that are internal to the learner (Williams & Burden, 1997). Research indicates that individuals’ setting of goals, valence, attribution of their previous performance, and sense of self-efficacy play important parts in deciding learners’ choice-making, effort expenditure and persistence.

2.1.1 Learners’ goal-setting

Goal-setting is closely associated with different levels of motivation. Oxford & Shearin (1994) claim that goal-setting can have exceptional importance in stimulating L2 learning motivation. In order to obtain an indication of the relationship between different goals and different motivational behaviors, researchers have conducted a number of studies. These studies indicate that goals regulate learners’ motivational behavior. There are three mechanisms by which goals affect motivation (D?/FONT>rnyei, 2001):

- 1) They direct attention and effort towards goal-relevant activities at the expense of actions that are not relevant.
- 2) They regulate effort expenditure in that people adjust their effort to the difficulty level required by the task.
- 3) They encourage persistence until the goal is accomplished.

order to function as efficient motivators, goals should meet several requirements. Setting appropriate goals becomes an important part of motivating so that the decision can be carried out and the required effort sustained. Locke summarizes the main findings of past researches under several points (cited in D?/FONT>rnyei, 2001): individuals will be more committed to the goals when

the goals are specific and explicit. Individuals will not dedicate themselves to reaching vague “do your best” goals.

the goals are challenging and difficult, but not outside the range of students’ capabilities. On the one hand, when the level of challenge is perceived as lower than the individual’ s ability, the result is boredom. Nobody will make great efforts to perform boring tasks. On the other hand, when the level of challenge is perceived as higher than the individuals’ level of ability, the result is anxiety (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). Only when the individual is convinced that the goal is attainable, or that, at least, progress can be made toward it will he commit to the goals.

the goals are important. In the context of language learning, language students may devote considerable effort and persistence if he or she believes that his or her goals are of high importance.

Qin (1998) has conducted a survey among 500 Chinese students at the tertiary level to examine the relationship between various goals and motivational behavior of language learners. He concludes that both short-term goals (the learners’ desire to pass examinations) and long-term goals (the learner’ s expectancy of future development) have positive effects on motivational behavior; and that long-term goals can help the learners achieve higher levels of motivational behavior than short-term goals do while short-term goals can do better than no goals.

In addition to goal-setting theory, language learners’ goal orientation is also associated with their motivational strength. Currently, goal-orientation theory is probably an active area of research on student motivation in the classroom. Based on goal-orientation theory, goals can also be classified into two categories: mastery goals and performance goals. They represent different success criteria and different reasons for engaging in achievement activity. Individuals with a mastery goal believe that effort will lead to success and their focus is on one’ s own improvement and growth whereas individuals with a performance goal focus on demonstrating ability, getting good grades or outdoing other students (D?/FONT>rnyei, 2001).

Educational psychologists Ames & Archer (See Oxford & Shearin, 1994) have examined the relationship between motivation and goals in the classroom, particularly in terms of mastery vs. performance. They state that when mastery is the goal, learners are concerned about developing new skills; they value the learning process, and they believe that mastery depends on effort. When mastery is the goal, students like the class more and believe that effort and success go together. This constellation of attitudes is highly motivating. On the other hand, when relative performance is the goal, learners are concerned about being judged able, they value normatively high outcomes, and they believe that ability is shown by success, outperforming others, and achieving success with little effort. Ames argues that mastery goals are superior to performance goals in that they are associated with a preference for challenging work, an intrinsic interest in learning activities and positive attitudes towards learning. Individuals with mastery goals will hold the helpful belief that success is related to one’ s own efforts and persist longer in the face of difficulty or temporary failure (D?/FONT>rnyei, 2001).

This goal-orientation theory has been proved by many studies. The empirical findings obtained by Qin (1998) confirm the positive relationship between mastery goals and motivational behavior and Qin concludes that learners of English who really want to ultimately achieve the goal of skillful communication in English will try every means to approach it, such as using more time, actively participating in learning activities and persisting in learning outside class.

2.1.2 Valence

Another theory concerning motivation is the perceived value (valence) of the activity to the individual performing it. In the motivation literature, valence is generally defined as the subjective value that an individual associates with a particular outcome (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Heckhausen (1977) indicates that it is the consequence of the outcome that determines the level of valence.

Psychologists Eccles & Wigfield (1995) develop a comprehensive model of valence, defining them in terms of four components.

- 1) Attainment value, that is, the personal importance of mastering a skill and doing well on a task;
- 2) Intrinsic value, that is, interest in the subject/skills in question, and enjoyment coming from performing the activity;
- 3) Extrinsic utility value, that is, awareness of how well a task relates to current and future goals and what role learning plays in improving the quality of one’ s life or making one a better person;
- 4) Cost, that is, the negative value variables, including factors such as expended effort and time, etc.

The first three components are attractive to individuals and constitute the positive value of the task, while the last variable makes up the negative value of the task. The overall achievement value of a task is made up of the interplay of these four components, and this value is believed to determine the strength or intensity of the behavior. This model of valence has important implications for language learning. As Oxford & Shearin(1994) indicate, if language students do not perceive value in their performance, or perceive too much cost, then their motivation will be lowered. The greater the value that individuals attach to the accomplishment of or involvement in an activity, the more highly motivated they will be both to engage in initially, and later to put sustained effort into succeeding in the activity.

In the L2-specific domain, the second component of valence proposed by Eccles and Wigfield (1995) — intrinsic interest has been proved to play so important a role in motivating language learners that L2 researchers tend to study it as an important and independent component of motivation rather than a subcomponent of valence. In Qin’ s study (1998), he examines the effect of valence and interest on motivation respectively and confirms that valence and interest have positive effects on motivational behavior. In a qualitative study of the memorization ability of academically retarded children, Male (1992) finds that, contrary to prevailing view, the memorization task could be accomplished by establishing the “personal authenticity” of the task. Much of the previous research in this area had used tasks (such as remembering nonsense words) which carried little or no personal meaning for the subjects. However, when Male was able to provide an authentic link between the strategies that had been taught and the new task to be performed, the retarded learners became much more motivated to employ those strategies and were able to remember significantly more than before (See Williams & Burden, 1997). This example indicates that attaching more value to tasks will contribute to higher level of motivation.

2.1.3 Attribution of previous performance

Attribution theory, that is, the analysis of how people process past experiences of success and failure, and what consequences these will have on future achievement strivings, is a particularly relevant research area in the L2 field (D?/FONT>rnyei, 2001). Attribution of past success and failures could be expected to affect motivation (D?/FONT>rnyei, 1990).

In foreign language learning contexts, learning failure is a very common phenomenon. Language learning in most people’ s minds is inevitably associated with perceptions of some degree of learning failure. Individuals have different understanding about their past success or failure. What is particularly important here is that there are individual differences in how people form attributions (D?/FONT>rnyei, 2001). These are referred to as attributional style (i.e. habitual ways of explaining events) and attributional biases (i.e. incorrect inference rules that are used to make attributions, e.g. basic attribution errors such as the tendency to attribute something to lack of ability while ignoring relevant, or even crucial factors). Attribution can be classified into three dimensions: internality (internal factors/external factors), stability (stable factors/unstable factors), and controllability (controllable factors /uncontrollable factors). As D?/FONT>rnyei (2001) summarizes, the most common attributions in school environments are those to

ability

effort

task difficulty

learning strategy

luck

mood

help or hindrance from others

Past research has identified a certain hierarchy of the types of attributions people make in terms of their motivating nature. Internal attributions such as ability, effort, learning strategy, and mood are usually perceived as “within the individual” whereas external attributions such as luck, task difficulty, and help or hindrance from others are perceived as “outside the individual”. Among them, ability and effort have been identified as the most dominant perceived causes in the Western culture. The principles of attribution theory are mainly as follows:

1) Attribution to the context or to luck in cases of success or failure will hinder achievement behavior because they represent external factors that the individual cannot control. Learners with this type of attributional style will easily give up efforts in the case of failure because they do not believe they can turn failure into success by exerting more efforts (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

2) Higher satisfaction occurs when success is self-attributed than when success is attributed to external factors. When people believe that their ability, effort or learning strategy — rather than luck, fate, or an easy test — have created the successful performance, they are happier with themselves and their skills, which will result in an increase of motivational level (Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

3) Attribution of failure to lack of efforts may enhance motivation. This is the kind of attributional style that can help learners to persist in the face of failure and gain confidence in future success (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

4) Attribution of failure to learning strategy can also stimulate learners to go ahead and cultivate learners’ motivation (Platt, 1988).

These main principles of attribution theory have been proved by a number of empirical studies home and abroad. Weiner (1974), for example, finds that when persons believe that increased effort will produce success they will persist longer in the task and thereby increase the level of their performance. Platt (1988) also finds that attributions predict effort in learning. Qin (1998) has also confirmed the causal relation between attribution and motivational behavior and concludes that learners who make attribution in terms of personal effort and learning strategy expend more time and energy in learning English.

Bandura (1991) suggests that attributions are associated with self-efficacy (a detailed discussion of self-efficacy is made below). An attribution of success to ability is associated with high self-efficacy while an attribution of failure to lack of ability is associated with low self-efficacy. Students who attribute their failure to their own inability are likely to have a low estimate of their future success in second language learning. Although causal attributions can be categorized in terms of whether they are internal or external, stable or unstable, controllable or uncontrollable to the individual (Qin, 2002), they may also be differentiated in terms of their relationship to self-efficacy (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Attributions that are associated with high-efficacy could be labeled as adaptive attributions whereas attributions associated with low levels of self-efficacy could be labeled as maladaptive attributions. Based on the causal attribution literature, making attributions of success to ability is adaptive, whereas making attributions of failure to lack of ability is maladaptive. Attributions to the context or to luck in cases of success or failure is maladaptive because they represent external factors that individual cannot control (See Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

2.1.4 Self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy is drawn from social cognition theory and plays an important role in explaining motivation to achieve something. Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s beliefs that he or she has the capability to reach a certain level of performance or achievement (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Self-efficacy involves the idea that performance will lead to rewards and focuses on one’s ability, creativity, adaptability, and capacity to perform in a particular situational context (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Bandura (1993) expresses his beliefs on self-efficacy: “People make causal contribution to their own functioning through mechanisms of personal agency. Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives. Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave.” (cited in D?/FONT>rnyei, 2001: 23)

The implication of self-efficacy is that the amount of motivational behavior exerted to reach a specific outcome will be influenced by a perceived probability of the attainability of the goal (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). This is one way of explaining the common distinction between capability and performance. A learner may have the necessary capability, but unless he believes that he is capable of doing so, he is unlikely to demonstrate his ability in that context. Therefore learners’ self-efficacy will influence their choice of activities that they undertake. It will also affect the amount of effort that they are prepared to expend and their level of persistence.

According to Oxford & Shearin (1994), self-efficacy will affect performance because they:

- 1) lead individual to persist longer at tasks;
- 2) lead individuals to exert more effort;
- 3) direct attention toward goal-relevant action;
- 4) stimulate individuals to develop plans for attaining goals;
- 5) enhance the quality of analytic strategies used.

People with a low sense of self-efficacy in a given domain perceive difficult tasks as personal threats; they dwell on their own personal deficiencies and the obstacles they encounter rather than concentrate on how to perform the task successfully. Consequently, they easily lose faith in their capabilities and are likely to give up (D?/FONT>rnyei, 2001). In contrast, a strong sense of self-efficacy enhances people’s motivational behavior by helping them to approach threatening situations with confidence, and to heighten and sustain in the face of failure. Once a strong sense of efficacy is developed, a failure may not have much impact.

Bandura proposes that self-efficacy is determined by four factors (cited in D?/FONT>rnyei, 2001):

previous performance

vicarious learning (i.e. learning through observing models)

verbal encouragement by others

one’s physiological reactions (e.g. anxiety)

Although attributions of past accomplishments play an important role in developing self-efficacy, people also appraise efficacy from observational experiences (e.g., by observing peers), as well as from persuasion, reinforcement, and evaluation by others, especially teachers or parents (e.g., “you can do it!” or “you are doing fine!”). Self-efficacy is the product of a complex process of self-persuasion that is based on cognitive processing of diverse

Researchers have made various empirical studies to examine the causal relationship between self-efficacy and motivational behavior. Qin (1998) confirms in his investigation that self-efficacy has a direct effect on motivational behavior. The work by Schunk and others in school settings also reveals that self-efficacy does indeed appear to be a significant factor in training poor achievers to overcome their difficulties, particularly with regard to effort expenditure and persistence (See Williams & Burden, 1997)

2.2 Teacher-specific motivational components

The learner, however, is only one player of the language learning process that for most part takes place in the context of the classroom. Another important player in the language learning process, whose influence on motivation should not be overlooked, is the teacher. The role of the teacher in language learning motivation is receiving increasing attention recently. Some researchers (Dörnyei, 1994; Williams, 1997; Noels, 1999) claim that teachers play a significant role in shaping the motivation of their students. As Finocchiaro (1981) puts it, "Motivation is the feeling nurtured primarily by the classroom teacher in learning situation. The moment of truth — the enhancement of motivation — occurs when the teacher closes the classroom door, greets his students with a warm, welcoming smile, and proceeds to interact with various individuals by making comments or asking questions which indicate personal concern (cited in Ellis, 1994: 516)." Dörnyei's (1994) model of L2 motivation offers an elaborate conceptualization of teacher-specific motivational components, by including three main constituents: affiliative motive, authority type (autonomy supporting or controlling), direct socialization of motivation (modeling, task presentation and feedback). However, this framework was largely conceptual in nature with little empirical testing of the components. Among these components, teachers' authority type and style of providing feedback are of great significance in influencing students' motivation and have been confirmed by empirical evidence.

2.2.1 Authority type

The teacher's authority type, that is, whether the teacher is autonomy supporting or controlling, has a motivational influence on students, which makes teacher's behavior a powerful 'motivational tool' (Dörnyei, 2001). When the students are given more autonomy, they become more highly motivated and that autonomy leads to better, more effective work. Learner autonomy has been shown to exert a significant positive impact on motivation in L2 contexts as well. Knowles' claim is illustrative: "...there is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning learn more things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be taught...They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation." (cited in Dickinson, 1995: 165). In Ushioda's (1996) extensive discussion of learner autonomy and L2 motivation, he concludes that autonomy and motivation go hand in hand: Autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners. Dickinson (1995) refers to a study by Bachman (1964) which indicates that involving learners in decision-making tends to lead to increased motivation and thereby, to increased productivity. In his own study, Dickinson makes the assumption that an active, independent attitude to learning and personal involvement in decision making leads to increased L2 motivation. Williams & Burden (1997) also hold that if teachers help learners take control of their own learning, then there is a greater chance that learners will be motivated to learn.

Learner autonomy is ensured by the teacher's democratic teaching style. Teachers should adopt a more democratic teaching style and be prepared to step aside to give the learner a meaningful role, only intervening when necessary. As Dörnyei (2001) summarizes, democratic leaders involve the learners in decision-making about their own functioning, share with them the long-term goals and steps to be taken to achieve these, and take part in the activities themselves. That is, they consciously promote learner autonomy: students are given positions and tasks of genuine authority, are invited to design and prepare activities themselves.

Empirical testing also proves that when students are given autonomy in L2 learning, they tend to show higher level of motivation. Wang (2002) has conducted a longitudinal study among Chinese college students. His study adopted random sampling of experimental and control groups. The control group was taught in traditional ways while the experimental group was provided with more autonomy and given adequate autonomous learning training. It has been found that after two semesters, students in the experimental group show a higher level of motivation and actively participate in classroom activities, and their performance in L2 is obviously better than students in the control group.

2.2.2 Feedback

Psychologists also recognize another aspect of the teacher's role in motivation, that is, as the provider of feedback. Feedback can be given by means of praise, by any relevant comment or action, or by silence (Williams & Burden, 1997).

External reinforcers in the form of rewards, merit marks or simple praise, are often considered to be excellent ways of motivating underachieving or reluctant learners. However, punishments are not only ineffective in bringing about positive changes, but they can often have the opposite effect. Wheldall & Merrett (1987) cite a large number of studies which show that rewards, such as praise, are far more effective than punishment. However, too much praise is seen as detrimental by the learners, and more is not always better. For any sort of feedback to be effective, teachers need to state their reasons for approval or disapproval (Williams & Burden, 1997).

From the various theories emerging on this topic, some guidelines for the application of positive and negative feedback have been proposed. Lepper & Hoddell (1989) demonstrate clearly that feedback to learners which is interpreted by them as informational rather than controlling is likely to increase their motivation towards certain tasks as it provides them with information that helps them perform the current and subsequent tasks with a greater degree of independence. If feedback actually provides information that enables the learners to identify specific aspects of their performance that are acceptable and capable of improvement by some specific means, it should prove both motivating and helpful to them to move into the zone of next development. If, on the other hand, the feedback fails to provide this kind of information, it could have entirely the opposite effect. The comment "well done" may make learners feel good momentarily, but it does not give any indication of how they might subsequently improve their work. Besides, indiscriminate praise or praise which is given only to those who perform well according to some general "norm" may lower the feeling of self-competence and self-efficacy of other learners in the class (William & Burden, 1997).

In addition to theoretical proposal, empirical testing has also been conducted by researchers. Caffyn (1984) has carried out an investigation into the attitudes towards rewards and punishment of more than five hundred learners and a hundred teachers. The result of the study shows that learners unanimously reject punishments as motivating forces. Noels et al. (1999) have conducted a study to examine the motivational impact of the teachers' teaching style, particularly the extent to which teachers are perceived to support students' autonomy and provide useful feedback about students' learning process. In accordance with the findings in educational psychology (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 1985), Noels and his colleagues find that the degree of the teachers' support of student autonomy and the amount of informative feedback they provide is in a significant positive relationship with the students' intrinsic motivation (Noels et al, 1999).

Chapter III A survey on Chinese

Non-English Majors' Motivational Beliefs

3.1 Purpose of the survey

As discussed in the previous chapters, motivation is one of the central factors determining success in learning a second language in the classroom setting. Motivation is a particularly interesting concept for L2 teachers because it can presumably be enhanced in the appropriate social context. But without knowing where the roots of problems with motivation lie, how can teachers get rid of these roots? Since researchers home and abroad have established some motivational components for L2 learners, what good and effective L2 teachers need to know are the following questions: What goals do the students tend to set? What do they think of their previous performance? Do they value English learning? Are they sure of their capability of achieving a certain level of learning outcomes? What do they think of their English teacher and teaching? All of these will greatly influence learners' motivational level in English learning. No doubt, without a good knowledge of these questions, teachers cannot do much in increasing learners' motivational strength. Effective

motivational strategies need take into consideration learners' motivational beliefs about English learning and teaching that underlie motivational behavior. Regrettably, little effort has been made to gain insight into learners' beliefs in this regard. This is the most important reason that initiates the author's attempt to probe into Chinese non-English majors' motivational beliefs.

Qin's study (1998) has already confirmed the causal relationship between some motivational components and motivational behavior in Chinese context, but he does not explore the beliefs of students in his study although he realizes that it is of great significance for Chinese teachers to have a clear knowledge of students' beliefs concerning motivation. In order to draw teachers' attention to the important yet unexplored topic in the future research, he strongly suggests at the end of his thesis that "above all, to raise effectiveness of his English teaching, a teacher should try to know very well about students' beliefs concerning EFL motivation, for example, using a questionnaire like the one designed for my study" (Qin, 1998: 154). Dai (2002) also argues that in EFL motivation applied research, future study should focus on the combination of motivation theories with learners' actual beliefs so as to apply EFL motivation research results into practice and motivate learners effectively.

In order to promote teachers' understanding of EFL motivation in Chinese context and help teachers know deeply about Chinese students before they can develop more effective motivational strategies, the author has designed this survey to examine Chinese students' beliefs concerning EFL motivation. This survey focuses on Chinese college non-English majors' general tendency of motivational beliefs and explores the effects of selected variables in terms of gender and grade on learners' motivational beliefs.

3.2 Subjects of the survey

The subjects of the survey consisted of 150 randomly selected non-English majors from Anhui Medical University. The subjects were chosen from Anhui Medical University for the sake of convenience since the author works there and could carry out the survey with the help of colleagues. Anhui Medical University is an average university in China, and the students come from various regions of the country, from eastern provinces such as Shandong and Jiangsu, western provinces such as Guizhou, Ningxia and Shangxi, and middle provinces such as Henan and Anhui, so the subjects from Anhui Medical University could be representatives of Chinese non-English majors. Demographic information about the subjects in terms of grade and gender is shown in the following table.

Grade	Grade One		Grade Two		Grade Three	
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Number	27	25	27	21	30	20

Table 3.1: subjects of the survey

Annotation: Students in Grade one and two are studying EGP. Students in Grade three are studying ESP.

3.3 Instrument of the survey

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire, which has been adapted on the work by Qin (1998). In order to avoid language barrier, all items were translated into Chinese. The consistency between two versions of English and Chinese has been checked by the author's supervisor and her suggestions have prompted modifications of some expressions. Before formal administration, the questionnaire items were first tested in a pilot study on ten students. The author had interviews with several of these students after they had completed the questionnaire items and accepted their suggestions to improve the questionnaire. The results of the pilot study have proved that the questionnaire is effective in serving the purpose of this study. The final version of the questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A is about students' personal background. Section B consists of a 48-item self-report questionnaire. Each one of the 48 items has five choices: (1) I strongly disagree; (2) I disagree; (3) I have no clear answer; (4) I agree; (5) I strongly agree. All subjects responded to the Chinese version of the questionnaire. A sample questionnaire is provided in Appendix. Brief descriptions of the questionnaire items are shown in the table 3.2.

Motivational variables	Brief description	Item No.
Valence	Learners' perception on value and cost of learning English	1, 2
Interest	Learners' interest in English learning, English class and English culture	3-5
Goal-setting	Learners' desire to fulfill various goals	6-9
Goal-orientation	Learners' focus on whether to learn the content or get high scores and outdo other students	10-13
Self-efficacy	Learners' view on their ability to achieve certain proficiency level in English skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking	14-33
Attribution	Learners' view on whether factors of ability, effort, learning environment and strategy, task difficulty take responsibility for prior success or failure.	34-43
Perception of teachers	Learners' perception of teachers' style of giving feedback and authority type.	44-48

Table 3.2: descriptions of the questionnaire items

3.4 Procedure of the survey

The questionnaire was administered to 150 students during the ninth week of the first term of the academic year 2003-2004. It took place during regular class hour. Each class teacher reserved twenty minutes of the class time for the present author to administer the questionnaire. Before the students answered the items, detailed instructions were given by the author on how to respond to the questionnaire so that the subjects knew clearly what they were expected to do. They were told: "Please be as accurate and frank as possible in your answers" and "give your first reaction after reading each item," but "do not rush, since it is important to express your true opinion." They were also informed that (a) their participation was voluntary, (b) their names would not appear on the questionnaire, (c) their teacher would not see their response, (d) their participation would not affect their course scores. The students then completed

3.5 Result and discussion

After collecting the questionnaire, the author counted up the votes and calculated the percentage of each item. For the convenience of calculation, the votes for choice 1 “I strongly disagree” and choice 2 “I disagree” were merged to show the negative response, and the votes for the choice 4 “I agree” and choice 5 “I strongly agree” were merged to show the affirmative response. The results and findings obtained from the survey will be reported below. First, the author will discuss the general motivational beliefs of Chinese non-English majors concerning English learning and teaching, and then the intergroup differences in terms of gender and grade will be reported.

3.5.1 General problems of Chinese non-English majors’ motivational beliefs

a) perceiving high EFL cost

In the questionnaire, valence was measured by two items, that is, item 1 “a good English proficiency is very useful for me”, and item 2 “I doubt whether it is worthwhile learning English because learning English is too time-consuming”. The following table indicates the percentage of affirmative votes made by the subjects.

Item number	Item 1	Item 2
Affirmative votes	109	73
percentage	72.3%	48.7%

Table 3.3: votes for items of valence

The results of the responses show that a majority of students (72.3%) attach high value to a good mastery of English, but at the same time nearly half of the students (48.7%) think English learning is too time-consuming and doubt whether it is worth their effort. The two findings seem contradictory to each other; however, it is logic for several reasons. Firstly, English as an international language has been highly valued in China. College students are no exception, and most of them agree on the value of good English. However, being on campus, they have little actual and practical use of English except for meeting course requirements. As some students admit in the teacher-student conference held annually in Anhui Medical University, their understanding of the importance of English is largely derived from strict course requirements and English learning craze in society. Accordingly, although most students agree that a good proficiency of English is useful, their understanding of the value of English may be superficial and sequacious. Secondly, language learning needs long-lasting expenditure of time and energy. According to the author’s years of teaching experiences, students, especially those who do not have obvious progress or lack sense of achievement in English learning will acquire a feeling of imbalance because effort does not bring about what they expected. In this situation, they will complain that their continual efforts are not rewarded. Still another interpretation for high perception of EFL cost lies in the time conflict between English learning and major courses learning. This survey focuses on non-English majors who, different from English majors, have many other major courses to learn in addition to English. Too much time and energy expended on English learning might affect students’ major courses learning. English course takes more class hours than any other subject in Chinese colleges. Those who can not balance the time spent in English learning and major courses learning will doubt whether their long-lasting effort expended on English is worthwhile.

This finding concerning students’ judgment about the value and cost of English learning can well account for the finding obtained by Qin (1998). In his study, he finds that the direct positive effect of valence on motivational behavior is not as strong as other motivational components. This is logic because as discussed in Chapter Two, high value perceived by learners will induce them to make efforts to learn English while at the same time high cost perceived by them will become an obstacle for their further efforts and persistence. Therefore, the positive effect of high value and the negative effect of high cost will counteract each other to some extent, which weakens the overall effect of valence on motivational behavior.

b) imbalanced expectation of four basic skills

A section of twenty items is used in the questionnaire to measure students’ level of self-efficacy. This section can be further divided into four subsections in terms of reading, listening, writing and speaking. Items 14-18 deal with listening skill, items 19-23 deal with speaking skill, items 24-28 deal with reading skill and items 29-33 deal with writing skill. The average percentage of affirmative responses to these items is reported as follows:

Item number	Items 14-18	Items 19-23	Items 24-28	Items 29-33
Average percentage of affirmative votes	39.6%	25.4%	66.4%	42.0%

Table 3.4: votes for items of self-efficacy

On the average, items concerning listening, speaking, reading and writing skills respectively get 39.6%, 25.4%, 66.4% and 42.0% affirmative responses. These data show that students have the highest expectation about their potential reading level, but the lowest expectation about their potential speaking level, with a substantial gap between them. Their expectations of writing skill and listening skill rank in between. This finding is consistent with the current state of English education at tertiary level in China, that is, the imbalanced development of four basic language skills. As discussed in the previous chapter, self-efficacy is determined by previous performance. Chinese students are usually good at reading, but they are less capable of writing and listening, and especially poor in oral English. Students’ imbalanced sense of self-efficacy is actually caused by their imbalanced competence of four basic language skills. Furthermore, of the four language basic skills, speaking is most likely to cause anxiety among students (Zhou, 2003). Chinese students tend to be reserved in nature. Reading practice gives them more psychological security while oral communication involves greater anxiety. As discussed in the previous chapter, anxiety exerts negative influence on self-efficacy. High anxiety caused by speaking will lead to low self-efficacy.

However, the imbalanced expectation of four basic language skills could be detrimental to motivational behavior of Chinese non-English majors. According to the findings obtained by researchers home and abroad, self-efficacy has a direct positive effect on motivational behavior. High expectation of reading skill will lead students to persist longer, exert more effort, direct more attention toward reading, and stimulate students to develop reading plans for achieving high reading level so that they can meet their expectations, hence a virtuous circle may occur, as shown in Figure 3.1. However, on the other hand, students’ low expectation of other skills especially speaking will decrease the amount of effort exerted and persistence displayed to improve their speaking skills. By so doing, they will further lose faith in their speaking capability. If no efforts are made to alter this situation, a vicious cycle may occur, as shown in Figure 3.2. The imbalanced development of skills will affect learners’ sense of self-efficacy; and in turn their sense of self-efficacy will affect their strength of motivational behavior, and their choice of attempted activity will lead their four basic language skills to further imbalance.

Another problem concerning self-efficacy is learners’ lack of initial beliefs in self-efficacy. On the average 36.1% students choose choice 3 “I have no clear answer” for these self-efficacy items. This data shows that more than one third students do not have an initial belief in their self-efficacy. Lack of sense of self-efficacy will also be harmful to improvement of motivation. Learners without a sense of self-efficacy are not sure about what level of English proficiency they will be able to achieve after a period of English learning, or what problems need to be solved in a given time. In other words, learners without such a sense will have no clear directions of endeavor. Therefore, it is worthwhile taking some time in helping students develop a sense of self-efficacy in class.

In the questionnaire of motivational components of English learning, 10 items are used to assess attribution tendency of Chinese non-English majors. Two groups of causal attribution are identified: uncontrollable attribution and controllable attribution. Uncontrollable attribution is mainly composed of three factors: language ability, learning environment, and language difficulty, while controllable attribution includes effort and learning strategies. Questionnaire items that measure attribution involve two cases: failure and success in learning English. Items 39-43 deal with attribution of prior success in English learning and items 44-48 deal with prior failure in English learning. The following figure shows the general tendency of Chinese non-English majors' causal attribution.

Figure 3.3: attribution of previous performance

The above figure reflects obvious differences in students' attribution of their previous success and failure. A majority of students who believe they have a good performance in English learning attribute their prior success to internal factors — effort, learning strategy, and language ability, and most of them do not think their success in English owes much to external factors like learning environment or language difficulty. As discussed in Chapter Two, this kind of attributional style is adaptive, and it will increase their self-efficacy and lead them to take control of their English learning, which is beneficial for improving motivational behavior, and in turn help them achieve further success in English learning. Figure 3.4 shows the virtuous circle of students with good performance.

In the case of failure, the top three factors that students attribute to are uncontrollable ones — ability, learning environment and language difficulty. The author had talked with some disadvantaged students and has learned a lot about the reasons for their attributional style. Their attribution of failure to inability is mainly due to vulnerability in the face of failure. Some students are discouraged by their failure in English learning, so they become very pessimistic about their ability to learn English and acquire a sense of inferiority. In addition, by making attribution to these uncontrollable factors, they seem to adopt a measure of self-protection and try to set themselves free of guilt in the case of failure. Whatever the reason, attributing failure to language ability, learning environment and language difficulty can be detrimental to improvement of motivation. As discussed in the previous chapter, attribution is associated with self-efficacy (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Students with this type of maladaptive attribution in the face of failure will develop a low sense of self-efficacy; hence decreasing their motivational strength, which will result in further failure in English learning. If no instruction is made to guide them, a vicious circle may occur, as shown in Figure 3.5: failure in English learning—maladaptive attribution—low sense of self-efficacy—low motivational behavior — further failure in English learning.

Preference for short-term goals and performance goals

In the questionnaire, four items deal with students' goal-setting. The four items are further classified into short-term goals and long-term goals. Item 6 "I want to pass College English Test of Band 4 or 6" and item 7 "I would like to pass entrance examination for postgraduate candidates" are concerned with short-term goals; item 8 "I need English for the sake of my specialty" and item 9 "I need English to develop my future career" are concerned with long-term goals. The next four items are concerned with students' goal-orientation. The four items are further classified into performance goals and mastery goals. Evaluation of performance goals consists of item 10 "it seems to me success in learning English lies in getting higher school grades in examination than my peers" and item 11 "I manage to know well the skills in getting higher scores in the English examination"; evaluation of mastery goals consists of item 12 "what I need is to speak English fluently" and item 13 "I try my best to improve my proficiency in English". Affirmative votes to these questionnaire items are shown in the following table.

Short-term goals		Long-term goals		Performance goals		Mastery goals		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Affirmative votes	145	86	61	49	93	123	63	71
Percentage	96.7%	57.3%	40.1%	30.7%	62%	82%	42%	47.3%

Table 3.5: votes for items of goal-setting and goal-orientation

This table shows that an overwhelming majority of students choose College English Band 4 or 6 as their purpose to learn English, and more than half of the students claim that they learn English to pass entrance examination for postgraduate candidates. However, there is a marked decline in the number of students who make affirmative responses to items 8 and 9. Items 12 and 13 also get far fewer affirmative votes than items 10 and 11. These data clearly reflect students' choice of goals: they prefer short-term goals especially CET 4 and 6 to long-term goals and prefer performance goals to mastery goals.

This finding is consistent with Shi' s (2000) finding that most Chinese college students are motivated to learn English just for obtaining certificates. In another word, they learn English mainly for the purpose of passing examinations. This phenomenon is understandable in the current situation of China. College students are faced with great pressure of passing Band 4 examinations. The day when they enter the university, they are told by teachers and students in higher school grades how important it is to pass Band 4 examination. In many universities, students who fail in Band 4 examinations cannot be awarded scholarships no matter how excellent he is in other courses; what' s more, he cannot even be awarded bachelor' s degree when he graduates. Therefore, it is not surprising that students almost unanimously vote for "I want to pass College English Band 4". In addition to Band 4, Band 6 and entrance examination for postgraduate candidates are also great driving forces for many college students to learn English because possessing a Band 6 certificate and a Master' s degree will make them more competitive than their peers. In addition, in order to win the scholarship and the favor of teachers, students need to get high scores and outperform their peers. Therefore, they highly value performance goals like improving test skills in standardized examination. However, they do not attach as much importance to long-term and mastery goals as to short-term and performance goals probably because long-term goals and mastery goals seem to be a little remote to them and they do not perceive immediate benefits from these goals as they can get from short-term and performance goals. Many students still lack an awareness of the consequences or benefits that will follow the mastery of English.

As discussed in the previous chapter, short-term goals do have a direct positive effect on motivational behavior, and in turn, play an important role in learning. Therefore, students' enthusiasm in passing all kinds of English examinations should not be strongly criticized. At the very least, any goal for learning L2 is better than the lack of a goal. Students who attach importance to passing the examinations usually work hard for this purpose. However, research literature also indicates that the effect of long-term goals on motivational behavior is stronger than short-term goals and mastery goals are superior to performance goals. Learners who prefer long-term and mastery goals tend to expend more energy and time and persist longer. Therefore, measures should be taken to help students who prefer short-term goals move toward higher learning goals or to enable them to place more emphasis on mastery goals.

e) perceiving the English teacher as controlling and less informative

In the questionnaire, five items are used to measure students' perception of teaching style, involving teachers' style of giving feedback and authority type. Items 34-36 are concerned with students' perception of teachers' style of giving feedback; items 37-38 are concerned with students' perception of teachers' authority style, that is, autonomy supporting or autonomy controlling.

Item number	Item 44	Item 45	Item 46	Item 47	Item 48
Affirmative votes	55	41	22	27	91

percentage	36.7%	27.3%	14.7%	18%	60.7%
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Table 3.6: votes for items of teachers' feedback-giving and authority type

As shown in the above table, 36.7% students vote for item 34 "My English teacher sometimes gives me encouragement in English learning"; 27.3% students vote for item 35 "My English teacher sometimes praises me for my progress in English learning"; only 14.7% students vote for item 36 "My English teacher gives me constructive suggestions which are helpful for my English learning". These data show that many students do not think their English teachers provide much feedback such as praise and encouragement to them, and more students do not think their teachers give them much informational feedback. 18% students vote for item 37 "My English teacher adopts autonomy-supporting approach" while as many as 60.7% students vote for item 38 "My English teacher forces us to learn English in the way prescribed by him or her". These data reflect that most students think their teachers adopt authority type of autonomy-controlling rather than autonomy-supporting.

The finding that students perceive their English teachers as controlling and less informative should arouse concern among English teachers. Reflection should be made to find out the reasons for many teachers' demotivating teaching style. One reasonable explanation for this may be that many teachers lack theoretical and systematic pedagogical knowledge (Shu, 2001). Heavy load of teaching task makes them busy with teaching every day. Few College English teachers ever spend time studying pedagogy systematically. Rarely have L2 teachers administered a survey to learn about students' individual differences or conducted research to improve their teaching methods (Shu, 2001). Therefore, it is not surprising that they are not aware of the important role feedback and authority type play in motivating students. The author's observation of the ELT practice in Chinese classrooms notices the inadequacy of guidance by motivation theory. For example, some teachers give students no feedback, which provides no driving force to push students towards further efforts; some teachers criticize students in the presence of others, which may exert negative motivational influence on the students; some teachers always give praise to very few top students in class, which may lower self-efficacy of other learners in the class; some teachers only make the comment such as "good job", "well done", which is superficial and cannot provide enough instructions for students' further development.

The finding that students perceive English teachers as controlling is consistent with the one obtained by Liu (2002) that teachers in China tend to adhere to Chinese traditional teaching method, which is autonomy-controlling. For decades Chinese teachers have been quite used to the traditional way of teaching a foreign language, in which the teacher is regarded as an unquestionable authority who dominates the whole class from the beginning to the end, trying to put everything into students' heads and taking scant notice of the feelings and reactions of students. Students are just an "ignorant audience", waiting to be filled up with knowledge by the teacher. Although initial changes have taken place in English teaching in recent years, this traditional idea is so deeply rooted that even now many teachers continue to maintain it in ELT. They are used to being the supreme authority in the classroom, and not letting their students share their teaching arrangements and methods (Liu, 2002; Wei, 2002). Therefore, the result is the teacher's heavy domination over the whole class and students' passive reception, which frustrate students' motivation in English learning.

As discussed in Chapter Two, in the language learning situation the teacher appears to be a key person who affects students' motivation. Greater intrinsic motivation is linked with receiving more feedback from the teacher, and lower perception of being controlled by the teacher can enhance autonomous learning. Perception of the language teacher as controlling and as failing to provide constructive information about students' learning corresponds with lessened intrinsic motivation and greater student anxiety in the language classroom. The more one perceives the teacher as controlling and less informative, the less one shows motivational intensity and intention to continue studying the L2.

3.5.2 inter-group differences between male and female students

The subjects of the study are made up of 84 male students and 66 female students. Their differences in their motivational beliefs are mainly reflected in the degree of interest. Three items were used to measure the degree of learners' interest in English, that is, item 3 "I really like learning English", item 4 "I like English class" and item 5 "I am very interested in cultures of English speaking countries". Affirmative responses of male and female students to the three items are compared in the following table.

males' affirmative votes		females' affirmative votes		
votes	percentage	votes	percentage	
Item 3	28	33.3%	34	51.5%
Item 4	27	32.1%	32	48.5%
Item 5	32	38.1%	34	51.5%

Table 3.7: votes for items of interest by male and female students

The above table reveals that more female students have interest in English than male students. Of all motivational components, interest has the strongest positive effect on motivational behavior (Qin, 2001). Learners who are interested in English tend to spend more time and energy learning English. According to the causal relationship between interest and motivational behavior, different level of interest in English between male and female students will lead to different amount of motivational behavior. This phenomenon is common in the situation of China. During the staff chat in the office, almost all of the colleagues of the author agree that girls usually spend more time in learning English, attend English classes and finish English home assignment more regularly. Their high interest in English learning and English culture help them hold a relatively more positive attitude towards English learning than male students who are less interested in it. In other words, they are more willing to exert more motivational behavior because they have less feeling of being forced to learn under some external pressure. Their interest will arouse their curiosity about exploring the English language and culture, and are helpful for them to persist in their English learning. Deci and Ryan (1985) conclude that students who perform tasks with interest in them learn faster and achieve greater success than those who show less interest in them. Therefore it is not surprising that female students in this study get higher scores in College Entrance Examination and CET Band 4 examination than male students on the average, as shown in the subjects' background information in the questionnaire.

3.5.3 Intergroup differences among students in different grades

Subjects in this study consist of students in Grade One, Grade Two and Grade Three. The author compares different motivational beliefs among the three grades by counting their votes for the questionnaire items respectively and finds that differences among them are mainly reflected in their perception of EFL cost, interest, self-efficacy, goal-setting and goal-orientation. The following figure indicates the average percentage of affirmative votes respectively made by students in different grades for items of interest, sense of self-efficacy, long-term goals, mastery goal and perception of cost.

Figure 3.6: intergroup differences among different grades.

This figure shows that more freshmen have interest in English, high sense of self-efficacy and they are more inclined to choose long-term goals and mastery goals than sophomores and juniors. Fewer freshmen perceive high EFL cost than students in higher school grades. This finding is reasonable. Stepping into a college is a turning point in life for Chinese students and it marks a new and promising beginning, so freshmen are usually full of expectation and passion about their study in a new period (Liu, 2003). They tend to be more interested in English learning. Having passed college entrance examination gives them a great sense of success, which makes them develop strong beliefs in their future achievement, so more freshmen show a high sense of self-efficacy than students in higher grades. Besides, being in college for only a few months, they have not met with many difficulties in study and have not experienced real failures in college, either (Liu, 2003). Therefore, many of them hold positive attitude toward

English learning, and perception of cost. When they tend to be more ambitious and goal-oriented, they tend to set high and mastery goals. These factors are positive for them to improve motivational strength.

In contrast to freshmen, however, sophomores and juniors are less ambitious. With the increase of college grades, their fresh feelings of entering college campus have gone and the pressure of passing Band 4 or 6 examinations becomes urgent. Many of them have experienced difficulties and hardships in English learning. For example, failure in term examination, heavy load of curriculum, prolonged effort required, slow progress, and dissatisfaction with teaching style are all likely to discourage them. They tend to show less interest, higher evaluation of cost, lower sense of self-efficacy in English learning and focus more on short-term and performance goals. These negative factors put them in a passive state, and are not helpful for them to increase the motivational strength. Although the pressure of Band 4 and 6 examinations may urge them to work hard temporarily, as long as they fulfill the purpose of passing the examinations, they are not likely to persist in English learning.

Compared with sophomores, the factors influencing junior students' motivation are more negative especially in terms of interest and perception of cost. Fewer juniors show interest in English but more of them perceive high EFL cost than sophomores. This finding reflects a big problem in College English education, that is, the low efficiency of ESP teaching. According to the revised edition of English syllabus for non-English majors, College non-English majors complete their compulsory general English learning at the end of the second academic year. When they are in Grade Three, they begin to learn ESP. However, the teaching of ESP is not quite satisfactory. As the result of this study indicates, students show low interest and attach high cost to their English learning. The reason may be as follows: firstly, many junior students are still busy preparing for CET 4 or 6. College students, as required, usually take CET 4 for the first time when they are in Grade Two; however, on the whole, the percentage of sophomores who can pass CET 4 in average universities is not very high, so many students are still under the pressure of CET 4 when they are in Grade Three. For example, on the average, in 1995 only 39% students from average universities pass Band 4 (Hou, 2001); the pass rates of Band 4 for average universities in 2001, 2002 and 2003, are respectively 33% and 27.95%. Among those who have passed CET 4, many students are striving for passing CET 6. For example, in Anhui Medical University, students all sign up for Band 6 right after they pass Band 4. Therefore, most junior students are still busy with their preparation for the examinations after the regular English class, and with the increase of school grades, the pressure becomes greater and they tend to be more worried about College English Examinations than sophomores. The learning of ESP in English class seems to be of little help for them to pass these examinations and many of them cannot afford much time and energy in ESP learning. It is quite natural for them to show low interest and high perception of cost. The second reason lies in the lack of qualified teachers. Except for a few top universities, the number of qualified teachers of ESP is far from enough in most universities of China (Zhu & Han, 2002). Currently, ESP in universities is taught either by specialized course teachers or general English teachers. However, both types of teachers turn out to be not qualified enough at present. General English teachers usually lack enough specialized knowledge while specialized course teachers are also faced with difficulties of teaching ESP. Many of specialized course teachers are not quite proficient in English. Even if they have gained proficiency in English, they may lack the training of English pedagogy and cannot organize classroom language teaching efficiently. Therefore, currently, the teaching of ESP is not of satisfactory quality. For the two above mentioned reasons, it is not surprising that students show low interest in ESP, which will surely decrease their effortful behavior in ESP learning.

In general, students' motivational beliefs in interest, self-efficacy, valence, goal-setting and goal-orientation do not remain stable. They develop in the negative direction along with the increase of college grades. The negative development of the beliefs influencing language learning motivation should arouse concern for language teachers. Instructions should be made to help students develop motivation beliefs favorable for English learning and prevent them from moving in negative trend.

3.6 Limitations of the survey

Like all empirical studies, this study suffers from some limitations though it is designed carefully.

The first problem concerns the subjects. As pointed out above, all of the 150 subjects are from Anhui Medical University. The number of the subjects is relatively small compared with the total number of Chinese non-English majors and they may not be the best representatives of all the Chinese non-English majors. Future research can replicate this study with a larger sample of learners of different specialties to obtain more accurate and complete information.

The second problem lies in the validity of the self-report questionnaire. The choices made by the subjects probably do not reflect their real opinions because of their carelessness. Besides, motivation items are usually rather "transparent", that is, respondents can have a fairly good guess about what the expected answer is, and some of them will provide this response even if it is not true.

Thirdly, although quantitative approach applied in this survey is superior in terms of representativeness and generalizability, and is helpful for the researcher to obtain some general tendencies among students, qualitative approach such as interview, diary-keeping may be complemented to obtain information which can not be revealed by the quantitative approach. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods might be a particular fruitful direction for future motivation research.

Lastly, this study is only a cross-sectional research. In fact, in order to explore the dynamic nature of motivational beliefs for language learners, a longitudinal survey is needed. Future researchers can adopt a longitudinal survey to track the changes and patterns of development of motivational beliefs among a certain group of students over an extended period of time.

Chapter IV Implications and suggestions

4.1 Implications of the study

Based on literature review and the survey administration, the author draws some implications from the present study. The first implication is a pedagogical implication, that is, teachers should be provided with pedagogic training to raise their motivational awareness, so that they can consciously apply the motivation research result to teaching practice. Secondly, findings obtained from the survey expose several motivational beliefs that negatively influence Chinese' non-English majors' motivation. Proper steps should be taken to remedy these beliefs.

4.1.1 Raising teachers' motivational awareness

The influence of the teacher is of prime importance for enhancement of English learning motivation. This is so because teachers act as key figures, or authorities, who affect the motivational quality of the learning process by providing mentoring, guidance, nurturance and support setting. In spite of the important role teachers play in shaping student motivation, few teachers are aware of students' motivation (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). This is especially true in China. Many Chinese teachers of English have not received systematic training of pedagogy. Their teaching is mainly based on their experience instead of being guided by theoretical knowledge. Many of them fail to improve students' motivational strength by consciously following effective motivational principles and guidelines. In view of this, it is quite important to raise teachers' motivational awareness. As English teachers, they should be knowledgeable about the following three aspects concerning language learning motivation.

Firstly, teachers should be aware of the important role motivation plays in second language acquisition. Motivation is a powerful factor in SLA. Its effects are to be seen on the rate and success of SLA. The relationship between motivation and achievement is an interactive one. A high level of motivation stimulates learning, and perceived success in achieving L2 goals can help to maintain existing motivation. Conversely, a vicious circle of low motivation=low achievement=lower motivation can develop (Ellis, 1994).

Only with a clear understanding of the important role motivation plays in SLA will English teachers make their effort to activate students' motivation and encourage the highest possible motivation.

Secondly, teachers should be aware of the complexity of motivation. Motivation to learn L2 is a multifaceted concept. As discussed in Chapter Two, a number of factors such as goal-setting, valence, attributions of previous performance, self-efficacy, and teachers' feedback and authority type contribute to the intensity of motivation. Therefore, teachers should have a comprehensive view of the motivational components while emphasizing the direct effect of

components. They should know why learners adopt this or that motivational behavior and reflect on their teaching styles. Then they can direct learners' attention to increasing motivational strength by instructional interventions to motivational components.

Thirdly, teachers should be aware of the dynamic nature of motivation. Mastering a foreign language is a sustained, long-term activity which takes several years to be successfully accomplished, so L2 motivation does not remain constant during the course of months or years. Rather, it is characterized by regular appraisal and balancing of the various internal and external influences to which the learner is exposed.

It is of particular importance for a teacher to be aware that over time, students' motivations might change in type and degree. From the point of view of many Chinese teachers, motivation is simply sparking an initial interest. However, motivating learners entails far more than that. It also involves sustaining that interest and investing time and energy into putting in the necessary effort to achieve certain goals. Therefore, teachers should not take it for granted that initially motivated students will always maintain high motivation and they should try hard to trace the changes in students' motivational level and prevent it from moving in a downward direction.

4.1.2 Identifying students' negative motivational beliefs

Teachers who have realized the importance of motivation always dream of class packed with highly motivated students; however, they are all too frequently faced with demotivated learners. Therefore, teachers' skill in motivating learners is central to teaching effectiveness. What teachers usually wish to know is how they can intervene, that is, what they can actually do to motivate their learners. In other words, for classroom practitioners the real area of interest is the various techniques or strategies that can be employed to motivate students. Usually an English teacher judges whether students are motivated mainly by some explicit indicators of motivation, such as the amount of time for English learning (Qin, 1998). This emphasis on external indicators can only be of very limited help for improving English teaching because what teachers can do with students is only to urge them again and again to spend more time. This attempt in calling them for more motivational behavior usually results in futility, as teachers often experience. A clear understanding of student motivational beliefs will be effective in helping teachers to motivate their students to work harder on English. Therefore, the findings obtained in this study are of significant practical value.

According to the findings of the survey, problems that negatively influence the improvement of motivational strength for Chinese non-English majors become clear. The results of the survey indicate that examination-related goals are the main driving forces for students to exert effortful behavior; however, their desire for achieving long-term and mastery goals is weaker. In addition to over-emphasis on short-term and performance goals, students' other negative motivational beliefs include high perception of English learning cost, low sense of self-efficacy in terms of integrated skills, lacking initial belief in self-efficacy, attribution of previous failure to uncontrollable factors and perceiving teachers as controlling and less informative. In terms of intergroup differences, with the increase of grades, interest, sense of self-efficacy, setting of long-term and mastery goals develop in a downward trend while perception of cost develops in an upward trend. Gender difference lies in the degree of interest in English.

4.2 Suggestions for improving Chinese non-English majors' motivation

Motivational beliefs mentioned above are all modifiable. Causal attribution, goal-setting and the degree of interest in learning English can be subjected to teachers' instructions or students' self-adjustment, or both. Similarly, there is the possibility to raise learners' self-efficacy and lower their perception of language learning cost. Teaching style can also be improved with teachers' increasing awareness and understanding of EFL motivation.

In order to alter students' beliefs that negatively influence their motivation and promote students' motivational level, the author offers some suggestions for reference as follows:

4.2.1 Helping students set mastery goals

making examinations more mastery oriented

Goal-setting is an important motivational factor. Teachers need not adopt a negative attitude toward examination-related purpose because having a purpose is better than no purpose at all. However, the over-emphasis of Chinese students on the examination-related goals should arouse concern for authorities in the educational departments of various levels. An effective way to minimize the negative influence of examination-related goals is to make examinations more mastery oriented. Since CET is a very powerful driving force for Chinese students to learn English, unsparing efforts should be made to exert its positive backwash effect on students' English learning. The portion of examination questions concerning productive and communicative skills should be enlarged and CET oral examination should be carried out on a larger scale so that more students can take part in it. In this way, students will attach greater importance to the mastery of English.

using the mastery approach in the classroom

The mastery approach in the classroom is much more positive than the performance approach in terms of motivating students. It fosters participation, involvement, and persistence, all of which lead to greater proficiency in the target language. English teachers in the classroom must focus on using clear criteria for students to master the language rather than on comparing one student's performance against the performance of others. Comparisons of students' performance in the classroom such as showing list of names in sequence of examination scores should be avoided. Serious competition which focuses on outperforming peers is not a particularly useful vehicle for L2 learning (Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

4.2.2 Enhancing students' language-related value

deepening students' understanding of the value of English learning

If language learners do not believe that English learning leads somewhere or is ultimately valuable, their motivation will be lowered. Although most Chinese students agree on the value of English, their understanding of the importance of English is mainly due to strict course requirements and English learning craze in society. Their understanding may be superficial and skin-deep. Teachers need to demonstrate that L2 learning can be an exciting mental challenge, a career enhancer, a vehicle to cultural awareness and friendship, and a key to world peace. For students to deepen their understanding of the value of English learning, they need repeated evidence from successful users of English who were once in the students' own position. In order to provide evidence, teachers can invite former graduates back to universities to give lectures to show the rewards and benefits of L2 learning to the students. Lectures given by former graduates concerning their real-life experience will be more effective in helping students deeply realize the value of English. Teachers can also invite visitors who are native speakers of English to share information and to confirm that English is a useful language. If effort is viewed as leading to significant outcomes, the language learner will feel continuously motivated.

b) lowering students' perception of EFL cost

In addition to the above mentioned efforts, English teachers need to give students more guidance to lower the negative influence exerted by students' perception of language learning cost. English teachers should help students realize at the same time the ultimate value of learning English and the nature of English learning so that they can have a right perception of English learning. Teachers can make it clear to the students that foreign language learning is a long-term activity which requires years of effort. During the long process, learners will inevitably meet setbacks and failures. As long as learners persist and do not give up easily, setbacks can be overcome and failures can be turned into successes in the end. The final benefits they can gain through English learning surely outweigh the cost. A deep understanding of the nature of English learning will help students, especially students in higher grades who have experienced more hardships in English learning to persist longer. Besides, English teachers need to stress on the importance of carefully planning time. They should give students guidance and suggestions when students choose elective courses and urge students to plan English learning and other major courses' learning to guarantee sufficient time and energy during the college years. If students can balance the time spent on English learning and major courses learning, they will lower their perception of English learning cost.

a) varying teaching pattern in the classroom

Of all motivational variables, interest has the strongest positive effect on motivational behavior (Qin, 2001). However, in China, with the increase of college grades, fewer students show interest in English learning. Accordingly, generating and maintaining interest become an important task of English teachers. Teachers need to increase learners' interest in English learning for an enhancement of motivational level.

A great number of recommendations have been made in literature as to how to promote this intrinsic interest, ranging from making the tasks varied and challenging to including novel elements and relating the content of the tasks to the learners' natural interest. Change is an essential part of maintaining interest because otherwise habituation will set in (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Therefore, a too-regular pattern of classroom routine which may be produced by strict adherence to textbooks that use the same format for each unit should probably be avoided. The new feeling of stepping into universities may generate interest among freshmen in learning. However, rigid teaching will result in their boredom as time goes on. So providing a variety of different learning activities will help students to maintain interest. It is the teachers' responsibility to vary the sequence, style, content and teaching method of lessons. In other words, teachers should send a ripple through each class. That ripple is a mixture of surprise and curiosity.

providing opportunities for communication

Studies in the literature also suggest that providing opportunities for communication is an effective way in which intrinsic interest in L2 learning might be achieved because "the really important part of motivation lies in the act of communication" (McNamara, 1973). In fact, the ability to get meaning across and the pleasure experienced in communication are good ways to increase the intrinsic enjoyment of participating in learning tasks (See Ellis, 1994).

4.2.4 Promoting attributions to controllable factors

Attributional style of Chinese students in the case of failure is detrimental to enhancement of motivational strength. Teachers should help learners, especially low achievers, to reduce their tendency to engage in a maladaptive attribution pattern. Though attributional styles are habitual ways of explaining events, researches have proved that the styles can be modified. Attribution retraining techniques have revealed encouraging findings. Through these techniques, behaviors considered to be maladaptive can be altered by teaching more favorable causal attributions (see Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). In order to promote adaptive attributions in failure situations, teachers should help students cast off sense of inferiority and helplessness, analyze the deep cause for their failure and make a modification to their incorrect attribution. Teachers can emphasize the low effort exerted as being a strong reason for underachievement because this communicates to students that they can do better in the future. By ascribing failure to insufficient effort rather than to lack of ability, students will believe "I didn't work hard enough but I will make more efforts to avoid failure" instead of pessimistically thinking "I'm not good enough for this sort of thing". In situations where failure occurs in spite of obvious hard work on the student's part, the best strategy is to point out the skills that are missing and communicate to the student that learning skills can be modified and more effective skills can be mastered.

4.2.5 Helping students develop sense of self-efficacy

setting achievable subgoals to provide sense of progress for students

Learners' self-efficacy will influence their choice of activities, the amount of effort they are prepared to expend and their level of persistence. However, as indicated in this study, many Chinese students do not have initial belief in their own self-efficacy. They feel lost in the language class and are not sure of their capability. English teachers must help such students develop a sense of self-efficacy. One important suggestion for teachers is that they should often provide their students with a sense of achievement in class. Providing meaningful, achievable language task can serve as an important vehicle in the development of students' self-efficacy (Dörnyei, 1994). Teachers should make sure that students could regularly experience success and a sense of achievement by providing attainable subgoals, and help students make realistic and objective expectation of what can be accomplished in a given time. By achieving immediate, achievable subgoals, students will acquire a feeling of control and a sense of progress. Accordingly, their sense of self-efficacy will be built gradually.

providing positive and informational feedback

Another big problem with Chinese students' sense of self-efficacy is that their beliefs in four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing vary greatly. English teachers can improve learners' self-efficacy of integrated skills by providing positive and informational feedback. As discussed in Chapter Three, although self-efficacy is determined by previous experience, it is also subjected to the influence of several other factors such as learning through observing models and encouragement from others. Therefore, teachers can provide informational feedback by giving relevant positive examples to students who have developed imbalanced language skills. This feedback gives students models to follow and the achievement of models will suggest that task attainment is within the students' means. Teachers' effective feedback can also contain encouragement and praise, which communicate to the students that the teacher believes that the student is capable of reaching a certain level of proficiency. Students in general experience high efficacy when told they are capable of achieving success by a trustworthy person such as the teacher. Besides, based on the relationship between attribution and self-efficacy, providing attributional feedback, that is, modifying students' attributional style, is an effective type of informational feedback to raise students' level of self-efficacy. When learners believe their low speaking competence is due to insufficient effort and ineffective learning strategies rather than to lack of ability, their level of self-efficacy will be improved.

creating a relaxed environment in class and encouraging students to practise after class

Providing informational feedback may be useful in helping students enhance their sense of self-efficacy; however, shortening the proficiency gap among four language skills is also a crucial element in developing students' self-efficacy in integrated skills. In addition to further developing students' reading skill, teachers should make every effort to improve students' performance in other three skills especially speaking. For example, creating a better environment for students to practice in class contributes to the improvement of students' performance. Poor performance of speaking is due to lack of practice. Therefore, teachers must make the atmosphere in the classroom as favorable as possible for students to open their mouth to practice. Teachers can make the L2 classroom a welcoming, supportive place where psychological needs are met and where language anxiety is kept to a minimum. In order to develop a supportive and accepting environment in the classroom, teachers should establish a good relationship with students, avoid sarcasm and sharp criticism, help students lessen self-consciousness in using English, help them relax through music and laughter. In such a relaxed environment, students will feel comfortable in practicing speaking because they know that they will not be embarrassed or criticized if they make a mistake.

In addition, teachers can encourage students to seize every chance and make full use of the existing learning environment to practise after class. For example, students can be advised to go to an English corner, have an English club, take part in an English speech contest, attend lectures given by foreign teachers, listen to English radios and watch original English movies. In doing so, students can plunge themselves into a semi-authentic English environment. They will surely improve their communicative competence, break the vicious circle of imbalanced development of four basic language skills and raise the level of self-efficacy in integrated skills.

4.2.6 Creating learner autonomy

If students are aware of and willing to take responsibilities, their motivation will increase. Dickinson (1995: 166) suggests: "motivation can be enhanced through encouraging learners to exert personal control over their learning and take responsibility for it." The traditional authoritarian role of Chinese teachers should be changed. Teachers' job is not only to offer a description of the language but also, through various strategies such as allowing students real choice, sharing responsibility with them for organizing their learning process and encouraging student contributions, to create conditions that would help students learn through active involvement in activities and tasks. Undoubtedly, no learner autonomy can be achieved successfully unless teachers have a positive attitude toward it. However, findings obtained from this study indicate that many Chinese English teachers still adopt an autonomy controlling approach in class. Therefore, developing teachers' positive attitude towards autonomy is of great significance in the current Chinese situation. The presupposition of autonomous learning is that teachers are willing to change their traditional roles as information providers and prepare to accept their new

roles as facilitators in classrooms. Little (1995) points out that learner autonomy depends on teacher autonomy. Generally speaking, in a formal educational context, learners do not initiatively accept responsibility for their learning. This is especially true of Chinese students. Due to social, cultural and educational reasons, many Chinese students tend to adopt a passive role in learning and believe that to be a learner is to listen to or to be dependent on teachers (Wang, 2002). Teachers must first raise their own awareness of autonomy supporting, then help students take an active, independent attitude to learning. The job of teachers working on an autonomous pedagogy includes helping learners raise their awareness of responsibilities, helping learners plan and carry out their independent learning tasks and helping learners monitor and evaluate their learning (Wang 2002).

Allowing students autonomy is of great significance in improving students' motivation in the Chinese context. For example, an effective way to motivate students who learn ESP is to let students themselves decide when they will take the course. Although training qualified ESP teachers may be a crucial way in the long run, creating students' autonomy may have immediate and positive effect in motivating them. As discussed in the previous chapter, many universities prescribe that junior students take required ESP right after they finish their EGP learning. However, juniors are still faced with the pressure of CET 4 or 6. If they are allowed to have a say in curriculum planning, they can establish priorities in task completion. Given autonomy, they can plan their English learning and choose the proper time to take the course. By so doing, they may not have the feeling of being controlled and they will voluntarily get involved in the learning process. Accordingly, their motivation will be improved.

Chapter v Conclusion

This thesis has offered an empirically based study of Chinese non-English majors' beliefs concerning EFL motivation. The study reflects many beliefs that are detrimental to the enhancement of Chinese non-English majors' motivational level. The major findings are summarized as follows:

Many students attach high cost to English learning; students show imbalanced expectation about four basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and many of them lack an initial sense of self-efficacy; many students make attributions to uncontrollable factors such as inability, high language difficulty and lack of learning environment in the case of failure; students tend to overemphasize short-term goals and performance goals while ignoring long-term and mastery goals; most students believe their English teachers adopt autonomy-controlling approach instead of autonomy-supporting approach and think their teachers seldom give them informational feedback; with increase of school grades, students' interest, self-efficacy, long-term goal and mastery goal decrease and perception of EFL cost increases; and fewer male students show interest in English than female students.

Although there may exist many problems, these motivational beliefs can be modified through instructions of English teachers. **High motivational level requires positive beliefs on the part of both teachers and learners.** In order to alter students' negative beliefs about English learning and teaching that underlie motivational behavior, priority should be given to raising teachers' motivational awareness. The author also provides several suggestions for Chinese teachers of English to minimize the negative influence of students' motivational beliefs. These suggestions include helping students set mastery goals, enhancing students' language-related values, raising students' intrinsic interest, promoting efforts attribution in the case of failure, helping students develop sense of self-efficacy, and creating learner autonomy. It is expected that the findings obtained in this study can be of help for Chinese teachers of English to have a better understanding of Chinese students and the suggestions offered in this thesis can be a contribution to the improvement in ELT in China.

In order to obtain a more complete and accurate picture of Chinese non-English majors' motivational beliefs, it is suggested that future studies combine quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate more subjects with more specialties over an extended period of time.

Appendix

问卷

第一部分 个人简况

性别

年级

你的高考英语成绩为

你是否已通过四级考试? 成绩

5. 你是否已通过六级考试? 成绩

第二部分

下面是同学们对英语学习和教学的一些看法, 这些看法没有对错之分。请你根据自己的实际情况, 按照每个数字所代表的含义, 选出其中一个填写在句子前面的括号内, 所填的数字一定要能如实反映你的看法。本次调查旨在为研究和改进外语教学提供参考依据。谢谢合作和帮助。

1=我不同意

2=我不太同意

3=我没有明确答案

4=我比较同意

5=我同意

() 1. 学好英语对我非常有用。

() 2. 学英语需要太多时间了, 真有点不值得。

() 3. 我喜欢学英语。

() 4. 我喜欢上英语课。

() 5. 我对英语国家的文化感兴趣。

() 6. 我想通过四、六级考试。

() 7. 我想学好英语, 报考研究生。

() 8. 我要学好英语是为了更好地学习专业知识。

() 9. 我要学好英语是为了将来事业的发展。

() 1 0. 我努力使自己的英语考分超过别人。

() 1 1. 我设法提高自己的英语应试能力。

() 1 2. 我努力把英语讲流利。

() 1 3. 我尽可能提高自己的英语水平。

请做14-33题, 预计本科阶段全部英语课程结束时, 你能否达到以下程度

() 1 4. 听懂外教用英语授课或讲座。

() 1 5. 听懂简单的英语录像。

() 1 6. 听懂VOA或BBC英语节目。

() 1 7. 听懂国内电台或电视台的英语新闻。

() 1 8. 听懂一般的英语会话。

() 1 9. 用英语与外教交流问题。

() 2 0. 用英语能基本满足日常需要, 如就餐, 购物、旅游等。

() 2 1. 用英语进行详细的自我介绍。

() 2 2. 用英语做演讲。

() 2 3. 比较流利地讲英语。

() 2 4. 看懂外国人写的英文信。

() 2 5. 看懂本专业的英文文献。

() 2 6. 看懂英语简写本读物。

() 2 7. 看懂国内出版的英语报刊, 如《中国日报》。

() 2 8. 看懂原版英文报刊杂志。

() 2 9. 用英语给外国朋友写信。

() 3 0. 用英语给国外大学写入学申请书。

() 3 1. 用英语做笔记和写日记。

() 3 2. 用英语写出约2千字的学期论文。

() 3 3. 用英语写个人简历。

() 3 4. 英语老师有时鼓励我好好学英语。

() 3 5. 英语老师有时表扬我的英语学习有进步。

() 3 6. 英语老师给我提的建议对我学习英语比较有帮助。

() 3 7. 英语老师给了我们较大的自主学习空间。

() 3 8. 英语老师总让我们按照他(她)要求的方式学英语。

如果你觉得自己过去的英语成绩较好, 请做39-43题; 如果觉得较差, 请做44-48题。

() 3 9. 我过去取得的成绩与自己有一定的外语天赋有关。

() 4 0. 我有现在这样的英语成绩, 原因是我们有经常使用英语的环境。

() 4 1. 我有现在的英语成绩是因为英语比较简单。

() 4 2. 我的英语学得较好, 重要原因是我比较努力。

() 4 3. 我的英语学得较好, 原因是学习方法比较有效。

() 4 4. 我以前英语学得不好, 我认为原因是自己不擅于学英语。

() 4 5. 我的英语学得不好, 原因是缺少好的英语学习环境。

() 4 6. 我的英语学得不好, 是因为英语难学。

() 4 7. 我的英语学得不好, 原因是我努力不够。

() 4 8. 我的英语学得不好, 原因是学习方法不当。

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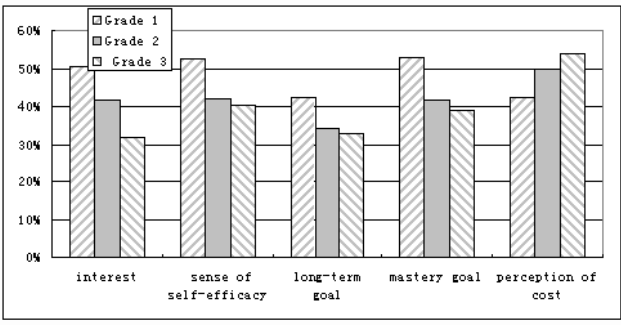
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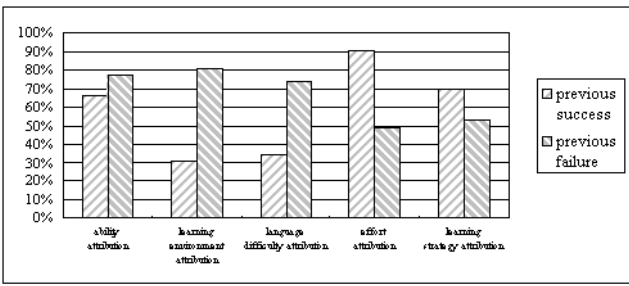
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Figure 3.6



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Figure 3.3



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