

**BELIEFS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING  
HELD BY CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS  
AND TEACHERS IN THE PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

**WANG JUN**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Studies**

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Suranaree University of Technology has approved this thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) สำรวจความเชื่อของนักศึกษาเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ โดยนักศึกษาระดับมหาวิทยาลัยในตอนใต้ของประเทศสาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีนที่ไม่ได้เรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเป็นวิชาเอกและครูผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษระดับมหาวิทยาลัย 2) ศึกษารูปแบบของความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความเชื่อของนักศึกษาเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและตัวแปรที่ศึกษา 3 ประเภท คือ เพศ สาขาวิชาที่เรียน และระดับความสามารถทางด้านภาษา 3) ศึกษารูปแบบของความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความเชื่อของครูผู้สอนเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและตัวแปรที่ศึกษา 3 ประเภท คือ เพศ วุฒิการศึกษา และประสบการณ์การสอนภาษาอังกฤษ 4) ศึกษาความเชื่อที่เหมือนและแตกต่างกันของนักศึกษาและครูผู้สอน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูล คือ แบบสอบถาม 2 ประเภท และ การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลที่ได้จากการตอบแบบสอบถามของนักศึกษาและครูผู้สอน คือ สถิติเชิงพรรณนา และการทดสอบไค-สแควร์ ผู้วิจัยใช้การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลที่ได้จากการสัมภาษณ์นักศึกษาและครูผู้สอน ผลการวิจัยพบว่านักศึกษามีความเชื่อว่าการพูดภาษาอังกฤษผู้พูดควรพูดให้เหมือนเจ้าของภาษา นักศึกษาจะได้รับการกระตุ้นให้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษจากปัจจัยภายนอก และนักศึกษายังเห็นว่ากิจกรรมนอกหลักสูตรมีความสำคัญเช่นเดียวกับการเรียนในชั้นเรียน ครูผู้สอนมีความเชื่อว่านักศึกษาควรจะเดาความหมายของคำศัพท์ใหม่ถ้าหากไม่รู้ความหมายของคำศัพท์นั้น นักศึกษาจำเป็นต้องรู้เกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรมของเจ้าของภาษาเพื่อที่จะพูดภาษาอังกฤษให้ดีขึ้น และครูผู้สอนยังเชื่อว่านักศึกษามีความรู้ลึกซึ้งวลเมื่อพูดภาษาอังกฤษต่อหน้าคนอื่น จากการศึกษาครั้งนี้ยังพบว่าความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทาง ด้านเพศของนักศึกษา สาขาวิชาที่เรียน และระดับความสามารถด้านภาษา ส่วนความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของครูผู้สอนตัวแปรที่พบว่ามีแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ คือ เพศและประสบการณ์ของครูผู้สอน นอกจากนี้นักศึกษาและครูผู้สอนมีความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษที่เหมือนและแตกต่างกันในบางประเด็น

สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ  
ปีการศึกษา 2551

ลายมือชื่อนักศึกษา \_\_\_\_\_  
ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา \_\_\_\_\_



WAN GJUN : BELIEFS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING  
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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA. THESIS ADVISOR : ASST. PROF.  
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BELIEFS/LEARNERS' BELIEFS/TEACHERS' BELIEFS/CHINESE UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS/CHINESE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

The present investigation aims to explore: 1) beliefs about English language learning held by Chinese non-English major university students and teachers in the southwest of China; 2) variation patterns of learners' beliefs about English language learning associated with their gender, field of study and level of language proficiency; 3) variation patterns of teachers' beliefs about English language learning associated with their gender, academic degree and their years of teaching experience; and 4) the existence of similarities and differences of beliefs held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers. Two questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the research data. Descriptive statistics and chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests were used to analyze the quantitative data from both students' and teachers' questionnaires. The data obtained through students' and teachers' semi-structured interviews were analyzed qualitatively. The findings revealed that Chinese non-English major students strongly believe that it is important to speak English with an excellent accent; they are normally extrinsically motivated to learn English; and they also regard extra-curricular activities as important as learning in class. At the same time, Chinese teachers of English strongly believe that

students should guess a new word if they do not know the meaning; that they need to know English culture in order to speak English well; and they also believe that their students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people. Significant differences were found in beliefs about English learning in terms of students' gender, major fields of study and their level of language proficiency; teachers' gender and teaching experience, but with regard to their academic degree, only to some extent. Furthermore, the findings reveal some other similarities and differences of beliefs about English language learning held by students and teachers.

School of English

Academic Year 2008

Student's Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Advisor's Signature\_\_\_\_\_

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

B. A.	Bachelor's degree
BALLI	Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory
CET-Band 4 and 6	College English Test Band 4 and 6
E1	Teaching experience 1~5 years
E2	Teaching experience 6~15 years
E3	Teaching experience more than 15 years
EFL	English as foreign language learning
EFT	English as foreign language teaching
FL	Foreign language
FLL	Foreign language learning
F	Female
H	High level of English proficiency
L	Low level of English proficiency
M (gender)	Male
M (level)	Medium level of English proficiency
NSMT	Nation-Wide Standardized Matriculation Test (in China)
non.Sci.-ori.	Non-Science-oriented
OT	Other education certificates
PG	Postgraduate degree
RL	Rote learning



**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (CONTINUED)**

Sci.-ori.	Science-oriented
SL	Second language
SLA	Second language acquisition
SLL	Second language learning
SPSS	Statistical package for the social sciences
suc.	Successful
unsuc.	Unsuccessful

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **BACKGROUND TO STUDY**

This chapter is an introductory section of the research which provides a general background to the context of the present study. It starts off with a brief introduction and a summary of beliefs about language learning held by learners and teachers. This is followed by the definition of the key terms in the present study, an overall picture of education in China, English language learning and teaching in the Chinese context, reasons for undertaking the study, location of universities in the study, and research objectives. Finally, the expected outcomes and the outline of the research are presented, respectively.

### **1.1 Introduction**

Since the 1980s, language learners' beliefs, as the result of the influence of research in cognitive psychology, have received considerable attention by researchers (Horwitz, 1987a; Wenden, 1986a, 1986b; 1999). A great amount of research regarding language learners' beliefs has been conducted in a variety of second language learning (SLL) or foreign language learning (FLL) contexts. Examples are Riley's (1996); Cotterall's (1995); Mantle-Bromley's (1995); Benson and Lor's (1999); Sakui and Gaies's (1999); White's (1999); Yang's (1999); Mori's (1999); and Intaraprasert's (2004).

The importance of beliefs has been of great interest for researchers in the fields of second language acquisition (SLA). Learners' beliefs have the potential to influence not only learners' experience and actions as language learners but also they have direct or indirect effects on learners' behavior (Wen and Johnson, 1997). Learners' beliefs about language and language learning may directly influence or even determine a learner's attitudes toward language and language learning or his/her motivation (Riley, 1996). Also, the preconceived beliefs about language learning would be likely to affect the way the learners use their learning strategies and learn a second or foreign language (Horwitz, 1987a, 1988; Wenden, 1986a, 1987a). Moreover, Richards and Lockhart (1994, p.52) state,

“Learners' beliefs are influenced by the social context of learning and can influence both their attitudes toward the language itself as well as toward language learning in general. Learners' belief systems cover a wide range of issues and can influence learners' motivation to learn, their expectations about language learning, their perceptions about what is easy or difficult about a language, as well as the kind of learning strategies they favor”.

It has been recognized that second or foreign language learners often hold different beliefs or notions about language learning where the beliefs are influenced by the learners' previous experience as language learners, or shaped by their own cultural backgrounds (Horwitz, 1987a). Language learners' expectations which are developed prior to their experience are also influenced and shaped by their beliefs (White, 1999). Victori and Lockhart (1995, p. 225) investigated differences between 'insightful beliefs' which successful learners hold, and the 'negative or limited beliefs' which unsuccessful learners hold, and concluded that, ‘...if students develop or maintain misconceptions about their own learning, if they attribute undue importance to factors that are external to their own actions...they are not likely to adopt

responsible and active attitudes in their approach to learning and may never become autonomous'. Among recent studies, the main areas have covered culture-related differences in beliefs (e.g. Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Intaraprasert, 2004); the link between beliefs and proficiency (e.g. Wen and Johnson, 1997; Peacock, 1999); domain-specific beliefs, such as epistemological beliefs (i.e. beliefs about the nature of knowledge, See Mori, 1999, p. 534) and language learning beliefs (e.g. Mori, 1999); the dimensions underlying learners' beliefs (e.g. Cotterall, 1995; Sakui and Gaies, 1999); the impact of beliefs on language learning (e.g. Victori and Lockhart, 1995); methods of investigating learners' beliefs (e.g. Sakui and Gaies, 1999); the degree of match between learners' and teachers' beliefs (e.g. Kern, 1995); and gender-related differences in beliefs (e.g. Bacon and Finnemann, 1992). The possible relationships between beliefs and SL/FL learners' factors have also been investigated, such as learners' use of strategies (i.e. metacognitive strategies, e.g. Yang, 1999), their motivation (e.g. Riley, 1996; Pintrich, 1989), their readiness for autonomy (e.g. Cotterall, 1995), their approaches to language learning (e.g. Mori, 1999), their attitudes toward language learning (e.g. Chan, Spratt and Humphreys, 2002), and their learning culture (e.g. Intaraprasert, 2004). Although it is generally acknowledged that learners can learn equally well by following their own preferences and styles, it is also assumed that certain beliefs may be more enabling than others (Benson and Lor, 1999).

During the last two decades, researchers have examined learners' beliefs about foreign language learning for different purposes. Horwitz (1987b) developed an instrument, Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), to assess learners' beliefs about language learning in five major areas: 1) the difficulty of language learning; 2) foreign language aptitude; 3) the nature of language learning; 4) learning

and communication strategies; and 5) motivation and expectations. BALLI questionnaires are widely used or modified for use by some researchers in investigating learners' beliefs in second or foreign language settings (e.g. Yang, 1999; Intaraprasert, 2004). In some other studies, for instance, Cotterall (1999) investigated learners' beliefs focusing on six factors, namely, the role of the teacher; the role of feedback; the learner's sense of self-efficacy; important strategies; dimensions of strategies-related behavior and the nature of language learning. In addition, some researchers studied successful language learners (e.g. Carter and Leask, 1994; Takeuchi, 2002; Gan, Humphreys and Hamp-Lyons, 2004) through investigating what strategies these learners prefer to use. However, there is little research which concerns the beliefs being held by successful and unsuccessful English language learners in the Chinese context.

In the environment of learning English as a foreign language, teaching cannot be isolated from learning. Teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs, which in turn are closely linked to their values, to their views of the world and to their conceptions of their place within it (Williams and Burden, 1997). Teachers' beliefs about what is involved in learning will influence the way in which they teach. Moreover, these beliefs have a greater influence than teachers' knowledge on the way they planned their lessons, on the kinds of decisions they made and on their general classroom practice (Pajares, 1992). As William and Burden (1997) state that "...we can only be effective teachers if we are clear in our minds what we mean by learning because only then can we know what kinds of learning outcomes we want our learners to achieve". Recently, some studies have investigated the degree of correspondence between learners' preferred activities and the activities teachers believe the learners like (Spratt,

1999; Yang and Lau, 2003; Eslami-Rasekh and Valizadeh, 2004). These studies aim to outline learners' expectations and attitudes about how languages are learned in order to reduce gaps between learners' and teachers' beliefs (e.g. Horwitz, 1985; Wenden, 1986a; Kern, 1995; Peacock, 1999). Benson and Lor (1999) maintain that language teachers need to know not only what beliefs learners hold about learning, but also whether these beliefs are 'functional' or 'dysfunctional' in order to be able to influence learners' attitudes and behavior. Similarly, Ellis (2001) states that it is important to identify learners' beliefs which relate to successful learning as well as beliefs which have a negative impact on language learning. However, there is little research work on exploring if there are any gaps between learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning.

In terms of the research contexts, some studies on the beliefs of second/ foreign language learners have explored foreign language learners in the USA (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Mori, 1999); adult learners of English as second language in multi-ethnic communities in the USA (Wenden, 1986b, 1987a; Horwitz, 1987a) and New Zealand (Cotterall, 1995); and learners of English as a foreign language in China (Wen and Johnson, 1997), Lebanon (Diab, 2006), Hong Kong (Benson and Lor, 1999), and Taiwan (Yang, 1999).

Most of the studies mentioned above have investigated the beliefs of university-level or adult language learners. The main research methodologies employed in these research works are classroom observations, interviews, and closed (forced-choice) questionnaires. Because of the complexity and abundance of variables influencing SL/FL learners' beliefs, it makes conducting research in this area a difficult task. In order to conduct more convincing research in the field of learners' and teachers'

beliefs, it is recommended that research should investigate learners' beliefs using both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Cotterall, 1999).

In summary, it is clear that both learners' and teachers' beliefs play very important roles in the process of language learning and teaching. However, there is little research work which investigates learners' and teachers' beliefs about learning English as a foreign language in the Chinese tertiary context, in particular, very few studies have been conducted to investigate or examine the similarities and differences between learners' and teachers' beliefs in this field. So the researcher has decided to investigate what beliefs about learning English as a foreign language are held by Chinese non-English major university students and teachers of English in addition to a comparison of learners' and teachers' beliefs in order to shed some light on this unexplored area.

## 1.2 Definitions of Key Terms in the Study

- **Beliefs about English Language Learning**

In this specific study, '*beliefs about English language learning*' has been defined as an acceptance of propositions which might be consciously or unconsciously held by university learners and their teachers of English in the process of learning and teaching English as a foreign language at the six universities in the southwest of China. Such propositions are accepted as true by the individuals and supposed to influence learners' and teachers' thoughts and behaviors. The beliefs about English language learning have been classified partly using a partial modification of the categories proposed by Horwitz (1988), Cotterall (1995), Intaraprasert (2004) and the researcher-designed part. The items of beliefs cover the following aspects:

- 1) The difficulty of language learning;
- 2) Foreign language aptitude;
- 3) The nature of language learning;
- 4) Strategy use;
- 5) Motivation and expectations;
- 6) The role of the teacher and feedback;
- 7) The role of media utilization in EFL; and
- 8) Learners' independence.

- **Language Learning and Teaching**

In this particular study, '*language learning and teaching*' refers to English as foreign language learning (EFL) and English as foreign language teaching (EFT) at the university level in China. It is different from first language learning and teaching, such as Chinese language learning by Chinese students or Chinese language teaching by Chinese teachers.

- **Language Learners**

In this study, '*language learners*' were non-English major university students who were studying English as a foreign language at the six universities in the southwest of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the academic year 2007. The six universities are located in Guizhou, Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces. The students were first-year (Grade 1 or Academic Year 2006) and second-year (Grade 2 or Academic Year 2005) non-English major students. To consider the students' level of English proficiency, students were classified as having High, Medium or Low levels of language proficiency based on their performances in the English Test in Nation-



Wide Standardized Matriculation Test (NSMT, See Section 1.4.2) or College English Test (CET-Band 4, See Section 1.4.4).

- **Successful and Unsuccessful Language Learners**

*‘Successful language learners’* were generally those students who performed well in the English exams such as the Nation-Wide Standardized Matriculation Test (NSMT) or College English Test Band-4 (CET Band-4). On the contrary, those students who did not perform well were called *‘unsuccessful language learners.’* The criteria were based on the percentage of the examination scores. Detailed descriptions can be seen in Section 3.4.1.

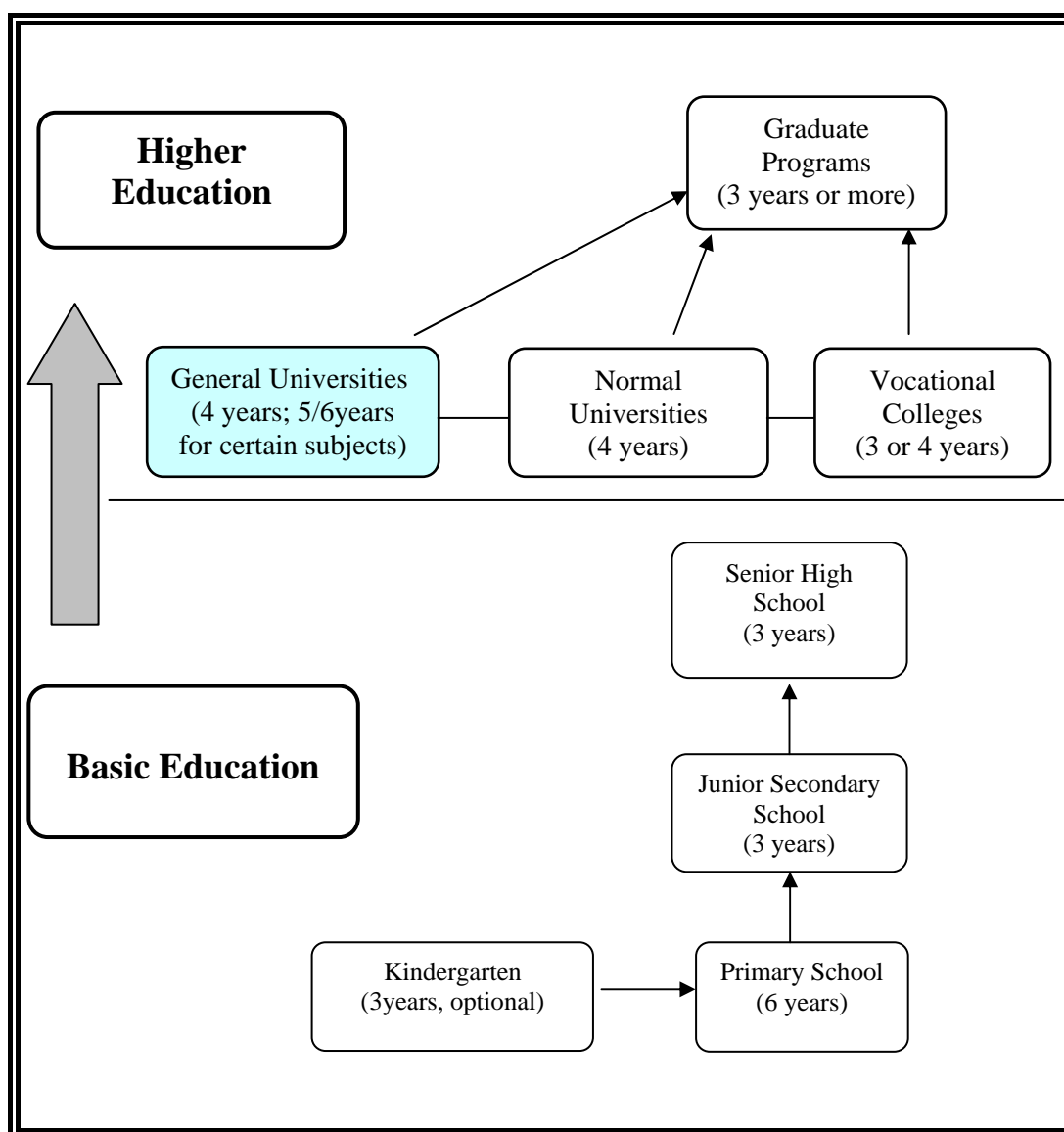
- **Language Teachers**

*‘Language teachers’* were non-native English teachers who were teaching English as a foreign language at the six universities in the southwest of the Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC) in the academic year 2007. These teachers were categorized into ‘least’, ‘more’ and ‘most’ experienced teachers according to their years of teaching experience. Detailed description can be seen in Section 3.4.2.

### **1.3 An Overall Picture of the Education in China**

The People’s Republic of China is a country of more than nine million and six hundred thousand square kilometers in size, with a population of over 1.3 billion. It administers 33 province-level divisions, including 22 provinces, five autonomous regions, four municipalities, and two special administrative regions (China Statistical Yearbook, 2005). Chinese civilization dates back 5000 years. The past thirty years have witnessed China emergence as one of the fastest growing countries in the world.

In China, the education system is composed of 4 components, i.e. basic education, occupational / polytechnic education, higher education and adult education. In this study, the researcher describes basic and higher education in details. The main stages of basic education and higher education in China are shown in Figure 1.1 as follows.



Reference resource: Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2008).

**Figure 1.1** Main Stages of Basic and Higher Education in the People's Republic of China

Basic education comprises pre-school education (kindergarten 3 years, not compulsory), primary (6 years), junior secondary (3 years) and senior high (3 years) schooling. In 1986, the National People's Congress of China promulgated the 'Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China', thus placing basic education in the country on a firm legal basis. The Compulsory Education Law stipulates that each child have at least nine years of formal education which starts from primary level. Basic education in China has achieved great progress since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Moreover, since the issuing of the Compulsory Education Law of the PRC in 1986, governments at all levels have actively promoted nine-year compulsory education, and with remarkable results.

Higher education at the undergraduate level includes two-and three-year junior colleges, and universities offering programs in both academic and vocational subjects. Many colleges and universities also offer graduate programs leading to the master's or Ph.D. degree. Common higher education comprises junior college, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs. Junior college programs usually last 2~3 years; bachelor's program 4 years (medical and some engineering and technical programs, 5 years); master's program 2~3 years; and doctoral program 3 years. Higher education in China has been well developed. China now has more than 1,700 standard institutions of higher education with nearly 6 million enrollments in total every year, and about 6 percent of them are key institutions which are named as Project 211 Institutions (Fuzheng, 2008). Project 211 is a project of 100 (as of 2007) key universities and colleges in the 21st century initiated in 1995 by the Chinese Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (from Wikipedia). The figure of 21 and 1 within 211 are from the abbreviation of the 21st century and approximate 100

universities respectively (from Wikipedia). These universities are normally equipped with highly qualified teachers, more library books, better lab equipments, more financial funds from the government than the ordinary ones. In addition, high school students are strictly selected and required a higher performance in Nation-Wide Standardized Matriculation Test (NSMT) to be allowed to register in the universities of Project 211. In this specific research, three universities are members of Project 211, and the other three are regular higher education universities.

#### **1.4 English Language Learning and Teaching in the Chinese Context**

Since its door was opened to the outside world in the early 1980s, China has seen an explosion in the demand for English. A great number of competent users of English in a whole range of professions, businesses, workplaces and enterprises have been seen by the authorities as a key element in the drive to modernization (Xu, 1990). Social, economic and political forces are important factors in the massive expansion of English teaching (Hildebrandt and Liu, 1991). At present, China needs thousands of people with a working command of English in a variety of foreign-joint factories and companies, or some government departments. Since English is the leading international language for communication, business, and technology, learning and teaching of English as a foreign language in China has become very important nowadays.

To meet all the different needs of the community, English has become a compulsory subject in the primary, secondary and tertiary stages in China. The number of teaching hours at school varies between 2 and 4 hours per week, depending on the school's requirements. In some developed cities, pupils of Grade 3 in the

primary school start to learn English, and some children even begin their English learning in the kindergarten. There are more learners and teachers of English as a foreign language in China than in any other non-native speaking countries (Cortazzi, 1996). A Chinese student who has a good level of English is likely to have a better chance to enter and graduate from university, to obtain a better job, to read technical materials, and to study abroad (Zhou and Chen, 1991). English has gradually increased its popularity among Chinese students ranging from middle schools to universities. Normally, most Chinese university students have studied English for about 6 years in their middle and high school stages before they start their tertiary education.

#### **1.4.1 English Language at the Basic Education Level**

English language is one of the compulsory subjects from the stage of basic education to higher education.

In China, the academic year of most schools is normally divided into two semesters. The first semester of one academic year starts in early September which lasts for 20 weeks (including examination week), and is then followed by a one-month winter holiday. The second semester starts in March, and ends by the middle of July. Then, a summer holiday follows, which normally lasts for more than one month. Generally, from Monday to Friday, morning classes start at 8:00 o'clock (or half an hour earlier in some schools) and end at 12:00 o'clock, then classes start at 14:30 and end about 17:30 in the afternoon. However, some schools set their own class timetable according to the local situation. In particular, schools in some rural areas might make their school timetable more convenient for the local students.

Basically, most primary schools open English course for students in Grade 1 according to the requirements of the Ministry of Education in China (English Curriculum for Primary Schools, 2007). In some areas, primary students start to learn English from Grade 4 or 5. In some remote areas, students have to start learning English after they enter lower secondary school because of the lack of qualified English teachers. Some schools with adequate English teachers open English courses from the first grade at the primary level. In some developed areas, some kindergartens open English courses for children, or even some kindergartens have bilingual languages. It is reported that about 70% of primary schools in the urban areas and 30% of primary schools in the rural areas have opened English courses for their Grade 3 students in China at present.

At the primary school level, the objectives of teaching English is to train students in the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing through active class activities in addition to learning a certain number of vocabulary items and basic grammar rules. Listening and speaking are emphasized. One of the important teaching objectives is to stimulate students' interest in English language learning at this level.

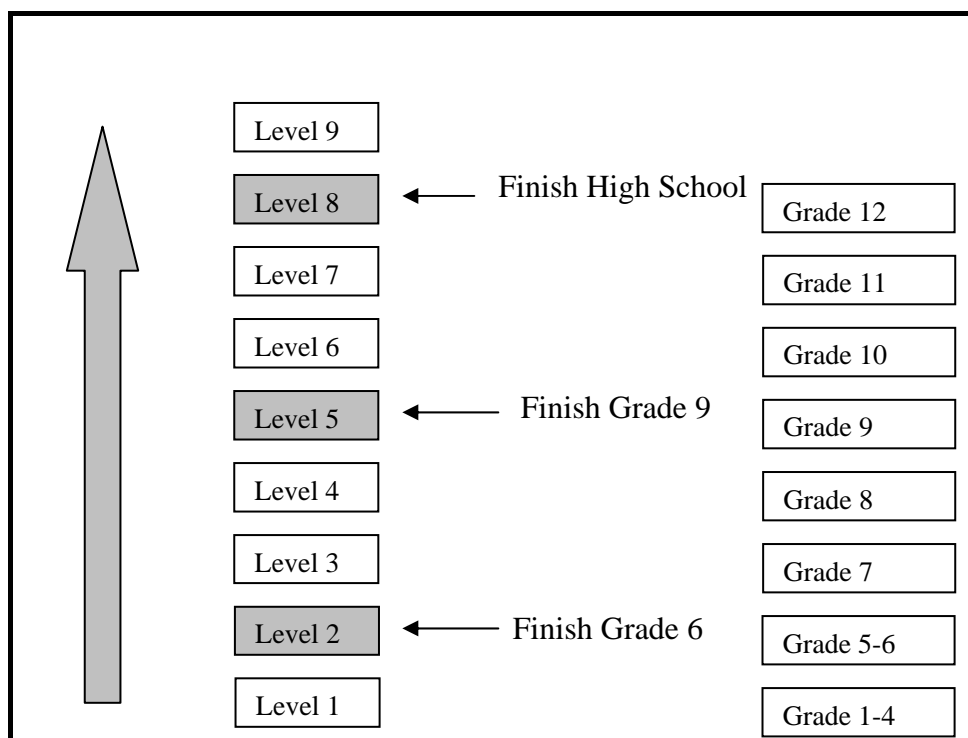
Concerning the class time at school, at the lower primary school level (Grade 1~2), English is taught for five 20- minute periods a week. Till the middle (Grade 3~4) and higher (Grade 5~6) primary school levels, every period lasts 40 minutes, four periods a week. After the junior middle school, every period normally lasts 50 minutes. Details can be seen in Table 1.1 below.

**Table 1.1** English Learning Periods at the Basic Education Level

School Level	Learning Level	Learning Periods (p.)/week
Primary School	Grade 1 and 2	5 sp. $\times$ 70 weeks=175 periods
	Grade 3 and 4	4 p. $\times$ 70 weeks=280 periods
	Grade 5 and 6	4 p. $\times$ 70 weeks=280 periods
	Total: 735 periods (one period=40 minutes)	
Junior Middle School	Grade 7 and 8	4 p. $\times$ 70 weeks=280 periods
	Grade 9	4 p. $\times$ 35 weeks=140 periods
	Total: 420 periods (one period=50 minutes)	
Senior High School	Grade 10	4.5. $\times$ 35 weeks=157.5 periods
	Grade 11	4 p. $\times$ 35 weeks=140 periods
	Grade 12	5 p. $\times$ 26weeks=130 periods
	Total: 427.5 periods (one period=50 minutes)	

Notes: 'sp.' stands for a short period of learning which lasts 20 minutes.

At the beginning of this century, two standards of English courses were set up for junior middle and senior high school students, respectively. One is 'Standards of English Course for Junior Secondary School of Compulsory Education' (draft) 《全日制义务教育普通高中英语课程标准（实验稿）》（简称义教普高课标），and the other is 'Standards of English Course for Senior High School' (draft) 《普通高中英语课程标准（实验稿）》（简称普高课标）。In the two drafts of standards, education for all-around development is emphasized as the first important element in English teaching rather than only learning language skills. Another important reform in both of the standards is that English teaching is considered as an entire system from compulsory education (primary to junior middle school) to senior high school consistently. The nine levels of English teaching at the basic education level are shown in Figure 1.2 as follows.



*Reference resource: Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2008)*

**Figure 1.2** Levels of English Courses at the Basic Education Level

From Figure 1.2 above, five levels (Levels 1-5) are designed for the stage of compulsory education (primary and junior middle school), and linked to four levels (Level 6-9) in the senior high school. Students in the primary school are required to attend Level 2 when they graduate. Junior middle school students should attend Level 5 when they finish their compulsory education. Students in senior high school are required to attend Level 8 when they graduate. Level 9 is for those students who have more potential and more interest in English. In addition, primary school students are required to begin learning English in Grade 3 or earlier depending on the school's capacity. According to the new curriculum, the ultimate goal of English teaching is to develop students' comprehensive language ability, which includes students' language skills, language knowledge, emotional attitudes, learning strategies and their cultural



consciousness. In other words, the main purpose of the two standards is to develop students' comprehensive ability to communicate in English language.

Regarding English textbooks, three 'generations' are vividly described to match the three periods mentioned previously. The first generation of English textbooks for primary and junior secondary school students was written by a group of experts authorized by the Chinese Ministry of Education in the early 1980s, which were used all over the country. These textbooks were used from 1978 to 1992. The second generation of textbooks, especially textbooks for junior secondary school students, appeared in five different editions under one curriculum by the Chinese Ministry of Education. Two editions of English textbooks for senior high school students were published and selected for use in different schools. Meanwhile, textbooks for primary school students were also written with the cooperation of foreign language organizations. Nowadays, there are many kinds of textbooks for primary, junior secondary, and senior high school students. According to Daoyi's (2008, p. 5) report, 'Besides textbooks published by Shanghai Press, there are about 30 editions of textbooks for primary school, 10 editions of textbooks for junior secondary school, and 7 textbooks for senior high school students all over the country' (*Note: the author's translation*). In addition, all of these textbooks are well designed, of high quality, colorful and printed attractively well.

#### **1.4.2 Nation-Wide Standardized Matriculation Test (NSMT)**

The Nation-Wide Standardized Matriculation Test (NSMT) is for students who graduate from a high school before they can register to study at the university. Whatever type of higher education students wish to undertake, they must first take the NSMT.

Candidates can take the examination in either one of the two categories, humanities or sciences/engineering. They apply for the institutions and departments they wish to enter in order of preference. University and College admission is administered nationally and by admissions committees at provincial level, under the Chinese Ministry of Education. Enrolment is mainly determined by candidate's examination results. Brief investigation into students' social behavior and moral character is conducted before students are admitted. In some faculties, specific physical requirements must be met.

NSMT was initiated in 1977 and is now carried out on the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> of July all over the country every year. It has been reformed greatly in the recent years. In 2003, the test date was changed from the 6<sup>th</sup>. to 8<sup>th</sup>. of July to 6<sup>th</sup>. to 8<sup>th</sup>. of June. In addition, some provinces were allowed by the Chinese Ministry of Education to design provincial test papers of their own. Consequently, some provinces adopt different grading standards from that of NSMT. However, all of the tests must be standardized according to the curriculum of each subject administered by Chinese Ministry of Education.

NSMT covers the main subjects in the education system at secondary level in China. The compulsory test subjects include Chinese, mathematics and English for all the test-takers. Apart from the three compulsory test subjects, the test-takers must take some subjects related to their choice of majors as elected tests. Normally, most senior high school students take the test after they graduate in order to choose a university they wish to go to. As a result, the universities in China (including two special administrative regions: Hong Kong and Macao) can select students to register in their universities based on the students' performance in NSMT. Generally, the students can

be categorized into three main groups: Science-oriented, Social-Science-oriented and Arts-oriented major students. In this study, the participants were Science-oriented and non-Science-oriented major students. All of these students were non-English majors.

### **1.4.3 English Language at the Higher Education Level**

Higher education in China has played an important role in the economic construction, scientific progress and social development in China. Higher education is only for those students who have passed the examinations at all levels. First of all, students must pass the entrance examination for senior high schools or middle-level technical schools. After two, three or four years, they have to go through the Nation-Wide Standardized Matriculation Test (NSMT) for admission to universities.

As non-English major university students, they are required to study a College English Course as a compulsory subject in the first two years at university. Each year is divided into two semesters of which each semester lasts twenty weeks. The College English Course traditionally offers 3 or 4 hours of classroom English training per week in intensive reading, extensive reading, writing and listening. All courses are taught over 18 weeks each semester with four contact hours per week. English textbooks are written by a committee of experts under the authority of the Chinese Ministry of Education. With regard to English as a foreign language as taught in China, the College English Course remains using teacher-centered and exam-oriented methods. English teaching places a heavy emphasis on linguistic knowledge of English. English language teachers usually follow prescribed syllabi, use ready-made textbooks and adopt a traditional grammar-based methodology. The majority of teachers primarily over-emphasize the linguistic points of English rather than authentic communication in the classroom. As a result, English language teaching has

become ‘time-consuming, and less-effective’ in China (Lanqing, 1996). In reality, many universities link the College English Course to the nation-wide College English Test (CET). English teachers in China have to focus on linguistic knowledge from textbooks authorized by the Chinese Ministry of Education in order to meet the examination needs of many students. However, the communicative language teaching method has been widely admitted as an effective way to make language learning successful.

#### **1.4.4 College English Test (CET) Bands-4 and 6**

In the early 1990s, the National College English Testing Committee on behalf of the Chinese Ministry of Education administered a unified, single course-based and standardized test named the “National College English Test” (CET) which includes two levels: College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) and College English Test Band 6 (CET-6). The test is held twice a year, normally soon before the end of each semester, that is, late in January and June every year. The CET is a ‘large-scale standardized test with a view to: 1) promoting the implementation of the National College English Teaching Syllabus, and 2) measuring objectively and accurately the real English ability of college English students in China’ (Yang, 2000, p.197). According to the syllabus administered by the Chinese Ministry of Education (The College English Syllabus, 1999), students of College English should at least pass CET Band-4 after they finish their College English Course within the first two years at university. If a student fails the test, he/she can have more chances to pass the exam within the remaining two years in the university even without further courses. CET Band-4 is considered as compulsory part of the bachelor’s degree by most of the universities in China. Students are generally required to pass CET Band-4 at a

minimum level of 60% in order to qualify for their bachelor's degree. Successful Band-4 students can extend their English studies with Band-6 advanced courses in a similar manner as CET Band-4. Many universities in China link the College English Course to the national College English Test (CET).

A reform administered by the CET Committee under the Chinese Ministry of Education was carried out during 2006 and 2007. The most obvious difference was that grading scores were changed from 100 to 710 as full marks. The reformed test was started throughout China from January, 2007 according to the official announcement of the CET-4 and 6 Committee in 2006. As a result, some Year 2 students were able to give their grade of CET-Band 4 based on the new system of test grading. Based on the students' results from CET-Band 4, students are divided into three levels according to the percentage scores: below 425 (60%) which is Low; between 425-567 scores (60%-80%) which is Medium; and above 567 scores (80%) which is High.

However, many university students in the southwest of China cannot pass CET-Band 4 after they finish their College English Course within two years. If CET Band-4 can be regarded as one of the measurements to evaluate university students' success in learning English language to some extent, the present situation shows that many university non-English major students are unsuccessful as English language learners.

### **1.5 Reasons for Undertaking the Study**

As an English language teacher, the researcher has been teaching the College English Course to non-English major university students for many years. The researcher often finds that a lot of students feel it is difficult for them to become successful in their English language learning although they spend a lot of time on it in order to improve their language performance. What causes such a situation? What reasons are there for students to have difficulty in learning English? What do students and teachers think about learning English? And do students think the same as their teachers do? Are there any misconceptions held by the students? As a result of these concerns, the researcher feels that it is appropriate to investigate what happens in this situation. There may be some unexplored reasons which present obstacles for students trying to achieve their goals. Teachers might also adjust the way they normally teach in order to help their students to become more successful in learning English. This is the first reason which led the researcher to choose this topic for her research. Of course, in order for a language learner to be successful in his/her language learning or not, many factors must be taken into consideration, such as beliefs, motivation, aptitude, personality, intelligence, and learner's preferences. Each factor has its own effect on language learning success. To a certain extent, language learning is influenced by cognitive factors, such as intelligence, attitude, age and motivation as well as beliefs (Victori and Lockhart, 1995). Having taken all of these factors into account, the researcher believes that learners' beliefs come first when a learner aims to be successful in language learning since the beliefs that learners develop and hold to be true about their capabilities (Richardson, 1996) and the skills they possess have an immediate impact on their learning behavior (Wen and Johnson, 1997). In other words,

understanding learners' beliefs about language learning is essential to understanding learners' attitudes toward language and language learning and their strategy use (Horwitz, 1999). An understanding of learner beliefs can, therefore, enhance the learning process.

Secondly, as language learning is an extremely complex process, which is further complicated by the learners' individual differences and their different social, political and cultural backgrounds (Cheng, 2000), it is also important to look at the learners' beliefs within their certain cultural context. In the fields of applied linguistics and second language acquisition, researchers have been long on assumptions and short on rigorous empirical research when it comes to Asian learners (Young, 1987; Gu, 2002). Asian learners of English have been reported as reticent and passive learners. They are described as over-dependent on their teachers, reluctant to participate in classroom discourse, unwilling to give responses in class, inclined to rote learning and unable to engage in independent learning (Jones, 1999; Bradock et al., 1995; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Tsui, 1996). These allegations are often associated with the Confucian cultural heritage which values teacher authority (Huang and van Naerssen, 1987; Song, 1995; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). In a more recent study, Cheng (2000) has concluded that sweeping generalizations about Asian learners are largely based on anecdotal evidence.

It is widely accepted that language learning is fully situated within a given cultural context (Ellis, 1994). As a result, different cultural backgrounds are one of the important factors which shape beliefs about foreign language learning (Horwitz, 1987a). While research on learners' beliefs has covered some important areas in the second /foreign language learning in diverse contexts, however, little research has

been conducted to explore learners' and teachers' beliefs about English as foreign language learning at the tertiary level in the Chinese context so far. Therefore, it is important to explore precisely what beliefs are held by Chinese university non-English major students and their teachers of English in order to fill this gap. Hopefully, the present research results may shed some light on one aspect of learners' and teachers' beliefs about English as a foreign language in the Chinese context, which is quite different from English as second language learning in other geographical areas.

Moreover, it is important to explore the similarities and differences between learners' and teachers' beliefs in order to reduce any gap between them (Horwitz, 1985; Wenden, 1986a; Kern, 1995; Peacock, 1999). Kagan (1992) also affirms that the study of beliefs is critical to educational practice since beliefs may be 'the clearest measure of a teacher's professional growth' (p. 85). However, the lack of attention given to learners' and teachers' beliefs, in particular, in the Chinese context, may be due to, as Pajares (1992) explains, to the fact that the construct does not lend itself easily to empirical investigation and it is difficult to define. In order to fill the research gap, one of the purposes of this research is to explore the similarities and differences in beliefs about English language learning between students and teachers in the Chinese tertiary context. This is the third reason for carrying out this study. Determining beliefs can help learners and teachers 'to construct a shared understanding of the language learning process and the part they play in it' (Cotterall, 1995, p.203). Also, the outcomes of the study may be useful in making teachers aware of 'different learner types that need to be accommodated' (Cotterall, 1999, p. 493). Researching the similarities and differences between learners' and teachers' beliefs about English as foreign language learning and teaching in the Chinese context will



eventually help Chinese learners and teachers to better understand the relationship between effective language learning and teaching. In addition, this study will be able to create a better English language learning environment for students at the universities in the southwest of China, and it may be possible to generalize the result for language learning and teaching in similar contexts.

However, as Wenden (2001) argues, foreign and second language learners' beliefs have been neglected. Remarkably, few studies have investigated the relationship between learners' and teachers' beliefs about English as a foreign language in the non-native speaking context. As a consequence, more research work is needed in order to shed some light how to help learners become more successful in their English language learning in such a context.

In sum, the results of this study should be able to shed some light on teachers' instructional practice in the classroom, on learners' learning and also provide guidance on syllabus and materials revision in the future. Hopefully, a way can be found to narrow the gap in beliefs between learners and their teachers.

## **1.6 Location of Six Universities in the Study**

Southwest China (Chinese: 西南; pinyin: *Xīnán*) is a region of China defined by governmental bureaus that includes the municipality of Chongqing; provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou; and the Tibet Autonomous Region. In the study, three provinces were selected for the collection of the research data. In fact, three provinces of southwest China are traditionally described as one area which covers more than one million square kilometers (40 thousand square miles) with a population size of more than one hundred and seventy million (China Statistical Yearbook, 2005). The

provinces serve an important cultural role in China. Most dialects in the three provinces as well as in Chongqing Municipality belong to the southwestern subdivision of the Mandarin (Standard Chinese) group. Chuan Hua (Sichuan dialect) is spoken by the majority of residents in this area. In fact, southwest China is relatively underdeveloped economically compared to those provinces in the southeast or east of China. Consequently, for collecting similar and useful samples from the population, six universities located in the three provinces were selected to participate in this specific investigation. Among the six universities, three are key (Project 211, See Section 1.3) and the rest are regular universities, respectively. Both students and teachers' data were collected in the second semester of the academic year from April to June 2007. One thousand two hundred and fourteen non-English major students and two hundred and seven teachers of English from six universities in the southwest of China participated in the study.

### **1.7 Research Objectives**

The main impetus for the present study on learners and teachers' beliefs about learning English as a foreign language comes from the lack of discussion on beliefs in the field of EFL in the Chinese tertiary context. Beliefs are viewed as an important construct to be investigated in relation to their subsequent impact on learners' and teachers' behavior. The general objectives of this study aim to explore: what percentages of beliefs about EFL are held by Chinese university students and their teachers; the association of students' beliefs with their gender, fields of study and level of language proficiency; the association of teachers' beliefs with their gender, academic degrees and years of teaching experience; and what similarities and

differences of beliefs exist between students and teachers. Specifically, the objectives of the research are to explore:

- 1) beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English in the southwest of China in general;
- 2) variation patterns in learners' beliefs about learning English associated with their gender, field of study and level of language proficiency;
- 3) variation patterns in teachers' beliefs about learning English associated with their gender, academic degree and their years of teaching experience; and
- 4) the existence of similarities and differences of beliefs held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English.

### **1.8 The Expected Outcomes**

The expected outcomes will correspond to the research questions (See Section 3.2, p.70). The results of this research may shed some light on: firstly, learners' and teachers' beliefs about EFL; secondly, the association of learners' beliefs about learning English with their gender, field of study and their level of language proficiency; thirdly, the association of teachers' beliefs about learning English with their gender, academic degrees and their teaching experience; and lastly, the similarities and differences between learners' and teachers' beliefs.

## 1.9 The Outline of the Thesis

In order to achieve the research objectives, the researcher first conducted the related literature review on learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning and research methods which contribute to the present study. The literature review can be seen in Chapter 2. This chapter overviews beliefs about language learning, which includes definitions, how beliefs are formed, and the main characteristics of beliefs, followed by learners' and teachers' beliefs and recent research work. Finally, a comparison between the learners and teachers' beliefs is conducted.

Chapter 3 discusses some general principles of research design which are employed in the present study. It starts off with the introduction and purpose of the chapter, the research questions, sampling and rationale for choice of subjects, followed by the methods for data collection. Then, it deals with the procedure of data collection. Finally, the analyzing, interpreting and reporting of the data is described.

Chapter 4 deals with the data analysis which includes two parts: the results from students' and teachers' written questionnaires about beliefs, and the results of students' and teachers' semi-structured interviews. In the first part, the quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics. To start with beliefs about learning English reported by 1, 214 Chinese non-English major university students and 207 teachers of English are presented based on the calculation of percentages using the SPSS program, respectively. Then, variations in patterns of beliefs about English language learning held by students and teachers according to variables are described based on the results of chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test analysis. Finally, a comparison of beliefs about English language learning and teaching held by Chinese university students and teachers of English is described. In the second part, the results from the qualitative

data, i.e. 78 students and 15 teachers' semi-structured interviews were analyzed. Content analysis was mainly adopted to analyze the transcriptions. The results of students' and teachers' semi-structured interviews were presented based mainly on 10 guided questions (See Appendices 5 and 6) which were related to the eight categories of beliefs about learning English, respectively.

Chapter 5 presents the research findings of the research in response to the five research questions. A summary of the research findings is presented first, followed by a discussion of the research findings, and the implications arising from the present investigation for learning and teaching English in the Chinese tertiary context. Then, the contributions of the research to the related field is described. Finally, the limitations of the present study and recommendations for the future research are discussed, and it is ended with the conclusion of the present investigation.

### **1.10 Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher gives an introduction to learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning. Then the definitions of the key terms used in the study are defined. The reasons for undertaking the study, the research objectives, and the expected outcomes are also presented. Finally, the outline of the research is explained. The next chapter will mainly focus on the related literature and establish the framework for the present study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical background and explore recent research work on learners' and teachers' beliefs about English language learning which will contribute to the present study. The chapter will begin with an introduction of general beliefs, beliefs about language learning, followed by recent research work in the field of language learning, beliefs in relation to different variables, which focus on learners' beliefs, teachers' beliefs and a comparison between learners' and teachers' beliefs.

#### **2.1 Introduction**

For the past two decades, some researchers have provided anecdotal and empirical evidence that defines, describes, and sets a framework for understanding beliefs which are described as a central construct in every discipline that deals with human behavior and learning (Ajzen, 1988; Sakui and Gaies, 1999).

Recently, the concept of beliefs has been given much attention by teachers and researchers. It is believed that beliefs help individuals to define and understand the world and themselves (Abelson, 1979; Lewis, 1990; White, 1999); beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and play a critical role in defining behavior (Bandura, 1986; Nespor, 1987; Schommer, 1990; Yang, 1999); and beliefs can and should become an important focus of educational inquiry (Pajares, 1992). Several research

studies reveal that preconceived beliefs about language learning have a profound influence on learning behavior (Cotterall, 1995; Yang, 1999), or even determine a learner's attitudes toward language and language learning or his/her motivation, and precondition the learner's success or lack of success (Kuntz, 1996), and on their learning outcomes (Martin and Ramsden, 1987). Similarly, Riley (1996, p. 155) states that beliefs about language and beliefs about language learning 'may directly influence or even determine...(a learner's) attitudes or motivation or behavior when learning the language in question.' Moreover, supportive and positive beliefs help overcome problems and thus sustain motivation, while negative or unrealistic beliefs can lead to an increase in frustration and anxiety (Kern, 1995). Because of the effects of beliefs on language learning, it is important to study learners' beliefs. The main reasons are listed below:

First of all, beliefs are guiding principles for learners' behavior and strong perceptual filters which act as if they were true. Language learning seems to be a more intrinsically ego-involving activity than most other kinds of school learning. The success depends less on materials and techniques but more on what goes on inside the learners' heads (Peacock, 2001). Secondly, it is important that the learners themselves be given opportunities to think about their learning process so that they can become aware of their own beliefs and how these beliefs can influence what they do to learn (Wenden, 1986a). Finally, if learners hold erroneous beliefs about language learning, this might lead to the deployment of less effective strategies (Horwitz, 1987a). As Cotterall (1995, p. 196) concludes, "...all behavior is governed by beliefs and experience". The beliefs system learners hold or develop help them adapt to new

environments, to define what is expected of them and to act in accordance with those understandings.

In the language learning environment, "...investigating learners' beliefs about language study is a process of (self-) discovery which involves the learners themselves as much as the teachers" (Tudor, 1996, p. 52). It is very important to make both the teachers and learners aware of their beliefs about language teaching and learning because the beliefs held by teachers and learners always "play a central role in learning experience and achievement" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 494).

In the classroom context, teachers' beliefs have a significant impact on their classroom practices (Wenden, 1986a; Tudor, 1996). This specific environment is a social setting with its own conventions, norms, and behavior (Breen, 1985). These factors derive in part from the deeper and less accessible social and psychological dimensions of the teacher-learner relationship (Tudor, 1996). On the one hand, the classroom practices that teachers engage in are particularly important because the practices ultimately affect the learners' opportunity to learn, and the beliefs that learners bring with them to the learning situation have been recognized as another significant contributory factor in the learning process and ultimate success on the other (Benson, 2001; Breen, 2001). For teachers, the insights gained, both in a pre-course needs analysis and during an instructional program itself, by investigating learners' beliefs about language learning can lead to more effective instructional planning and implementation. For learners, the process of exploring beliefs can in the best of circumstances lead to more effective behavior in language learning as well as greater self-knowledge and autonomy (Horwitz, 1987a; Victori and Lockhart, 1995; Wenden, 1998).



Since language learning requires the active involvement of learners (Littlewood, 1996; Richards, Gallo and Renandya, 2001), learners need to learn how to learn, and teachers need to learn how to facilitate the process (Oxford, 1990). At the same time, it is also important for the teachers to know their students' beliefs about language learning in order to make a 'perfect' learning environment. The over-arching goal of all teaching is to help learners act more independently within a chosen range of domains, such as in the context of language learning, the ultimate goal of teaching is to help learners become more effective and take more responsibility for their own learning.

## **2.2 Beliefs about Language Learning**

### **2.2.1 Definitions of Beliefs**

Beliefs are often mistaken for attitudes, values, judgments, opinions and ideologies (Pajares, 1992). Pajares explains that confusion with the concept centers around the distinction between knowledge and beliefs. Nespor (1987) notes that a further distinction between beliefs and knowledge is that: while knowledge often changes, beliefs are 'static'. Currently there is not a standard definition for what the term 'beliefs' means. In an attempt to clarify the meaning of 'beliefs', some definitions have been collected from some research studies as follows:

Regarding the definitions from a psychological perspective, Richardson (1996) views beliefs as individual understandings, premises, or propositions held about the world that are felt to be true. Similarly, Harvey (1986, p. 660) construes beliefs as "a set of conceptual representations which signify to its holder a reality or given state of

affairs of sufficient validity, truth or trustworthiness to warrant reliance upon it as a guide to personal thought and action”.

In the FL/SL literature, the term ‘metacognitive knowledge,’ which refers to knowledge about learning, is often used to indicate learners’ beliefs (Wenden, 1998; Horwitz, 1987a). However, beliefs are distinct from metacognitive knowledge. The former is value-related and tends to be held more tenaciously (Alexander and Dochy, 1995) while the latter is viewed as factual, objective information, acquired through formal learning. Normally, beliefs are viewed as individual subjective understanding, idiosyncratic truths, which are often value related and characterized by a commitment not present in knowledge. Flavell (1987) suggests that beliefs about learning are a component of metacognitive knowledge which consists of what learners know about learning, and to the extent a learner has made distinctions.

Language learning beliefs are also defined as learners’ “...general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing language learning and about the nature of language learning and teaching” (Victori and Lockhart 1995, p. 224).

In order to distinguish the three terms ‘knowledge’, ‘assumption’ and ‘beliefs’, Woods (1996, p. 195) defines them as follows:

“We use the term ‘knowledge’ to refer to things we ‘know’—conventionally accepted, it generally means that it has been demonstrated or is demonstrable. ...the term ‘assumption’ normally refers to the (temporary) acceptance of a fact (state, process or relationship ) which we cannot say we know, and which has not been demonstrated, but which we are taking as true for the time being. ....assumptions may also refer to working assumptions’: ‘facts’ that we may know in a large context are not true, but which we will take as being true for the purpose of carrying out an activity..... beliefs refer to an acceptance of a proposition for which there is no conventional knowledge, one that is not demonstrable, and for which there is accepted disagreement”.

Pajares (1992) expresses the need to distinguish between beliefs and knowledge and explains that knowledge is based on objective fact, while beliefs are based on evaluation and judgment.

To sum up, beliefs are subjective ideas about what human beings think is true about the world and about themselves, and are formed through their interactions with the world. These beliefs might be correct or incorrect according to the holder's attitudes toward the world. As beliefs influence people's behavior in their lives, it is important to trace back to where these beliefs are from and how they are formed. The subsequent sections will give an overall picture about this issue.

### **2.2.2 How Beliefs are Formed?**

How can beliefs be captured? It is not a simple question to ask what learners believe. In his study, Peacock (1999) set a question in his interview to ask the participants 'from where did you get your beliefs about language learning?' He found that it was an effective question since many learners did not seem to know the origin of their beliefs.

In the social and cognitive psychological literature, it is still debated to what extent beliefs are social and cultural but also mental and individual. In a prominent social and cultural psychology view, beliefs are understandings which arise from an individual's life history and educational experience and which the basis is for value judgments (Dole and Sinatra, 1994) and beliefs are constructed in a social context. In the cognitive psychology, some scholars consider beliefs as well-organized schemata and suggest that the information of beliefs is an individual autonomous act and each belief bears the mark of the individual. Language learners are seen as active and

responsible participants who learn from their own experience, make their own choices and respond to events as the learners perceive them (Williams and Burden, 1997).

Brown and McGannon (1998) explored the beliefs about second language learning of 35 trainee teachers at Monash University, Australia. They were taking a Graduate Diploma in Education; some of the trainee teachers had some previous language teaching experience. The purpose of their study was to see how strong the influence of Lortie's (1975) 'apprenticeship of observation', i.e. their experience as language learners, was on their beliefs about language learning. The results of the study showed that trainee teachers had many incorrect beliefs about how foreign languages are learned. The researchers concluded that it is important for both trainers and trainees to be aware of the strong influence of the 'apprenticeship of observation' on trainee beliefs.

Some researchers in this field (e.g. Horwitz, 1985; Roberts, 1992; Kern, 1995) propose that learners' beliefs about language learning originate from their second language learning experience, particularly in grammar translation and in the audio-lingual classroom in secondary school. These researchers also suggest that teachers of a second/foreign language probably acquire their beliefs from either their methodology courses or their teaching.

In his longitudinal study about the Chinese learners in Hong Kong, Peacock (2001) proposes that the Chinese learners might have acquired their beliefs in secondary school where rote learning and an emphasis on grammar were frequently used as strategies for learning. This viewpoint is similar to that of some other researchers such as Richards and Lockhart (1994), and Ho and Crookall (1995).

Johnson (1996) conducted a qualitative study of the pre-service beliefs of four English as second-language teachers. Beliefs were inferred from teachers' narratives, intentions and instructional practices. One of the most important implications of the findings of this study was that the teachers' beliefs were largely based on images from their formal language learning experience and that these beliefs may have been responsible for the teachers' ineffectual teaching practices.

So far, few empirical studies have focused on to what extent the beliefs held by learners and their teachers in the Chinese tertiary context, and in particular, what similarities and differences of beliefs exist between them. In order to investigate what sorts of beliefs are held by learners and teachers in this context, it will be helpful to discuss briefly the characteristics of beliefs.

### **2.2.3 Characteristics of Beliefs**

According to Pajares (1992), beliefs are related to knowledge, but are more affective, more idiosyncratic, and more evaluative. They are formed in one's early life and they are self-perpetuating and are not easily changed. Importantly, in the same study, Pajares (1992, p. 314) states that 'beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do –fundamental prerequisites that educational researchers have seldom followed'. In reality, beliefs have also proved difficult to identify and classify in any systematic way (Benson and Lor, 1999).

One of the obvious characteristics of learners' beliefs, as Kern (1995, p. 76) describes, that they are 'quite well entrenched' and do not automatically change when learners are merely exposed to new methods. It has long been acknowledged that some beliefs are more important than others to individuals, and the more important the

belief is, the more difficult it is to change. However, if one central belief is changed, other beliefs within this person's system of beliefs are affected (Rokeach, 1968). Another characteristic is described by Flavell (1987) which is that beliefs are a part of self-knowledge, which includes all that individuals understand about themselves as learners and thinkers, including their learning goals and needs.

In cognitive psychology, beliefs about language learning are viewed as a component of metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1998, 1999). According to Wenden (1999), metacognitive knowledge is made up of 'a system of related ideas, some accepted without question and other validated by their experience' (p. 436). She views beliefs as separate from metacognitive knowledge because beliefs are 'value-related and tend to be held more tenaciously'. In other words, beliefs are not easily changed in one's life unless some of them are affected by certain events.

In his research, Biggs (1992) suggests that beliefs are always contextualized in relation to some learning tasks or situations. The beliefs are not likely to be held by the learners under all circumstances. Rather, they are likely to be held to cope with specific contents and contexts of learning. Similarly, Benson and Lor (1999, p. 464) state that 'conceptions and beliefs are understood as relational and responsive to context'. In other words, beliefs are made manifest in approaches to learning, which can also be analyzed in terms of a quantitative/qualitative distinction. In addition, beliefs have also been said to 'act as very strong filters of reality' (Arnold, 1999, p. 256).

Based on the characteristics of beliefs mentioned above, some of the important characteristics of beliefs can be summarized as follows:

- beliefs are formed in one's early life;

- they are not easily changed;
- they influence belief-holders' behavior in language learning and teaching; and
- beliefs influence both perception and behavior and they need not be consistent.

To sum up, in this section, three parts of the literature review related to the present study are involved: definitions of beliefs, how beliefs are formed and the characteristics of beliefs. Beliefs are described as subjective ideas about what human beings think is true about the world and about themselves, and are formed through their interactions with the world. Beliefs are characterized by being formed in one's early life, they are not easily changed, they influence the belief-holder's perceptions and behavior, and need not be consistent. In the following section, the focus will be shifted to learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning and recent research work.

### **2.3 Learners' and Teachers' Beliefs and Recent Research Work**

Recently, there has been an increased focus on learners' beliefs about the nature of language and language learning in an attempt to account for individual differences in language learning (Cotterall, 1995; Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Wenden, 1986a). Learners' beliefs about language learning have become one of the most heatedly discussed topics in the field of second language learning (SLL) and foreign language learning (FLL).

In the past decades, the majority of research studies in second and foreign language development both in natural and formal settings have made us realize that language learning is primarily a learner- and learning-oriented activity (Brown, 2001; Nunan, 1988; Wright, 1990). In other words, learners should take responsibility for

their learning, teachers should equip learners with strategies for the task of learning, and teaching should meet learners' needs (Richards, Gallo and Renandya, 2001). In the classroom context, the concept of learner-centered teaching requires classes to be motivating, interesting, relevant, secure, and fun. Similarly, Peacock (1999) suggests that the teacher should encourage an informal classroom atmosphere, praise students, give students care and support, have variety in lessons and identify with students' aspirations and needs. Consequently, the focus of language teaching has been shifted from being teacher-centered to being learner-centered.

With respect to learners, they should have, at some level of consciousness, a philosophy of how language is learned. This philosophy '...guides their attitudes toward their learning, the approach they take in language learning situations, which in turn is manifested by observable or unobservable strategies used in learning and communication' (Abraham and Vann, 1987, p. 96).

In this section, the focus is on recent research work related to learners' and teachers' beliefs. Concerning learners' beliefs, eight aspects will be discussed. They are beliefs about a language learning inventory (BALLI), a factor analysis of learners' beliefs, cultural traits of learners' beliefs, learners' beliefs about strategy use, learners' beliefs about autonomous learning, learners' beliefs about motivation and learners' beliefs about the role of media utilization in language learning. With respect to the section on teachers' beliefs, the importance of teachers' beliefs in language teaching, teacher education, and teachers' beliefs and the process of change, will be dealt with, respectively. Finally, it will end with a comparison between learners' and teachers' beliefs.



### 2.3.1 Learners' Beliefs

In order to investigate learners' beliefs, a 34-item Likert-scale BALLI, 'Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory' by Horwitz (1985) was used to investigate 32 intermediate level ESL students from 12 different ethnic backgrounds, studying in an intensive English program, at the University of Texas, in the USA. The instrument was a questionnaire asking respondents to rate their agreement to 34 statements about their beliefs on a Likert (1932) scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). BALLI was used to determine the participants' beliefs concerning five areas of language learning:

- difficulty of language learning;
- foreign language aptitude;
- nature of language learning;
- learning and communication strategies, and
- motivation and expectations

Horwitz (1988) proposes that the gaps between teacher's and learners' beliefs probably result in 'negative (language learning) outcomes' for learners. She also suggests that a gap between teachers' and learners' beliefs would lead to reduced learners' confidence and satisfaction with the class and to an unwillingness to participate in 'communicative' activities (p. 290). She concludes that the 'teacher will likely encounter...many unanticipated beliefs, some enabling and some truly detrimental to successful language learning...foreign language teachers can ill afford to ignore those beliefs if they expect their students to benefit from them' (p. 293). BALLI has been regularly used to test learners' beliefs about language learning in the majority of research studies since then.

Kern (1995) conducted a study using the BALLI with 180 students of French as a second language at the University of Berkeley. His conclusions are similar to those of Horwitz (1988). Additionally, he checked the learners' beliefs at the beginning and the end of one semester in order to see whether the learners' beliefs changed over time or not. Very little change was found over the whole semester. Finally, he concluded that learners' beliefs do not automatically change when learners are merely exposed to new methods, and when those learners' beliefs were 'quite well entrenched' (p. 76).

Mantle-Bromley (1995) used the BALLI to investigate the beliefs of 208 seventh grade students taking first-year French and Spanish in Kansas, in the USA. The results showed that some of the learners' beliefs about language learning differed from commonly held teachers' beliefs. She stressed that teachers need to have a clear understanding of foreign language learners' beliefs since learners with realistic and informed beliefs were more likely to behave productively in class, work harder outside class, and persist longer with language study (pp. 373-375). Moreover, she suggested that when learners' beliefs do not match their performance, the learners would 'become frustrated with the class and with themselves' (p. 381) and that as a result 'beliefs and expectations may actually prove harmful to their success in the classroom' (p. 383). Some other research works support this view as well (See Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Cotterall, 1995; Littlewood, Liu and Yu, 1996).

### ***2.3.1.1. Factor Analysis of Learners' Beliefs***

Wenden (1986a, 1987a) conducted two major studies on learners' beliefs. From the findings of the first study, Wenden (1986a) suggested that learners have explicit beliefs about how to learn a second language and that these beliefs affect

the way they approach language learning. She suggested that learners' beliefs about language learning influence their approach to learning with respect to the kind of strategies they use, what they attend to, the criteria they use to evaluate the effectiveness of learning activities and of social contexts that give them an opportunity to use or practice the language, and where they concentrate on their use of strategies. In her second study, Wenden (1987a) identified twelve explicit and prescriptive beliefs of learners in advanced level classes. She suggested that learners' beliefs about language learning are consistent with their approaches to learning.

Two other studies covered a large sample in two different contexts. One of them was conducted by Cotterall (1995), in which she examined the beliefs of 139 respondents in New Zealand and reported on a questionnaire study of the language learning beliefs of a mixed nationality group of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) learners. She identified six factors underlying subjects' responses to the questionnaire items (role of the teacher, role of feedback, learner independence, learner confidence in study ability, experience of language learning, and approach to studying). She argued that learners' beliefs reflect their readiness for assuming greater responsibility for their learning. These beliefs about language learning profoundly influence the learners' approach to language learning. Learners need to be aware of the role of cognitive and affective variables in language learning, of how language works and of how strategies influence learning (Cotterall, 1995).

In her further study, Cotterall (1999) suggested that many students reported believing that their success in language learning depends on their own effort. This implies that learners take a dominant place in their language learning.

### ***2.3.1.2 Cultural Traits of Learners' Beliefs***

With regard to learners' beliefs about foreign/second language learning, as mentioned earlier, one of the obvious features is that beliefs are more or less marked by the learners' own culture. Some research studies focus on the cultural traits of language learners. Among these studies, Asian learners have constantly been portrayed as passive, teacher-dependent, unable to engage in independent learning, and prone to rote learning. Some scholars tend to associate such alleged passive learning behavior with the Confucian cultural heritage which values teacher authority (Huang and van Naersen, 1987; Song, 1995; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996).

Yang (1992) investigated the beliefs about language learning held by Taiwanese students. The participants were 505 students in Taiwan. The results indicated that the learning context is important in language learning. In particular, differences occurred according to the backgrounds of the students as well as the reasons why they study and where they choose to study. At the same time, however, these studies support the underlying premise of previous research that shows an understanding of learners' beliefs can enhance the learning process. Determining learners' beliefs can help teachers and learners 'to construct a shared understanding of the language learning process and of the part they play in it' (Cotterall, 1995, p. 203).

Xiuping (2005) investigated Chinese EFL learners' beliefs about the role of rote learning (RL) in vocabulary learning strategies among 100 Chinese university students in the northeast area of China through three instruments---questionnaires, interviews and an English vocabulary test. The results indicated that Chinese EFL learners generally hold highly positive beliefs about RL in EFL vocabulary learning because

they believe that this form of RL---an integration of repetition, memorization, practice, including reviewing and understanding---suggests consistency with traditional Chinese culture and values.

### ***2.3.1.3 Learners' Beliefs about Strategy Use***

Horwitz (1988) argues that certain learners' beliefs would be likely to restrict the range of language learning strategy use. She suggested that '...it is possible that learners' beliefs led to their use of learning strategies, or that learners' use of learning strategies shaped their beliefs about language learning. It is also possible that other factors may cause learners' beliefs and affect their use of learning strategies' (p. 531). In investigating the variables affecting college foreign language students' strategy use, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) suggest that not only high motivation leads to significant use of language learning strategies but high strategy use probably leads to high motivation as well. Wenden (1986a) suggests that unsuccessful learners used fewer strategies, less frequently, compared with more successful learners, while Abraham and Vann (1990) found in their study that unsuccessful learners are also active strategy users but use the strategies less appropriately than do successful learners.

Wen and Johnson (1997) conducted a research in the Chinese context of L2 learner variables and their relationship to English language achievement. They found that the direct effects of belief variables on strategy variables are strong and consistent. They conclude that '...widely differing beliefs and strategies can lead to successful outcomes when effectively managed' (p. 40). In addition, they suggest that success in identifying learners' beliefs about language learning and their related strategy preferences, and sensitivity in dealing with these preconceptions, are likely to have a

major bearing upon students' attitudes to the program and upon its effectiveness. Also, as Wenden (1987a) states, in many instances, students could not only distinctly describe their beliefs about language learning, but also adopt consistent learning strategies.

Wenden (1986a) used learners' retrospective reports to investigate and classify learners' metacognitive knowledge about their language learning experience. The findings indicate that these learners' explicit beliefs about how best to learn a language seem to provide the logic for their choice of learning strategies.

In her other research, through student interviews, Wenden (1986b) found that adult ESL students could discuss the following five aspects of their language learning:

- (1) The language, including its grammar, phonology, vocabulary, discourse, and function;
- (2) Their proficiency and progress in the language, difficult areas of the language, and comparisons with other languages;
- (3) The outcome of using a selected strategy;
- (4) Their reactions to the learning process and views on language aptitude, learning style, personality, and age; and
- (5) Explicit and implicit beliefs about how best to learn a second language.

#### ***2.3.1.4 Learners' Beliefs about Autonomous Learning***

With respect to learners' beliefs about autonomous learning, Littlewood (1996) considers learners' ability and willingness to make choices independently to be 'at the core of the notion of autonomy' (p. 427). The promotion of learner autonomy gives more reasons to study learners' beliefs about language learning. Although language learning is a two-way process—involving both the

teacher and the learner, beliefs about language teaching and learning demonstrate an awareness of the learner as central to the educational context (Richards, Gallo and Renandya, 2001). A growing body of research describes and supports the move away from a teacher-centered to a more learner-centered teaching methodology (e.g. Nunan, 1988; Bailey, 1992; Tudor, 1996). In recent research, Richards, Gallo and Renandya (2001, p. 45) explored teachers' beliefs and found that 'many of the respondents commented on the need for learners to be independent, self-directed and responsible for their own learning'.

It is important to explore what beliefs learners hold about the nature of the language they are learning, the role of the teacher in the class context, and even the beliefs about how the learners look at themselves. Horwitz (1988) suggests that no matter what explicit messages students receive, they will not 'learn' a language because learning is not just a matter of translation or vocabulary or rule acquisition when it is only those kinds of learning outcomes that are evaluated in the language class. She suggested that erroneous beliefs about language learning may lead to the deployment of less effective strategies. In addition, learners' beliefs are very important in planning for autonomy because 'the beliefs and attitudes learners hold have a profound influence on their learning behavior' (Cotterall, 1995, p.195).

Victori and Lockhart (1995) discussed differences between 'insightful beliefs' which successful learners hold, and the 'negative or limited beliefs' which unsuccessful learners hold, and suggested that:

"If students develop or maintain misconceptions about their own learning, if they attribute undue importance to factors that are external to their own action... they are not likely to adopt a responsible and active attitude in their approach to learning and may never become autonomous" (p. 225).

Moreover, incorrect beliefs may have some other effects on learners' behavior. It is likely that learners' beliefs affect their choice of language learning strategies, which is significant because of a probable link between strategy use and achievement (Kern, 1995).

In her study, Cotterall (1995) used factor analysis to identify six factors underlying subjects' responses to questionnaire items about language learning beliefs and explored the relationship between each factor and autonomous language learning behavior. She suggested: 'All behavior is governed by beliefs and experience. It follows that autonomous language learning behavior may be supported by a particular set of beliefs or behavior. The beliefs learners hold may either contribute to or impede the development of their potential for autonomy' (Cotterall, 1995, p. 196)

Wenden (2001) emphasized three categories of knowledge: person, task and strategy. She claimed that metacognitive knowledge is a prerequisite to the self-regulatory processes leading to autonomy. She pointed out that the foundation for the development of learning autonomy is planning, monitoring and evaluating.

#### ***2.3.1.5 Learners' Beliefs about Motivation***

Learners' beliefs about their ability may affect their goals and motivational patterns, which in turn influence their learning behavior and strategy use (Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Dörnyei, 1994). Yang (1999) composed a theoretical construct of language learning beliefs based on the related literature and his study was composed of two primary dimensions: metacognitive and motivational. The metacognitive dimension referred to learners' metacognitive beliefs (or 'metacognitive knowledge') about second language learning (Flavell, 1979; Wenden, 1986b). It included the following components:



- what learners know about themselves as second/foreign language learners;
- what learners think about the task of second/foreign language learning; and
- what they believe about how best to learn a second or foreign language.

The motivational dimension referred to learners' motivational beliefs about second/foreign language learning and included Pintrich's three motivational components (Garcia and Pintrich, 1995). These include:

(1) Learners' beliefs about their ability to learn a second/foreign language and their expectations about the results or difficulty of the learning task (i.e. expectancy or self-efficacy);

(2) Learners' goals for second/foreign language learning as well as beliefs about their importance, utility, and interest in the learning task, (i.e. value); and

(3) Learners' emotional reactions to second/foreign language learning (i.e. affect).

In this study, it was found that both beliefs about self-efficacy and intrinsic values are positively related to the use of cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies and effort management. In other words, students who are very confident in their own ability to learn a foreign language are more likely to be engaged in their study cognitively (Pintrich, 1989). On the contrary, those students who are very anxious in their learning are less likely to persist in their study and use fewer cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Pintrich, 1989; Pintrich and De Groot, 1990).

#### ***2.3.1.6 Learners' Beliefs about the Role of Media Utilization in FLL***

In this rapidly changing world, technology has increasingly taken its place in the field of education. In the area of SLL/FLL, the World Wide Web, with its rich trove of multimedia resources, interactive tools, and telecommunication facilities,

accessible from anywhere on the planet, seem full of potential as a facilitator of learning and teaching. Multimedia tools can provide images of effective practice, to complement more abstract descriptions. Hypermedia supports multiple layers of annotations on exemplary models (Wiske, Sich and Wirsig, 2001). It seems that educational technology can implement ‘powerful learning environments’ which are distinguished from traditional ‘weak’ learning environments (Gerjets and Hesse, 2004, p. 447). The constructivist concept of a powerful learning environment is based on the rather different perspective of ‘new learning’ that focuses on knowledge construction instead of knowledge transmission, on competencies instead of information, and on social exchange instead of individual learning (Simons, van der Linden and Duffy, 2000). With the development and use of technology in the language learning environment, what beliefs language learners hold about the role of media use has recently become an important issue. However, few studies to date have been conducted to investigate learners’ and teachers’ beliefs about the role of media utilization in EFL.

In summary, as illustrated above, six aspects of learners’ beliefs are discussed in this section. The BALLI can be described as a pioneer study to investigate learners’ beliefs about language learning. Cotterall’s (1995) six factors provided another picture of learners’ beliefs in the field of language learning. Learners’ beliefs are more or less influenced by their cultures. Considering learners’ beliefs, it is also important to investigate learners’ beliefs about strategy use, autonomous learning, motivation and their beliefs about the role of media utilization in EFL. In the following section, teachers’ beliefs will be discussed. There are three main areas: the importance of

teachers' beliefs in language teaching, pre-service teachers' beliefs and teacher education, and teachers' beliefs and the process of change.

### **2.3.2 Teachers' Beliefs**

Teachers' beliefs represent a complex and inter-related system of personal and professional knowledge that serves as implicit theories and cognitive maps for experiencing and responding to reality. Kagan (1992, p. 85) argues that teachers' beliefs may be 'the clearest measure of a teachers' professional growth' and that understanding them is 'instrumental in determining the quality of interaction one finds among teachers in a given school'. The study of teachers' beliefs forms part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualize their work (Richards, Gallo and Renandya, 2001).

The difference between knowledge and beliefs is that when information (i.e. knowledge) is not available, teachers will rely on beliefs to guide them. Subsequently, a number of further definitions have been developed to deal with the complex area of types of knowledge and beliefs.

In terms of the definitions of teachers' beliefs, Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis (2004, p. 244) define teachers' beliefs as 'statements made about their (teachers') ideas, thoughts, and knowledge that are expressed as evaluations of what 'should be done', 'should be the case', and 'is preferable' ". Undoubtedly, the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom, and the materials and activities they choose for the classroom (Pajares, 1992; Hampton, 1994; Borg, 2001). In his recent study, Gan (2004) suggests that teachers' awareness of learners' positive attitudes toward self-directed learning, and a

shared view of learners as metacognitively active seekers of knowledge and skill, could have a significant impact on their approach to foreign/second language teaching.

It is important to examine language teachers' beliefs as well as to examine how teachers' beliefs are formed. The majority of research studies show that the most resilient of 'core' teachers' beliefs are formed from the basis of teachers' own schooling as young students while observing teachers who taught them (Clark and Peterson, 1986). These beliefs stem from learners' previous learning experience—what Lortie (1975) has called 'apprenticeship of observation'.

Within the domain of teachers' beliefs, there are various types of beliefs which include beliefs about teaching effectiveness (teacher efficacy), beliefs about values, beliefs about teaching and learning, beliefs about learners, beliefs about teachers themselves, and beliefs about the nature of knowledge and knowledge acquisition.

Another important aspect of teachers' beliefs is the conception of change in the teachers' teaching practice. Hampton (1994, p.129) suggested that 'some of the teachers' beliefs are changeable, but others are impermeable and difficult or impossible to change.' Regarding the reasons which result in changes of teachers' beliefs, Richards, Gallo and Rengandya (2001, p.55) concluded that 'changes in teachers' practices are the result of changes in teachers' beliefs'.

In the subsequent sections, the following areas will be discussed in detail: the importance of teachers' beliefs in language teaching, pre-service teachers' beliefs and education, and teachers' beliefs and the process of change.

### ***2.3.2.1 The Importance of Teachers' Beliefs in Language Learning***

In the language learning context, obviously, teachers play a very important role. It is, therefore, of great important to study what teachers believe in

their teaching. Pajares (1992, p. 307) argued that ‘teacher’s beliefs can and should become an important focus of educational inquiry’. He suggested that ‘beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors of behavior’ (p. 311). It is no doubt that the beliefs that teachers hold directly affect both their perceptions and judgments of teaching and learning, interactions in the classroom, and that these, in turn, affect their teaching behavior (Clark and Peterson, 1986). Similarly, Mantle-Bromley (1995) concludes that teachers need to have a clear understanding of learners’ beliefs about foreign language learning because learners with realistic and informed beliefs are more likely to behave productively in class, work harder outside class, and persist longer with language study.

McDonough (1995, p. 9) indicated that beliefs can be important incentives for behavior:

“...what we believe we are doing, what we pay attention to, what we think is important, how we choose to behave, how we prefer to solve problems, form the basis for our personal decisions as to how to proceed. An important fact about this argument is that it is not necessary for these kinds of evidence to be true for them to have important consequences for our further development”.

In the language learning context, teachers’ beliefs play an important part in the process of language learning. As Williams and Burden (1997, p. 56) put forth:

“Teachers’ beliefs about what learning is will affect everything they do in the classroom, whether these beliefs are implicit or explicit. Even if a teacher acts spontaneously, or from habit without thinking about the action, such actions are nevertheless prompted by a deep-rooted belief that may never have been articulated or made explicit. If the teacher-as-educator is one who is constantly re-evaluating in the light of new knowledge his or her beliefs about language, or about how language is learned, or about education as a whole, then it is crucial that teachers first understand and articulate their own theoretical perspectives”.

Wen and Johnson (1997, p. 40) suggested that ‘the direct effect of belief variables on strategy variables were strong and consistent, reinforcing the view that teachers and materials writers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, students pre-existing assumptions about the language learning process’. Similarly, some researchers (e.g. Richards, Gallo and Renandya, 2001; Hampton, 1994) agreed that teachers’ beliefs strongly affect the materials and activities they choose for the classroom as well as determine how they approach their teaching.

### ***2.3.2.2 Teachers’ Beliefs and the Process of Change***

Although studies on teachers’ beliefs have gradually gained prominence, with regard to the issue of teacher change, it still does not receive adequate attention (Cabaroğlu and Roberts, 2000; Sato and Kleinsasser, 2004). The term ‘teacher change’ refers to many things, including knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, understanding, self-awareness, and teaching practice (Bailey, 1992; Jackson, 1992). The notion of teacher change is crucial to the field of second language teacher education as it plays a central role in the process of teacher development; and it is multi-dimensional and triggered by many factors (Richards, Gallo and Renandya, 2001).

Teachers have many beliefs about education, teaching and learning, which come from their experience in the classrooms. As a result of teachers enriching their teaching experience, some changes must take place. Some researchers (e.g. Bailey, 1992; Golombek, 1998; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell and Lloyd, 1991; Richards, Gallo and Renandya, 2001) affirm the notion that changes in teachers’ beliefs precede changes in their teaching practice. However, Guskey (1986) examined 52 teachers who participated in teacher development programs and concluded that change in

teachers' beliefs 'is likely to take place only after changes in student learning outcomes are evidenced' (p. 7). Richardson (1996, p. 104) suggests that 'beliefs are thought to drive actions; however, experience and reflection on action may lead to changes in and/or additions to beliefs'.

Mattheoudakis (2006) conducted a longitudinal study among 66 full-time undergraduates in the School of English at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki through a BALLI questionnaire. This study aimed to track possible changes in those beliefs during a 3-year teacher education program and explores the impact of teaching practice, in particular, on student teachers' beliefs. The results indicated that while there is a gradual and sometimes significant development in student teachers' beliefs during the program, student teachers' engagement in the teaching practice seems to have a low impact on the development of their beliefs.

In sum, as illustrated above, teachers' beliefs are important in the process of language learning. It is a critical issue to educate pre-service teachers so that they can acquire correct or appropriate beliefs in their teaching practice. Furthermore, the changes in teachers' beliefs are also worth investigating since the beliefs can partly or mostly dominate teachers' behavior in the classroom. In the next section, a comparison between learners' and teachers' beliefs will be discussed.

### **2.3.3 Comparison between Learners' and Teachers' Beliefs**

In the language learning context, whether teachers and learners believe in the same or different aspects regarding language learning has become a very important issue recently. Given the significant role that beliefs play in determining behavior, both teachers' and learners' beliefs relating to language learning are equally important. Undoubtedly, teachers' beliefs influence how they go about teaching, and learners'

beliefs influence how they conceptualize their learning and the way they interpret learning within the classroom context.

Three empirical studies conducted by Horwitz (1988), Kern (1995) and Mantle-Bromley (1995) all employed the 34-item Likert-scale BALLI to investigate learners' and teachers' beliefs. The researchers compared the similarities and differences between learners' and teachers' beliefs. All of these studies found similar results and reached similar conclusions. One of the common results is that learners seemed to underestimate the difficulty of language learning and also to hold misconceptions about how to learn foreign languages.

Another issue is about learners' beliefs and their performances. As mentioned earlier, Mantle-Bromley (1995) proposed in her study that when learners' beliefs and performances do not match, the learners 'become frustrated with the class and with themselves' (p. 381) and that certain misinformed 'beliefs and expectations may actually prove harmful to their success in the classroom' (p. 383).

Following these three studies, Peacock (1999) compared the beliefs about English language learning held by 202 university students and 45 ESL teachers in Hong Kong. Several broad differences were found notably regarding Horwitz's (1988) two core beliefs about vocabulary and grammar. Firstly, nearly two thirds of learners believed that 'learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words', but only 18% of teachers agreed. Then, sixty-four percent of learners believed that 'learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules', while only 7% of teachers agreed. The third finding showed that fifty-seven percent of learners believed that 'people who speak more than one language well are very intelligent', but only 18% of teachers agreed. Finally, Peacock



concluded that learners with the first belief, which is ‘learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words’, may focus on memorizing vocabulary lists, to the exclusion of teacher directed tasks. In addition, these learners may also be very dissatisfied with a teacher who does not emphasize the learning of vocabulary in classroom tasks, materials, or assignments. With the second belief reported by the student participants, it was concluded that these learners might focus on memorizing grammar rules, to the exclusion of other tasks. The possible effect of this incorrect belief is that students could become very dissatisfied with a teacher who does not emphasize grammar in classroom tasks and marking essays. Moreover, the majority of learners who held the third belief, which is ‘people who speak more than one language well are very intelligent’, may blame difficulty, slow progress, and failure on lack of intelligence, leading to further frustration, dissatisfaction, and disillusionment.

Davis (2003) conducted a study on whether beliefs about language learning held by teachers and students coincided or differed between teachers and students. Eighteen full-time teachers of English and 97 students in a Chinese-English translation program participated in this research. The results indicated points of congruence between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about language learning in respect of eight areas, and teachers and students differed in their beliefs in four other areas. Some useful questions were raised, such as, should teachers simply acquiesce in students’ wishes, even though, in their own judgment, they may not serve what they consider to be the best practice of language learning? How do beliefs affect practice? What happens if teachers’ and learners’ beliefs differ, i.e. what is, and what should be, the impact of this difference on practice?

Eslami-Rasekh and Valizadeh (2004) investigated learners' beliefs about different learning activities and the degree of discrepancy between learners' preferences and instructors' awareness of those preferences in foreign language learning. The results indicated that, in communicative activities, there is a significant difference between learners' preferences and instructors' perception of those preferences. Learners' preferences for communicative activities were significantly higher than their instructors' beliefs. The research also showed that instructors are not fully aware of learners' preferences in relation to communicative activities.

In fact, learners' beliefs do not change naturally even if they are exposed to new methods and techniques (Kern, 1995). If learners hold incorrect beliefs about language learning, these misconceptions negatively affect language learning. It may be advisable for EFL teachers to take a more active role in finding out precisely what beliefs their learners hold, and to work towards correcting some of those beliefs (Peacock, 1999).

In her study of investigating learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning, Horwitz (1988) found some gaps between learners' and teachers' beliefs. These gaps probably result in 'negative (language learning) outcomes' (p. 292). This finding is supported by a number of other researchers, such as Mantle-Brommley (1995, pp. 380-381), Cotterall (1995, pp. 202-203), and Littlewood, Liu and Yu (1996, p. 71). In the same study, Horwitz also suggested that gaps between teachers' and learners' beliefs can lead to a reduction in learner's confidence and satisfaction with the class and to unwillingness to participate in 'communicative' activities (p. 290). In her conclusion, she argued that '...teachers will likely encounter...many unanticipated beliefs, some enabling and some truly detrimental to successful language learning...

foreign language teachers can ill afford to ignore those beliefs if they expect their students to be open to particular teaching methods and to receive the maximum benefit from them' (p. 293). According to Horwitz, if learners believe language learning means mainly learning vocabulary words and grammar rules, they will spend most of their time memorizing vocabulary lists and grammar rules rather than doing the tasks their teacher plans for them.

To sum up, learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning have played a very important role both in the process and achievement of language learning (Cotterall, 1995; Horwitz, 1988). BALLI questionnaires were often used or modified for use in quite a number of research studies in order to investigate learners' and teachers' beliefs. Interviews are sometimes used by a few researchers in order to triangulate the data from the questionnaire. Most of the research studies have been conducted with native speakers of English learning other foreign languages (e.g. Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Mantle-Bromley, 1995). Although a few studies were conducted with non-native speakers of English, such as in China (Wen and Johnson, 1997), Taiwan (Yang, 1992), Japan (Sakui and Gaies, 1999) and Lebanon (Diab, 2006), etc., very little research work touches on the field of what similarities and differences in learners' and teachers' beliefs about learning English as a foreign language, in particular, at tertiary level in mainland China. The present study will endeavor to fill this gap and to take into account learners' and teachers' beliefs in order to explore what similarities and differences exist between the beliefs held by learners and teachers in the Chinese tertiary context.

In order to present a clear overall picture of the related literature review covered in this section, the main research work of learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning related to the present study will be summarized in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1** Main Research Studies on Beliefs about Language Learning

<b>1. Horwitz, E. K. (1988). The Beliefs about Language Learning of Beginning University Foreign Language Students.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To assess students' opinions on a variety of issues and controversies about foreign language learning
<b>Participants</b>	80 university students learning German, 63 learning French, and 98 learning Spanish at the University of Texas at Austin
<b>Method of data collection</b>	The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)
<b>Variables</b>	Three groups of students from target languages (German, French and Spanish); gender
<b>Results</b>	The similarities of beliefs among the different target language groups were found.
<b>2. Cotterall, S. (1995). Readiness for Autonomy: Investigating Learner Beliefs</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To identify 'factors' in learners' sets of beliefs
<b>Participants</b>	139 adults ESL learners at a university in New Zealand
<b>Method of data collection</b>	A researcher-designed questionnaire
<b>Variables</b>	Six factors underlying learners' beliefs about language learning
<b>Results</b>	The importance of investigating the beliefs which are likely to reflect learners' 'readiness' for autonomy.
<b>3. White, C. (1999). Expectations and Emergent Beliefs of Self-instructed Language Learners.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To investigate how learners experienced and articulated their experience in a solo distance language learning context
<b>Participants</b>	23 beginners of Japanese and Spanish who choose distance learning at Massey University, New Zealand.
<b>Method of data collection</b>	Interviews, open-ended questionnaires
<b>Variables</b>	1. Self-instructed language learning; 2. Solo language learning context;
<b>Results</b>	The learner-context interface, tolerance of ambiguity and locus of control emerged from the reports as central to an understanding of how learners conceptualized the initial stages of the process of self-instructed language learning.

**Table 2.1(Cont.)** Main Research Studies on Beliefs about Language Learning

<b>4. Yang, Nae Dong (1999). The Relationship between EFL Learners' Beliefs and Learning Strategy Use.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To investigate the relationship between college EFL students' beliefs about language learning and their use of learning strategies
<b>Participants</b>	505 university students in Taiwan
<b>Method of data collection</b>	Questionnaires based on modified BALLI and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)
<b>Variables</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Three different English language courses;</li> <li>2. Gender</li> </ol>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language learners' self-efficacy beliefs about learning English were strongly related to their use of all types of learning strategies, especially functional practice strategies.</li> <li>• Learners' beliefs about the value and nature of learning spoken English were closely linked to their use of formal oral-practice strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Cotterall, S. (1999). Key Variables in Language Learning: What do Learners Believe about them?</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To examine learners' beliefs about sets of factors and encourage learners to adopt autonomous approaches to their language learning
<b>Participants</b>	131 learners of English as a second language at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
<b>Method of data collection</b>	A researcher-designed questionnaire
<b>Variables</b>	<p>Six key variables:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the role of the teacher;</li> <li>2. the role of feedback;</li> <li>3. the learner's sense of self-efficacy;</li> <li>4. important strategies;</li> <li>5. dimensions of strategies-related behavior; and</li> <li>6. the nature of language learning.</li> </ol>
<b>Results</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adding new items based on the factor structure previously identified.</li> <li>2. Incorporating items designed as a result of a survey of current research in second language acquisition (SLA).</li> <li>3. Providing a learner perspective on topics in the SLA literature which researchers and teachers often claim as their domain.</li> </ol>

**Table 2.1(Cont.)** Main Research Studies on Beliefs about Language Learning

<b>6. Mori, Y. (1999). Epistemological Beliefs and Language Learning Beliefs: What Do Language Learners Believe about their Learning?</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To examine the structure of language learners' beliefs about learning in general and beliefs</li> <li>To explore the relationship between the two beliefs domains</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	187 college students learning Japanese as a foreign language in the USA
<b>Variables</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic: course level, school year, major, gender, age, ethnicity and nationality;</li> <li>Variables indicating students' achievement: Daily quizzes, achievement exams, proficiency test and course achievement.</li> </ol>
<b>Results</b>	Students' beliefs about learning in general and language learning in particular can largely be characterized as consisting of multiple independent dimension.
<b>7. Peacock, M. (1999). Beliefs about Language Learning and their Relationship to Proficiency.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To determine if the differences between learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning affect proficiency</li> <li>To develop hypotheses about the origin of Chinese learners' beliefs about language learning</li> <li>To check the correlation between learner self-rated proficiency and tested proficiency</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	131 learners of English as a second language at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
<b>Method of data collection</b>	BALLI questionnaire, a comprehensive proficiency test, interview, a self-rated proficiency test
<b>Variables</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students' levels of study</li> <li>Students' major field of study</li> <li>Gender</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<p>The gaps between teachers' and learners' beliefs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>resulted in negative learning outcomes;</li> <li>led to reduce learner confidence in and satisfaction with the class;</li> <li>led to a reluctance to participate in communicative activities.</li> </ul>

**Table 2.1(Cont.) Main Research Studies on Beliefs about Language Learning**

<b>8. Sakui, K. &amp; Gaies, S. J. (1999). Investigating Japanese Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To investigate the value of interview data to complement and explain questionnaire data; and to describe the beliefs about language learning of Japanese learners of English and to determine through factor analysis how those beliefs are organized
<b>Participants</b>	1296 university Japanese students learning English as a foreign language
<b>Method of data collection</b>	Questionnaire and interview
<b>Variables</b>	Levels of colleges and universities
<b>Results</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. without complementary sources of data, learners' responses to questionnaires can be easily misinterpreted as evidence of instrument unreliability.</li> <li>2. many of the respondents' beliefs about learning English correspond to the distinction which many teachers would make between traditional and contemporary approaches to language teaching and learning.</li> </ol>
<b>9. Cabaroglu, N. and Roberts, J. (2000). Development in student teachers' pre-existing beliefs during a 1-year PGCE program.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To test student teachers' beliefs on language teaching and learning</li> <li>• To explore the nature of belief development</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	25 students on the 1997-1998 PGCE secondary courses at the University of Reading, UK
<b>Method of data collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written language learning autobiography</li> <li>• Three in-depth interviews</li> <li>• End-of-course questionnaire</li> </ul>
<b>Variables</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gender</li> <li>2. Nationalities</li> <li>3. Modern Language Teaching Course</li> </ol>
<b>Results</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student teachers' belief development is highly variable between individuals.</li> <li>2. Belief development is essentially cumulative and evolutionary in nature.</li> </ol>

**Table 2.1(Cont.) Main Research Studies on Beliefs about Language Learning**

<b>10. Peacock, M. (2001). Pre-service ESL Teachers' Beliefs about Second Language Learning: a Longitudinal Study.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To investigate changes in the beliefs about second language learning of trainee ESL teachers
<b>Participants</b>	146 trainee ESL teachers over their 3-year program at the City University of Hong Kong
<b>Method of data collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner self-report questionnaire based on BALLI'</li> <li>• ESL proficiency scores</li> <li>• An instruction package</li> <li>• Class observations</li> </ul>
<b>Variables</b>	Teaching experience
<b>Results</b>	Three key beliefs about language learning differed from experienced ESL teachers' beliefs, and these beliefs changed very little over their 3 years of study of TESL methodology.
<b>11. Davis, A. (2003). Teachers' and Students' Beliefs Regarding Aspects of Language Learning.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To explore the similarities and dissimilarities between teachers' and students' conceptions of language learning
<b>Participants</b>	18 teachers of English and 97 institute students in Macao, China
<b>Method of data collection</b>	A closed questionnaire
<b>Variables</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Years of study</li> <li>2. Types of class (day and night)</li> </ol>
<b>Results</b>	<p>Teachers and students differed in their beliefs in four areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the earlier a second language is introduced in schools, the greater the likelihood of success in learning;</li> <li>2. teachers should present grammatical rules one at a time and students should practice examples of each one before going onto another;</li> <li>3. students' errors should be corrected as soon as they are made in order to prevent the formation of bad habits;</li> <li>4. teachers should use materials that expose students only to those language structures that they have already been taught.</li> </ol>



**Table 2.1(Cont.)** Main Research Studies on Beliefs about Language Learning

<b>12. Eslami-Rasekh, Z. and Valizadeh, K. (2004). Classroom Activities Viewed from Different Perspectives: Learners' Voice and Teachers' Voice.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To investigate learners' beliefs about different learning activities and the degree of discrepancy between learners' preferences and instructors' awareness of those preferences in foreign language learning
<b>Participants</b>	376 female and 227 male undergraduates, 27 instructors at Texas University, the USA
<b>Method of data collection</b>	Questionnaires.
<b>Variables</b>	1. Students' Major Field of study 2. Communicative activities
<b>Results</b>	1. In communicative activities, there is a significant difference between students' preferences and instructors' perception of those preferences. 2. Students' preferences for communicative activities were significantly higher than their instructors' beliefs.
<b>13. Intaraprasert, C. (2004). An investigation of Beliefs about Learning English by Thai and Vietnamese Universities Science-oriented Students: a Cross-cultural Perspective.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To examine the learners' beliefs about learning English in Thailand and Vietnam as well as to investigate the similarities and differences of learners' beliefs
<b>Participants</b>	344 Thai and 319 Vietnamese university students
<b>Method of data collection</b>	Modified BALLI
<b>Variables</b>	Nationalities: Thai and Vietnamese
<b>Results</b>	Similarities and differences in beliefs about learning English responded to by the students from two countries were found. It is concluded that the cultural background of learners has a strong relationship with learner beliefs in most of the examined aspects.

**Table 2.1(Cont.) Main Research Studies on Beliefs about Language Learning**

<b>14. Xiuping, Li (2005). An analysis of Chinese EFL learners' beliefs about the role of rote learning in vocabulary learning strategies.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	1. to promote a concrete understanding of the concept of RL in the literature; 2. to explore Chinese EFL learners' culturally based beliefs about their preference for RL strategies; 3. to offer a challenge to widely-held beliefs that Confucian culture is a negative influence on learning; 4. to offer guidance to EFL teachers/researchers who are interested in Chinese EFL learners' memory strategy choice and use.
<b>Participants</b>	100 Chinese learners in the English Department at a large University in the Northeast area of China
<b>Method of data collection</b>	Questionnaires, interviews and an English vocabulary test
<b>Variables</b>	Six factors (Chinese educational/cultural background; EFL environment; traditional habit; national situation/examination demand; Chinese linguistic background/the way of learning mother tongue; and Failure to try out "best" strategies)
<b>Results</b>	Chinese EFL learners believe that RL strategies are preferable to other memory strategies for learning and memorising vocabulary. They hold positive beliefs about RL, because they consider RL strategies to be consistent with traditional Chinese culture and values.
<b>15. Mattheoudakis, M. (2006). Tracking changes in pre-service EFL teacher beliefs in Greece: a longitudinal study.</b>	
<b>Purpose of study</b>	To track possible changes in those beliefs during a 3-year teacher education program and explores the impact of teaching practice, in particular, on student teachers' beliefs.
<b>Participants</b>	66 full-time undergraduates in the School of English at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
<b>Method of data collection</b>	BALLI Questionnaire
<b>Variables</b>	Practice and Non-practice groups
<b>Results</b>	Student teachers' engagement in teaching practice did not have the expected impact on the development of their beliefs.

## 2.4 Summary

In this Chapter, the related literature provides an overall picture of recent research on learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning in the past two decades. It starts with an introduction to general beliefs, beliefs about language learning, followed by recent research articles, and a comparison between learners' and teachers' beliefs.

From the literature review, it can be seen that the first important research study was conducted by Horwitz (1987b) who is well-known for the design of the BALLI instrument. Since then, many researchers have followed the similar research methods to carry out their research. The main instruments were modified BALLI and interviews were also conducted to collect data. Almost all of the researchers chose university students as their research participants. The research covered the following main aspects: beliefs about language learning and the use of language learning strategies (Yang, 1992; Yang, 1999); the impact of culture on learners' beliefs (McCargar, 1993; Intaraprasert, 2004); change in learners' beliefs (Kern, 1995; Peacock, 2001); factors in learners' sets of beliefs (Cotterall, 1995; Sakui and Gaies, 1999); the relationship between learners' beliefs and their language proficiency (Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Peacock, 1999); learners' experience in a solo distance language learning context (White, 1999); learners' beliefs and autonomous learning (Cotterall, 1999); pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning (Cabaroğlu, 2000); similarities and dissimilarities between teachers' and students' conceptions of language learning (Davis, 2003); learners' beliefs about different learning activities and the degree of discrepancy between learners' preferences and instructors' awareness of those preferences in foreign language learning (Eslami-Rasekh and

Valizadeh, 2004); and the structure of language learners' beliefs about learning in general and beliefs (Mori, 1999).

However, very few studies have been conducted in the Chinese context. Consequently, this study aims to investigate beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English, and the variation in these beliefs as held by students and teachers. Chapter 3 provides the research methodology and the theoretical framework for beliefs about learning English for this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR BELIEFS ABOUT LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

This chapter aims to provide the research methods and design for the present study. It starts off with some general principles of research design which were employed in the present study. Then the research questions are raised based on the objectives of the study. This will be followed by the sampling and rationale for the choice of subjects, which covers the characteristics of student and teacher participants, the methods for data collection, and the beliefs which were focused on in the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews. Then, the procedure for the data collection is described. Lastly, it will deal with analyzing, interpreting and reporting the data.

#### **3.1 Introduction**

A research design is obviously a plan for a specific study. It should describe the purpose of the study, the selection of participants, the research instruments, the procedures for the data collection followed by the data analysis (Johnson, 1977). It is also important for a researcher to consider the research objectives before choosing appropriate methods. According to Robson (1993), the purpose of any research can be classified as explanatory, descriptive, or exploratory. For the explanatory purpose, a researcher explores an explanation of a situation or problem. It may be qualitative and

or quantitative. For the descriptive purpose, a researcher describes the profile of persons, events or situations in detail. This sort of research can be qualitative and /or quantitative. For the exploratory purpose, a researcher looks for what is happening in order to seek new sights. This type of research is usually qualitative.

Apart from considering the purpose of research, it is also important to concern the research design. Brown (1988) classifies two main types of research as primary and secondary. A primary study includes a case study, a survey and an experimental research, the last two being categorized as statistical studies. For the primary study, data is obtained from the basic sources, e.g. a certain population who are learning English in a foreign context. However, the data for the secondary study is obtained through reviewing literature in a given area and synthesizing the work conducted by other researchers.

When it comes to the research design, the researcher must take the most appropriate one into consideration in order to answer research questions best. Robson (1993) has suggested the appropriate use of three types of research as:

1) A case study: it is appropriate for ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. It is widely used to develop detailed, intensive knowledge about a single case or a small number of related cases.

2) A survey study: it is appropriate for ‘who, what, where, how many and how much’ questions. It is commonly used to collect information from a larger number of people with questionnaires or different types of interviews.

3) An experimental study: it is an appropriate choice for ‘how and why’ questions. The difference from the former is the control of variables and even is necessary.

### **3.2 Research Questions**

The research questions have been formulated according to the objectives of the study. In order to establish some empirical data on the context of Chinese university learner and teacher beliefs about learning English as a foreign language, the present study has been designed to answer the following specific questions:

1. What are the percentages of Chinese non-English major university students reporting discrete beliefs about learning English?
2. What are the percentages of Chinese university teachers of English reporting discrete beliefs about learning English?
3. Do learners' beliefs about learning English vary significantly with their gender, major field of study and level of language proficiency? If they do, what are the main significant variation patterns?
4. Do teachers' beliefs about learning English vary significantly with their gender, academic degree and teaching experience? If they do, what are the main significant variation patterns?
5. Do beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English vary significantly? If they do, what are the main significant variation patterns?

### **3.3 Theoretical Framework for the Present Study**

As discussed in Section 2.3, the prime data-collection instrument used for researching learners' beliefs about language learning is the 34-item Likert-scale BALLI, prepared by Horwitz in 1985 to use on her foreign language teacher training course—she asked her trainees to question their beliefs about language learning. (e. g.

Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Wen and Johnson, 1997; Sakui and Gaies, 1999). The other common approach to develop a questionnaire is to collect responses through a large set of statistical procedures such as factor analysis (e.g. Yang, 1992; Cotterall, 1995; Kuntz, 1996; Mori, 1999).

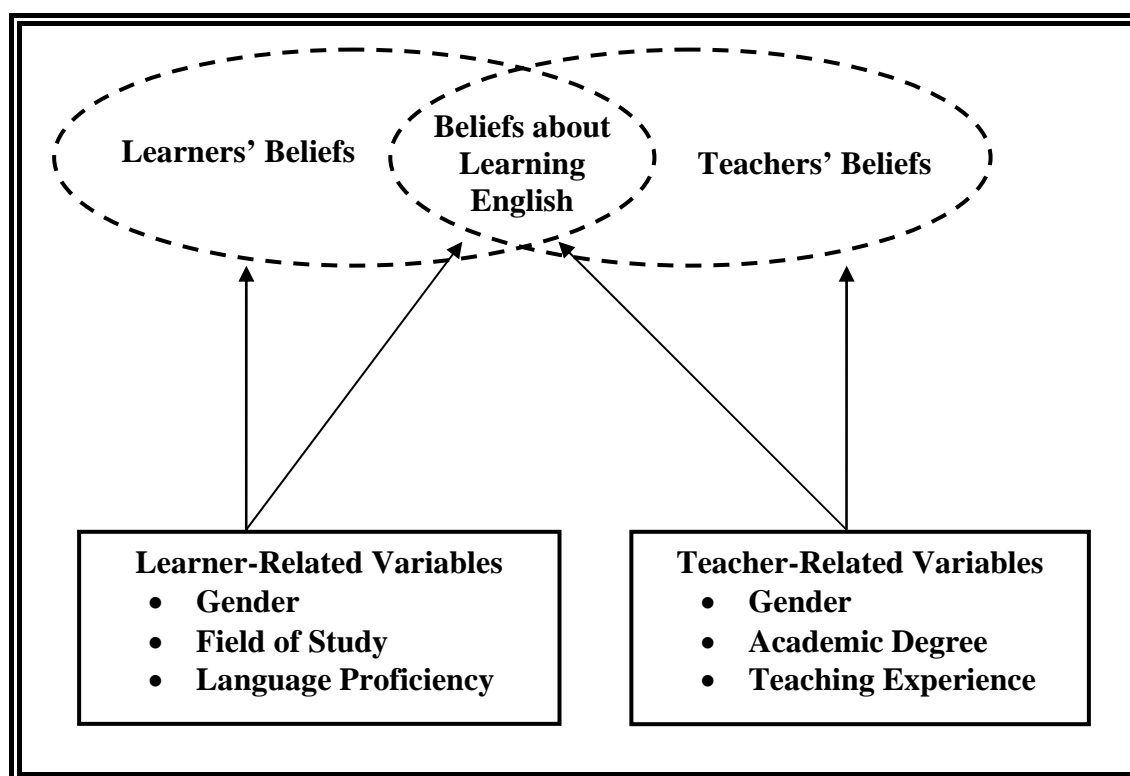
With regard to the variables investigated in relation to learners' beliefs about language learning, learners' anxiety and learning strategies have become the main foci. Both of the variables are found to be significantly related to learners' beliefs. Considering the obvious features of learners' beliefs about foreign /second language learning are more or less marked by the learners' own cultures, a few researchers investigated learners' beliefs in a different context (e.g. Yang, 1992). In addition, some studies investigated learners' beliefs about language learning with regard to learners' cultural background (e.g. McCargar, 1993) or with a cross-cultural perspective (e.g. Intaraprasert, 2004).

Recently, a growing body of research work has explored learners' beliefs and supported the move away from a teacher-centered to a more learner-centered oriented teaching methodology (e.g. Bailey, 1992; Tudor, 1996). To some extent, a learner-centered approach requires learners to be independent, autonomous, self-directed and responsible for their own learning (Cotterall, 1995; Richards, Gallo and Renandya, 2001). However, very few research studies have been conducted to examine the similarities and differences of beliefs being held by learners and teachers since the traditional learning and teaching way has shifted to a more learner-centered focus recently.

Bearing these thoughts in mind, the researcher is interested in investigating learners' and teachers' beliefs about learning English as a foreign language in the



Chinese tertiary context in order to find out to what extent learners and teachers hold beliefs on learning which are the same or different way since the teaching focus has shifted from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach. Figure 3.1 shows the theoretical framework for the present study.



**Figure 3.1** Theoretical Framework for the Present Study

In the present study, the beliefs about EFL refer to learners' and teachers' beliefs about learning English as a foreign language at tertiary level in the southwest of China. Eight specific aspects of foreign language learning beliefs are described: 1) the difficulty of language learning; 2) foreign language aptitude; 3) the nature of language learning; 4) strategy use; 5) motivation and expectations; 6) the role of the teacher and feedback; 7) the role of media utilization in EFL; and 8) the learners' independence. Figure 3.1 above illustrates the theoretical framework for the present study. Learner-related variables include learners' gender, field of study and their English language

proficiency. Teacher-related variables include teachers' gender, academic degree and their teaching experience. Based on the theoretical framework, what beliefs are held by learners and their teachers was investigated firstly, and secondly, a comparison between the learners' and the teachers' beliefs was made. Further, it is assumed that some similarities and differences exist between the learners' and teachers' beliefs but what these beliefs may be will be explored later.

The implication of Figure 3.1 is that the bigger the overlapping area between learners' and teachers' beliefs about EFL, the better. In other words, the more similarities rather than differences of beliefs held between learners and teachers, the more successful and satisfying learning and teaching environment the learners and teachers will be. Undoubtedly, the gradually narrowing gap between learners and teachers will contribute to positive rather than 'negative (language learning) outcomes' (Horwitz, 1988, p. 292).

### **3.4 Sampling and Rationale for Choice of Subjects**

Kane (1983, p. 90) defines a sample as 'a portion of the universe and, ideally, it reflects with reasonable accuracy of the opinions, attitudes or behavior of the entire group.... Further, the result from a sample cannot be expected to be precisely the same as the result obtained from studying the universe. The sample has to be similar to the universe or the population. If not, the results of the study are useless'. In terms of an appropriate choice of subjects, some factors were taken into account, such as whether the subjects were suitable for the research, whether they were representative, and how many subjects should be selected (Drew, 1980).

Based on these factors, the present investigation is generally classified as an exploratory research which is intended to use a sample size adequate to serve the objectives while it should not be too big to manage or too small to be appropriate. In other words, the research participants should be representative of the non-English major students studying English at the university level in similar regions. As a result, the researcher decided to select the participants from six universities in the southwest of China. Convenience and availability were the criteria used for the sampling procedure (Cohen and Manion, 1994). In the following sections, the characteristics of the student and the teacher participants will be described in detail.

#### **3.4.1 Characteristics of the Student Participants**

In this study, two universities were chosen from each province in the south-west of China for data collection. One thousand two hundred and fourteen university non-English major students who were studying the College English Course participated in this study. All of them were students of Grade 1 (Academic Year 2006) and Grade 2 (Academic Year 2005) from the six universities. The students' ages range from 18 to 22. In this specific study, the students were categorized as Science-oriented (Sci.-ori.) and non-Science-oriented (non-Sci.-ori.) major students. Those whose majors are Mathematics, Physics, Agriculture, etc. were defined as learners whose major was Science-oriented, while the others were defined as learners whose major was non-Science-oriented, such as the students majoring in Law, Art and Philosophy. Concerning one of the variables, that is, the students' level of language proficiency, the 1,214 students were categorized as High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L) according to their performance in the English Test in NSMT (See Section 1.4.2) or

CET-Band 4 (See Section 1.4.4). Detailed information about the student participants is shown in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1** General Information about the Student Participants in Terms of Variables

	<u>Gender</u>		<u>Field of Study</u>		<u>Level of Language Proficiency</u>		
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Sci-ori.</u>	<u>Non-sci.ori.</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Low</u>
<b>No.</b>	680	534	710	504	133	721	360
<b>%</b>	52.4	47.6	58.5	41.5	11	59.3	29.7
<b>Total: 1, 214</b>							

*Note: Sci.-ori.=Science-oriented; Non-Sci.-ori.=Non-Science-oriented*

Students from Grade 1 or Academic Year 2006 were studying College English for the second semester when the researcher collected data. Most students were preparing for CET-Band 4 in the following June, 2007. Some universities have regulations requiring students to take CET-Band 4, but students from Grade 1 are normally not allowed to take part in CET-Band 4 before they finish studying College English course. If the students could pass CET-Band 4 in the first academic year, then they would lose their interest in learning College English further. As a result, some universities have established a policy of allowing students to participate in CET-Band 4 in their second academic year. In practice, a few students had already taken this exam when they became university students. Moreover, a few students whose English was very good took CET-Band 4 in high school. At the same time, students from Grade 2 had almost finished their English learning at the university. Most of them had participated in CET-Band 4 or 6 during the two years at university. Some of them passed CET-4 or even 6, however, some students with a low proficiency in English still could not pass the exam.

In Table 3.1 above, 680 boys and 534 girls from Grade 1 and Grade 2, 56% and 44% respectively, make up a total of 1,214 student participants for this study. According to the variables, 710 (58.5%) were majoring in Science-oriented majors, and 504 (41.5%) in non-Science-oriented majors. Meanwhile, students' levels of English language proficiency were categorized through their English performance in the Nation-wide Standardized Matriculation Test (Grade 1 students), and CET-Band 4 (Grade 2 students), or even from students' self-evaluation of their own English language proficiency which were required in the Student Profile for the Questionnaire. All students from Grade 1 offered their scores of NSMT, and those students from Grade 2 offered their scores of CET-Band 4. Since the full score for the English Test in NSMT is 150, the three levels are divided based on percentages (%): below 90 scores and not including 90 (60%) as Low; between 90-119 scores (61-79%) as Medium; and above 120 (80%) as High. Regarding CET-Band 4, three levels for CET-Band 4 according to the information provided by the students in CET-Band 4 are divided according to percentages (%): below 425 scores and not including 425 (60%) as the Low; between 425-567 scores as Medium; and above 567 scores as High. Finally, 1,214 students were categorized as High (n=133, 11%), Medium (n=721, 59.3%) and Low (n=360, 29.7%) proficiency levels. For the purpose of collecting qualitative data through interviews with the students, student interviewees were categorized as *successful* and *unsuccessful* language learners. The cut-off point of 119 was used for NSMT and 425 for CET-Band 4 in order to distinguish *successful* and *unsuccessful* language learners.

### 3.4.2 Characteristics of the Teacher Participants

All the teacher participants in this study are non-native English teachers who teach the College English Course for non-English major university students at the six universities in the south-west of China. An obvious characteristic of the teacher participants is that there are more female than male teachers of College English at each university. The general information about the participants is shown in Table 3.2 below.

**Table 3.2** General Information about the Teacher Participants in Terms of Variables

	<u>Gender</u>		<u>Academic Degree</u>			<u>Years of Teaching Experience</u>		
	Male	Female	BA	PG	OT	E1	E2	E3
<b>No.</b>	39	168	82	119	6	130	65	12
<b>%</b>	18.8	81.2	39.6	57.5	2.9	62.8	31.4	5.8
<b>Total: 207</b>								

*Notes: 1) BA= Bachelor Degree, PG= Postgraduate Degree*

*OT= Other Education Certificates*

*2) E1=Least Experienced (1~5 years); E2=More Experienced (6~15 years);*

*E3=Most Experienced (More than 15 years)*

The teachers who were teaching College English at the universities in the south-west of China are the second group of the research participants in the present study. There were 207 university teachers of English consisting of 39 male (18.8%) and 168 female (81.2%) teachers. Concerning the research variables, teacher participants were categorized into three groups, which are Bachelor's Degree (82, 39.6%), Postgraduate Degree (119, 57.5%), and Other Education Certificates (6, 2.9%). 'Other Education Certificates' means degrees for those teachers, in particular a few older teachers, who received their education degrees or training certificates under a different degree system in 1960s or early 1970s in China. In terms of another variable, that is, the teachers' years of teaching experience, teacher participants were categorized into three

groups. Teachers who had 1~5 years of teaching experience were described as the least experienced teachers; those who had 6~15 years of teaching experience were described as more experienced teachers; and those who had more than 15 years of teaching experience were described as the most experienced teachers. For the sake of convenience in the reporting of the data, teachers who had 1~5 years of teaching experience were indicated as E1; those who had 6~15 years of teaching experience were indicated as E2; and those who had more than 15 years of teaching experience were indicated as E3. From the Instructor Profile for the Questionnaire, one hundred and thirty teachers (62.8%) are in group E1, sixty five are in group E2 (31.4%), and twelve (5.8%) are in group E3.

### **3.5 Methods for Data Collection**

Peng, Peterson, and Yuh-Ping (1991, p.105) state, ‘...with the use of a combined quantitative-qualitative approach, we shall improve our capacity in revealing the holistic, naturalistic, and inductive aspects of the phenomena under investigation’. In this section, the main research methods will be discussed. The main instruments include: 1) written questionnaires; and 2) semi-structured interviews.

To explore beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by university students and teachers in the south-west of China, two written questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used as the main instruments for data collection. Student and teacher questionnaires were administered in the first phase, and student and teacher semi-structured interviews were conducted in the second phase of the fieldwork.

### 3.5.1 Written Questionnaires about Beliefs

A written questionnaire has been commonly used by the majority of researchers to elicit learners' beliefs in previous studies. As Fraenkel and Wallen (1996, p.129) explain, '...it is possible to discover attitudes by asking individuals to respond to a series of statements of preference...the pattern of responses is then viewed as evidence of one or more underlying attitudes'. In addition, questionnaire items can range from those simply asking for 'yes' or 'no' responses, or degrees of beliefs (e.g. Likert Scales), or to less structured items usually asking respondents to describe or discuss in detail the beliefs they hold. Moreover, a written questionnaire enables the researcher to collect data in field settings and the data obtained is more amenable to quantification than that collected through free-form field notes, participant observing journals or the transcripts of oral language (Nunan, 1992). However, some weak points might exist by only using a questionnaire as Benson and Lor (1999) state that, questionnaire data give only a 'snapshot' of learners' beliefs and this might not be sufficient to understand the complexity of learners' beliefs.

The main items concerning beliefs used in this study were modified based on the version of the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI, Horwitz, 1987b), Cotterall (1995) and Intaraprasert (2004). According to Horwitz (1999), even though a wide variety of cultural groups contributed to its development, the BALLI aims at eliciting "commonly held beliefs". Therefore, she recommends that research studies on beliefs of a certain cultural group consider identifying and perhaps adding beliefs specific to the target population. This suggestion is similar to Benson and Lor's (1999) who argued that beliefs about learning should not be viewed independently of context. Consequently, some items were modified to suit the Chinese context in this study. For



example, Item 13 ‘It is OK to guess if you do not know a word in the foreign language’ was changed into ‘It is OK to guess if I do not know the meaning of a new word in English.’ In addition, a few items were added based on Cotterall’s (1995) factor analysis in order to meet the objectives of this research. For example, Item 10 ‘I find it helpful to have a test regularly from the teacher’ was used to elicit learners’ beliefs about the role of the teacher and feedback. Moreover, some items were based on Intaraprasert (2004), such as Item 35 ‘Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well’. Finally, some items were added by the researcher to complement the beliefs about media utilization in EFL. As a result, forty-two items were administered in all. Concerning the different situations between students and teachers, some items were indicated as “S” for students and others “T” for teachers. For example, Item 6 ‘I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak this language very well’ was modified as:

**S: I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.**

**T: Students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.**

Consequently, four categories of items in the questionnaire were described as: adopted items with no change, slightly changed items, deleted items and additional items.

- **Category 1: Adopted Items with No Change**

English is the first foreign language in China in general; obviously, Chinese people normally regard ‘a foreign language’ as English. The adopted items with no change were used in both students’ and teachers’ questionnaire. They are:

15. S/T: I have foreign language aptitude.

21. S/T: It is important to practice in the language laboratory.

22. S/T: Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.

- 24. S/T: It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.
- 25. S/T: Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.
- 32. S/T: People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.
- 34. S/T: Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

- **Category 2: Slightly Changed Items**

Because the present study is intended to explore beliefs about learning English rather than other foreign languages, it is better to replace ‘a foreign language’ with ‘English’ in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding. The slightly changed items include the following:

- 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.

**S/T: It is easier for children than adults to learn English.**

- 2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.

**S/T: Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.**

- 6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak this language very well.

**S: I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.**

**T: Students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.**

- 7. It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.

**S/T: It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.**

- 8. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.

**S: It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.**

**T: Students need to know English culture in order to speak English well.**

- 9. You shouldn't say anything in a foreign language until you can say it correctly.

**S: I should not say anything in English until I can say it correctly.**

**T: Students should not say anything in English until they can say it correctly.**

12. If I heard someone speaking the language I am trying to learn, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.

**S: If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to him/her so that I could practice my speaking.**

**T: If students heard someone speaking English, they would go up to him/her so that they can practice their speaking.**

13. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language.

**S: It is OK to guess if I do not know the meaning of a new word in English.**

**T: It is OK to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English.**

16. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.

**S/T: Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.**

17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.

**S/T: It is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class.**

18. I feel self-conscious speaking the foreign language in front of other people.

**S: I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.**

**T: Students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.**

19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.

**S: If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get**

**rid of them later on.**

**T: If students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard for them to get rid of such mistakes later on.**

20. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.

**S/T: Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.**

23. If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.

**S: If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.**

**T: If students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it.**

26. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from English.

**S/T: Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Chinese.**

27. If I learn to speak this language very well, it will help me get a good job.

**S: If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.**

**T: If students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job.**

28. It is easier to read and write this language than to speak and understand it.

**S/T: It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.**

29. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.

**S/T: People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English.**

30. Americans think that it is important to speak a foreign language.

**S/T: Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.**

31. I would like to learn this language so that I can get to know its speakers better.

**S: I would like to learn English so that I can make friends with some foreigners.**

**T: Students would like to learn English so that they can make friends with some foreigners.**

33. Americans are good at learning foreign languages.

**S/T: Chinese are good at learning English.**

- **Category 3: Deleted Items**

For most Chinese, English is the only foreign language; therefore, they cannot make a comparison with other foreign languages. Consequently, the following items are unnecessary in the present study. These items were replaced by additional items with the same numbers. The deleted items include:

3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.

5. The language I am trying to learn is structured in the same way as English.

10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.

11. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.

- **Category 4: Additional Items**

The items were added to explore learners' and teachers' beliefs about the eight aspects in this study. They are:

3. S/T: A teacher should speak some Chinese to teach English.

4. S/T: English is learned mainly through imitation.

5. S: I learn English the same way as I learn Chinese.

T: Students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese.

10. S: I find it helpful to have a test regularly from the teacher.

T: Taking a test regularly is helpful for students.

11. S: I need the teacher to tell me how I am progressing.

T: Students need their teacher to tell them how they are progressing.

14. S: I like the teacher to tell me what to do after class.

T: Students like their teacher to tell them what to do after class.

35. S: Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well.

T: Extra-curricular activities enable my students to learn English well.

36. S: I can improve my English if I often chat with English native speakers on line.

T: Students can improve their English if they often chat with English native speakers on line.

37. S/T: It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.

38. S/T: It is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.

39. S: I normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.

T: Students normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.

40. S: I often use the Internet to help me learn English outside class.

T: Students often use the Internet to help them learn English outside class.

41. S/T: Multimedia is very useful in learning English.

42. S: I like the teacher to tell me what to do in class.

T: Students like their teacher to tell them what to do in class.

Items 4 and 14 were modified to be used in the first part of both questionnaires.

**Item 4:** The language I am trying to learn is: 1) a very difficult language; 2) a difficult

language; 3) a language of medium difficulty; 4) an easy language; and 5) a very easy language. It is modified as:

- **English is: 1) a very difficult language; 2) a difficult language; 3) a language of moderate difficulty; 4) an easy language; and 5) a very easy language.**

**Item 14:** If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year; 2) 1-2 years; 3) 3-5 years; 4) 5-10 years; 5) you cannot learn a language in 1 hour a day. It is modified as:

- **If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1) 2 years or less; 2) 3 to 5 years; 3) more than 5 years.**

In order to have a clear overall picture of beliefs about learning English, eight categories were classified based on eight aspects of English language learning. Forty-two plus two additional items are categorized as:

- 1) The difficulty of language learning (Items Extra 1 and 2; 6, 24 and 28);
- 2) Foreign language aptitude (Item 1, 2, 15, 22, 29, 32, 33 and 34);
- 3) The nature of language learning (Item 4, 8, 16, 20, 25 and 26);
- 4) Strategy use (Item 5, 7, 9, 12, 13, 18 and 19);
- 5) Motivation and expectations (Item 3, 23, 27, 30 and 31);
- 6) The role of the teacher and feedback (Item 10, 11, 14 and 42);
- 7) The role of media utilization in EFL (Item 21, 36, 37, 38 and 41); and
- 8) Learners' independence (Item 17, 35, 39 and 40).

Based on the modified items above, two questionnaires were administered to collect the research data. A summary of the items is shown in Figure 3.2.

1. S/T: It is easier for children than adults to learn English.
2. S/T: Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.
3. S/T: A teacher should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English.
4. S/T: English is learned mainly through imitation.
5. S: I learn English the same way as I learn Chinese.  
T: Students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese.
6. S: I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.  
T: Students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.
7. S/T: It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.
8. S: It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.  
T: Students need to know English culture in order to speak English well.
9. S: I should not say anything in English until I can say it correctly.  
T: Students should not say anything in English until they can say it correctly.
10. S: I find it helpful to have a test regularly from the teacher.  
T: Taking a test regularly is helpful for my students.
11. S: I need the teacher to tell me how I am progressing.  
T: Students need their teacher to tell them how they are progressing.
12. S: If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to him/her so that I could practice my speaking.  
T: If students hear someone speaking English, they would go up to him/her so that they can practice their speaking.
13. S: It is OK to guess if I do not know the meaning of a new word in English.  
T: It is OK to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English.
14. S: I like the teacher to tell me what to do after class.  
T: Students like their teacher to tell them what to do after class.
15. S/T: I have foreign language aptitude.
16. S/T: Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.
17. S/T: It is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class.
18. S: I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.  
T: Students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.  
get rid of them later on.
19. S: If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to  
T: If students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard for them to get rid of such mistakes later on.
20. S/T: Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.
21. S/T: It is important to practice in the language laboratory.
22. S/T: Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.
23. S: If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.  
T: If students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it.

**Figure 3.2** A Summary of the Items of Beliefs



24. S/T: It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.
25. S/T: Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.
26. S/T: Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Chinese.
27. S: If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.  
T: If students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job.
28. S/T: It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.
29. S/T: People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English.
30. S/T: Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.
31. S: I would like to learn English so that I can make friends with some foreigners.  
T: Students would like to learn English so that they can make friends with some foreigners.
32. S/T: People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.
33. S/T: Chinese are good at learning English.
34. S/T: Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.
35. S: Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well.  
T: Extra-curricular activities enable students to learn English well.
36. S: I can improve my English if I often chat with English native speakers on line.  
T: Students can improve their English if they often chat with English native speakers on line.
37. S/T: It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the tradition classroom.
38. S/T: It is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.
39. S: I normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.  
T: Students normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.
40. S: I often use the Internet to help me learn English outside class.  
T: Students often use the Internet to help them learn English outside class.
41. S/T: Multimedia is very useful in learning English.
42. S: I like their teacher to tell me what to do in class.  
T: Students like their teacher to tell them what to do in class.

**Figure 3.2 (Cont.)** A Summary of the Items of Beliefs

### ***3.5.1.1 The Design of the Student Questionnaire***

The Student Questionnaire consisted of three parts: the first part was a ‘Student Profile’ which was designed to collect data about the student, namely, the participants’ names (on a voluntary basis), nicknames (in case the name was used to interpret some of the data analysis anonymously), age, gender, major, academic year, language learning experience and self-evaluation of one’s language ability. In addition,

a freshman was required to provide his/her English grade in the Nation-Wide Standardized Matriculation Test and for the sophomore the grade of the College English Test (CET) Band-4 grade was requested. The purpose of collecting the information was to use the data to compare the beliefs about learning the English language held by university students who have different levels of language proficiency.

The second part was 'Learners' beliefs about learning English as a Foreign Language' based on the modified version of the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI, Horwitz, 1987b), Cotterall (1995) and Intaraprasert (2004). In this section, students were required to rank their responses on 5-Likert scales (Likert, 1932) which ranged from 'Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral / Unsure, Agree and Strongly agree'. Apart from these two main parts, students were requested to write any comments or suggestions they might have. This was the third part of the questionnaire.

It should be noted that the Student Questionnaire was translated into Chinese and tried out in a pilot study consisting of interviews with a few students chosen at random before it was carried out among the whole population. The purpose of a pilot study was to elicit any beliefs about language learning that might be unique to the target population and that might therefore have to be added to the Student Questionnaire. For the main study, the Students Questionnaire was administered to 1, 214 students at six universities in order to collect the quantitative data for the present study. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) for the Student Questionnaire is .729 which was considered acceptable, and was higher than the criterion of .70 as suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (1993).

### ***3.5.1.2 The Design of the Teacher Questionnaire***

There were also three parts to the Teacher Questionnaire. The first part was the 'Instructor Profile' which contained the teacher's name (on a voluntary basis), nickname (for the purpose of identifying data), highest academic qualification, years of teaching experience and gender. In addition, a request for a 15-minute interview was made to the teachers so that the volunteers could be contacted later on. The second part was 'Beliefs about Learning English as a Foreign Language'. These items were the same as the items in the Student Questionnaire and were intended to compare similarities and differences in beliefs between students and teachers. The third part was for additional comments for which teachers were requested to write suggestions or comments if they had any. The Teacher Questionnaire was also translated for the convenience of the teacher participants. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) for the Teacher Questionnaire is .819 which was considered acceptable, and was higher than the criterion of .70 as suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (1993).

Both the Student and the Teacher Questionnaires were drafted in English when the researcher finished writing her research proposal in early March, 2007. To ensure greater accuracy of research results, especially for the convenience of student participants, students and teachers' questionnaires were translated into Chinese by the researcher herself. Then, four university teachers of English from the College English Department were invited by the researcher to discuss the Chinese wording of the translation and checked for the validity of the questionnaire items in order to avoid any ambiguity. After that, a pilot study was administered among a group of students on the south campus at Guizhou University which was convenient for the researcher

since she has been working there as an English teacher for many years. Lastly, the final Student and Teacher Questionnaires in Chinese were prepared and hardcopies were made to be administered to the student and teacher participants at the six universities in the southwest of China.

For the Student Questionnaire, most statements of beliefs used the first pronoun 'I' in order to allow students to express their own thoughts or ideas rather than those of others'. However, for the sake of reducing redundancy of language, words such as 'I think', 'I feel', 'I believe', etc., are normally deleted in most of the Chinese items in the questionnaire. For the Teacher Questionnaire, those items which used 'I' were normally changed to 'Students' except Item 15, 'I have a foreign language aptitude'. The intention was to explore what English teachers think about this statement regarding themselves as successful language learners in contrast to some of their students who were comparatively unsuccessful in learning English.

Both the Student and the Teacher Questionnaires used 5-Likert scales. The scales are valued as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

1= Strongly Disagree  
 2= Disagree  
 3= Unsure  
 4 = Agree  
 5 = Strongly Agree

Participants were required to decide what degree they preferred for each item of beliefs. A sample of the questionnaire is shown in English and Chinese below:

**English version:**

A Statement of Beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
0: Languages are learned mainly through imitation.				√	

**Chinese version:**

学 习 者 信 念	1	2	3	4	5
0: 语言学习主要是通过模仿。				√	

Both English and Chinese versions of the Student and Teacher Questionnaires can be seen in Appendices 1 to 4.

**3.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews**

According to Merriam (1998, p.74), a semi-structured interview ‘...is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time’. The purpose of semi-structured interviews was to collect qualitative data to support and clarify the information extracted from the students’ questionnaire. One of the advantages of this method is that it is flexible enough to allow the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world-view of the participants, and to new or unforeseen ideas on the topic. Consequently, this method is often used by a great number of researchers. However, according to Robson (1993), the interviewer needs more skills and experience to make profitable use of its flexibility. Otherwise, the data might be biased and unreliable. Another shortcoming is that it is time-consuming to interpret the data.

***3.5.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews of Students***

Student interviews were conducted with a selected group of students after the questionnaire was administered. Guided questions for the semi-structured interviews of students (both English and Chinese versions) can be seen in Appendix 5. The main purpose of the interview was intended to gather qualitative data to answer the research questions for this study. The interviewees from the quantitative

part were invited to attend interviews on a voluntary basis and the researcher's selection according to the grades in the English test either from NSMT (for freshmen) or CET-Band 4 (for sophomores). Both versions of English and Chinese guided questions for students' semi-structured interview are shown in Appendix 5. Four university teachers of English from the College English Department were invited by the researcher to discuss the guided questions in order to explore more useful information from the student participants. Chinese was used as the working language in the interviews. All the students' interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed more or less verbatim and translated into English for analysis. Field notes documented the setting, participants, events, acts, and gestures of the interviewers (Glensne and Peshkin, 1992). Details of the students' interviews will be described in the qualitative data analysis in Section 4.3.1.

### ***3.5.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews of Teachers***

The teacher interviews were conducted in a similar way to those for the student as student interviews. The guided questions for the teacher semi-structured interview were based on the Teacher Questionnaire which covered 8 aspects. Some questions were revised after the pilot study. Both versions of guided questions in English and Chinese for the teachers' semi-structured interview are shown in Appendix 6. In the same way as the Students' Guided Questions, four university teachers of English from College English Department were invited by the researcher to discuss the guided questions in order to explore more useful information from the teacher participants. Chinese was also used as working language in the interviews for a better understanding and convenience. All the teachers' interviews were tape-recorded, more or less transcribed verbatim and translated into English for data

analysis. Field notes were documented as well. Details of the teachers' interview will be described in the qualitative data analysis in Section 4.3.2.

### **3.6 Procedure for Data Collection**

As discussed previously, different research methods have their own advantages and disadvantages. Obviously, it is useful to investigate beliefs held by Chinese university students and teachers of English using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. According to Johnson (1977, p. 9), 'research methods are procedures a researcher follows in attempting to achieve the goals of a study'. For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted mixed methods (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989) in one study in which quantitative data taken from two questionnaires is complemented by qualitative data taken from two interviews. The combination of the two methods includes questionnaire items demanding objective responses as well as oral semi-structured interviews with the university students as well as their teachers. The research methods in this study meet the needs of the research objectives (See Section 1.7).

#### **3.6.1 A Pilot Study of the Student Questionnaire and the Semi-structured**

##### **Interview**

In order to investigate the beliefs of a large and potentially diverse student population, a pilot study was carried out before the formal questionnaires were administered to all of the participants.

Before the final versions of both questionnaires were prepared, a pilot study was administered to a group of university Science-oriented major students from Grade 1 (Academic Year 2006) in the south campus at Guizhou University, Guiyang City.

Each item was carefully discussed with all of the students to ensure they could fully understand without misunderstanding and there were no ambiguities for any item. After the students finished doing the questionnaire, all of the students agreed that they were able to answer all of the questions. No ambiguities were found. In addition, about one third of the students gave their comments, suggestions and even some expectations besides answering the questionnaire items with great enthusiasm.

Shortly after the questionnaire pilot study, five students were interviewed by the researcher using prepared semi-structured questions. In order to cover a full spectrum of students, including successful and unsuccessful students, three among the five students were categorized as ‘Successful’ language learners while the other two were categorized as ‘Unsuccessful’ language learners according to their performance in English in the first term at the university. Basic information about these students’ was provided by their English teacher to the researcher in advance. Consequently, a series of semi-structured interviews with guided questions for students were revised and some questions were added in order to explore more information related to students’ beliefs about learning English as a foreign language in China. In terms of student and teacher interviews, these will be explained in detail in the qualitative data analysis in Section 4.3. Both English and Chinese versions of the guided questions are shown in Appendix 5.

After the Chinese versions of the Student and Teacher Questionnaires were discussed and validated among the four invited university teachers of English from College English Department, the final versions of the questionnaires were prepared by the researcher herself so that both student and teacher questionnaires could be



administered to 1, 214 university students and 207 teachers of English at the six universities in the southwest of China from April to June 2007.

### **3.6.2 Data Collection**

The research data were drawn from 1,214 non-English major university students and 207 teachers of English at six universities in the south-west of China. The six universities are located in the City of Guiyang (Guizhou Province), City of Chengdu (Sichuan Province) and City of Kunming (Yunnan Province). As the research is not an officially approved academic task and so it is not related to any department, the researcher had to contact some senior teachers from the College English Department at each university through her own friends in advance. As a result, the procedure for the data collection was successful. Firstly, the data were successfully collected from two universities in Guiyang. Then, the researcher went to Chendu and Kunming for the rest of the data collection. The details of the data collection can be seen in Appendix 7.

The arrangements were well prepared by the English teacher at each university who was invited by the researcher to help administer the questionnaire and the interview: a set of questionnaires was firstly given to students to complete in class. Students took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Some of the students offered their comments and suggestions afterwards. In particular, the researcher appreciated the fact that many students voluntarily provided a means of contact, such as a mobile telephone number or an e-mail address in order to be an interviewee if the researcher needed them. After finishing the questionnaire, some students were chosen to be interviewed on a voluntary basis or with their teacher's recommendation. The students' interviews will be described in detail in Section 4.3.1.

As for the collection of the teachers' questionnaires, it was almost impossible to request all the participants to answer the questionnaire at one time even at one university because of the teachers' busy teaching tasks and the way they work as a university teacher in China. To my knowledge, many of the teachers at university do not need to go to the university office and but they go directly to the classroom according to their teaching timetable, unless they are requested to attend a faculty meeting once a week or every two weeks. As a result, the researcher had to ask the Chair of the College English Department at each university to administer the teachers' questionnaires to each teacher. Then, the responses to the Teachers' Questionnaires were collected by each Chair and returned to the researcher after one week at least. For those teachers who work at the universities in Chendu and Kunming, the questionnaires were sent to the Chair of the College English Department by post one month ahead of the researcher's arrival at that university. Most teachers of the College English Department from the six universities kindly answered the questionnaires, except for those who were not available due to their different kinds of work. In terms of the teachers' interviews, it normally depended on the teacher's convenience and availability. The researcher was very grateful to those who spent their valuable time to sharing their ideas, thoughts and suggestions with her. Details of the teachers' interviews will be described in detail in Section 4.3.2.

### **3.7 Analyzing, Interpreting and Reporting Data**

In the previous sections, the research questions are based on the objectives of the study, followed by the sampling and the rationale for the choice of subjects, methods of data collection, descriptions of eight categories of belief and the procedure for the data collection. Finally, the process of data collection is described. This section concentrates on analyzing quantitative data from the students' and the teachers' questionnaire, and reports the results.

Ideally, it is suggested that when multiple data are systematically analyzed and interpreted, more reliable conclusions result (Eisner, 1991). In this study, the data were collected in the Chinese context; as a result, it was more convenient and feasible to conduct all the questionnaire items in Chinese. Also, Chinese was used as the working language to interview both students and teachers. The data obtained in the questionnaires were analyzed by the researcher with the assistance of the SPSS program.

The purpose of the questionnaire analysis is to answer the research questions in relation to the percentages of beliefs about learning English language held by Chinese university students and their teachers of English. The data was quantified and the SPSS program was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data to find out percentage of the responses by the participants. Chi-square Tests were employed to determine the significant variation patterns in the learners' reported beliefs about learning English as a foreign language at the individual item level: 1) whether the beliefs held by students are related to their gender, field of study and levels of language proficiency; 2) whether the beliefs held by teachers are related to their gender, academic degree and years of teaching experience; and 3) whether the

beliefs about EFL held by learners and teachers vary significantly. If so, it is intended to analyze them in order to see what kinds of variation patterns exist.

### **3.8 Summary**

Based on the related literature review in Chapter 2, most researchers used questionnaires and interviews to explore beliefs about language learning from the participants. The most frequently used instrument is the modified BALLI developed by Horwitz (1987b). In the present study, both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used as the main instruments for the collection of data. The questionnaire items were modified based on BALLI (Horwitz, 1987b), Cotterall's (1995) factor analysis items and Intaraprasert's (2004) items of beliefs. Finally, the procedures for the data analysis were also provided. In the next chapter, all the data obtained from both the students and the teachers' questionnaires will be analyzed, interpreted and reported in detail.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES ABOUT BELIEFS AND SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

The purpose of this chapter is to report the results of the quantitative data from both the students' and the teachers' questionnaires with the assistance of the SPSS program, and the qualitative data from both the students' and teachers' semi-structured interviews are reported.

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This section starts off with beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students, followed by beliefs about learning English held by Chinese teachers of English. Then, significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students according to their gender, major, and level of language proficiency are reported. This is followed by significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English held by Chinese university teachers of English according to their gender, academic degree, and years of teaching experience. Finally, beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers are compared in order to find out if any significant variation patterns exist. In the present study, responses to 42 questionnaire items and two additional items by the 1, 214 students were firstly analyzed. Responses to Student Questionnaire by Chinese

university students were analyzed as ‘Disbeliefs’, ‘Doubts’, and ‘Beliefs’. The degree of beliefs ranged from ‘strongly disagree’ which is valued as 1, ‘disagree’ valued as 2, ‘unsure’ valued as 3, ‘agree’ valued as 4 and ‘strongly agree’ which is valued as 5. These frequency categories were consolidated into three categories so that the main tendencies could be detected clearly. That is to say, responses of 1 and 2 (‘strongly disagree/disagree’) were consolidated into a single category called ‘Disbeliefs’, responses of 3 as one category called ‘Doubts’, and responses of 4 and 5 (‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’) were combined into a single category called ‘Beliefs’. This has been done in order to discern the overall trends in the participants’ responses.

To determine the percentages of beliefs, the researcher adopted the criteria from Intaraprasert (2004, p. 54) that any items with 50% or more of the responses by the participants in either ‘4’ or ‘5’ will be presented.

## **4.2 Results of the Questionnaires about Beliefs**

### **4.2.1 Beliefs about Learning English as a Foreign Language held by Chinese Non-English Major University Students**

In this section, beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by the majority of Chinese non-English major university students are presented from the highest to the lowest percentage based on the criteria above. In order to get an overall picture of what students reported agreeing, the descriptions will be based on the eight categories of the items of beliefs.

Based on the data reported by the 1, 214 Chinese non-English major university students in the southwest of China from the Student Profile in the Students’

questionnaire, Table 4.1 below shows the results from the two additional items of beliefs about learning English.

**Table 4.1** Results from the Additional Items: Beliefs about the Difficulty of Language Learning held by Chinese Non-English Major University Students

<b>Rank/Items</b>	<b>Beliefs (%)</b>
<b>1: English language is:</b>	
Difficult/Very Difficult	32.9
Moderately Difficult	47.1
Easy/Very Easy	19.9
<b>2: Years of Language Learning:</b>	
2 years of less	44.1
3~5years	39.8
More than 5 years	16.1

Meanwhile, fifty percent or more of the students reported that they agreed or strongly agreed on 20 out of 42 items which were stated in the questionnaire. This was evidenced by the rating scale they chose, i.e. 4 or 5 which were indicated by ‘agree or strongly agree’. The results are shown in Table 4.2 as follows.

**Table 4.2** Beliefs about Learning English held by Chinese Non-English Major University Students

<b>Rank/ Items</b>	<b>Beliefs (%)</b>
1. (7) It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	85.0
2. (30) Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.	82.0
3. (27) If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.	79.2
4. (17) It is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class.	76.8
5. (23) If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	76.0
6. (13) It is OK to guess if I do not know the meaning of a new word in English.	75.1
7. (3) A teacher should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English.	73.6
8. (35) Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well.	73.2
9. (6) I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	71.9
10. (8) It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.	71.7
11. (1) It is easier for children than adults to learn English.	71.1

**Table 4.2 (Cont.)** Beliefs about Learning English held by Chinese Non-English Major University Students

<b>Rank/ Items</b>	<b>Beliefs (%)</b>
12. (37) It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.	68.0
13. (41) Multimedia is very useful in learning English.	67.7
14. (25) Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.	65.6
15. (36) I can improve my English if I often chat with English native speakers on line.	64.7
16. (21) It is important to practice in the language laboratory.	59.9
17. (2) Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.	59.3
18. (38) It is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.	54.9
19. (18) I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	54.6
20. (34) Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	50.1

### ● **Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning**

With respect to the Difficulty of Language Learning, Table 4.1 above shows that almost half of them (47.1%) considered English as a moderately difficult language, while 32.9% of the students regarded it as a difficult or very difficult language, and only a small percentage of students (19.9%) agreed that English is easy or very easy. When asked if someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long it would take him/her to become fluent, 44.1% of the students chose '2 years or less', and 39.8% of them chose '3 to 5 years'. It was estimated by the majority of students that English can be learned very well in a relatively short time. The results were consistent with what they reported on the difficulty of language learning. In addition, Table 4.2 shows that 71.9% of students reported believing that they will ultimately learn to speak English very well (Item 6) which shows that most of the students are very optimistic and confident about learning English well in the future.



- **Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude**

In terms of their Foreign Language Aptitude, 71.1% of students agreed that it is easier for children than adults to learn English (Item 1), while 59.3% agreed that some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English (Item 2), and 50.1% believed that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language (Item 34). In other words, most of the students believe that it is better to learn English at a younger age rather than after they have grown up. Although language gifts do exist in the process of language learning, however, it does not mean that only those with a gift for learning a foreign language can learn a foreign language. Students believe that everyone is capable of speaking a foreign language.

- **Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning**

It is also interesting to show that the students take the learning culture as one important factor in the Nature of Language Learning. Slightly more than seventy percent of the participants agreed that it is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well. Also, 65.6% of them reported believing that learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.

- **Category 4: Strategy Use**

The majority of the students (85.0%) reported that they strongly agreed or agreed that it is important to speak English with an excellent accent when they learn English, which shows that the students pay adequate attention to their English accent so that they could speak English confidently when they use the language. Meanwhile, some other items of Strategy Use also attracted the majority of students, such as, 75.1% of students agreed that it is OK to guess if they do not know the meaning of a new word in English, and 54.6% of students reported that they feel self-conscious

speaking English in front of other people, which come in the sixth and the nineteenth rank. The results show that the majority of students care very much about learning and communication strategies in learning English.

- **Category 5: Motivation and Expectations**

In terms of the Motivation and Expectations, 82.0% of students agreed that Chinese people think it is important to learn English nowadays, which is one of the top second, followed by 79.2% of students agreed that if they learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job. Meanwhile, 76.0% of students reported that if they get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it. The results of the students' agreements to these items show that English language has become very important in China, and the students reported believing that they can get a good job if they speak English well. Students are highly motivated by this instrumental force to learn English. Item 3 'Teacher should speak some Chinese to teach English' (73.6%) shows that the students expect their English teachers to use their mother language, i.e., Chinese rather than only the target language English when they teach English in class.

- **Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback**

None of the items from the Role of the Teacher and Feedback were responded to by 50% of the participants. As a result, it reveals that the importance of the role of teacher and feedback is not as important as it was before.

- **Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL**

When it comes to the Role of Media Utilization in EFL, the percentages of the following items show the evidence. They are: Item 37 'It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom' (68.0%), Item 41

‘Multimedia is very useful in learning English’ (67.7%), Item 36 ‘I can improve my English if I often chat with English native speakers on line’ (64.7%), Item 21 ‘It is important to practice in the language laboratory’ (59.9%), and Item 38 ‘It is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom’(54.9%). The results show that the students consider media utilization as a very important means in learning English.

- **Category 8: Learners’ Independence**

With respect to beliefs about Learners’ Independence, 76.8% of students agreed that it is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class, and 73.2% of students reported believing that extra-curricular activities enable them to learn English well. The results show that the majority of students prefer to learn English as independent learners. This is also evidenced by the fact that none of the items from the Role of the Teacher and Feedback were responded to by less than 50% of the participants.

In summary, in this section, students’ responses to two additional items and 42 questionnaire items were reported based on the beliefs about learning the English language. The majority of Chinese university students reported believing that it is important to speak English with an excellent accent. This is followed by the fact that nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English. In the next section, the teachers’ responses to Teacher Questionnaire based on the beliefs about learning the English language will be reported.

#### 4.2.2 Beliefs about Learning English as a Foreign Language held by Chinese University Teachers of English

This section concentrates on analyzing and interpreting quantitative data from teachers' beliefs questionnaire, and reporting the results. Teachers' responses to two additional items and 42 questionnaire items were analyzed with the assistance of the SPSS program first by calculating percentages, and then reported based on the beliefs about learning English.

Based on the data reported by the 207 Chinese non-native English university teachers in the southwest of China, Table 4.3 below shows the results from the two additional items of beliefs about learning English from the Teacher Profile in the Teacher Questionnaire.

**Table 4. 3** Results from the Additional Items: Beliefs about the Difficulty of Language Learning held by Chinese Teachers of English

Rank/ Items		Beliefs (%)
<b>1: English language is:</b>		
	Difficult/Very Difficult	22.7
	Moderately Difficult	47.8
	Easy/Very Easy	29.5
<b>2: Years of Language Learning:</b>		
	2 years of less	27.5
	3~5years	50.2
	More than 5 years	22.2

Based on the data reported by the 207 teachers obtained from the Teachers' Questionnaire, it was found that 19 out of the 42 items met the criteria given earlier, i.e., fifty-three percent or more of the teachers reported that they believed or agreed to what was stated in the questionnaire. Table 4.4 below shows beliefs about learning English reported by the 207 non-native English university teachers.

**Table 4.4** Beliefs about Learning English held by Chinese University Teachers of English

<b>Rank/ Items</b>	<b>Beliefs (%)</b>
1. (13) It is OK to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English.	84.1
2. (8) Students need to know English culture in order to speak English well.	82.1
3. (18) Students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	78.3
4. (35) Extra-curricular activities enable my students to learn English well.	77.8
5. (17) It is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class.	77.3
6. (41) Multimedia is very useful in learning English.	76.8
7. (2) Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.	75.8
8. (30) Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.	74.9
9. (1) It is easier for children than adults to learn English.	72.0
10. (3) A teacher should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English.	71.0
11. (27) If students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job.	68.1
12. (7) It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	65.7
13. (23) If students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it.	64.3
14. (25) Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.	63.8
15. (36) Students can improve their English if they often chat with English native speakers on line.	56.5
16. (10) Taking a test regularly is helpful for students.	55.6
17. (37) It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.	55.6
18. (42) Students like their teacher to tell them what to do in class.	55.6
19. (34) Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	53.1

### ● Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning

In Table 4.3, Additional Item 1 shows that nearly half of the teachers (47.8%) considered English as a moderately difficult language, while 22.7% of them regarded it as a difficult or very difficult language, and almost one third (29.5%) of them

reported that English is easy or very easy. When asked if someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long it would take him/her to become fluent, just half of the teachers chose '3~5 years', nearly one third of them chose '2 years or less', and 22.2% reported that more than five years are needed. It was estimated by the majority of teachers that English can be learned very well within a moderately short time. The results were consistent with what they reported on the difficulty of language learning. No items about the Difficulty of Language Learning were reported from 42 items of beliefs based on the given criteria.

- **Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude**

Regarding beliefs about Foreign Language Aptitude, 75.8% of teachers reported believing that some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English; 72.0% of teachers agreed that it is easier for children than adults to learn English; and 53.1% of teachers agreed that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. These beliefs offered evidence that a high percentage of teachers believed that language aptitude does play an important role in the process of language learning.

- **Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning**

In terms of belief about the Nature of Language Learning, 82.1% of teachers reported believing that students need to know English culture in order to speak English well while 63.8% of teachers reported believing that learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.

- **Category 4: Strategy Use**

The majority of the teachers (84.1%) reported that they strongly agreed or agreed that it is OK to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English (Item 13), which was categorized in the beliefs about Strategy Use. Besides,

78.3% of teachers reported believing that students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people. Moreover, 65.7% of teachers reported believing that it is important to speak English with an excellent accent. When taking a close look at the items which teachers reported ‘strongly agree or agree’, we may have an overall impression that teachers highly value Strategy Use in language learning.

- **Category 5: Motivation and Expectations**

When it comes to beliefs about Motivation and Expectations, four items were reported as Beliefs based on the set criteria. More than seventy percent of the teachers reported believing that Chinese people think it is important to learn English nowadays; 71.0% of the teachers reported believing that a teacher should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English; 68.1% of the teachers reported believing that if students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job; and 64.3% of the teachers reported believing that if students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it. The results of these items show some of the factors which really motivate Chinese students to learn English. Similarly, most of the teachers reported believing that teachers should speak some Chinese when they teach English in class.

- **Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback**

In terms of beliefs about the Role of Teacher and Feedback, 55.6% of the teachers reported believing that taking a test regularly is helpful for students, and that students like to be told what to do in class. The results show that teachers believe that the role they play in the language learning is very important to the students.

- **Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL**

When taking beliefs about the Role of Media Utilization in EFL into consideration, we found that 76.8% of the teachers reported believing that multimedia is very useful in learning English; 56.5% of the teachers reported believing that students can improve their English if they often chat with English native speakers on line. Moreover, 55.6% of the teachers reported believing that it is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.

- **Category 8: Learners' Independence**

Concerning beliefs about Learners' Independence, 77.8% of the teachers reported believing that extra-curricular activities enable their students to learn English well, which is one of the top four. In addition, 77.3% of teachers reported believing that it is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class. The results obviously show that teachers believe that students should develop their independence in learning English.

In summary, this section reports the beliefs reported by the 207 Chinese university teachers of English at the six universities in the southwest of China. The majority of university teachers of English reported believing that it is all right to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English. Similarly, a high percentage of the teachers agreed that students need to know English culture in order to speak English well. In the following sections, students' responses to 42 and two additional items based on their gender, major, and level of language proficiency are analyzed and significant variation patterns in beliefs will be described in detail.



### **4.2.3 Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English held by Chinese University Students According to Variables**

In the previous Section 4.2.1, beliefs held by Chinese university students were reported based on certain criteria by using the descriptive statistics data analysis without considering significant differences. In this section, the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests were employed to determine the significant variation patterns in learners' reported beliefs about learning English as a foreign language at the individual item level, which is associated with their gender, major, and level of language proficiency among 1,214 Chinese non-English major university students in this specific research. The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests are used to compare the actual frequencies with which participants gave different responses on the 5-point rating scale, a method of analysis closer to the raw data than comparisons based on average responses for each item. For the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests, responses of 1 and 2 ('Strongly Disagree', and 'Disagree') were consolidated into a single 'Disbeliefs' category; responses of 3 'Unsure' were one individual 'Doubts' category; and responses of 4 and 5 ('Agree' and 'Strongly Agree') were combined into a single 'Beliefs' category. The purpose of consolidating the five degrees of response into three categories of beliefs is to obtain cell sizes with expected values high enough to ensure a valid analysis (Green and Oxford, 1995, p. 271).

According to McCall (1970, p.230), the level of significance is usually set at .05 and sometimes (but rarely) at .01 or .001. As Kohout (1974) states, the .05 level is routinely used in the Social and Behavioral Sciences. Concerning the levels of significant differences associated with each variable, that is, gender, major, and level of language proficiency, a conservative level of significance ( $\alpha < .001$  and  $\alpha < .01$ ) and

a more liberal level ( $\alpha < .05$ ) are both adopted in this study which show the degree of significance in a strong or weak way. That is, if the probability of an event is .001, the researcher expects this event to occur 1 in 1000 times or less, and if the probability of an event is .05, that means the expectation of occurrence is 5 in 100 times or less.

In this section, students' responses to Student Questionnaire were analyzed by using the SPSS program with the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests and beliefs in terms of the student's gender, major field of study and level of language proficiency will be reported, respectively.

#### ***4.2.3.1 Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in***

##### ***Terms of Students' Gender***

In this section, beliefs held by Chinese non-English major university students in terms of gender are reported based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests analysis. Regarding the gender of the participants in this specific research, there were slightly more male than female students (680: 534) from Grade 1 (Academic Year 2006) and Grade 2 (Academic Year 2005). Beliefs held by the 1,214 Chinese non-English major university students in terms of their gender are illustrated according to eight categories of the items of beliefs. For the purpose of getting a general picture of beliefs held by Chinese non-English major university students in terms of their gender in the southwest of China, the significant results are described in detail according to Table 4.5 as follows.

**Table 4.5** Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Students' Gender

Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning (%)					
Additional 1: English language is					
	D/VD	MD	E/V	Observed $\chi^2$	
M	37.8	43.1	19.1		
F	26.8	52.2	21.0	$\chi^2=16.857$	p<.001
		Agree		Observed $\chi^2$	
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.					
M		67.8			
F		77.2		$\chi^2=14.622$	p<.01
24. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.					
M		36.0			
F		29.0		$\chi^2=8.175$	p<.05
Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude (%)					
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English.					
M		68.1			
F		76.2		$\chi^2=17.865$	p<.001
29. People who are good at mathematics and science are not good at learning English.					
M		13.2			
F		8.1		$\chi^2=8.402$	p<.05
Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning (%)					
8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.					
M		68.8			
F		75.5		$\chi^2=7.575$	p<.05
Category 4: Strategy use (%)					
5. I learn English the same way as I learn Chinese.					
M		15.6			
F		11.4		$\chi^2=9.720$	p<.01
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.					
M		82.4			
F		88.4		$\chi^2=8.577$	p<.05
Category 5: Motivation and Expectations (%)					
23. If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.					
M		72.5			
F		80.5		$\chi^2=10.568$	p<.01
27. If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.					
M		75.6			
F		83.7		$\chi^2=12.200$	p<.05
30. Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.					
M		78.4			
F		86.7		$\chi^2=14.199$	p<.05

Note: M=Male, F=Female

**Table 4.5 (Cont.)** Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Students' Gender

	Agree	Observed $\chi^2$	
<b>Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback</b>			
14. I like the teacher to tell me what to do after class.			
M	31.3	$\chi^2=6.212$	p<.05
F	26.6		
42. I like the teacher to tell me what to do in class.			
M	29.1	$\chi^2=15.641$	p<.001
F	21.0		
<b>Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL</b>			
21. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.			
M	54.0	$\chi^2=23.102$	p<.001
F	67.4		
36. I can improve my English if I often chat with English native speakers on line.			
M	62.2	$\chi^2=6.661$	p<.05
F	67.8		
<b>Category 8: Learners' Independence (%)</b>			
17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class.			
M	72.9	$\chi^2=13.62$	p<.01
F	81.6		
35. Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well.			
M	70.6	$\chi^2=6.828$	p<.05
F	76.6		
39. I normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.			
M	22.4	$\chi^2=18.145$	p<.001
F	13.1		
40. I often use the Internet to help me learn English outside class.			
M	24.1	$\chi^2=9.726$	p<.01
F	16.9		

- **Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning**

In this category, in addition to two additional items, three items were used to explore what students think of the difficulty of learning English. The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests in Table 4.5 above show significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English reported by Chinese non-English major university students, with a significantly higher percentage of male compared to female students reported believing that the English language is difficult or very difficult (37.8% and 26.8%). In

the meantime, a significantly higher percentage of female than male students regarded English as moderately difficult (52.2% and 43.1%); and English language is easy or very easy (21.1% and 19.1%). What has been found previously seems to be consistent with the results, that is, a significantly higher percentage of female than male students reported agreeing that they will ultimately learn to speak English very well (77.2% and 67.8%). However, a significantly higher percentage of male than female students reported agreeing that it is easier to speak than understand a foreign language (36.0% and 29.0%).

- **Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude**

In this category, eight items were designed to explore how students regard foreign language aptitude. Based on what students agreed, we found in Table 4.5 that a significantly higher percentage of female compared to male students reported believing that it is easier for children than adults to learn English (76.2% and 68.1%). Meanwhile, a significantly higher percentage of male than female students reported agreeing that people who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English (13.2% and 8.1%).

- **Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning**

As described earlier, male and female students' beliefs regarding the difficulty of language learning were significantly different to some extent. Under this category, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.5 indicate that one out of the six items was found to be significantly different. A significantly higher percentage of female compared to male students reported agreeing that it is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well (75.5% and 68.8%). No significant differences were found in the other five items in this category.

- **Category 4: Strategy Use**

In this category, seven items were designed to deal with learning and communication strategies. The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.5 indicate that two out of the seven items were found to be significantly different. Surprisingly, a significantly higher percentage of female compared to male students reported agreeing that it is important to speak English with an excellent accent (88.4% and 82.4%). Meanwhile, a significantly higher percentage of male than female students reported agreeing that they learn English the same way as they learn Chinese (15.6% and 11.4%).

- **Category 5: Motivation and Expectations**

In this category, five items are designed to explore learners' beliefs about their motivation and expectations in learning English. The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests in Table 4.5 reveal that three out of the five items were found to be significantly different. A significantly higher percentage of female compared to male students reported agreeing that if they get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it (80.5% and 72.5%); if they learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job (83.7% and 75.6%); and nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English (86.7% and 78.4%).

- **Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback**

The results as shown in Table 4.5 through the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests describe significant differences regarding learners' beliefs about the role of teacher and feedback reported by male and female Chinese non-English major university students. Two out of the four items were found to be significantly different in this category. A significantly higher percentage of male compared to female students reported agreeing

that they like their teacher to tell them what to do after class (31.3% and 26.6%); and they like their teacher to tell them what to do in class (29.1% and 26.6%).

- **Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL**

The results as shown in Table 4.5 through the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests describe significant differences regarding beliefs about the role of media utilization in EFL. Two out of the five items were found to be significantly different in this category. A significantly higher percentage of female compared to male students reported agreeing that it is important to practice in the language laboratory (67.4% and 54.0%); and they can improve their English if they often chat with English native speakers on line (67.8% and 62.2%).

- **Category 8: Learners' Independence**

In this category, four items were designed to check how students study English outside their class. The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.5 reveal that all of the items were found to be significantly different. A significantly higher percentage of female compared to male students reported agreeing that it is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class (81.6% and 72.9%); and extra-curricular activities enable them to learn English well (76.6 % and 70.6%). In contrast, in terms of using a computer and the Internet in learning English, a significantly higher percentage of male than female students reported agreeing that they normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom (22.4% and 13.1%); and they often use the Internet to help them learn English outside class (24.1% and 16.9%).

In summary, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests reported in Section 4.2.3.1 determine the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English as a

foreign language held by Chinese non-English major university students associated with their gender. Significant differences of beliefs in this section ranged from  $p < .001$  to  $p < .05$ . In the next section, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests will be reported to determine the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by Chinese university non-English major students associated with their major field of study.

#### ***4.2.3.2 Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Students' Major Field of Study***

In the present investigation, seven hundred and ten students were Science-oriented and five hundred and four were non-Science-oriented major students. With respect to the participants' majors in this specific research, more Science-oriented students than non-Science-oriented students participated in the study. Beliefs held by 1,214 Chinese non-English major university students in terms of their major field of study are illustrated according to eight categories of items of beliefs. The significant results are described in detail according to Table 4.6 below.

**Table 4. 6** Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Students' Major Field of Study

	Agree	Observed $\chi^2$	
<b>Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning (%)</b>			
28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.			
Sci.	45.4		
Non.	37.1	$\chi^2=9.206$	p<.05
<b>Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude (%)</b>			
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.			
Sci.	56.6		
Non.	63.1	$\chi^2=8.871$	p<.05
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.			
Sci.	34.6		
Non.	42.3	$\chi^2=14.631$	p<.01

*Note: Sci.=Science-oriented; Non.=Non-Science-oriented*



**Table 4.6 (Cont.)** Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Students' Major Field of Study

		Agree	Observed $\chi^2$	
Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning (%)				
4. English is learned mainly through imitation.				
Sci.		47.6		
Non.		35.9	$\chi^2=18.733$	p<.001
Category 4: Strategy Use (%)				
12. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to him/her so that I could practice my speaking.				
Sci.		12.7		
Non.		15.5	$\chi^2=7.885$	p<.05
Category 5: Motivation and expectations				
No significant differences were found in this category.				
Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback (%)				
11. I need my teacher to tell me how I am progressing.				
Sci.		43.9		
Non.		52.8	$\chi^2=9.525$	p<.01
14. I like my teacher to tell me what to do after class.				
Sci.		27.0		
Non.		32.3	$\chi^2=6.155$	p<.05
Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL (%)				
21. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.				
Sci.		55.6		
Non.		65.9	$\chi^2=13.644$	p<.01
37. It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.				
Sci.		64.4		
Non.		73.2	$\chi^2=11.338$	p<.01
41. Multimedia is very useful in learning English.				
Sci.		63.7		
Non.		73.4	$\chi^2=13.093$	p<.01
Category 8: Learners' Independence (%)				
39. I normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.				
Sci.		21.1		
Non.		14.3	$\chi^2=12.329$	p<.01

- Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning**

In this category, no significant differences were found with regard to the two additional items of beliefs in terms of students' major field of study as shown in Table 4.6 above. Regarding learning English, one out of the three items was found to be significantly different. The results reveal that a significantly higher percentage of

Science-oriented compared to non-Science-oriented major students reported agreeing that it is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it (45.4% and 37.1%).

- **Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude**

In terms of foreign language aptitude, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests shown in Table 4.6 reveal that two out of the eight items were found to be significantly different. A significantly higher percentage of non-Science-oriented compared to Science-oriented major students reported agreeing that some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English (63.1% and 56.6%); and women are better than men at learning foreign languages (42.3% and 34.6%).

- **Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning**

With respect to beliefs about the nature of language learning according to the students' majors, only one out of the six items was found to be significantly different in this category as shown in Table 4.6. A significantly higher percentage of Science-oriented compared to non-Science-oriented major students agreed that English is learned mainly through imitation (47.6% and 35.9%).

- **Category 4: Strategy Use**

In this category, with respect to beliefs about strategy use held by Science-oriented and non-Science-oriented university students, one out of the seven items was found to be significantly different. A significantly higher percentage of non-Science-oriented compared to Science-oriented major students reported agreeing that if they heard someone speaking English, they would go up to practice their speaking (15.5% and 12.7%).

- **Category 5: Motivation and Expectations**

No significant differences in terms of students' major field of study were found in this category.

- **Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback**

Concerning the role of the teacher and feedback, two out of the four items were found to be significantly different in this category as shown in Table 4.6. A significantly higher percentage of non-Science-oriented compared to Science-oriented major students reported agreeing that they need their teacher to tell them how they are progressing (52.8% and 43.9%); and they like their teacher to tell them what to do after class (32.3% and 27.0%).

- **Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL**

In this category, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests in Table 4.6 show significant differences for three out of the five items about the role of media utilization in EFL in terms of students' majors. A significantly higher percentage of non-Science-oriented compared to Science-oriented major students reported agreeing that it is important to practice in the language laboratory (65.9% and 55.6%); it is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom (73.2% and 64.4%); and multimedia is very useful in learning English (73.4% and 63.7%).

- **Category 8: Learners' Independence**

In this category, four items were designed to explore the learners' independence in learning English language. The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.6 reveal that one of the four items was found to be significantly different. A significantly higher percentage of Science-oriented compared to

non-Science-oriented major students reported agreeing that they normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom (21.1% and 14.3%).

In summary, Section 4.2.3.2 deals with the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests which were reported to determine the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by Chinese non-English major university students associated with their major field of study being categorized as Science-oriented and non-Science-oriented. Items of beliefs with significant differences in this section ranged from  $p < .001$  to  $p < .05$  and were summarized in Table 4.6. Significant differences were found in all categories except Category 5 (beliefs about motivation and expectations). In the next section, beliefs about learning English reported by Chinese university non-English major students according to their level of language proficiency will be described in detail.

#### ***4.2.3.3 Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Students' Level of Language Proficiency***

In this section, significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by Chinese non-English major university students associated with their level of language proficiency are reported in exactly the same way as in Sections 4.2.3.1 and 4.2.3.2.

In this particular investigation, the levels of language proficiency of Chinese university students were categorized as 'High'; 'Medium'; and 'Low' according to their performance based on the scores obtained from NSMT (for Students in Grade 1) and CET-Band-4 (for Students in Grade 2). The details of student participants' characteristics can be seen in Section 3.4.1.

In this section, beliefs about learning English as a foreign language in terms of the students' level of language proficiency are illustrated according to the eight categories of items of beliefs. The results are shown in detail in Table 4.7 below.

**Table 4.7** Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Students' Levels of Language Proficiency

<b>Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning (%)</b>					
Additional 1: English language is					
	D/VD	MD	E/V	<b>Observed<math>\chi^2</math></b>	
H	8.3	41.4	50.4		
M	22.1	56.6	21.4		
L	63.9	30.3	5.8	$\chi^2=29.00$	p<.001
Additional 2: 2years or less/ 3-5years /More than 5years					
H	48.1	40.6	11.3		
M	45.8	40.4	13.9		
L	39.2	38.3	22.5	$\chi^2=16.473$	p<.01
<b>Agree</b>					
<b>Observed<math>\chi^2</math></b>					
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.					
H			86.5		
M			79.8		
L			50.8	$\chi^2=121.256$	p<.001
<b>Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude (%)</b>					
15. I have foreign language aptitude.					
H			62.4		
M			29.5		
L			10.3	$\chi^2=217.558$	p<.001
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.					
H			33.1		
M			34.4		
L			46.4	$\chi^2=24.344$	p<.001
29. People who are good at mathematics and science are not good at learning English.					
H			7.5		
M			9.0		
L			16.1	$\chi^2=39.504$	p<.001
33. Chinese are good at learning English.					
H			18.0		
M			16.2		
L			10.8	$\chi^2=16.48$	p<.01
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.					
H			51.1		
M			53.0		
L			43.9	$\chi^2=20.092$	p<.001

Notes: H=high proficiency; M=medium proficiency; L=low proficiency

**Table 4.7 (Cont.)** Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Students' Levels of Language Proficiency

	Agree	Observed $\chi^2$	
<b>Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning (%)</b>			
8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.			
H	74.4		
M	75.0		
L	64.2	$\chi^2=17.438$	p<.01
16. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.			
H	31.6		
M	31.9		
L	43.6	$\chi^2=23.376$	p<.001
20. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.			
H	9.8		
M	12.9		
L	16.4	$\chi^2=27.299$	p<.001
25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.			
H	61.7		
M	62.6		
L	73.1	$\chi^2=13.434$	p<.01
26. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Chinese.			
H	12.8		
M	20.2		
L	27.8	$\chi^2=17.815$	p<.01
<b>Category 4: Strategy Use (%)</b>			
5. I learn English the same way as I learn Chinese.			
H	11.3		
M	11.1		
L	20.0	$\chi^2=39.441$	p<.001
12. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to him/her so that I could practice my speaking.			
H	18.0		
M	15.4		
L	9.2	$\chi^2=32.891$	p<.001
13. It is OK to guess if I do not know the meaning of a new word in English.			
H	82.0		
M	79.2		
L	64.4	$\chi^2=38.068$	p<.001
18. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.			
H	36.8		
M	51.3		
L	65.8	$\chi^2=49.362$	p<.001

**Table 4.7 (Cont.)** Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Students' Levels of Language Proficiency

	Agree	Observed $\chi^2$	
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of such mistakes later on.			
H	25.6		
M	29.1		
L	33.6	$\chi^2=20.107$	p<.001
<b>Category 5: Motivation and Expectations (%)</b>			
3. A teacher should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English.			
H	64.7		
M	73.8		
L	76.4	$\chi^2=9.723$	p<.05
<b>Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback (%)</b>			
42. I like the teacher to tell me what to do in class.			
H	12.8		
M	23.7		
L	33.9	$\chi^2=29.243$	p<.001
<b>Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL (%)</b>			
21. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.			
H	45.9		
M	61.6		
L	61.7	$\chi^2=21.322$	p<.001
41. Multimedia is very useful in learning English.			
H	70.7		
M	68.5		
L	65.0	$\chi^2=10.273$	p<.05
<b>Category 8: Learners' Independence (%)</b>			
35. Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well.			
H	72.2		
M	76.7		
L	66.7	$\chi^2=14.166$	p<.05
40. I often use the Internet to help me learn English outside class.			
H	32.3		
M	20.8		
L	16.9	$\chi^2=13.942$	p<.05

- **Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning**

The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests in Table 4.7 above show significant differences in beliefs about learning English according to their level of language proficiency reported by Chinese non-English major university students, with a

significantly higher percentage of low (63.9%), compared to medium (22.1%) and high (8.3%) proficiency students reporting that English language is very difficult, while a significantly higher percentage of high (50.4%), compared to medium (21.4%) and low (5.8%) proficiency students regarded English as an easy or very easy language. Most students reported that English language is moderately difficult. A significantly higher percentage of high (48.1%) compared to medium (45.8%) and low (39.2%) proficiency students reported that they would need to spend two years or less to become fluent in English. Significantly higher percentages of high (40.6%) and medium (40.4%) compared to low (38.3%) proficiency students reported that they need 3 to 5 years to attain this goal. A significantly higher percentage of high compared to medium and low (86.5%, 79.8% and 50.8%) proficiency students reported that they will ultimately learn to speak English very well.

- **Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude**

Significant differences were found on five out of the eight items in this category which were shown in Table 4.7. A significantly higher percentage of high compared to medium and low (62.4%, 29.5% and 10.3%) proficiency students reported that they have foreign language aptitude. A significantly higher percentage of low compared to medium and high proficiency students reported agreeing that women are better than men at learning foreign languages (46.6%, 34.4% and 33.1%); and people who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English (16.1%, 9.0% and 7.5%). Meanwhile, concerning beliefs about Chinese people and learning English, a significantly higher percentage of high compared to medium and low proficiency students reported agreeing that Chinese are good at learning English (18.0%, 16.2% and 10.8%). In addition, significantly higher percentages of medium and high



compared to low proficiency levels reported agreeing that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language (53.0% and 51.1%, 43.9%).

- **Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning**

Five out of the six items were found to be significantly different based on the results from the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.7. The results reveal that significantly higher percentages of both medium and high compared to low proficiency students reported agreeing that it is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well (75.0% and 74.4%, 64.2%).

In terms of vocabulary, a significantly higher percentage of students from low compared to medium and high proficiency students reported believing that learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words (43.6%, 31.9% and 31.6%).

With respect to grammar, a significantly higher percentage of low compared to medium and high proficiency students reported agreeing that learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules (16.4%, 12.9% and 9.8%).

To compare English learning to the other school subjects, a significantly higher percentage of low compared to medium and high proficiency students reported believing that learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects (73.1%, 62.6% and 61.7%).

Concerning the role of translation in language learning, a significantly higher percentage of students from low compared to medium and high proficiency students reported agreeing that learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Chinese (27.8%, 20.2% and 12.8%).

- **Category 4: Strategy Use**

Five out of the seven items were found to be significantly different based on the results from the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.7. Significantly higher percentages of low compared to high and medium proficiency students reported agreeing that they learn English in the same way as they learn Chinese (20.0% and 11.3%, 11.1%).

With regard to practicing speaking, a significantly higher percentage of high compared to medium and low proficiency students reported agreeing that if they heard someone speaking English, they would go up to practice their speaking (18.0%, 15.4% and 9.2%).

In terms of guessing a new word, significantly higher percentages of high and medium compared to low proficiency students reported believing that it is OK to guess if they do not know the meaning of a new word in English (82.0%, 79.2% and 64.4%).

With respect to speaking English in front of other people, a significantly higher percentage of low compared to medium and high proficiency students reported believing that they feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people (65.8%, 51.3% and 36.8%).

Considering mistakes, we found that significantly higher percentages of low compared to medium and high proficiency students reported agreeing that if they are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of such mistakes later on (33.6% and 29.1%, 25.6%)

- **Category 5: Motivation and Expectations**

In this category, one out of the five items was found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.7. Concerning the expectations, significantly higher percentages of low and medium compared to high proficiency students reported believing that a teacher should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English (76.4% and 73.8%, 64.7%).

- **Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback**

With respect to the role of the teacher and feedback, one out of the four items was found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.7. A significantly higher percentage of low compared to medium and high proficiency students reported agreeing that they like their teacher to tell them what to do in class (33.9%, 23.7% and 12.8%).

- **Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL**

Two out of the five items in this category were found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.7. Significantly higher percentages of low and medium compared to high proficiency students reported believing that it is important to practice in the language laboratory (61.7% and 61.6%, 45.9%). Regarding the role of multimedia utilization in learning English, a significantly higher percentage of high compared to medium and low proficiency students reported agreeing that multimedia is very useful in learning English (70.7%, 68.5% and 65.0%).

- **Category 8: Learners' Independence**

In this category, two out of the four items were found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.7.

Significantly higher percentages of medium and high compared to low proficiency students reported agreeing that extra-curricular activities enable them to learn English well (76.7% and 72.2%, 66.7%). In terms of accessing the Internet, a significantly higher percentage of high compared to medium and low proficiency students reported agreeing that they often use the Internet to learn English outside class (32.3%, 20.8% and 16.9%).

In summary, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests are reported in Section 4.2.3.3 determine the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English as foreign language held by Chinese non-English major university students associated with their level of language proficiency. Significant differences of items ranged from  $p < .001$  to  $p < .05$  in this section.

#### ***4.2.3.4 Summary***

In summary, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests are reported in Section 4.2.3 determine the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students associated with their gender (Section 4.2.3.1), major (Section 4.2.3.2), and level of language proficiency (Section 4.2.3.3). In the next section, significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English held by Chinese university teachers of English according to variables will be reported in detail.

#### **4.2.4 Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English held by Chinese University Teachers According to Variables**

In Section 4.2.3, beliefs about learning English were reported based on the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests to determine the significant variation patterns in beliefs at the individual item level associated with their gender, major, and level of language proficiency among the 1,214 Chinese non-English major university students in the southwest of China. In this section, the responses of 207 teachers to 42 plus two additional items of the Teachers' Questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS program with the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests and beliefs about learning English held by Chinese university teachers of English in terms of their gender, academic degree, and years of teaching experience are reported respectively. For the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests, responses of 1 and 2 ('Strongly Disagree', and 'Disagree') were consolidated into a single 'Disbeliefs' category; responses of 3 'Unsure' was one individual 'Doubts' category; and responses of 4 and 5 ('Agree' and 'Strongly Agree') were combined into a single 'Beliefs' category. The purpose of consolidating the five levels of responses into three categories was to obtain cell sizes with expected values high enough to ensure a valid analysis (Green and Oxford, 1995, p. 271) as was done for the students' report previously.

##### ***4.2.4.1 Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Teachers' Gender***

In this section, beliefs held by Chinese university teachers in terms of their gender are reported based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests analysis. Regarding the gender of the teacher participants in the present research, there are substantially more female than male teachers of English (168: 39) which was shown

in Table 3.2. Beliefs reported by Chinese university teachers of English in terms of their gender are illustrated based on eight categories of items of beliefs. The results are described in detail in Table 4.8 below.

**Table 4.8** Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Teachers' Gender

Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning (%)					
Additional 1: English language is					
	D/VD	MD	E/V	Observed $\chi^2$	
M	41.0	33.3	25.6		
F	18.5	51.2	30.4	$\chi^2=9.453$	p<.01
				Agree	Observed $\chi^2$
Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude (%)					
5. I have foreign language aptitude.					
M	41.0				
F	48.2			$\chi^2=13.619$	p<.01
Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning					
No significant differences were found in this category.					
Category 4: Strategy Use					
No significant differences were found in this category.					
Category 5: Motivation and Expectations					
No significant differences were found in this category.					
Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback					
No significant differences were found in this category.					
Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL					
No significant differences were found in this category.					
Category 8: Learners' Independence (%)					
No significant differences were found in this category.					

- **Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning**

In this category, one out of the five items (including two additional items) was found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.8 above reported by Chinese university teachers of English in terms of their gender. A significantly higher percentage of male compared to female teachers reported that English language is difficult or very difficult (41.0% and 18.5%), while a significantly higher percentage of female compared to male teachers

reported the English language as moderately difficult (51.2% and 33.3%), and English is easy or very easy (30.4% and 25.6%).

- **Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude**

In this category, significant differences were found in one out of the eight items based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.8. Regarding language aptitude, a significantly higher percentage of female compared to male teachers reported agreeing that they have foreign language aptitude (48.2% and 41.0%).

In terms of the beliefs reported by Chinese university teachers of English according to their gender, no significant differences were found in Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning; Category 4: Strategy Use; Category 5: Motivation and Expectations; Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback; Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL; and Category 8: Learners' Independence.

In summary, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests reported in Section 4.2.4.1 determined the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English reported by Chinese university teachers associated with their gender. Beliefs with significant differences in this section ranged from  $p < .001$  to  $p < .05$  and were summarized in Table 4.8 above. In Section 4.2.4.2, significant variation patterns in learner beliefs held by Chinese university teachers in terms of teachers' academic degree will be reported.

#### ***4.2.4.2 Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Teachers' Academic Degree***

In this section, beliefs held by Chinese university teachers of English in terms of their academic degree are reported based on basis of the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test analysis. The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests reported in Section

4.2.4.2 determine the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by Chinese university teachers of English associated with their academic degree, which was categorized as Bachelor's Degree (39.6%), Postgraduate Degree (57.5%), and Other Education Certificates (2.9%). Details of teachers' academic degrees can be seen in Section 3.4.2. No significant differences were found in the beliefs held by Chinese university teachers of English about learning English as a foreign language in terms of this variable.

In Section 4.2.4.3, significant variation patterns in beliefs reported by Chinese university teachers of English in terms of their years of teaching experience will be reported.

#### ***4.2.4.3 Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs about Learning English in Terms of Teachers' Teaching Experience***

In this section, beliefs reported by Chinese university teachers of English in terms of their years of teaching experience are reported based on the basis of the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests analysis. In terms of teachers' teaching experience in this study, teacher participants were categorized according to the number of years they have been teaching English at university. Teachers who have been teaching from 1 to 5 years were described as the 'Least Experienced'; those with 6~15 years of teaching experience were the 'More Experienced'; and those with more than 15 years of teaching experience were categorized as the 'Most Experienced' teachers. From the profile of teachers' questionnaire, one hundred and thirty teachers (62.8%) were Least Experienced (E1), sixty five (31.4%) were More Experienced (E2) and twelve (5.8%) were Most Experienced (E3) teachers. Details of teachers' years of teaching experience can be seen in Section 3.4.2. Beliefs held by Chinese university



teachers of English in terms of their years of teaching experience are illustrated based on the eight categories of items of beliefs.

Based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests, two out of the forty two plus two additional items were found to be significantly different in this variable. The results are described in detail in Table 4.9 below.

**Table 4.9** Significant Variation Patterns in Beliefs in Terms of Teachers' Teaching Experience

	Agree	Observed $\chi^2$	
<b>Category 4: Strategy Use (%)</b>			
5. Students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese.			
E1	25.4	$\chi^2=12.878$	p<.05
E2	29.2		
E3	8.3		
<b>Category 8: Learners' Independence (%)</b>			
40. Students often use the Internet to help them learn English outside class			
E1	23.8	$\chi^2=10.063$	p<.05
E2	23.1		
E3	16.7		

*Note:* E1=Least Experienced (1~5 years); E2=More Experienced (6~15 years); E3=Most Experienced (More than 15 years)

- **Category 4: Strategy Use**

In terms of strategy use, one out of the seven items was found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.9. Significantly higher percentages of more and most compared to least experienced teachers reported agreeing that their students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese (29.2% and 25.4%, 8.3%).

- **Category 8: Learners' Independence**

In this category, one out of the four items was found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.9. Significantly higher percentages of least and more compared to most experienced teachers reported

agreeing that their students use the Internet to help them learn English outside class or not (23.8% and 23.1%, 16.7%).

No significant differences were found in Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning; Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude; Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning; Category 5: Motivation and Expectations; Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback; and Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL.

In summary, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests reported in Section 4.2.4.3 determine the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by Chinese university teachers associated with their years of teaching experience. The beliefs with significant differences in this section ranged from  $p < .001$  to  $p < .05$  and were summarized in Table 4.9.

#### ***4.2.4.4 Summary***

In summary, the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests were reported in Section 4.2.4 determine the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English held by Chinese university teachers of English associated with their gender (Section 4.2.4.1), academic degree (Section 4.2.4.2), and years of teaching experience (Section 4.2.4.3). In Section 4.2.5, a comparison of beliefs about learning English as a foreign language reported by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English will be reported in detail.

#### 4.2.5 A Comparison of Beliefs about Learning English as a Foreign

##### Language held by Chinese University Students and Teachers

As described in the previous sections (4.2.3 and 4.2.4), significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers in the southwest of China have been reported according to the results from the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests with the assistance of the SPSS program. In this section, a comparison of beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers will be reported according to the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.10. Some of the forty-two items of beliefs have been neutralized so that both students and teachers' responses to these items can be analyzed in a reasonable and appropriate way. All the results are described in detail based on Table 4.10 below.

**Table 4.10** A Comparison of Beliefs about Learning English held by Students and Teachers

Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning (%)					
Additional 1: English language is					
	D/VD	MD	E/V	Observed $\chi^2$	
S	32.9	47.1	19.9	$\chi^2=13.457$	p<.01
T	22.7	47.8	29.5		
Additional 2: 2 years or less/ 3-5 years			/More than 5years		
S	44.1	39.8	16.1	$\chi^2=19.016$	p<.001
T	28.0	49.8	22.2		
	Agree		Observed $\chi^2$		
6. Students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.					
S			71.9	$\chi^2=1.833$	p<.001
T			26.1		
28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.					
S			41.9	$\chi^2=12.386$	p<.01
T			29.0		

Note: S=Students; T=Teachers

**Table 4.10 (Cont.)** A Comparison of Beliefs about Learning English held by Students and Teachers

	Agree	Observed $\chi^2$	
<b>Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude (%)</b>			
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.			
S	59.3		
T	75.8	$\chi^2=22.030$	p<.001
15. I have foreign language aptitude.			
S	27.4		
T	46.9	$\chi^2=48.863$	p<.001
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.			
S	37.8		
T	42.0	$\chi^2=17.156$	p<.001
29. People who are good at mathematics and science are not good at learning English.			
S	11.0		
T	7.2	$\chi^2=6.572$	p<.05
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.			
S	21.5		
T	35.3	$\chi^2=29.976$	p<.001
33. Chinese are good at learning English.			
S	14.8		
T	19.3	$\chi^2=14.239$	p<.01
<b>Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning (%)</b>			
8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.			
S	71.7		
T	81.6	$\chi^2=10.502$	p<.01
16. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.			
S	35.3		
T	16.4	$\chi^2=33.788$	p<.001
<b>Category 4: Strategy Use (%)</b>			
5. Students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese.			
S	13.8		
T	25.1	$\chi^2=63.055$	p<.001
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.			
S	85.0		
T	66.2	$\chi^2=45.838$	p<.01
9. Students should not say anything in English until they can say it correctly.			
S	17.7		
T	20.8	$\chi^2=13.298$	p<.01
13. It is OK to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English.			
S	75.1		
T	84.1	$\chi^2=7.842$	p<.05
18. Students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.			
S	54.0		
T	78.3	$\chi^2=46.934$	p<.001

**Table 4.10 (Cont.)** A Comparison of Beliefs about Learning English held by Students and Teachers

	Agree	Observed $\chi^2$	
19. If students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of such mistakes later on.			
S	30.1		
T	12.6	$\chi^2=27.438$	$p<.001$
<b>Category 5: Motivation and Expectations (%)</b>			
23. If students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it.			
S	76.0		
T	64.3	$\chi^2=15.336$	$p<.001$
27. If students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job.			
S	79.2		
T	68.6	$\chi^2=13.558$	$p<.01$
30. Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.			
S	82.0		
T	74.9	$\chi^2=7.937$	$p<.05$
31. Students would like to learn English so that they can make friends with some foreigners.			
S	18.3		
T	14.0	$\chi^2=43.471$	$p<.001$
<b>Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback (%)</b>			
10. Taking a test regularly is helpful for students.			
S	46.8		
T	55.6	$\chi^2=6.703$	$p<.05$
11. Students need their teacher to tell them how they are progressing.			
S	47.6		
T	43.5	$\chi^2=9.981$	$p<.01$
14. Students like their teacher to tell them what to do after class.			
S	29.2		
T	54.1	$\chi^2=68.581$	$p<.001$
42. Students like their teacher to tell them what to do in class.			
S	25.5		
T	55.1	$\chi^2=99.175$	$p<.001$
<b>Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL (%)</b>			
21. It is important to practise in the language laboratory.			
S	59.9		
T	39.1	$\chi^2=31.398$	$p<.001$
37. It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.			
S	68.0		
T	55.6	$\chi^2=12.774$	$p<.01$

**Table 4.10 (Cont.)** A Comparison of Beliefs about Learning English held by Students and Teachers

	Agree	Observed $\chi^2$	
38. It is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.			
S	54.9	$\chi^2=13.143$	p<.01
T	41.5		
41. Multimedia is very useful in learning English.			
S	67.7	$\chi^2=7.858$	p<.05
T	76.8		
<b>Category 8: Learners' Independence (%)</b>			
40. Students often use the Internet to help them learn English outside class			
S	20.9	$\chi^2=1.141$	p<.001
T	23.7		

- **Category 1: The Difficulty of Language Learning**

The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests in Table 4.10 show significant variations in four out of the five items (plus two additional items) about the difficulty of language learning reported by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers in the southwest of China. A significantly higher percentage of students compared to teachers reported agreeing that English language is difficult or very difficult (32.9% and 22.7%), while a significantly higher percentage of teachers compared to students reported agreeing that English is easy or very easy (29.5% and 19.9%). Although more students than their teachers regarded English as a difficult language to learn, a significantly higher percentage of students compared to teachers reported agreeing that 2 years or less are needed to be fluent in English (44.1% and 28.0%), while a significantly higher percentage of teachers compared to students reported agreeing that 3 to 5 years (49.8% and 39.8%) and more than five years (22.2% and 16.1%) are needed to become fluent in English.

Significantly higher percentages of students compared to teachers reported agreeing that students will ultimately learn to speak English very well (71.9% and

26.1%); and it is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it (41.9% and 29.0%).

- **Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude**

Concerning foreign language aptitude, six out of the eight items were found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.10.

With respect to a special ability for learning a foreign language, significantly higher percentages of teachers compared to students reported agreeing that some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English (75.8% and 59.3%); they had foreign language aptitude (46.9% and 27.4%); women are better than men at learning foreign languages (42.0% and 37.8%); people who speak more than one language well are very intelligent (35.3% and 21.5%); and Chinese are good at learning English (19.3% and 14.8%). However, considering the field of study, we found that a significantly higher percentage of students compared to teachers reported agreeing that people who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English (11.0% and 7.2%).

- **Category 3: The Nature of Language Learning**

Two out of the six items under this category were found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests shown in Table 4.10.

Considering the culture in learning English, we found that a significantly higher percentage of teachers compared to students reported agreeing that it is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well (81.6% and 71.7%). Regarding vocabulary learning, a significantly higher percentage of students compared to

teachers reported agreeing that learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary (35.3% and 16.4%).

- **Category 4: Strategy Use**

Six out of seven items of beliefs in this category were found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.10.

Regarding strategy use, significantly higher percentages of teachers compared to students reported agreeing that students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese (25.1% and 13.8%); students should not say anything in English until they can say it correctly (20.8% and 17.7%); it is OK to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English (84.1% and 75.1%); and students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people (78.3% and 54.0%). However, in terms of speaking English and students' mistakes, significantly higher percentages of students compared to teachers reported believing that it is important to speak English with an excellent accent (85.0% and 66.2%); and if students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of such mistakes later on (30.1% and 12.6%).

- **Category 5: Motivation and Expectations**

Four out of the five items of beliefs in this category were found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.10.

Taking students' motivation and expectations into consideration, we found that significantly higher percentages of students compared to teachers reported agreeing that if students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it (76.0% and 64.3%); if students learn to speak English very well, it will help



them get a good job (79.2% and 68.6%); Chinese people think it is important to learn English nowadays (82% and 74.9%); and students would like to learn English so that they can make friends with foreigners (18.3% and 14.0%).

- **Category 6: The Role of the Teacher and Feedback**

Four items of beliefs in this category were all found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.10.

With respect to the role of teacher and feedback, significantly higher percentages of teachers compared to students reported agreeing that taking a test regularly is helpful for students (55.6% and 46.8%); students like their teacher to tell them what to do after class (54.1% and 29.2%); and students like their teacher to tell them what to do in class (55.1% and 25.5%). However, a significantly higher percentage of students compared to teachers reported believing that students need their teacher to tell them how they are progressing (47.6% and 43.5%).

- **Category 7: The Role of Media Utilization in EFL**

Four out of the five items in this category were found significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.10.

Significantly higher percentages of students compared to their teachers reported believing that it is important to practice in the language laboratory (59.9% and 39.1%); it is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom (68.0% and 55.6%); and it is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom (54.9% and 41.5%). However, a significantly higher percentage of teachers compared to students reported that multimedia is very useful in learning English (76.8% and 67.7%).

- **Category 8: Learners' Independence**

One out of the four items in this category was found to be significantly different based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests as shown in Table 4.10.

In terms of learners' independence, a significantly higher percentage of teachers compared to their students reported agreeing that students normally use the Internet to help them learn English outside class (23.7% and 20.9.9%).

In summary, in Section 4.2.5, the comparison of beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers was reported based on the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests. Significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English as a foreign language held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English were found to some extent. Significant differences of items ranged from  $p < .001$  to  $p < .05$  in this section which are shown in Table 4.10.

### **4.3 Results of the Semi-Structured Interviews**

The purpose of this section is to report the results of the qualitative data from students' and teachers' semi-structured interviews which were conducted with 78 non-English major university students and 15 Chinese university teachers of English in the southwest of China. The results from the analysis of students' semi-structured interviews are presented first. This is followed by the results from the analysis of teachers' semi-structured interviews.

### 4.3.1 Results from the Semi-Structured Interviews of Students

Students' semi-structured interviews were conducted with a group of students shortly after the Students' Questionnaire was administered to the students in class at the six universities in the southwest of China. The details of the students' semi-structured interviews can be seen in Section 3.5.2.1.

According to the information of contact offered by a lot of students from the Students' Profile in the questionnaire, a certain number of students were selected and invited to be interviewees as volunteers. These students were categorized as *Successful* and *Unsuccessful* English language learners based on their test scores obtained through NSMT (for freshmen) and CET-Band 4 (for sophomores). The cut-off point of 119 is set for NSMT and 425 for CET-Band 4 in order to distinguish *Successful* and *Unsuccessful* English language learners. Those whose English test scores were over 119 in NSMT and 425 in CET-Band 4 were classified as *Successful*, while those whose English scores below these cut-off points were classified as *Unsuccessful* English language learners. According to the university regulations, students are only permitted to take CET-Band 4 after they finish their College English Course within two years. Consequently, the student interviewees at the university were classified as *Successful* and *Unsuccessful* English language learners based on their scores in English in NSMT. The detailed background information of student interviewees is shown in Table 4.11 below.

**Table 4.11** Information about Student Interviewees

	Levels		Gender		Major		Language Proficiency	
	1	2	M	F	Sci.	Non.	Suc.	Unsuc.
No.	35	43	39	39	43	35	38	40

Table 4.11 above shows that 78 students participated in the semi-structured interviews. Apart from the same number of male and female students (39, respectively), the numbers of other variables were affected by the real situation in the procedure for the data collection. It can be seen that more students from Year 2 (43) than Year 1 (35), and more students from Science-oriented (43) than non-Science-oriented (35) major participants. In terms of students' language proficiency, two students insisted on being treated as *Unsuccessful* English language learners although their scores were high enough to be categorized as *Successful*. They claimed that they did not think they were successful in English at all although they could get a good grade in any exam. Detailed guided questions can be seen in Appendix 5. Chinese was used as the working language in the interviews except with one female student who insisted on being interviewed in English because of her confidence in speaking English to the interviewer. Before starting each actual interview, the researcher spent some time explaining the reasons and importance of the interviews and promised to keep the content of interviews confidential in order to make every interviewee relaxed and comfortable to express in their real feeling. Most of the interviews lasted for around 10 minutes and a few of them for over 15 minutes.

All the students' semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed more or less verbatim and translated into English for the analysis. Content analysis was mainly adopted to analyze the transcriptions. In order to better analyze students' semi-structured interviews, responses from *Successful* and *Unsuccessful* English language students to each question were categorized respectively, and then grouped together. The results of thirty-eight *Successful* and forty *Unsuccessful* English language students' semi-structured interviews are presented based on the main 10

guided questions (See Appendix 5) which are related to the eight categories of beliefs about learning English (See Section 3.5.1). The results of students' semi-structured interviews are described in detail below.

**Q1 (1) How do you interpret the term 'aptitude'?**

**(2) Do you think that you have foreign language aptitude?**

Concerning foreign language aptitude, two sub-questions are designed to explore learners' beliefs about this special ability. The first one aims to explore how students interpret the term 'aptitude', and the second one is intended to request the students to estimate their own foreign language aptitude.

Five main interpretations of 'aptitude' were shared by the successful and unsuccessful English language students. According to the results of the students' interviews, 'aptitude' means being diligent, able to learn easily, effective learning, being interested in learning and keeping practicing. The findings are summarized below:

- *S55:...It is from diligence. I don't think 'aptitude' is important. Only if you are diligent, you can be successful...Remember more new words by heart and do more exercises. Like me, I normally do more than ten sets of exam exercises before a test...*
- *S70:... I think it should be some special ability. To me, I just want to do it, but not....I do not have the ability. I learn English, normally, up to my interest...*

A number of the successful and unsuccessful students reported that they have foreign language aptitude to some extent shown in different aspects of learning English. They described that they can speak English well, remember vocabulary quickly, understand listening texts easily, spend a little time but get a better performance, and pronounce excellently. Even one successful student described that he showed his aptitude in taking exams. Examples are:

- *S40:...I feel I have a little...For example, I can remember new words by heart quickly. Once I take a quick glance on that new word, I can remember it...*
- *S74:...my aptitude is...in the examinations. In the middle school, I always got very high scores. In fact, I am not good at showing myself off in class even my teacher asked me to answer a question. Yes, I believe that I am particularly good at taking examinations...*

The majority of the successful students reported that they did not have any foreign language aptitude at all. They described their success in learning English basically as a result of their hard work, interest in English, good background, better learning methods, and a good English teacher rather than foreign language aptitude.

Examples are:

- *S53:...Language learning, I think if you study hard, you can learn it well. ... But I don't think 'aptitude' can become one important factor in one's successful language learning. The most important thing is up to one's hardworking...*
- *S18:...This...I don't have any sense...Emm...only one thing that is up to your interest. Like many boys from my class, their purpose of learning English is only for CET-Band 4 or 6, very utilized. For me, purely saying, just I love it...As my English becomes better, my teacher pays more attention to me. Then I want to learn more, like that...*

Some unsuccessful students also reported that they have a certain kind of foreign language aptitude although they were not successful in learning English. The reasons given varied from: they do not work hard enough to their learning methods are not good. Some students said that if they studied harder, their English performance would be much better. Examples are:

- *S41:... Yes, I have some. In my spoken English....and I learn very fast. If I worked harder, I believe my English performance would be very good. I am ashamed of talking about this...*
- *S34:...I feel that I still have. As I am particularly interested in English, just because of poor learning method,...I have been trying hard to explore a better way. Now I almost found it. It suits me...*

Some unsuccessful students said that they did not have foreign language aptitude. This factor is normally regarded as one of the basic reasons why they could not be successful in learning English. Examples are:

- *S10:... I feel...I feel...I don't have any...that is why...but...if I put my efforts on that, I could learn it well...*
- *S9:...There should be no. In the second year of the senior high school, when my teacher taught some grammar, something like that, I actually did not understand. At that time, we were in a small county. Later...later...I did not know how to learn...*

**Q2 Do you think it is easy or difficult to learn English? /If it is easy, in what aspects? / If it is difficult, in what aspects?**

In terms of the difficulty in learning English, generally, the majority of the successful students responded that it is easy to learn English. Based on the responses from the students' interviews, the students reported that it is easy to remember new words by heart; to understand listening texts; to read; to pronounce English words; and even to take exams. Examples are:

- *S76:...pronunciation is not difficult. I found that my teacher in the middle school taught us with good pronunciation. When I encounter a new word, I know how to read it. Even without the phonetics symbols, I can read it correctly...*
- *S53:...Easy...it should be to do exercises for exams. In China, we Chinese are good at this...*

Meanwhile, some successful students reported that it is not easy to learn English in particular in remembering vocabulary by heart. In addition, listening and speaking, pronunciation, and writing were regarded as relatively difficult aspects in learning English. Examples are:

- *S55:...Em...a bit difficult...vocabulary, too many words. It's difficult to remember them...like...I remember it, and then forget it one week later...*

- *S11: ...Not very easy...For us...one is that it is not easy to learn good pronunciation...because we do not have an English language surrounding...and...the language lab in our school, such equipments....are not very good. We cannot follow the standard pronunciation. Then many kinds of different pronunciations exist...*

Moreover, some successful students consider some aspects as easy and others as difficult. Different individuals responded in different ways. The main responses include: it is easy to listen but difficult to remember vocabulary; it is easy in all aspects except grammar; and it is easy to speak but difficult to write. Examples are:

- *S16: ...Easy....oral language...But difficult...should be remembering vocabulary...*
- *S51: ...For me, the most difficult part is vocabulary. In terms of my listening and speaking, I got a lot of training, watched many movies...my pronunciation is very good...*

However, most unsuccessful students regarded English as a very difficult language. The difficult parts mentioned by the students covered most of the language skills. Vocabulary and grammar came first as the difficult part for the majority of the students, followed by listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Examples are:

- *S1: ... Listening. It's very hard for me to understand if somebody speaks too fast. In the process of listening, I must immediately translate it into my own mother language, Chinese. I...In fact, I rarely practice my listening...*
- *S56: ... Difficult...listening and writing. I don't understand when I listen, and my reading speed is very slow...*

### **Q3 What is the most frequent method you use when you learn English?**

When students were asked what method they used most frequently to learn English, successful and unsuccessful English students shared some methods, such as, memorizing vocabulary, reading text-books, reading aloud, and doing some exercises related to exams. Examples are:



**1) Memorizing vocabulary.**

- S76: *...To my experience, the most important part is vocabulary. Read more, and remember more...Just hold a pen, look at the new word, write it down,...cannot remember it, rewrite it again, that's it. A few days later, review these words again...I don't have any best method, but I spent much time on the vocabulary...*
- S7: *...Any way, so far, I have not found the best...the most suitable way to learn English. I feel...just remember new words by heart...despite of its boredom...*

**2) S33: *...when I try to remember a new word, I always pay attention to its phonetics. I read it for several times. Later, I can spell that word easily...***

**3) Reading texts aloud.**

- S30: *...The most frequent method...the most...I rarely use so far...not as I studied in the middle school...I read English half an hour every day...*
- S2: *...The most frequent method? Em...just read a book...a text book...Em...it seems no. Em...just textbooks...*

**4) Doing a lot of exercises relating to exams.**

- S55: *...Doing more exercises. Like...rehearse a real exam including listening part.*
- S10: *...I learn English...mainly...I do exercises...actually...I don't know how to do...but every exam...I felt that I just tried my luck. I do exercises...anyway...every time...I have adequate time.*

Apart from the shared methods described above, some methods were only adopted by the successful English students. The students reported that they always concentrate attentively to their teacher's teaching in class; read books, articles, newspapers, magazines in English etc., extensively after class; recite good texts, favorite paragraphs in English, etc; and listen to radios, cassettes, songs in English etc.; and watch English movies after class. Examples are:

- S17: *...Just...reading the text and...reciting...those...beautiful sentences and something like that...or do some exercises...*

- *S47:...I like to listen all kinds of listening sources...like English news....and imitate the pronunciations...like BBC and VOA...very early....about in the third grade in the middle school. Also I listened to some English songs although I could not understand most of them. I enjoyed the beauty of American English language...very cool. I kept this habit till I studied in the high school. Now I insist on listening...I can understand about 60 or 70%...*

In contrast, most unsuccessful English students reported that they normally used the following methods to learn English: do English exercises; rehearse exam papers; practice listening through tapes; and translate English into Chinese. Examples are:

- *S10:...I learn English....mainly....I do exercises...actually...I don't know how to do...but every exam...I felt that I just tried my luck. I do exercises...anyway...every time...I have adequate time...*
- *S43:...I read the vocabulary first, then read the text and translate it into Chinese. Finally, pay some attention to the key language points in the text. Emm...it's easier to translate English into Chinese...but...not from Chinese into English...*

#### **Q4 How much time do you normally spend on learning English every day?**

With respect to how much time the students spend on their English learning, the responses varied from almost no time, 20 to 30 minutes a day, an hour a day, to several hours a day. Most of the student interviewees divided the different amount of time they spent on learning English in the senior high school and at the university. Normally, according to the responses, the students spent much more time on learning English for the purpose of NSMT in the senior high school compared to the time they spent at the university unless they needed to prepare for CET-Band 4 or 6. One special case is that some students at one university were studying under a bilingual curriculum, in which most of the subjects were taught in English. As a result, these students were fully exposed to an English environment in class.

After carefully reading the transcript of the students, both successful and unsuccessful students shared the following responses: more time in senior high school

than at university; most of their time to learn English because of the bilingual program; more time on English learning up to exams (e.g. term exam, CET-Band 4 or 6.); and even almost no time on learning English at the university. Examples are:

- *S52:...In the middle school, I spent more time, about two hours a day. In the high school,...about one hour a day, almost. At the university, for the purpose of exams,...about....em...more than one hour a day. Like at the moment, for CET-Band 6,...almost two hours a day...*
- *S78:...Mainly in English class. We mainly have English class now. ...Very difficult. Such as the subject 'Computer Culture', (it is written) absolutely in English...*
- *S46:...I almost stop learning (English). However, normally I only learn English before examinations. Like CET-Band 4, I prepared for it for a couple of months before I took part in it...*

However, many of the unsuccessful students regarded the time in English class or examinations as time spent on learning English. For example:

- *S53:....at the university, on the average, two times a week for English class, that' all,...rarely touch English after class...*
- *S46:...I almost stop learning. However, normally I only learn English before examinations. Like CET-Band 4, I prepared for it for a couple of months before I took part in it...*

**Q5 (1) Do you often read English magazines, newspapers or books after class?**

**(2) Do you often listen to English radios, songs, or watch English movies after class?**

**(3) Do you think these after-class activities influence your English study greatly?**

Concerning learners' independence, three sub-questions were used to explore what students do after class. Most successful English students reported that after class, they often read English magazines and newspapers such as 'English Saloon', 'Crazy English', 'English Weekly', '21 Century', 'China Daily', and 'Book Worm', etc. Meanwhile, some of the successful students surfed original English sources on the

Internet. Also, these students started reading some books related to their major in English.

However, many of successful students did not listen to English on the radio. The reasons ranged from no radio signals at the university, no time, no interest, too difficulty to understand. A few students listened to VOA (Voice of America Broadcast), BBC (British Broadcast Corporation), or CIB (China International Broadcast) quite often. Almost every student reported that they often watched English movies after class. The majority of the students said that they normally watched English movies with Chinese subtitles.

Through carefully reading and analyzing the students' interview transcripts, successful and unsuccessful students shared the following responses: rarely listen to the radio; sometimes read some newspapers, magazines, books and other materials; and often watch English movies. Examples are:

- *S53: ...In the high school, I especially like 'Watch and Listen to English', some songs, movies, ...very interesting...I subscribed 'China Daily', but...too many editions...then I gave up reading. Now I bought a book named 'World History', written in English by an American...because my major is history. I have to read it...*
- *S28: ...No. Em...not reading any magazine...but newspapers...only do exams on 'English Weekly' (英语周报). The book is...only that 'Beautiful English' (美丽英语)... It teaches us how to be a good person. I read English first, and if I don't understand, then look to the next page (with Chinese)...*

When students were asked what influences after-class activities have on their learning English, successful and unsuccessful English students responded very positively. Most students said that these after-class activities can stimulate their interest to learn English; offer them opportunities to learn English culture and learn some English slang; create an atmosphere to learn English in the Chinese

surroundings and improve their practical English language, pronunciation and listening. The following excerpts show a general view of the influence on these students' English learning:

- *S51:...Sure...I benefit a lot from watching English movies and listening to songs...*
- *S7:...English movies....English with Chinese sub-titles below. I...think I benefit to a certain level. In that environment, my ears are filled with English...I should say....very helpful to my listening...especially a lot of slangs in the daily life...*

Although the majority of unsuccessful students reported that after-class activities are very helpful on their English language learning, however, they seldom did the activities simply because they were not interested in English, their English proficiency was low, there were no opportunities for practicing, and even because they were lazy. Unsuccessful students' responses are summarized below:

- *S37:...Reasons? I absolutely don't like. I don't like English songs...but like Chinese songs...*
- *S61:...So far, I have never used my English...except for exam. One reason is that there are not many opportunities; the other is that my pronunciation is rather bad. In addition, I feel self-conscious to speak English...*

## **Q 6 How do you use your English language?**

When students were asked how they use their English language after they have learned English for at least six years (three years in the junior secondary school, three years in the senior high school), the majority of the successful and unsuccessful students responded that they do not use their English at all except for having English class and taking an exam. Consequently, they rarely use English to communicate in their daily lives. As one student said, the only opportunity for him to use his English is in English class when he was asked to answer his teacher's questions. A few students

read something related to their major subjects; use simple English to tease their friends in their daily lives, and so on. Examples are:

- *S4:...To me, I cannot say I use English. It's just to meet the need of examinations...if examinations can be called as a sort of applying English...almost no chance...*
- *S21:...Rarely. I don't like it...as my teacher asks me some questions.....I just replied that 'I don't know'. Rarely...rarely...to answer his questions. My oral English is rather poor...*

Although many students said that their purpose in learning English is just to meet all kinds of examination needs, they still make good use of any possible opportunity to practice their English which they have learned from the textbooks. For example, one student was from Xian where she can easily meet some foreigners. This provides her with a good opportunity to practice her oral English. The excerpt below shows the evidence:

*S72:...I can say I use my English in the examination; occasionally, I can chat with foreigners in very simple English..(because) my home is in Xi An. You can meet many of them in the street. If you greet them, they are normally very friendly...*  
*(Note: Xian is one of the oldest capital cities in the Chinese history and well-known for tourist sight-seeing in the northwest China.)*

'English Corner' is a kind of learning club organized by students at the university in order to provide a platform for the students to practice their English. Some 'English Corners' are set up outside the university. For example:

*S73:...I go to Cuihu Lake, (翠湖), an 'English Corner' there, every Thursday, from 19:00 to 21:00 PM. Many foreigners are there as well as many university students. We communicate with each other in English...*

However, students' attitude towards 'English Corner' varied. One student held positive attitudes toward 'English Corner'. The excerpt below shows the evidence:

*S47:...You know, 'English Corner' in our university is well-known and successful. My English teacher has some American friends. She has introduced some of them to me. Normally, I go to 'English Corner' to practice my English...*

In contrast, some students held negative attitudes toward 'English Corner'. For example:

*S51:...I suppose that practicing speaking, you should speak with a person whose English is better than yours, then you can be corrected if you make a mistake. However, 'English Corner' just provides you a stage to speak English. Everyone speaks English. Everyone can speak. But not all of them can speak very well. I don't think it is a good place to practice my English...*

The Internet has become very popular nowadays. Many successful students reported that they made good use of the Internet to read some English news and stories, listen to English songs, and chat with people in English. For example:

*S66:...Basically, I don't use English at all. Sometimes, I access the Internet. I can chat with people in English on line. I also get some posters from the Internet.....some are foreigners.....we normally use very simple English, like 'who are you?', 'How are you?', etc....*

The fact is that many students lack the opportunities to use English which they have learned from the textbooks for many years at school. Many of them expected to have more opportunities to practise their English rather than only to meet the examination needs. For example:

*S40:...I like to communicate with my classmates and teachers in English. What I extremely expect is to meet a native English speaking teacher...but I haven't met yet. I always keep expecting that...*

Surprisingly, one student got a score of 128 in English in the NSMT and 498 in CET-Band 4. He was definitely categorized as a successful English language learner. However, this student rarely either reads English magazines, newspapers or books after class, or listens to English radios, songs or watches English movies. Concerning

using English language, his response was absolutely 'No'. The reasons are shown in the extracted excerpt below:

*S54:...I don't like it very much. It's difficult,...I don't understand the movie, neither the songs....only listen to some music...that's it...and no chance to use...(even in class) basically no... it's difficult to find someone who speaks English...*

### **Q7 What role do you think vocabulary and grammar play in learning English?**

The role of vocabulary and grammar consists of the basic nature of learning English. Vocabulary is regarded as the basic element in learning English successfully. In addition, the majority of the successful and unsuccessful students said that they had learned most of the English grammar rules in their senior high school. At the university, it is more important to increase the size of vocabulary whereas grammar is less important in learning English.

Three types of responses are shared by the successful and unsuccessful students which are summarized below:

#### **1) Vocabulary is basically more important than grammar.**

- *S44:...Vocabulary is like bricks. You must learn it if you want improve your English. It's important and necessary to store adequate vocabulary. Grammar...em...language...my teacher said....read more, then you can understand grammar. Then you know how to use. For me, I don't know how to explain grammar. I don't know the structure but I can express what I want...*
- *S73:...Comparing the two, I think vocabulary is more important. When you communicate with people, you even can say some words individually, maybe you can be understood. But only grammar without words, nobody can understand...*

#### **2) Vocabulary is as important as grammar.**

- *S50:...Grammar...let you speak in a correct way or you cannot express yourself well. Vocabulary...still very important...grammar is a big tree...words are like leaves in this big tree...*
- *S48:...I never intended to study grammar. But I think vocabulary is very important. If you don't understand words, how can you*



*understand a text? Grammar....if you know nothing about grammar, it also brings you problems. You must be confused with all of these messy words...*

**3) Grammar is more important than vocabulary.**

*S54:...Vocabulary is the foundation, but grammar is extremely important. Grammar is more important...Because grammar...can make all of the vocabulary to be coherent...then you know how to use it. According to some kind of logic, you can use it...*

Apart from the three shared responses by successful and unsuccessful students, some unsuccessful students responded that grammar is no use in learning English.

Examples are:

- *S7:...In my own opinion, it seems no use to learn grammar. It's better to learn some oral English...*
- *S32:...I major in Chinese. Our English teacher always compares English grammar with Chinese. I feel they are almost the same. Don't pay much attention to grammar, I think. Just learn some basic rules, that's enough...*

**Q8 (1) During the period at the university, what role does the teacher play in your English learning?**

**(2) What role do you expect a teacher to play?**

Considering the teacher's role in learning English, the question aims to explore how the students think of their teachers in their English learning at the university. Most of the students regarded the role played by the teacher in the senior high school and at the university as different. The majority of the students took their English teacher as a guide or supervisor who could lead them in the right direction and give them immediate help when they needed it. Some students showed that they were not satisfied with their teachers at the university. Consequently, a further question was asked about what role the students expect their teachers to play. Comparing the role played by high school and university teachers, some students usually regarded the

former as more important than the latter. Two main types of responses are shared by successful and unsuccessful students. Some students reported that their English teacher plays a very important role at the university, such as, a role as a helper, a guide, a supervisor, a facilitator, a consultant, a cultural messenger, and an assignment manager. Examples are:

- *S40:...He helps us to plan. We follow him to fulfill what he plans for us...*
- *S50:...I feel it's very important. It's not like that the grammar we learned in the higher is enough, in fact, it's not enough. In class, we need teacher to help us understand some grammar...and need our teacher to assign us to do some work after class...*

However, some students reported that their teachers are not important in their English learning at the university. The following examples show the evidence:

- *S15:...I don't think...they play any role....mainly on my own...*
- *S6:...He (she) plays no role. As an old Chinese saying, 'Shi fu ling jing men, xiu xing zai ge ren' (Meaning: Teacher only leads you to enter the door, you should work on your own since then)... Like CET-Band 4 or 6, I actually study on my own...*

Through the information from the students' interview transcripts, a number of successful students were slightly disappointed with their teachers. Examples are:

- *S18:...Emm...this...I don't...know how to say. I really feel that teachers at the university...actually...play minor roles. For instance, like our Listening and Speaking class, our teacher just played the recording there...*
- *S52:... Compared to teachers in the high school, teachers in the university influence me less than my teacher in the high school...*

As some students showed their disappointments with or even complained about their English teachers, a further question was raised: what role do you expect your teacher to play? Five main responses are summarized based on the information from the interview transcripts:

**1) A teacher should be an interest stimulator.**

- S76: *...I hope our teacher...should lead us to... or to make those who like English already to like English more than before, and those who dislike English to begin to like English. He/she should play a role as a guide to lead us to such a stage...*
- S78: *...A teacher should or must develop our interest in learning and...stimulate, and encourage us to learn...*

**2) A teacher should be a method instructor.**

- S28: *...If...if...anything can help us how to help us to memorize English vocabulary, that'll be very good...*
- S49: *...S/he should offer us some kinds of models to learn. Then we decide which one suits us best...*

**3) A teacher should be a cultural messenger.**

- S24: *...Just as...introduce you some knowledge through English...and moreover, different cultures of some foreign countries...not only explain the texts...some phrases...or usages...should be left to the students to do after class...self-study...*
- S60: *...A teacher should tell us some key points and introduce us something related to English culture...and adjust our atmosphere of learning...point to the right direction. That's it...*

**4) A teacher should be a language helper.**

- S41: *...I expect our teacher give more opportunities to communicate with me in English...and I expect my teacher be friendly and patient to me when I ask a question...help us open an English Corner....and invite some native English speakers to talk with us...and so on...*
- S44: *...In my opinion, I expect my university teacher help me improve my spoken English. Now what we face is not to meet an exam, but to communicate with people in oral language...*

**5) A teacher should be an examination giver.**

- S20: *...Em...give us more examinations...more...more...suggestions...*

### **Q9 Can you learn English without your teacher at the university?**

A further question was asked the students as to whether they could learn English without their English teacher in order to explore the students' independence. Two main types of responses were shared by the successful and unsuccessful English language students. Firstly, most of the students reported that they could learn English without their teacher at the university. Examples are:

- *S47:...Yes, I can. I learned this way in the high school. My high school is located in the countryside...there is no good English teacher. I mean...he is a good man but his English is rather bad. As a result, I had to learn English by myself in this way...*
- *S76:...Without a teacher ? At the university, normally we depend on ourselves rather than on teachers. Without a teacher...I think...80% I can learn English by myself...*

Secondly, some students responded that they could learn English without their English teacher, but it would be better with the help of a teacher. Examples are:

- *S30:...I am trying to do that...but I can learn English better with a teacher's help...*
- *S55:...Now? Possible. But in the middle school, it's impossible...After we master the basic grammar, phonetics rules, how to look up a new word in the dictionary, and so on. Then I can learn it well on my own...*

Some successful English language students reported that they could not learn English without their English teacher because they need their teacher to discipline them as well as provide them some pressure to learn. Examples are:

- *S23:...No teacher? I can say that I could not learn well like this. It's better to have a teacher. I cannot discipline myself, so I need a teacher to keep his eyes on me...*
- *S57:...Without a teacher? I never think of this issue since we always follow our teacher. If no teacher, I have no idea how to learn...*

At the same time, most of the unsuccessful students responded that they cannot learn English without their teacher due to different reasons. Some examples are shown below:

- *S2:...No, I cannot. A teacher's role is important. But most of the time it is up to myself. I cannot control myself, lack of self-discipline. That's why I don't learn English...*
- *S29:...No. With the teacher I cannot learn well, how can it work without a teacher? Impossible! I do feel that I don't have any aptitude to learn English...*

#### **Q10 What factor motivates you to learn English most?**

The last question for the students in the semi-structured interviews is what factor motivates students to learn English most. Both the successful and unsuccessful English students were highly motivated to learn English in order to pass exams, find a good job, and have a better life in the future. Examples are:

- *S55:...For examinations, mainly. I have passed CET-Band 4, and I am preparing for CET-Band 6. Em...after that...like...(I will consider graduate entrance exam...*
- *S66:...I never thought of this. I think, at the beginning, I learn English for exams, but now, gradually, since the globalization, English has become very important. I can say that what motivates me to learn English is to have a better life in the future...*

Besides, the majority of the successful students were interested in learning English language and its culture. Some students were planning to study abroad. Even, a few students admired some famous TV hostesses in China or their English teachers who could speak wonderful and fluent English, which motivated them to learn English. Three main motivations are summarized below:

##### **1) *Personal interest in learning English and its culture:***

- *S24:...For the purpose of speaking English very fluently. That is a great honor, I feel...Learning a foreign language, in the future,*

*it will benefit a lot in my life. To learn some foreign cultures, it will widen my eyesight...Nothing else...*

- *S40:...For communicating with foreign friends...because I love westerner's ideas. I can learn their thoughts as I communicate with them...I admire western traditions and culture...*

## **2) Hope to study abroad:**

- *S11:...I want to study abroad...from my high school. stimulate me to go abroad...(I prefer to go to)the United States...I can show my talent there...*
- *S51:...I really hope to go to Germany...(because) my major is related to technology, Germany is well known for manufacturing. I like Germany. From next term, I will start learning German...*

## **3) Admiration for an English teacher and some famous TV hostesses:**

- *S30:...I want to communicate with the people in English. Those who can speak English well...I feel...they are very cool...when I saw Chen Lu Yu (陈鲁豫), that TV hostess, from Phoenix TV in Hong Kong (凤凰卫视)...and Yang Lan (杨澜)...when they speak English...very cool. In fact, both of them are well known. My major is Chinese. I hope to learn both Chinese and English well. Someday I hope to become a simultaneous interpreter; I know it's not easy. But I do love that...*
- *S72:...I admire one of my teachers. She can speak beautiful English...*

These main factors generally seemed to motivate some students to learn English successfully. Examples are:

- *S23:...Because firstly I will have to pass CET-Band 4, for the graduate entrance exam, then, I might go abroad to study...well, not very big possibility. But, if I want to catch up with the latest new knowledge, I would read some English books...*
- *S48:...First, I have a cousin who is studying at one university in Xian (西安). He has passed CET-Band 4 already. I hope I can compete to him. That motivated me to learn English. Secondly, I like English very much. Finally, English is an international language. If I want to see this world, it will be*

*much better to master English language. So, I hope to learn English well...*

In contrast to the successful students' high motivation to learn English, most of the unsuccessful English language learners were not highly motivated by the same factors. They failed or at least were not good at English performance compared to their successful counterparts within a similar learning environment. They normally owed their failure in English learning to a number of reasons. Six main reasons are summarized below:

### **1) Lack of interest in learning English**

- *S2:...No interest. Em...I am not interested in it. I feel bored when I look at it (English). When I don't understand some words, then I loose my interest...*
- *S36:...I feel...in middle school...my English was very bad...we lived in a remote area...Till I entered in the high school in the county, I did not have any interest in learning. I can say that that environment influenced my English learning. Just because of that, I lost my interest in learning English...*

### **2) Lack of endeavour**

- *S1:...I am not diligent enough, not work hard, don't remember enough vocabulary, em....em...then that resulted in my unsuccessful English learning, and I cannot get a good grade in the examination...*
- *S7:...Well, I think success results from diligence rather than some aptitude. Mainly because of my less diligence, and some.... not good learning methods, especially, when I remember new words, the method is not good. After all, I feel that I am not diligent enough...*

### **3) Lack of good learning habits**

- *S4:...Maybe...maybe...en..en..en...I am not active). Then...in every aspects, I think like that...*
- *S5:...The main reason is...myself. I am lazy. Myself. I don't spend enough time on it...*

#### 4) *Lack of time*

- S34: *...I think I spent little time on English learning. But I really don't have time on that. If I spent much time on English, then my other major subjects will be negatively influenced...*
- S60: *...I don't have enough time. I have to spend more time on my own major courses. In fact, it results from the lack of my interest in English subject. That's the reason why I don't spend much time on it...*

#### 5) *Lack of good teachers*

- S22: *...I feel that my teacher did not teach me well...from high school...*
- S64: *...I found that the teacher was irresponsible. He/She made all of us lose our interest in learning English. Later on, that teacher was replaced. From then on, my English became poor...*

#### 6) *Lack of good learning methods and language environment*

- S28: *...It's how to remember vocabulary...in my own opinion, if I could remember the vocabulary very well, then I can read more articles. And I believe I can improve my English...*
- S56: *...I think there is no English environment in China. If we can learn English in a foreign country, it would be easier to learn English well...*

In summary, in Section 4.3.1, the results from both the successful and the unsuccessful students' semi-structured interviews are presented based on the transcription scripts. The next section will deal with the results from the teachers' semi-structured interviews.



### 4.3.2 Results from the Semi-Structured Interviews of Teachers

Teachers' semi-structured interviews were conducted in a similar way to that of the students'. The detailed design of teachers' semi-structured interviews can be seen in Section 3.5.2.2.

Ten main guided questions for teachers' semi-structured interviews were conducted based on a Teacher Questionnaire (See Appendix 6). The questions were revised after the pilot study. Chinese was also used as the working language in the interviews for better understanding and greater convenience.

Ideally, an even number of teachers were needed to be interviewed according to three variables (i.e. gender, academic degree and teaching experience) based on the original proposal. However, most of teachers from the College English Department at six universities were female, the majority of them had got postgraduate degrees, and more than sixty percent of them were less experienced teachers (See Section 3.4.2). In addition, all the teachers were busy with their teaching during the term time. Consequently, 15 teachers were invited to be interviewees on a voluntary basis. The background information of the teacher interviewees is shown in Table 4.12 below.

**Table 4.12** Information about Teacher Interviewees

	<u>Gender</u>		<u>Academic Degree</u>			<u>Years of Teaching Experience</u>		
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>BA</u>	<u>PG</u>	<u>OT</u>	<u>E1</u>	<u>E2</u>	<u>E3</u>
<b>No.</b>	4	11	1	13	1	5	9	1

Table 4.12 above shows that 15 teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews. Among the teacher interviewees, there are more female than male teachers. The majority of them had got postgraduate degrees. In terms of their teaching

experience, 9 teachers were categorized as more experienced and 5 were least experienced and only one teacher was most experienced.

As for the conducting students' semi-structured interviews, the researcher always spent some time on explaining the reasons and significance of interviewing before starting each actual interview. A promise to keep the content confidential was always made in order to make the interviewees relaxed and confident to say what they really thought. Most of the interviews lasted around 10 minutes and a few of them lasted for over 15 minutes. At the end of each interview, care was taken to thank the participants for their help.

All the teachers' interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated for data analysis. Field notes were documented as well. Content analysis was used to analyze the transcription scripts. The results of the teachers' semi-structured interviews are presented based on the main 10 guided questions (See Appendix 6) which are related to the eight categories of beliefs about learning English as a foreign language (See Section 3.5.1).

### **Q1 How did you learn English successfully?**

Teachers, who were recognized as successful English language learners, were asked how they learned English successfully. The teachers' responses were summarized as three main types: being interested in learning English, continuing to practice, and being highly motivated. Examples are:

- *T1:...first of all, I should say we must have interest in learning. Secondly, after you acquire some language, you must use them. It's better to talk with some native speakers. It can encourage you to keep going since you find it's useful with what you learn. Meanwhile, it can stimulate your interest to learn more...*
- *T14:...I think we should be motivated highly first. That means you must be subjective, then you are happy to learn. With high motivation,*

*no matter how poor your English is, you can always make progress. Otherwise, even you have a best teacher, you cannot learn well...*

## **Q2 What factor influences most in terms of success of learning English?**

Based on the first question, teachers were asked what factor influenced their success most in learning English. Learner's motivation, strategy use, aptitude and interest were summarized as the main responses from the teachers. Examples are:

- *T8:...Motivation. First of all, you must have high motivation, then you can find strategy. Then you can learn a language well. If you don't have any motivation, although you know a lot of strategies, you could not learn a language well...*
- *T10:...At that time, emm...not because of the motivation, I just thought it's not difficult to learn English. I followed the teacher, and I found it was interesting. Then I liked it. When I learned English, not like now, you can go abroad, you can get a promotion, and we didn't have these. So, interest became the first important factor at that time...*

## **Q3 (1) How do you interpret the term 'aptitude'?**

### **(2) Do you think you have foreign language aptitude?**

In terms of language aptitude, two main types of interpretation were reported by Chinese teachers. They are: foreign language aptitude means that less effort gains more reward; and a kind of language sense. Examples are:

- *T3:...I suppose it could be....a certain ability which you pay less efforts than the other people, but you gain more reward. I regard it as talent with you when you were born...*
- *T6:...It should be a kind of language sense. Those who have 'aptitude' only spend a little time on learning while the others will spend more time on it. Those who don't have aptitude must spend more and more time to master what a talented person could do in a short time...*

A few teachers reported that they had a certain foreign language aptitude.

Examples are:

- *T4:...I dare say I have. When I was young, I was good at imitating. My mother trained me to sing songs; I was very good at that. That is*

*my mother's comment on me. At the university, my spoken English is pretty good. I am No. 1 in the spoken English in the Nation-wide Exam...*

- *T15:...I feel that I have a little. For myself, I prefer to read something related to language and literature. I am good at arts subjects. Moreover, I can easily understand the mysteries in the language as I approach more areas...*

However, some teachers said that they did not have any aptitude. Their success in learning English was a result of some other factors. These factors included having a good teacher, being in a good language environment, and even they succeeding in English by their own effort. Examples are:

- *T1:...Aptitude? No. First, I should say that I had a good opportunity to touch the language. When I was in the first grade of middle school, I met one of the most attractive teachers. I especially liked this teacher. Secondly, my family opened one restaurant in the local place. Many foreigners came to our restaurant. My hometown is in Li Jiang (丽江, in Yunnan Province). I had chance to use some of simple sentences after I learned. It also stimulated my interest of learning English. Both of the factors provided me with good chances in learning English more and more. In terms of aptitude, I don't have. Aptitude is not very important...*
- *T10:...I'm not a clever learner, so I think I don't have foreign language aptitude. Just through my hard work, then, I can be a slightly successful in learning English...*

#### **Q4 Do you think women are better than men at learning English?**

Most teachers expressed the feeling that it is very hard to answer this question. It seems that generally more females are better at learning English than males. However, still quite a number of males show outstanding performance in the higher levels of language study. Three main responses are summarized below:

##### **1) Different learning stages**

*T8:...In my opinion, at the beginning period, women are better. But till the mediate and advanced stages, I think men are better. By nature, women are easy to learn a language. It's easy for them to remember*

*something. But in the high school, there are more content to understand rather than memorizing, as a result, men will become better...*

## **2) Uncertainty**

- *T3:...I seldom think of that. It seems there are more women English teachers around us. But whether it is natural or not, I am not quite sure...*
- *T7:...It seems that more girls are better at learning English than boys. However, the fact is that more boys are more successful than girls in learning English...*

## **3) Women are better than men at learning English.**

- *T4:...Right, right. Like my class at the university, the first 15 students who ranked on the top, all of them are girls. There are few boys in language major. Moreover, their performances are not very good...*
- *T6:...Yes, I agree. Once one of my colleagues said, 'you see, many successful English students in our university are girls.' Girls are always more careful than boys. As consequence, they often get better grades than boys...something is up to chances. I am lucky because I like all the teachers when I was a university student. Gradually, I find that I can make more progress...*

## **Q5 What role do you think vocabulary and grammar play in learning English?**

This question is related to the nature of language learning. Most teachers place vocabulary and grammar in an equally important position in learning English. However, some other teachers held quite different beliefs about this statement. Three main responses are summarized below:

### **1) Vocabulary and grammar are equally important.**

- *T10:...I should say that there must be a certain amount of vocabulary. Language helps you to learn the outside word. If you only know some grammar, it's not enough. Like we build a house, we need bricks. No bricks, we cannot build our house. Grammar is like the structure. No grammar, it's messy and random order...*
- *T15:...For the language learning beginners, especially language learners, they should regard vocabulary and grammar as their basis. Till they attend a certain level, language learning will become natural. They*

*can increase their vocabulary unconsciously without intending to gain them...*

**2) Vocabulary is more important than grammar.**

*T3:...Vocabulary takes 80%, grammar takes 10%...and the rest of 10% should be one's language sense...*

**3) Grammar is more important than vocabulary.**

- *T9:...I think grammar is very important. In the Communicative Method, grammar is not emphasized. I find it misleads the students. What you write should be grammatically right. It is like a skeleton. It is systematical. Vocabulary is like flesh attached to the skeleton. Only when both of them combine together very well, then your English language will be perfect...*
- *T14:...In our country, I think grammar takes more space in our language teaching. As we read an article, we usually start from grammar. Vocabulary is not the focus in class although we told our students vocabulary is the basis of language learning. However, we spent much time on grammar in class. I feel that under such system in China, we pay more attention to grammar. I feel that we need more communication...*

**Q6 Do you think learning English is just a matter of translating from English into Chinese?**

Similarly, this question aims to explore teachers' beliefs about the nature of learning English. Two main responses are summarized from the teachers' semi-structured interview transcript. Examples are:

**1) It depends on the different stages of learning.**

- *T1:...At the very beginning, it is like this. I can say that most of the students in the National Exam use this way to write the composition. For our non-English major students, they still keep this method when they study in the first year. But for those English majors, they have stepped into a higher stage; as a result, they don't need to do like that...it depends more on mother tongue at the beginning stage. But at the advanced stage, it changed...*
- *T7:...It depends on different learning period. At the beginning, of course, a learner has to translate his mother language into target*

*language, or vise versa. But when he steps into mediate or higher levels, he might not translate every single word between English and Chinese...*

**2) *Learning English is not just a matter of translating from English into Chinese.***

- *T8:... Absolutely not. We can only learn English well as we speak it. Just like a child how to learn a language, you don't need to tell him how to translate, just lead him to follow you and then he can acquire a language...*
- *T6:...No, I am afraid not. Language learning should be described as acquisition. When I see something, I should know how to speak in English rather than translating with my mother tongue. I try to express what we want to with target language but not with translation...*

**Q7 Do you think learning English is the same or different from learning other school subjects?**

Concerning the nature of language learning, this question was intended to explore whether learning English is same or different from learning other subjects. The majority of teachers responded that it is different. The others expressed the idea that learning English shares something in common with learning other subjects. Three main responses to this question are summarized below:

**1) *Learning English is different from learning other school subjects.***

- *T1:...Different...because we should put more efforts on English learning. Firstly, you need memorize, that is 'memorization', how to read the word, and how to spell it. In addition, you need some kind of logic way to think. So, I think it is more difficult than the other subjects. In particular, we don't have a language surrounding to learn English. If you want to learn English well, you must be very determinative. But learning other subjects are different from learning English in some extent...*
- *T5:...Emm...should be different, different from Physics and Chemistry, not that logical. The method is different. Learning English is to learn more skills...*

**2) Some parts are different from and some are the same as learning other school subjects.**

- T7: ...Not exactly the same but they have something in common...
- T8: ...Mmm...how to say? A language has its own specialty although it has a lot in common with the other subjects. You need work hard, you need to accumulate, on this aspect, they are the same. In terms of language itself, it has its own specialty. At the very beginning, you need to memorize a lot, but later, you may feel free. But other subjects, you might have your freedom at the very beginning. So, it should be different. For example, those who major in science and technology, they are not as good as those who major in the arts...

**3) Learning English is the same as learning other school subjects.**

*T6: ...The same. I don't think English exists alone. There must be some background knowledge. If you know more about the area what you are in, you can understand deeply...*

**Q8 (1) Do you often give a test to your students?**

**(2) Are College English Test Band 4 and 6 helpful for students in learning English?**

In terms of the first sub-question related to tests, the majority of the teachers responded that they rarely give tests to their students but frequently check their students with small quizzes or dictations instead. Normally, mid- and final-exams are always given to the students according to the university's curriculum. Some teachers responded that they often gave a test to their students after they finished teaching one unit. With respect to CET-Band 4 and 6, most of the teachers always give more exams to their students before their students take their exams. For example:

*T9: ...Up to the actual situation. Before CET-Band 4 and 6, I always give more chances to train my students in order to get a better grade in their CET-Band 4 and 6. They can benefit a lot...*



Consequently, a further sub-question was raised to ask the teachers whether CET-Band 4 and 6 are helpful for students in learning English. Three main responses are summarized below:

**1) CET-Band 4 and 6 have more positive than negative effects.**

- *T1:...It should have two types of effects, positive and negative. If we cancel the test, it will hard to judge what English language level a student attends when he graduates...On its negative side, many students have a very utilitarian intention. They don't want to learn basic language, just want to do some exam papers in order to pass the exam...*
- *T13:...When I mentioned some cultural knowledge, tradition, etc., my students thought they were useless. They just need doing exam papers, requiring teacher to tell them how to take an CET-Band 4 and 6 exam. This is the negative point. In terms of positive side, since such a long time we have CET-Band 4 and 6, many companies care too much about this. This gives students some pressure. They realize the importance of English. As a result, they will work on that. This is the positive point...*

**2) CET-Band 4 and 6 have more negative than positive effects.**

*T4:...I feel there are more negative effects...students just study for the exam. They never focus on their real language proficiency. I feel that their intention of learning English is just for CET-Band 4 and 6. It really limits their language ability. In addition, there is no Oral Test in this exam...you don't know it only focused on grammar before. Students are good at doing exam papers but their language proficiency is rather poor...On the one hand, it can reflect teacher's teaching; and it can stimulate students to learn. Students will think it is important to learn English with the existence of CET-Band 4 and 6...*

**3) How to effectively link College English with CET-Band 4 and 6?**

*T6:...CET-Band 4 and 6 should be linked to College English teaching. Under such pressure, students have to learn, teachers have to prepare good teaching, then students can make much more progress. I can say that CET-Band 4 and 6 are in need. Students and teachers work together to make progress...*

**Q9 What do you think when your students make mistakes in their language communication?**

The majority of the teachers responded that they normally ignored their students' mistakes if such mistakes are not a serious hindrance to communication. Examples are:

- *T3:...Don't pay much attention to them (mistakes). Let the students keep practicing more and they can speak better language as they practice more...*
- *T12:...It's normal to make mistakes. Students can make progress when they make mistakes...*

Rather than correcting students' mistakes immediately, many teachers always encourage their students to practice more. The important point is what should be corrected, when it is appropriate to correct, and how to correct mistakes. Some examples illustrate this:

- *T6:...I told my students I can understand when they speak English. I always try to encourage them to speak more. Don't discourage them....*
- *T5:...Firstly, I don't criticize this student. But I will point out his mistake and tell him why he is not right. Then, I will ask him to speak it again...*

Only a few teachers responded that students' mistakes in communication should be corrected immediately. For example:

*T13:...I think making mistakes is unavoidable when speaking English, so usually it is tolerable for them, but we should point out the mistakes immediately and show them the right way...*

**Q10 How do you usually deal with the students who are poor at English?**

The last question is about how teachers of English at the university treat a number of unsuccessful English language students who are struggling to learn this subject despite their poor performances. The majority of the teachers responded that

these students should be encouraged to be confident, enthusiastic and interested in learning English rather than to be criticized frequently. In addition, they try to help these students to find better learning methods and strategies. In particular, it is better not to compare these students with successful English language students. However, a few teachers responded that it is acceptable to relinquish some students who really do not want to learn. Three main responses are summarized as follows:

**1) *Encourage the students.***

- *T1: ...Don't discourage them. I judge a good student up to how much effort he pays in his study rather than his scores. If he studies hard, he should be encouraged...*
- *T4: ...Normally, I always encourage them. Don't mention too much about their learning...show some movies, some songs, something interesting.... can attract those students who are not good at English...*

**2) *Give the students more pressure and help.***

- *T8: ...when I assign them to do something after class, I always pay my attention to these students. I always explain some difficulties to them and ask them some questions in class. After class, I also care about their learning and always ask them whether they have any questions. On the other aspects, I treat them as the normal students...*
- *T5: ...It depends on the different situations. If this student is very poor in his basic language, I normally ask him to study longer in the classroom after class. Then I will help him. For those who are not very interested in English in class, I will pay more attention to them...*

**3) *Relinquish the students if they really do not want to learn.***

- *T6: ...Normally I encourage. I never criticize those students whose English is rather poor. But, if they really don't listen to my advice, I just give them up. In a word, his subjective motivation is very important. You can do nothing if a student really doesn't want to learn...*
- *T4: ...For those who are really poor at English, I encourage them. If he really doesn't want to learn, let him go...*

In summary, in Section 4.3.2, the results from fifteen teachers' transcripts of semi-structured interviews are reported based on the ten guided questions relating to the eight categories of beliefs in this section.

#### 4.4 Summary

In this chapter, the quantitative and the qualitative data are reported.

Section 4.2, the results obtained from the questionnaires responded to by 1,214 Chinese non-English major university students and 207 teachers of English are reported.

In Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, students and teachers' responses to questionnaires are reported based on the eight categories of beliefs. The highlights of the findings of the present study are shown in a summary below:

- In terms of the learners' beliefs about learning English, the majority of the students agreed that it is important to speak English with an excellent accent. They also believed that nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English. In addition, they believed that they will get a good job if they learn to speak English very well.
- Regarding the teachers' beliefs about learning English, the majority of the teachers agreed that it is all right to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English. The teachers also emphasized that their students need to know English culture in order to speak English well. Also, they believed that their students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.

In Section 4.2.3, the results from the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests are reported in order to examine the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English held by

students in terms of their gender, major field of study and level of language proficiency. The highlights of the findings of the present study are shown in a summary below:

- With respect to the gender of students, a significantly higher percentage of female than male students reported agreeing that English is moderately difficult; it is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well; if they learn to speak English well, it will help them to get a good job; it is important to practice in the language lab; and it is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class.
- Regarding the major field of study, a significantly higher percentage of non-Science-oriented than Science-oriented students reported agreeing that some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English; they need their teacher to tell them how they are progressing; it is important to practice in the language lab; it is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom; and multimedia is very useful in learning English. In the meantime, a significantly higher percentage of Science-oriented than non-Science-oriented students reported agreeing that it is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it; English is learned mainly through imitation; and they normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.
- In terms of the level of language proficiency, the results showed that the higher the students' level of English language proficiency is, the easier the English language becomes, and the fewer years are needed to be fluent or successful. More students with a high level of proficiency reported agreeing that they will

ultimately learn to speak English very well; they have foreign language aptitude; it is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well; and extra-curricular activities enable them to learn English well. On the contrary, more students from a low level of proficiency reported agreeing learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words and rules; they feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people; and teachers should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English.

In Section 4.2.4, significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English held by teachers in terms of their gender, academic degree and years of teaching experience are reported as well. The highlights of the findings of the present study are shown in a summary below:

- A significantly higher percentage of male than female teachers reported that English is a moderately difficult language. In addition, a significantly higher percentage of female than male teachers reported agreeing that they had foreign language aptitude.
- No significant differences were found in the beliefs held by teachers about learning English as foreign language in terms of their academic degree.
- The findings showed no strong relationship in beliefs about learning English held by teachers regarding their teaching experience.

In Section 4.2.5, a comparison of beliefs about learning English held by students and their teachers is reported. The highlights of the findings of the present study are shown in a summary below:

- Regarding the difficulty of language learning, a significantly higher percentage of students than teachers reported that English is difficult or very difficult.

However, a significantly higher percentage of students than teachers reported agreeing that 2 years or less are needed to be fluent in English; they will ultimately learn to speak English well; and it is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.

- With respect to foreign language aptitude, more teachers reported that that some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English; they (teachers) had foreign language aptitude; women are better than men at learning foreign languages; and people who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.
- In terms of the nature of learning English, a significantly higher percentage of teachers than students reported agreeing that it is necessary to know English culture in order to learn English well. However, a significantly higher percentage of students than their teachers reported agreeing that learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of vocabulary items.
- Concerning strategy use, significantly higher percentages of students than teachers reported agreeing that that it is important to speak English with an excellent accent; and if students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of such mistakes later on. However, significantly higher percentages of teachers compared to students reported agreeing that students should not say anything in English until they can say it correctly; and students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.
- In terms of motivation and expectations, significantly higher percentages of students than their teachers reported agreeing that if students learn to speak

English very well, it will help them to get a good job; and Chinese people think it is important to learn English nowadays.

- Regarding the role of the teacher and feedback, a significantly higher percentage of teachers than students reported agreeing that taking a test regularly is helpful for students; and students need their teacher to tell them what to do in class as well as after class.
- With respect to the role of media utilization in EFL, significantly higher percentages of students compared to their teachers reported agreeing that it is important to practice in the language laboratory; and it is more interesting and useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.
- Considering learners' independence, a significantly higher percentage of students compared to their teachers reported agreeing that students normally use the Internet to learn English outside the classroom.

In Section 4.3, the results from the analysis of the qualitative data from both students' and teachers' interviews are reported.

The main findings are summarized below:

- Foreign language aptitude does not seem to play a very important role in the success in learning English although some students reported that they had such special ability. Many successful students owed their success of English learning to their interest in English, hard work, good background, better learning methods, and good English teachers. Some unsuccessful students described their failure in learning English as just, due to their not working hard, lack of good methods rather than their inability to learn English.



- Most Chinese students are highly motivated to learn English in order to get a better job after graduation. The main purpose of learning English is to meet all kinds of examinations' needs at different stages of education. They normally expected their English teacher to speak some Chinese to teach English in class and assign them to do some exercises related to the examination in order to perform better.
- Both successful and unsuccessful students normally memorized vocabulary items, read text-books, read aloud, and did some exercises related to exams when they were asked what method they used most frequently to learn English. However, apart from the previously mentioned methods, most successful students often extended their learning after class. They preferred to do some extra-curricular activities, such as, watching English movies, listening to English songs, and reading some novels of English, participating in English Corner after class so that they could have more opportunities to practise their English language and learn English culture while unsuccessful students reported that they rarely did after-class activities because of their poor English.
- Although a few teachers claimed to have foreign language aptitude, they always emphasized the importance of some other factors which lead to one's success in English learning, such as motivation, endeavour, better strategy use, good teachers, and a good language environment.
- Most of the teachers held very positive attitudes towards CET-Bands 4 and 6 on College English teaching at the university. Although many teachers were not satisfied with the exam-driven English teaching curriculum, they still hoped that

CET-Bands 4 and 6 would be kept to oblige their students to go on learning English.

- With respect to the students' mistakes in learning English, many teachers said that mistake-making is a part of learning English. They normally ignored students' mistakes and always encouraged their students to keep practicing English as much as they could.

In summary, this chapter concentrated on the results from the analysis of the quantitative data from both students' and teachers' questionnaires, and qualitative data from both students' and teachers' semi-structured interviews. In Chapter 5, a summary of research findings and discussion will be presented first; then, the implications, contribution, and limitations of this study will also be provided. Finally, a conclusion to this study will be made.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter aims to summarize the research findings from Chapter 4 in response to the five research questions proposed in Section 3.2, Chapter 3. Then, the discussion of the findings is described in detail. This is followed by the implications arising from the present study for English learning in the Chinese tertiary context. Finally, contribution of the present study to the related areas, limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research, and a conclusion are presented.

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In Section 4.2, beliefs from both students' and teachers' questionnaires reported by 1, 214 Chinese non-English major university students and 207 Chinese teachers of English in the southwest of China were analyzed systematically by using the SPSS program. Certain significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students according to their gender, major, and level of language proficiency were found. Then the significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English reported by Chinese teachers of English according to their gender, academic degree, and years of teaching experience were also obtained. Finally, a comparison of beliefs held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English were reported. In Section 4.3, the results of the

qualitative data from 78 students' and 15 teachers' semi-structured interviews revealed some useful implications which supported the research findings in a triangulated way.

## **5.2 Summary of the Research Findings**

The present study has presented the research findings of beliefs reported by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English in the southwest of China. In this section, the findings responding to the five research questions for the present study are illustrated as follows:

### **5.2.1 Research Question 1:**

*What are the percentages of Chinese non-English major university students reporting discrete beliefs about learning English?*

According to the set criteria, the findings responding to the first question were found; in terms of the two additional items: English was regarded by the majority of students as a moderately difficult (47.1%) language while only a small number of students regarded it as an easy/a very easy language (19.9%). In terms of the number of years needed to learn English fluently, 44.1% of students reported that they needed 2 years or less, while 39.8% of them needed 3~5 years; however, only 16.1% of students needed more than five years. The findings from the students' questionnaire showed that 20 out of 42 plus 2 additional items of beliefs were reported by 1, 214 Chinese non-English major university students. The findings are summarized as follows:

● **Percentages of *beliefs* about learning English held by students**

	(%)
1. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	85.0
2. Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.	82.0
3. If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.	79.2
4. It is important to repeat and practise a lot in class as well as after class.	76.8
5. If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	76.0
6. It is OK to guess if I do not know the meaning of a new word in English.	75.1
7. A teacher should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English.	73.6
8. Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well.	73.2
9. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	71.9
10. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.	71.7
11. It is easier for children than adults to learn English.	71.1
12. It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.	68.0
13. Multimedia is very useful in learning English.	67.7
14. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.	65.6
15. I can improve my English if I often chat with English native speakers on line.	64.7
16. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.	59.9
17. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.	59.3
18. It is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.	54.9
19. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	54.6
20. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	50.1

### 5.2.2 Research Question 2:

*What are the percentages of Chinese university teachers of English reporting discrete beliefs about learning English?*

In response to research question 2, the research findings revealed that English was regarded by the majority of teachers as moderately difficult (47.8%) while nearly thirty percent of teachers regarded it as easy/very very easy (29.5%). In terms of the number of years needed to learn English fluently, 50.2% of teachers reported that 3~5 years

were needed, while only 22.2% of teachers needed more than five years. The findings from the teachers' questionnaires showed that 19 out of 42 plus 2 additional items of beliefs were reported by 207 Chinese teachers of English. The findings are summarized below:

● Percentages of <i>beliefs</i> about learning English held by teachers	
	(%)
1. It is OK to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English.	84.1
2. Students need to know English culture in order to speak English well.	82.1
3. Students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	78.3
4. Extra-curricular activities enable my students to learn English well.	77.8
5. It is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class.	77.3
6. Multimedia is very useful in learning English.	76.8
7. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.	75.8
8. Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.	74.9
9. It is easier for children than adults to learn English.	72.0
10. A teacher should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English.	71.0
11. If students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job.	68.1
12. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	65.7
13. If students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it.	64.3
14. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.	63.8
15. Students can improve their English if they often chat with English Native speakers on line.	56.5
16. Taking a test regularly is helpful for my students.	55.6
17. It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.	55.6
18. Students like their teacher to tell them what to do in class.	55.6
19. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	53.1

### 5.2.3 Research Question 3:

*Do learners' beliefs about learning English vary significantly with their gender, major field of study and level of language proficiency? If they do, what are the main significant variation patterns?*

The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests revealed that 19 out of 44 (plus two additional) items varied significantly according to the gender; 11 items varied significantly according to the major field of study; and 24 items varied significantly according to the level of language proficiency of 1, 214 non-English major university students in the southwest of China. The significant differences in items of beliefs ranged from  $p < .001$  to  $p < .05$ . The findings are summarized as follows:

● **Significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English in terms of students' gender**

1. Additional 1: English is: 1) a difficult or very difficult language; 2) a language of moderate difficulty; 3) an easy or very easy language.
2. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.
3. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.
4. It is easier for children than adults to learn English.
5. People who are good at mathematics and science are not good at learning English.
6. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.
7. I learn English the same way as I learn Chinese.
8. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.
9. If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.
10. If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.
11. Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.
12. I like the teacher to tell me what to do after class.
13. I like the teacher to tell me what to do in class.
14. It is important to practise in the language laboratory.
15. I can improve my English if I often chat with English native speakers on line.
16. It is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class.
17. Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well.
18. I normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.
19. I often use the Internet to help me learn English outside class.

● **Significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English in terms of**  
*students' major field of study*

1. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.
3. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.
4. English is learned mainly through imitation.
5. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to him/her so that I could practise my speaking.
6. I need the teacher to tell me how I am progressing.
7. I like the teacher to tell me what to do after class.
8. It is important to practise in the language laboratory.
9. It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the tradition classroom.
10. Multimedia is very useful in learning English.
11. I normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.

● **Significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English in terms of**  
*students' level of language proficiency*

1. Additional 1: English is: 1) a difficult or very difficult language; 2) a language of moderate difficulty; 3) an easy or very easy language.
2. Additional 2: If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?  
 1) 2 years or less; 2) 3 to 5 years; 3) more than 5 years.
3. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.
4. I have foreign language aptitude.
5. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.
6. People who are good at mathematics and science are not good at learning English.
7. Chinese are good at learning English.
8. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.
9. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.
10. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.
11. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.
12. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.
13. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Chinese.
14. I learn English the same way as I learn Chinese.
15. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to him/her so that I could practise my speaking.
16. It is OK to guess if I do not know the meaning of a new word in English.
17. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.
18. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of such mistakes later on.
19. A teacher should speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English.
20. I like the teacher to tell me what to do in class.
21. It is important to practise in the language laboratory.



● **(Cont.) Significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English in terms of students' level of language proficiency**

22. Multimedia is very useful in learning English.
23. Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well.
24. I often use the Internet to help me learn English outside class.

**5.2.4 Research Question 4:**

*Do teachers' beliefs about learning English vary significantly with their gender, academic degree and teaching experience? If they do, what are the main significant variation patterns?*

The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests revealed that 2 (plus two additional) items varied significantly according to the gender; no items of beliefs varied significantly according to their academic degree; and 2 items of beliefs varied significantly according to the teaching experience of 207 teachers of English in the southwest of China. The significant differences in items of beliefs ranged from  $p < .001$  to  $p < .05$ . The findings are summarized below:

● **Significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English in terms of teachers' gender**

1. Additional 1: English is: 1) a difficult or very difficult language; 2) a language of moderate difficulty; 3) an easy or very easy language.
2. I have foreign language aptitude.

● **Significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English in terms of teachers' teaching experience**

1. Students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese.
2. Students often use the Internet to help them learn English outside class.

### 5.2.5 Research Question 5:

*Do beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English vary significantly? If they do, what are the main significant variation patterns?*

The results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests revealed that 31 out of 44 (plus two additional) items varied significantly between teachers and students. The significant differences in items of beliefs ranged from  $p < .001$  to  $p < .05$ . The findings are summarized as follows:

● **A comparison of beliefs about learning English held by students and teachers**

1. Additional 1: English is: 1) a difficult or very difficult language; 2) a language of moderate difficulty; 3) an easy or very easy language.
2. Additional 2: If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?  
1) 2 years or less; 2) 3 to 5 years; 3) more than 5 years.
3. Students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.
4. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.
5. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.
6. I have foreign language aptitude.
7. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.
8. People who are good at mathematics and science are not good at learning English.
9. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.
10. Chinese are good at learning English.
11. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.
12. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.
13. Students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese.
14. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.
15. Students shouldn't say anything in English until they can say it correctly.
16. It is OK to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English.
17. Students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.
18. If students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of such mistakes later on.
19. If students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it.
20. If students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job.
21. Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.
22. Students would like to learn English so that they can make friends with some foreigners.
23. Taking a test regularly is helpful for students.

● **(Cont.) A comparison of beliefs about learning English held by students and teachers**

24. Students need their teacher to tell them how they are progressing.
25. Students like their teacher to tell them what to do after class.
26. Students like their teachers to tell them what to do in class.
27. It is important to practise in the language laboratory.
28. It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.
29. It is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.
30. Multimedia is very useful in learning English.
31. Students often use the Internet to help them learn English outside class.

### **5.3 Discussion of the Research Findings**

The main purposes for conducting this study were to explore how Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers perceive English language learning; what significant variation patterns in beliefs in terms of investigated variables exist; and what are the similarities and differences between students' and teachers' beliefs in the Chinese tertiary context. Some important findings emerged from this study.

This section is intended to discuss the main research findings with respect to the data taken from the students' and teachers' questionnaires, and partly from the semi-structured interviews in order to provide an overall picture of the investigation at six universities in the southwest of China. It focuses on beliefs reported by Chinese non-English major university students in relation to each of the three independent variables, i.e., students' gender, major, and level of language proficiency. This is followed by the beliefs reported by Chinese teachers of English associated with each of the three independent variables, i.e., teachers' gender, academic degree, and teaching

experience. Finally, it discusses the comparison of beliefs between students and teachers.

- **An overall picture of beliefs about learning English held by learners in the Chinese tertiary context**

Learners' beliefs can influence both their attitude toward the language itself as well as toward language learning in general (Tumposky, 1991). Beliefs about the difficulty in English language learning held by the students are particularly important because their "...judgments about the difficulty of language learning are critical to the development of their expectations for and commitment to it" (Horwitz, 1988, p. 286). The findings of the present investigation revealed that nearly fifty percent of Chinese non-English major university students considered English as a moderately difficult language, while more than one third of them regarded it as a difficult or very difficult language, but only twenty percent of them felt that English was easy or very easy. When asked if someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long it would take him/her to become fluent, it was estimated by the majority of students that English can be learned very well in a relatively short time, for which the majority of the students chose '2 years or less' or '3 to 5 years'. The findings were consistent with some previous studies (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Peacock, 1999) in which the students normally underestimated the needed time of learning a difficult foreign language as they overestimated. In the Chinese tertiary context, all or most of the university students have learned English for at least six years before starting their higher education. It should be pointed out how the students defined the term 'becoming fluent' in English for themselves. According to Horwitz (1988), the belief that it takes a

relatively short time to learn a difficult foreign language will ultimately discourage the students and make them become frustrated when they could not make as much progress as they expect. In addition, most of the students were very optimistic about learning English very well ultimately.

China has seen an explosion in the demand for English (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996, p. 61) since opening its doors to the outside world in 1980s. There are probably three hundred million people in China who are actively engaged in the job of learning English and "...at this stage in the last few years of the millennium, it does look as if China will continue to want English, and want it badly" (Boyle, 2000, p. 15). While recent economic development in China has been remarkable, more and more foreign companies register to do business in China while many Chinese companies are opening their business abroad. As a result, more than eighty percent of students agreed that Chinese people think it is important to learn English nowadays. Under such circumstances, many Chinese students are highly motivated to learn English in order 'to enter and graduate from universities; to obtain better jobs, especially those in companies or joint ventures which have international connections; to read technical materials; and to study abroad (Zhou and Chen, 1991). Undoubtedly, English is not the only compulsory subject for students at schools, and it is also urgently needed in many areas of the country. However, Chinese students learn English as a foreign language "...rather than with reference to a community of English native speakers so that it is not surprising if integrative attitudes are not so significant as the learner's instrumental reasons for wanting the language" (Littlewood, 1984, p 57). The findings from students' interviews also showed that most of the students still lacked sufficient opportunities to practice English in their lives despite learning English for many years.

As one student wrote at the additional comments of students' questionnaire, '*...We need more opportunities to practice our English. Some platforms, such as 'English Corner', should be created for the students*'. In reality, students' main goal of learning English is just to meet all kinds of examinations' needs. The situation is determined by the English curriculum from primary schools to university stages. Examination scores are always considered first to select students to study at a higher level.

Although students' main purpose of learning English is just to meet all kinds of examination needs, it is surprising to find that more than eighty percent of students regarded an excellent accent as very important when speaking English. The findings were consistent with a previous study (Kern, 1995) which shows the importance of speaking a foreign language with an excellent accent. With such beliefs in mind, it is not surprising to find that more than fifty percent of the students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people. The findings might imply that many Chinese students were not confident enough to speak English because of their over-anxiety about their imperfect English accent. Furthermore, some students might become reluctant to practice their English because of their poor English accent, and might be discouraged from learning English if they could not improve their accent as they expect. In the researcher's opinion, it is more important to correct students' mispronunciation which really interferes with understanding in authentic communications rather than their un-native-like accent (Peacock, 1999). The emphasis on a 'perfect accent' might destroy some students' confidence in speaking English to some extent. In fact, students should be often encouraged by their teachers to communicate in English as much as possible. In addition, more opportunities should be provided for students to practise English which students have learned for many years.

- **An overall picture of beliefs about learning English held by teachers in the Chinese tertiary context**

According to Horwitz (1988, 291), an English “...language teacher is likely to be viewed as an ‘expert’ about language related matters, his/her views—whether expressed explicitly in class or implicitly by teaching practice— could have a strong influence on the students’ own beliefs”. It is obvious that all teachers hold beliefs about their work, students, subject, roles and responsibilities, no matter whether those beliefs are stated or not, which have been shaped and formed from personal identity and beliefs (Pajares, 1992). The beliefs held by teachers strongly influence how they teach.

Regarding the difficulty of learning English, the findings in this study revealed that nearly half of the teachers considered English as a moderately difficult language, while almost one third of them reported that English is easy or very easy. When asked if someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long it would take him/her to become fluent, 3~5 years were needed by half of the teachers , and 2 years or less by nearly one third of them , and more than five years by nearly one fifth of them. If we consider English teachers as successful English language learners, most teachers’ estimates of the difficulty of language learning objectively reflected the reality of learning English as a foreign language in the Chinese context.

With regard to teachers’ beliefs about English language learning, guessing the meaning of a new word became the top rank of beliefs by the majority of Chinese teachers of English. The findings showed that many teachers highly value strategy use in language learning. Moreover, in terms of beliefs about the role of teacher and feedback, more than fifty percent of the teachers believed that taking a test regularly is helpful for students. Based on the findings from the teachers’ semi-structured

interviews, when asked the influence of CET-Band 4 and 6 on College English teaching at the university, most of the teachers held very positive attitudes towards them. On the one hand, many teachers were not satisfied with the exam-driven English teaching curriculum; on the other hand, they still needed the examinations to force their students to go on learning English. What more important is to suggest how to link English teaching and examinations efficiently so that as much progress as possible can be made.

● **Beliefs held by Chinese non-English major university students in terms of gender**

Students come to the classroom with very specific assumptions about how to learn a language and about the kinds of activities and approaches they believe to be useful (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). In terms of speaking English, the results of the students' interviews revealed that speaking English is the most difficult skill in learning English. One of the possible reasons for is that for most of the students, the only purpose of learning English is to meet the needs of examinations. What they have to do is just to be familiar with different kinds of examinations, in particular, two important exams in their lives, i.e., NSMT and CET-Band 4 and 6, if they would like to study at the university and get a better job after graduation from the university. As a result, students are better at doing examination papers than communicating in English which is not needed in their daily lives.

With respect to foreign language aptitude, which is described as the 'general existence of specialized abilities for language learning' (Horwitz, 1988, p. 287), it is normally considered as one of the important factors leading to one's success in English language learning. In the investigation, students' interpretations of 'aptitude' basically



focused on their diligence, persistence and amount of time spent on learning. More male than female students admitted that they do not have foreign language aptitude. In addition, more female than male students believed that it is easier for children than adults to learn English. Students who hold such beliefs might be led to have negative expectations about their own capability of learning English considering their relatively older age, and they "...probably doubt their own ability as language learners and expect to do poorly in language study" (Horwitz, 1988, p. 288).

Obviously, the findings showed that more female than male students take English culture as an important part of learning the English language. They believed that it is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well. According to Kramsch (1993), language learning is inseparable with its culture because culture awareness and the learning of a second culture can only aid the attaining of second (or foreign) language proficiency. Wenden (1987b, p.188) also claims that "...the better we can understand the cultural context which gives rise to the language we are trying to learn, the more likely we are to come to understand the essential differences between the way in which that language is used and our own". The results from students' interviews revealed that the majority of students prefer to watch English movies, listen to English songs, and read some novels of English after class so that they could have more opportunities to learn English culture, which is closely linked to the target language which they are learning. In practice, these extra-curricular activities have an influence on the students' English language learning in a very positive way. Not only could they learn the English language, but also they have an opportunity to learn some English culture through these activities. Learning the culture becomes one of the important aspects for them in learning a foreign language. Moreover, students might

develop their interest in learning and come to accept the English culture to a greater extent. Consequently, they are likely to spend more time and energy on learning. In reality, many students developed favorable and positive beliefs as their English course progressed, and these beliefs stimulated them to make much more progress as a result.

The discrepancies between English and Chinese languages might become one of the obstacles for some Chinese students to learn English well since Chinese is not an Indo-European language, but belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family of languages, with a unique and complex relationship between the Chinese phonological system and written script (Chang, 1993). Written Chinese, unlike written European languages, is not based on an alphabet principle (Scurfield and Song 1996). There is no link between Chinese characters and pronunciation, and it is impossible to tell how a character is pronounced just by looking at it (Xiuping, 2005). As a result, it is not surprising to see that not many Chinese students believed that they learn English the same way as they learn Chinese although more male than female students reported agreeing with this statement.

Beliefs have also been reported to have a notable effect on L2 learners' strategy use (Oxford, 1994). In the present study, an excellent accent was clearly valued by more females than males when speaking English. Although students took an 'excellent accent' as a serious aspect of learning English, it is not contradictory to say that many students regarded an 'excellent accent' as important as practicing their English at the same time.

In the present investigation, more females than males agreed that they will have many opportunities to use English if they manage to speak it well. Learning English successfully means bringing success to their lives in the future to some extent.

Meanwhile, some students were motivated to learn English by their greater interest in the English culture, even their admiration for some famous public people, such as TV hostesses and movie stars. The intrinsic motivation made most of the students become fluent in English.

Learners' independence is described as "...the ability to take care of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 47). The development of technology, multimedia, the Internet, and many other kinds of measures have greatly changed the traditional way of learning a foreign language. Generally, more female than male students were very positive about the media utilization in their English language learning. They believed that it is more interesting, useful and important to learn English in the language lab rather than in the traditional classroom. From the results of the students' interviews, watching English movies was found to be overwhelmingly favorable by almost all of the students. It can be regarded as a good chance for the students to expose themselves to an authentic language surrounding although they could only partly practice their English language, i.e., listening alone.

Moreover, Littlewood (1996, p.97) explained that a learner's ability "...depends on possessing both knowledge about the alternatives from which choice have to be made and necessary skills for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate." The over-arching goal of all teaching is to help learners act more independently within a chosen range of domains, and help them become more effective learners and take more responsibilities for their own learning. In this study, more female than male students considered English practice after class as important as that in class. Similarly, more females than males also believed that extra-curricular activities enable them to learn English well. The findings from the interviews showed that a number of students

read a variety of materials, such as newspapers, magazines, and novels, etc. after class. They also actively took part in all kinds of activities to practice their oral English, such as taking part in ‘English Corner’ to practice their oral English.

Green and Oxford point out (1995, p. 291) “...gender difference trends in strategy use are quite pronounced *within and across cultures*, and this means that women and men are using different approaches to language learning....”. Chan (1996) found that Chinese boys in mainland China have higher verbal and visual-spatial abilities, whereas girls are superior in memory. He found girls in Hong Kong to be consistently superior to boys in both the Chinese and the English languages. The findings from the present investigation showed significant differences of beliefs about learning English between the male and female students. In general, females were more active, showed more initiative, and were more positive than their male counterparts in their perception of English language learning, although there is no data as yet to provide evidence in this regard so far.

● **Beliefs held by Chinese non-English major university students in terms of major field of study**

Concerning students’ major field of study, very few studies have explored learners’ beliefs about learning English in the Chinese tertiary context. In fact, English in China is learned primarily not for the sake of contact with the native-English speaking community, rather “...it is the language of science, specifically perhaps of the majority of research journals...the neutral language of commerce, the standard currency of international travel and communication” (Bowers, 1996, p. 3). In this study, it is not surprising to find that more Science-oriented than non-Science-oriented major students

agreed that it is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it. English has normally functioned as a compulsory school course for students from basic education till higher education. It was not possible for students to practice English in a wider surrounding because of a lack of opportunity, in particular, for most of the Chinese students in the southwest of China, which is relatively underdeveloped compared to some other developed regions. Many students said they rarely used English in their daily lives, although they had learned English for many years. The reality is, however, students do not have sufficient opportunities to practise their English language at university. At the same time, one of the other plausible reasons might be that some students were not confident in their English language ability. They were worried about their non-native-like accent, inappropriate word choices, and even incorrect grammar. Another reason might be due to the fact that a number of Chinese students are normally conservative, so that they often feel reluctant to greet strangers, especially foreigners.

In terms of foreign language aptitude, with regard to whether one's gender influences one's English language learning, more non-Science-oriented than Science-oriented major students agreed that women are better than men at learning a foreign language. It might be partly due to the fact in the Chinese universities in this study, more females than males majored in non-Science-oriented rather than Science-oriented subjects. Meanwhile, more non-Science-oriented than Science-oriented students believed that some people are born with some special foreign language talent which helps them succeed in English language learning. A common perception is that more non-Science-oriented major students took foreign language aptitude as important in learning English. This finding was consistent with some

previous studies (Horwitz, 1988; Peacock, 1999). Consequently, these students might be "...ascribing their lack of success (or slower than expected progress) to a lack of aptitude" (Peacock, 1999, p. 153).

According to Mackie and Wylie (1988), a user's acceptance of technology is affected by different factors, such as the extent to which the features of the technology are consistent with the user's needs, the user's experience with the technology, the user's awareness of technology and of its purposes. In terms of the role of media utilization, the findings revealed that more non-Science-oriented than Science-oriented major students regarded media utilization as interesting, important and useful in their English language learning.

However, regarding learners' independence, more Science-oriented than non-Science-oriented major students reported that they normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom. One of the possible explanations for the findings might be that most Science-oriented students were more skillful with the technology than their non-Science-oriented counterparts, although these students have been aware of the usefulness and importance of media utilization in English language learning. The findings also revealed that Science-oriented major students who normally used a computer to learn English outside class might not have benefited much from the technology.

Generally, according to what has been discussed above, it seems that Science-oriented major students were more independent than their non-Science-oriented major counterparts in the extra-curricular activities for learning English.

● **Beliefs held by Chinese non-English major university students in terms of level of language proficiency**

As proposed in Section 3.4.1 of Chapter 3, one thousand two hundred and fourteen Chinese non-English major university students were categorized as being at a high (H), medium (M) or low (L) level of language proficiency according to their performance in English Test in NSMT (See Section 1.4.2) or CET-Band 4 (See Section 1.4.4). Regarding the student participants' level of language proficiency in this particular study, obviously, the majority of students were at a medium (59.3%), a part of them at a low (29.7%), and a small part of them at a high (11%) level.

It is certainly important to investigate the impact of learners' beliefs on their language learning processes as well as outcomes (Bernat, 2008). Some previous researchers (Kern, 1995; Mantle-Bromley, 1995) have theorized that incorrect learners' beliefs negatively affect learners' language learning. Although it is not easy to judge what beliefs are correct or incorrect for individual learners, it is still critical to explore what beliefs are associated with lower language proficiency, and how they might be eliminated (Peacock, 1999) in order to allow the learners to learn English better.

The findings clearly showed that the higher the students' level of English language proficiency, the easier the English language becomes, and the fewer years are needed to be fluent or successful. On the contrary, the lower the level of proficiency, the more difficult English is, and more years are needed to be successful. In addition, students' enthusiasm to learn English well ultimately was relatively higher with their higher levels of language proficiency. It is not surprising to find that more than fifty percent of the low level proficiency students were still optimistic about their success in learning English in the future. One of the possible explanations might be that these

students have to learn English under the pressure of passing all kinds of examinations at the university in order to get their academic certificate. The results from some teacher interviewees also supported the idea that examinations (e.g. CET-Bands 4 and 6) become one of the factors which oblige many students to continue learning English. Otherwise, it would be more difficult for teachers to teach this subject at the university. One of the other reasons might be that many students have realized the importance of learning English well for their future lives, as a result, they can at least find a good job with qualified CET-Bands 4 and 6 certificates although it is still hard to judge students' actual English language proficiency just basically up to such certificates.

Strikingly, more than sixty percent of the high level proficiency students reported that they had foreign language aptitude, but only ten percent of the low level proficiency students claimed to have this special language ability. It is hard to say what role a foreign language aptitude plays in successful language learning; or whether students' higher level of proficiency contributes to their aptitude. According to the students' interviews, a number of successful students were very sure that they possessed such a special ability which enabled them to learn English easily and successfully. Their foreign language aptitude showed in different aspects of learning English, such as speaking English well, memorizing vocabulary quickly, understanding the listening texts easily, less time needed but a better performance in the exam, and excellent pronunciation, and so on. The findings suggested that a foreign language aptitude plays a relatively important role in the success of English language learning. Moreover, some unsuccessful students also claimed that they had a certain foreign language aptitude. They attributed that their failure in learning English to some other factors, such as not working hard enough, a lack of good learning methods, rather than



their ability to learn English. However, the findings of the students' interviews revealed that a few students with lower English language proficiency owed their failure in learning English language to a lack of such special ability (Horwitz, 1988; Peacock, 1999). Further studies are needed to explore what role one's foreign language aptitude plays in one's success in language learning.

In terms of the nature of English language, in general, more students from the low than the high and the medium levels of English language proficiency believed that learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary, grammar rules and translation. A possible explanation might be that students' lower proficiency resulted in these incorrect beliefs (Peacock, 1999). Consequently, they tended to use a limited inventory of memory strategies, i.e., memorizing English vocabulary, or grammatical rules, or even whole section of English articles (Yang, 1999) in the process of learning English. These students normally adopt rote memorization as their only memory strategy. These students may focus on memorizing vocabulary lists, to the exclusion of teacher-directed tasks. Therefore, they probably become very dissatisfied with a teacher who does not emphasize learning vocabulary or grammar (Horwitz, 1988; Peacock, 1999) in class. In addition, students of low level of proficiency were not as concerned about culture as those of high and medium levels of proficiency. For the unsuccessful language learners, these kinds of beliefs might be one of the possible reasons which led them to poor language proficiency (Peacock, 1999).

However, the findings from the students' interviews showed that the successful language learners learned English language well since they learned its culture at the same time while the unsuccessful language learners paid too much attention to the components of English language instead. These findings were consistent with what Gan,

Humphreys and Hamp-Lyons (2004) have found in their study. They claimed that 'learning a language means learning its culture; language learning means developing and maintaining language sense; language learning entails learning the language through using it' (p.239).

Incorrect beliefs have some negative effects on learner's choices of language-learning strategy use because of a probable link between strategy use and achievement (Peacock, 1999). It can be answered that the successful language learners were more confident, had more initiative and were more active than the unsuccessful language learners in learning English in many aspects. The confidence and initiative stimulate them not only how to learn English in an appropriate way but also to make them more active in using useful strategies, such as guessing new words from the context, and less self-conscious about speaking English in front of people.

Moreover, the successful language learners treated mistakes as one natural part of their language learning, but the unsuccessful language learners treated them more seriously. Students' over-anxiety might be another cause which made them more reluctant to practice English language. As a result, the lower proficiency students were more dependent on their teachers than those whose English language proficiency was relatively higher. They expected their teachers to speak some Chinese rather than only English to teach English as well as to tell them what to do in class. However, these students might be frustrated when classroom methods do not match their expectations (Kern, 1995).

Gardner and Lambert (1972) identified two types of motivation from a social-psychological view: integrative (or intrinsic) and instrumental (or extrinsic) motivation. Integrative motivation is the desire to learn a language so as to integrate

oneself into the target culture, and instrumental motivation is the desire to learn the language in order to get a better job or meet a language requirement. The findings from the students' interviews revealed that the majority of lower proficiency students were driven to learn English by various kinds of examinations, such as NSMT in the high school, CET-Bands 4 and 6 at the university, and graduate entrance exam if they wanted to study for a master's degree. Therefore, most of the students expected their English teachers would focus on some skills for taking exams and doing more exam papers which would be more useful rather than improving their language proficiency by practice. Due to this kind of motivation, many students set their final goal of learning English as passing each exam. They often gave up learning English after they had reached that goal. Some student interviewees revealed that English is not important in their future life but only for the purpose of passing the exams and getting their graduation certificates from the university.

In particular, the current requirements of the Chinese examination system tend to lead to instrumental rather than integrative motivation among Chinese EFL learners (Xiuping, 2005). Most of the students were motivated to learn English instrumentally (extrinsically); however, some students with higher proficiency were motivated by a mixture of integrative and instrumental reasons. They were more interested in learning English culture, actively participating in communicative activities, such as watching English movies and TV shows, listening to English songs, reading newspapers and magazines, participating in English Corners, rather than only passing all of the examinations. In contrast, those students whose English language proficiency was relatively lower seldom read any English materials after class or did any activities related to their English language learning although most of them admitted that these

after-class activities could influence their English in a positive way. The reasons for not doing extra-curricular activities ranged from no interest, no aptitude, no opportunity, poor English to even their own laziness. It is clear from the present study that learners with a higher integrative orientation are likely to achieve greater proficiency (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

Students' self-management also revealed differences between the successful and the unsuccessful language students (Gan, Humphreys, and Hamp-Lyons, 2004). In this present investigation, the successful language learners benefited more from the media utilization in their English language learning than the lower proficiency students. It can be inferred from this that using the Internet for language learning has played an important part for the successful English learners. Moreover, the findings from students' interviews revealed that many higher proficiency students benefited a lot by improving their English language proficiency from extra-curricular activities after class. Most of the lower proficiency students attributed their learning problems to many external factors. Thus, they failed to see the proper role of 'significant others' (Williams and Burden, 1997). It seems that the lower proficiency students are always hovering in a negative circle: from lower language proficiency to being less frequently exposed to target language; less language input, then to much lower proficiency again. Consequently, the lower proficiency students become less independent and less confident in learning English compared to their counterparts whose English proficiency was comparatively higher.

### ● Beliefs held by Chinese teachers of English in terms of gender

As described in Section 3.4.2 of Chapter 3, more than eighty percent of 207 teachers of English were female. Very few previous studies have investigated the significant variation patterns in beliefs held by teachers in terms of their gender. Regarding the difficulty of learning English, the findings in this study revealed that more male than female teachers regarded English as a difficult or very difficult language. It is also interesting to find out that male and female teachers of English seemed to hold different beliefs about foreign language aptitude in learning English.

Firstly, more female than male teachers claimed that they had foreign language aptitude. As found in this particular investigation, there were more female than male teachers of English at the six universities. Moreover, the findings revealed that many female teachers believed that they had foreign language aptitude which might have partly contributed to their success in English language learning. In the researcher's mind, these foreign language gifted teachers might complain that their students with lower language proficiency may lack a certain aptitude for language learning which resulted in their poor performance in English. Probably, some lower proficiency students might be ignored or even abandoned by their teachers due to their lack of such a special ability to learn English well.

Although some beliefs can be considered as 'wrong' or 'dysfunctional' by SLL/FLL specialists, they are still meaningful because they reflect the 'subjective reality', the 'truth' from the teachers' point of view (Riley, 1997). Moreover, teachers' interpretations of foreign language aptitude were explored through teachers' interviews. One teacher described her definition of 'aptitude' as: *"...a kind of foreign language sense. Those who have 'aptitude' only spend a little time on learning while the others*

*will spend more time on it. Those who don't have aptitude must spend more and more time to master what a talented person could do in a short time".*

Foreign language aptitude plays one of the more important rather than a decisive role in learning English successfully. Successful language learning may depend on many factors, such as learner's motivation, strategy use, diligence, persistence, and adequate time for learning as well as one's foreign language aptitude. Success in learning English will always be possible if the learner gives adequate time and effort to it despite a lack of aptitude. Obviously, hardwork is emphasized all the time by Chinese teachers of English as leading to success in English. One of the teacher interviewees claimed, "...*I'm not a clever learner, so I think I don't have foreign language aptitude. Just through my hard work, then, I can be a slightly successful in learning English....*".

Moreover, when asked whether women are better than men at learning English, most teacher interviewees responded that it is very hard to answer this question. On the one hand, they could not ignore the phenomenon that more female students are successful in learning English through the different levels of school education; on the other hand, neither could they neglect the fact that many outstanding English language specialists are male.

#### ● **Beliefs held by Chinese teachers of English in terms of academic degree**

As illustrated in Section 3.4.2 of Chapter 3, according to their academic degree, two hundred and seven teacher participants were categorized as holders of Bachelor Degree (39.6%), Postgraduate Degree (57.5%), and Other Education Certificates (2.9%). No significant differences were found in the beliefs held by Chinese university teachers of English about learning English as a foreign language in terms of their

academic degree. The findings showed that teachers' academic degrees do not influence teachers' beliefs about learning English to a great extent. It proved that one of the beliefs' characteristics, i.e., beliefs, are 'quite well entrenched' (Kern, 1995, p. 76) and 'static'. They do not automatically change when learners are merely exposed to new methods.

### ● **Beliefs held by Chinese teachers of English in terms of teaching experience**

In Section 3.4.2 of Chapter 3, two hundred and seven teacher participants were categorized as least (62.8%), more (31.4%) and most (5.8%) experienced teachers according to their years of teaching experience as English teachers.

Teachers' beliefs about learning English may be based on their training and their teaching experience (Freeman, 1992). These beliefs are developed through their 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975), 'deeply entrenched' (Powell, 1992; Kern, 1995; Tatto, 1998), 'have the potential to influence both their experience and actions' (Horwitz, 1988), and (some are) 'impermeable and difficult or impossible to change' (Hampton, 1994, p. 129).

In this study, the findings showed no strong relationship between beliefs held by Chinese teachers of English and their teaching experience. With respect to beliefs about strategy use, more teachers from the more compared to the least and most experienced groups believed that the students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese. It is obvious that Chinese language greatly differs from English in many ways, such as phonetics, spelling, and grammar. What differences and similarities exist between learning Chinese and English may become another research area to be investigated in the future. At the same time, more teachers from the least and more experienced groups

reported agreeing that their students use the Internet to help them learn English outside class. One plausible reason may be that most English teachers in the College English Department deeply hope that their students should use the Internet to learn English. However, many teachers normally have to teach classes of more than fifty (some over one hundred) students. They are actually responsible for their English teaching in class rather than taking care of their students after class unless they are needed by their students. Consequently, most teachers do not know much about what their students really do in English after class. The finding probably proves that least and more experienced teachers were close to their students because of their younger age.

In general, similar to the previous variable, i.e., teachers' academic degrees, in terms of teachers' teaching experience, teachers' beliefs were not greatly influenced by teachers' years of teaching experience. It also confirmed the fact that beliefs are not easy to change with teachers' increasing teaching experience.

#### ● **A comparison of beliefs about learning English between students and teachers**

Both students and teachers bring their experience to the classroom that influences their perceptions in subtle ways (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). These beliefs do nevertheless express realities which may influence classroom practices (Richards and Lockhart, 1994), and directly or indirectly affect their expectations about classroom behaviors (Wright, 1987). The findings revealed that students and teachers shared the same views on items of beliefs below:

- 1) It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.
- 2) It is easier for children than adults to learn English.
- 3) Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.
- 4) English is learned mainly through imitation.
- 5) Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.
- 6) Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Chinese.



- 7) Learning a foreign language is different from learning a lot of grammar rules.
- 8) Students can improve their English if they often chat with English native speakers on line.
- 9) It is important to repeat and practice a lot in class as well as after class.
- 10) Extra-curricular activities enable students to learn English well.

As illustrated in Section 3.3, the researcher hypothesized that more similarities rather than differences of beliefs held between learners and teachers, the more successful and satisfying learning and teaching environment the learners and teachers would be. In addition, the gradually narrowing gap between learners and teachers will contribute to positive rather than ‘negative (language learning) outcomes’ (Horwitz, 1988, p. 292). However, the wider mismatches between students’ and teachers’ beliefs in this study revealed a wide gap between students and their teachers. The mismatch between students’ and teachers’ beliefs might create tension in the classroom (Bernat, 2008), result in negative learning outcomes for learners, reduce learners’ confidence in and satisfaction with the class, and lead to a reluctance to participate in communicative activities (Peacock, 1999).

Moreover, learners’ beliefs have the potential to influence both their experience and actions (Horwitz, 1987a; 1999; Kern, 1995; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Peacock, 1999). Learners’ beliefs also influence the actions that learners perform to learn a foreign or second language if the learners are able and prepared to act on their beliefs (Ellis, 2008). In particular, ‘teachers’ beliefs play a major role in defining teaching tasks and organizing the knowledge and information relevant to those tasks’ (Nespor, 1987, p. 324). Regarding the difficulty of English language learning, more students than teachers believed that two years or less are needed to learn English language fluently although more students than teachers described English language as difficult or very difficult. On the one hand, students overestimated the difficulty of learning

English; on the other hand, they also underestimated the amount of time needed to learn English successfully. One plausible explanation for the findings might be due to the definition of 'becoming fluent' which was not interpreted by students in exactly the same way as their teachers. In the meantime, more students than their teachers believed that students will ultimately learn to speak English very well. The findings showed that most students were more optimistic about their own prognosis as language learners than their teachers. In the present investigation, the gap between students' and teachers' beliefs revealed that Chinese teachers of English were not confident enough either in their students' enthusiasm or their ability to learn English. As a result, students might be discouraged in their effort to learn English if their teachers lose patience with them.

With respect to the special ability of learning a foreign language, generally, more teachers than students believed that some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English; teachers had foreign language aptitude; women are better than men at learning foreign languages; and Chinese are good at learning English. In the reality, students and teachers witness the fact that there are more girl than boy students in foreign language departments, more female than male teachers of English at the university, and most female students perform better than male students in English language at the basic level. Do these phenomena influence people's judgment or is it a result of their subjective experience in life? It can be inferred that intelligence or special foreign language ability alone cannot ultimately determine one's success in English language learning from the perspective of the students. If these 46.9% of teachers, who believed that they had a certain kind of foreign language aptitude, were described as successful language learners, they might have owed their success in English language learning at least partly to such sort of special ability to a certain

degree. However, it may infer that some of these students who denied the existence of foreign language aptitude lacked the confidence to learn English well (Peacock, 1999). It may also be that some of these students may feel that their failure in English language learning was due to the lack of a foreign language aptitude. Considering the teachers of English as language ‘experts’, the findings seem to reveal that foreign language aptitude has played an important role in these teachers’ success in learning English.

In terms of the nature of English language learning, the findings were consistent with what Horwitz (1988) claims is a belief that learning vocabulary is the most important part of language learning and will almost certainly lead students to invest the majority of their time memorizing vocabulary lists at the expense of other language learning tasks. In addition, Chinese EFL learners hold positive beliefs about rote learning strategy for memorizing vocabulary, because this strategy is consistent with traditional Chinese culture and values (Xiuping, 2005). The findings from this study were also supported by the results from the students’ interviews. Most unsuccessful English language students firmly believed that their poor English was normally due to their inadequate vocabulary. If they would like to improve their English language proficiency as most interviewees said, they had to increase the size of their vocabulary first. However, another critical problem always makes these students frustrated, which is how to remember so many English words by heart without forgetting them.

Meanwhile, more teachers than students believed that it is necessary to know English culture in order to learn English well. The findings from the present research were consistent with what Hinkel (1999) states, namely, that applied linguists and language teachers have become increasingly aware that second or foreign language can

rarely be learned or taught without addressing the culture of the community in which it is used. According to Williams and Burden (1997, p.115), "...learning a foreign language involves far more than simply learning language skills, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it involves an alternation in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviors and ways of being, and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner".

Language learners might value some language learning strategies which the teacher may try to discourage (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Surprisingly, significant differences were found in the six items about the strategy use between students and their teachers. For example, more students than teachers believed that it is important to speak English with an excellent accent. Students who hold such beliefs might care too much about their English accent when they speak English rather than other communication strategies. Moreover, they might become more self-conscious to speak English in front of people and lack confidence to communicate with people in English because of their over anxiety about their imperfect accent. In practice, the findings from the teachers' interviews revealed that most of the teachers were not very serious about their students' mistakes unless such mistakes did really become obstacles to their communication. As one teacher interviewee said, "...*Don't pay much attention to them (mistakes). Let the students keep practicing more, and they can speak better language as they practice more*". In this aspect, these teachers were very generous about the students' inaccuracy in speaking since they took mistakes as one part of learning. To some extent, however, a small number of teachers believed that students should not say anything until they say it correctly. These teachers treated students' mistakes as a serious problem in English language learning. For them, accuracy is more important

than language fluency. Generally, most teachers did not regard students' mistakes or inaccuracy in the process of learning English as seriously as their students did. These findings were consistent with what Peacock (1999) claims: this mismatch between teacher and student priorities leads to student frustration.

With respect to guessing an unknown new word in English, more teachers than students undoubtedly agreed that it is all right to guess if they do not know the meaning of a new word in English. It can be seen that more teachers than their students were quite positive to adopt such a strategy in English language learning. It implies that the majority of teachers must have stimulated their students to apply this strategy in learning English in their teaching practice.

In the present investigation, more students than teachers agreed that 'if students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it'. It can be assumed that these students expect to use the English language in the real life in order to improve their language proficiency. However, students normally lack such opportunities at university. These findings were also supported by the findings from the successful students' interviews. When students were asked how they apply their English language, many of them responded that 'almost no use'. Many students said that they would like to have more opportunities to practice their English rather than only to meet the exam needs.

A test is a regular way for teachers to check their students' learning to a certain level. English language teaching becomes somewhat exam-oriented under the curriculum in the education system in China. Students have to take all kinds of examinations since they start learning English. Obviously, students and teachers hold different beliefs because of their different viewpoints. Littlewood (1996) considers

learners' ability and willingness to make choices independently to be 'at the core of the notion of autonomy' (p. 427). These responses provide evidence of the participants' willingness to assume responsibility for their learning and respect their acceptance of their role in determining their language learning success. The findings in this study revealed that Chinese non-English major university students were normally independent in learning English. On this point, normally more teachers than students regarded the role which teachers themselves play is very important. However, most of the students did not think that their English teacher plays a very important role at university. When students were asked what roles they expect their English teacher to play, most students (both successful and unsuccessful) said that an English teacher should act as a language guide and helper, a knowledge supervisor, a spirit motivator, a cultural messenger, an assignment manager, and even an exam giver. Although many students responded that they can learn English without their English teacher at university level, many students still believed that it would be more helpful with a teacher's advice.

Regarding the role of media utilization in learning English, more students than teachers believed that it is important to practice in the language laboratory; and more interesting and useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom. The findings revealed that media utilization has become very important for the university students in the process of learning English language nowadays.

In terms of learners' independence, more teachers than students agreed that students normally use the Internet to help them learn English outside the classroom. It seems that teachers are very positive about the availability of the Internet to their students; or they do hope that their students should use the Internet to help them learn

English after class. However, the findings from students' interviews revealed that a great number of students complained that it is not easy to access the Internet on campus. On the other hand, for some students, especially those from poor families in the remote regions, a computer is still very expensive and they could not afford it. With respect to the use of the Internet, it is not clear so far whether students could access the Internet on campus as easily as they would like.

In summary, the main findings from the present investigation are discussed in detail in this section. The following section will focus on the implications of the research findings for learning English in the Chinese context.

#### **5.4 Implications of the Research Findings for Learning and Teaching English in the Chinese Tertiary Context**

As illustrated in the previous section in response to the research questions, the findings from the present investigation revealed significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English in terms of students' gender, field of study, and their level of language proficiency. Also, the findings showed significant variation patterns in beliefs about learning English in terms of teachers' gender, and their teaching experience. In addition, this present investigation also showed both similarities and differences of beliefs between the students and teachers. A comparison of students' and teachers' beliefs revealed significant differences as well. As a result, some implications for learning English for Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers are discussed below:

1. English is regarded as very important by the majority of Chinese non-English major university students. Most students were highly motivated to learn English

extrinsically rather than intrinsically. They overestimated the difficulty of learning English but underestimated the amount of time needed to learn English successfully. They highlighted the importance of an excellent accent in learning English but rarely got opportunities to practice what they had learned. Moreover, they emphasized the rote memorization of vocabulary in the process of learning English without trying some more useful and helpful methods to improve their English proficiency. It is recommended that teachers of English should stimulate their students' interest in learning English in many aspects as possible in order to educate them to be more integrative than instrumental learners. In the meantime, teachers of English should create a better learning environment for their students to learn English in class and encourage them to practice their English after class as much as they can. Furthermore, teachers of English should introduce better and more effective learning methods to their students. As an old Chinese proverb goes: "Giving someone a fish is not as wise as teaching him how to fish." The ultimate purpose of teaching is to teach students to become responsible for their own learning, and the sooner, the better.

2. The research findings showed the majority of teachers seemed to know little about their students concerning their English learning. They had no idea what their students normally do in English after class. They were not optimistic about their students' ability to learn English ultimately well. Under such circumstances, it seems that teachers of English act in the classroom without knowing much about what their audience need. This might cause problems in teaching, i.e., what teachers focus on cannot meet students' needs. The consequence of the situation might make the students feel that English learning is boring day after day. More



understanding between students and teachers is badly needed in order to establish a better cooperation between them in the classroom. Ultimately, English learning could become more interesting, meaningful and fruitful.

3. In order to help students, in particular those with lower proficiency students, improve their English language proficiency, teachers should ensure their students that the ability to learn English is not innately fixed and could be improved with hard work and persistence in learning. In addition, teachers should make opportunities for students to share successful experience in learning English so that more positive beliefs could be promoted and ‘incorrect’ or ‘dysfunctional’ beliefs could be avoided.
4. In the present investigation, the discrepancies found between students’ and teachers’ beliefs also implied significant implications for learning and teaching English to some extent. Despite the ‘static’ and ‘unchangeable’ characteristics of beliefs, it is highly recommended that teachers should promote their students to hold more ‘correct’ or functional beliefs in their English learning, consequently, the gap between students’ and teachers’ beliefs might become narrower, a satisfying learning environment might be created, and more positive language ‘outcomes’ might be achieved ultimately.
5. Beliefs are constructed in social and cultural contexts with one’s mental and individual characteristics (White, 1995; Yang, 1999). Since learning English as a foreign language in China might be described as test-driven and teacher-centered, it is still not easy to re-direct teaching towards a more communicative-oriented and learner-centered approach. It is recommended to the organizations of the Chinese Education System to adjust the examination policies of English from the secondary

school to the university. The emphasis on learning English should focus on the real purpose of learning a language, i.e., to use the language to communicate with people rather than only to pass exams. In addition, more qualified English teachers should be educated and trained at every level of education, particularly, the secondary schools in the remote areas.

### **5.5 Contribution of the Present Study**

Based on the findings, it is possible to explore how they can contribute to other related areas. The reasons for carrying out this study were firstly to explore the percentages of discrete beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers; then to investigate the significant variation patterns in beliefs in terms of described variables; and finally, to compare the similarities and difference of the beliefs held by the students and teachers in the Chinese tertiary context.

As previously seen in Chapter 2, no single study has ever been conducted on the beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English, especially a comparison of beliefs between students and teachers, in the southwest of China. The findings of the present investigation make a contribution to the available information to classroom practice and provide guidance for a syllabus, materials revision process, and test designs being undertaken at the Chinese tertiary level. In addition, it can provide some information for teachers of College English in China to learn more about what their students need and expect so that a more harmonious and happier learning environment can be finally created.

The value of insights gained from investigating the beliefs held by Chinese

non-English major university students and their teachers of English can lead to effective instructional planning and implementation for the teachers. In the meantime, it is also useful for the students to learn English in and after class. In addition, the research on learners' and teachers' beliefs will hopefully provide some information to evaluate, implement and reform some policies on the College English Program in China. While the present investigation focused on EFL learners in the Chinese tertiary context, it has implications for other similar EFL contexts as well.

### **5.6 Limitations of the Present Study and Recommendations for Future Research**

The present investigation has been valid and valuable in addressing the primary research questions, which are to identify the percentages of beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English, the significant variation patterns in beliefs in terms of different variables, and the relationship of beliefs between students and teachers. However, some limitations have been apparent when this study was conducted, and areas for possible future research have emerged. To take the limitations into consideration firstly, the following issues are worthy of attention:

- 1) Firstly, the data for the present investigation were mainly from two written questionnaires and semi-structured interviews without being verified through other sources such as classroom observation, teachers' lesson plans, or students' diaries. These sources should also have been considered so that more information could have been obtained to triangulate the research findings from different aspects. The combination of more research methods could have

allowed the researcher obtain further information related to the research questions.

- 2) Secondly, open-ended questions about the formation of beliefs in accordance with eight categories should have been included in the two questionnaires in order to explore how these beliefs are formed. In doing so, more information might have been obtained in terms of each aspect of beliefs held by Chinese non-major university students and their teachers.
- 3) Finally, since the specific investigation was carried out among a certain group of participants at the six universities in the southwest of China, the generalization of the findings has to be limited to the similar contexts.

Despite the existence of these limitations, the specific investigation is undoubtedly valid. However, the following areas relating to beliefs about learning English might be justified in future research:

- 1) Since China is a country with a large size of population, millions of non-English major university students are learning English all over the country. It is imperative to replicate the research on beliefs about learning English held by students and their teachers of English by examining similar variables in the tertiary contexts in other regions of the People's Republic of China.
- 2) As illustrated in the background to this study, it shows that English is a compulsory course from the junior middle school (some even from the primary school), senior high school to university levels. Beliefs about learning English held by students are gradually developed through their experience at different levels of schooling. More future studies are needed in the junior middle and senior high school to explore: (1) the percentages of beliefs about

learning English held by the students and their teachers at these levels; 2) how the beliefs are formed, and 3) to what extent the teachers influence the development of beliefs held by their students.

- 3) It is also necessary to explore how far learners' and teachers' beliefs diverge, why they diverge, and how these differences can be removed.
- 4) It is still essential to explore what relationship exists between beliefs held by learners and their English language proficiency.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The present study gives a comprehensive picture of the students' and teachers' beliefs about learning English as a foreign language in the Chinese tertiary context. It is a new study in the field of beliefs about learning English as a foreign language in the southwest of China. It will contribute to the field of research in beliefs about learning English held by Chinese non-English major university students and their teachers of English in terms of investigated variables, i.e., students' gender, major field of study, level of language proficiency; and teachers' gender, and their years of teaching experience. The findings of mismatch between students' and teachers' beliefs have provided certain useful implications for learning English for students and teaching English for teachers. Effective language teaching and learning can only be achieved when teachers are aware of their learners' needs, capabilities, potentials, and preferences. As a result, it is also important for teachers to be aware of what beliefs their students hold. Little learning is likely if a bigger mismatch of beliefs exists between the teachers and the students. The researcher suggests that teachers should examine their students' beliefs about learning English to reduce students'

misunderstanding and dissatisfaction in order to develop a healthier and happier environment for learning English. The limitations of the present study and some recommendations for future research have been described. For the future study, some other qualitative research methods are recommended for use in investigating beliefs to gain more information to support the results obtained by using a quantitative method.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### Student Questionnaire about Beliefs

(English Version)

#### I. Student Profile

**Instructions:** This questionnaire is designed to gather information on your beliefs about learning English as a foreign language. Your information will be only used in this research and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Thanks for your kind cooperation!

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Contact (Voluntary): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your academic year: ☐ Grade 1 ☐ Grade 2
4. Your major: ☐ Science-oriented \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Non-Science-oriented \_\_\_\_\_
5. Your gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
6. Your age (years-old):  
☐16 ☐17 ☐18 ☐19 ☐20 ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
7. Your experience of learning English (years):  
☐1-5 ☐6-10 ☐More than 11
8. You perceive your English ability as:  
☐Very Good ☐Good ☐Fair ☐Poor ☐Very Poor
9. Your NSMT English grade (Student in Grade 1): \_\_\_\_\_  
Your recent CET Band-4 grade (Student in Grade 2): \_\_\_\_\_
10. Your beliefs about the difficulty of the English language (tick the one which best indicates your beliefs):  
(1) English is:  
☐1) a very difficult language  
☐2) a difficult language  
☐3) a language of moderate difficulty  
☐4) an easy language  
☐5) a very easy language  
(2) If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?  
☐1) 2 years or less  
☐2) 3 to 5 years  
☐3) more than 5 years



## II. Statements of Beliefs

**Instructions:** Read each statement carefully and put a (✓) for the response which best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral/ Unsure; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.

Example:

A Statement of Beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
0: Languages are learned mainly through imitation.				✓	

Statements of Beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English.					
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.					
3. A teacher should speak some Chinese to teach English.					
4. English is learned mainly through imitation.					
5. I learn English the same way as I learn Chinese.					
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.					
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.					
8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English well.					
9. I should not say anything in English until I can say it correctly.					
10. I find it helpful to have a test regularly from the teacher.					
11. I need the teacher to tell me how I am progressing.					
12. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to him/her so that I could practise my speaking.					
13. It is OK to guess if I do not know the meaning of a new word in English.					
14. I like the teacher to tell me what to do after class.					
15. I have a foreign language aptitude.					
16. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.					
17. It is important to repeat and practise a lot in class as well as after class.					

Statements of Beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
18. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.					
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.					
20. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.					
21. It is important to practise in the language laboratory.					
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.					
23. If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.					
24. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.					
25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.					
26. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Chinese.					
27. If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.					
28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.					
29. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English.					
30. Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.					
31. I would like to learn English so that I can make friends with some foreigners.					
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.					
33. Chinese are good at learning English.					
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.					
35. Extra-curricular activities enable me to learn English well.					
36. I can improve my English if I often chat with English native speakers on line.					
37. It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.					
38. It is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.					
39. I normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.					



## Appendix 2

### Student Questionnaire about Beliefs

(Chinese Version)

#### 英语学习者信念学生问卷调查

资料收集者: 贵州大学外语教学部: 王俊

e-mail: [jungwang64@yahoo.com.cn](mailto:jungwang64@yahoo.com.cn)

2007 年 4 月

该问卷是为了收集中国学习者对英语作为外语学习的信念而设计的。该研究的主要目的是调查大学非英语专业学生对学习英语的信念, 其研究结果将在一定程度上帮助学生改进学习态度和方法。问卷包括三个部分, 所有答案没有对错之分, 请你仔细阅读并认真作答。本研究者承诺: 你的个人信息以及答卷将高度保密并只用于该项研究。在此, 衷心感谢你的大力支持!

#### 第一部分 学生档案

- 1 姓名 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 你的联系方式 (自愿): \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 年级: ☐ 一年级 ☐ 二年级
- 4 专业: ☐ 文科 \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 理科 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 性别: ☐ 男 ☐ 女
- 6 年龄 (岁): ☐ 16 ☐ 17 ☐ 18 ☐ 19 ☐ 20 ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 英语学习时间 (年): ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 超过 11
- 8 对英语能力的自我估计:  
☐ 很好 ☐ 好 ☐ 一般 ☐ 差 ☐ 很差
- 9 你的高考成绩 (一年级学生): \_\_\_\_\_  
你的最近英语四级成绩 (二年级学生): \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 对于英语学习难度的信念 (在最能代表你的信念的方框里打勾)
  - (1) 英语是:  
☐ 很难学的语言  
☐ 较难学的语言  
☐ 中等难度的语言  
☐ 容易学的语言  
☐ 很容易学的语言
  - (2) 如果一个人每天花一个小时学习英语, 多长时间能够达到流利程度?  
☐ 两年或者少于两年  
☐ 三到五年  
☐ 五年或者更多

## 第二部分 学习者信念

仔细阅读每一项，在最能代表你意愿程度的符号下面打勾。

1=完全不赞同 2=不赞同 3=不确信 4=赞同 5=完全赞同

例子：

学 习 者 信 念	1	2	3	4	5
0: 语言学习主要是通过模仿。				√	

学 习 者 信 念	1	2	3	4	5
1. 儿童比成年人容易学好英语。					
2. 有些人天生一种特别能力，这种能力能够帮助他们学好英语。					
3. 教师教英语时应该适当用一些汉语。					
4. 学英语主要靠模仿。					
5. 用学汉语的方法学习英语。					
6. 我相信我最终能够说好英语。					
7. 英语完美的发音对于说好英语很重要。					
8. 学生有必要了解英国文化以便说好英语。					
9. 我一开口说英语就应该说得正确。					
10. 我发现老师定期考试对我很有帮助。					
11. 我需要老师告诉我有关我的学习进展。					
12. 如果我听到某人说英语，便会主动走前打招呼以便练习口语。					
13. 如果我不知道单词意思，猜测词义是可行的。					
14. 我喜欢老师告诉我课后该做什么。					
15. 我具备学外语的天赋。					
16. 学英语多半是学习英语单词。					
17. 课后大量重复和练习非常重要。					
18. 我在其他人面前说英语感到紧张。					
19. 如果我在初学英语时老师允许我犯错，那么以后将很难改正那些错误。					
20. 学英语多半是大量学习语法规则。					
21. 在语言实验室里练习英语非常重要。					
22. 女性比男性外语学得好些。					
23. 如果我英语说得好，他将会有很多机会应用它。					
24. 说英语比理解英语容易。					

学 习 者 信 念	1	2	3	4	5
25. 学英语不同于学习其它课程。					
26. 学英语多半是从英语翻译成汉语。					
27. 如果我的英语说得好，将有助于我找到一个较好的工作。					
28. 读写英语比说和理解要容易。					
29. 数学及自然科学学得好的人学不好英语。					
30. 当前中国人认为学习英语很重要。					
31. 我喜欢学英语为的是能与外国人交朋友。					
32. 能说好一门以上外语的人都非常聪明。					
33. 中国人擅长学英语。					
34. 每个人都能学说一门外语。					
35. 课外教学活动有助于我学好英语。					
36. 如果我常在网上用英语与人聊天就能够提高我的英语水平。					
37. 在语言室里学英语比在传统教室里更有趣。					
38. 在语言室里学英语比在传统教室里更有用。					
39. 在课外我一般用电脑学习英语。					
40. 在课外我常常借助英特网学习英语。					
41. 多媒体应用对学习英语非常有用。					
42. 在课堂上我喜欢老师告诉我该做什么。					

第三部分 您有评论或建议吗？如果有，请您写在下面：

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*Thank you!*

## Appendix 3

### Teacher Questionnaire about Beliefs

(English Version)

#### I. Instructor Profile

**Instructions:** This questionnaire is designed to gather information on your beliefs about learning English as a foreign language. Please kindly spare a few minutes of your time to fill out this questionnaire. Your personal information and responses to this questionnaire will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Thank you for your cooperation!

1. Name (voluntary) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your highest academic qualifications. Please tick one box only.  
☐ Bachelor    ☐ Postgraduate    ☐ Others; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your experience of teaching (years):  
☐ 1-5    ☐ 6-15    ☐ More than 15
4. Your gender:    ☐ Male    ☐ Female
5. Your beliefs about the difficulty of English language (tick the one which best indicates your beliefs):
  - (1) English is:  
☐ 1) a very difficult language  
☐ 2) a difficult language  
☐ 3) a language of moderate difficulty  
☐ 4) an easy language  
☐ 5) a very easy language
  - (2) If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?  
☐ 1) 2 years or less  
☐ 2) 3 to 5 years  
☐ 3) more than 5 years

## II. Statements of Beliefs

**Instructions:** Read each statement carefully and put a (√) for the response which best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral/ Unsure; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree

**Example:**

A Statement of Beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
0: Languages are learned mainly through imitation.				√	

Statements of Beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English.					
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn English.					
3. A teacher should speak some Chinese to teach English.					
4. English is learned mainly through imitation.					
5. Students learn English the same way as they learn Chinese.					
6. Students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.					
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.					
8. Students need to know English culture in order to speak English well.					
9. Students should not say anything in English until they can say it correctly.					
10. Taking a test regularly is helpful for students.					
11. Students need their teacher to tell them how they are progressing.					
12. If students hear someone speaking English, they would go up to him/her so that they can practice their speaking.					
13. It is OK to guess if students do not know the meaning of a new word in English.					
14. Students like their teacher to tell them what to do after class.					
15. I have a foreign language aptitude.					
16. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.					
17. It is important to repeat and practise a lot in class as well as after class.					



Statements of Beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
18. Students feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.					
19. If students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard for them to get rid of such mistakes later on.					
20. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.					
21. It is important to practise in the language laboratory.					
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.					
23. If students get to speak English very well, they will have many opportunities to use it.					
24. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.					
25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.					
26. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English into Chinese.					
27. If students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job.					
28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.					
29. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English.					
30. Nowadays Chinese people think it is important to learn English.					
31. Students would like to learn English so that they can make friends with some foreigners.					
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.					
33. Chinese are good at learning English.					
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.					
35. Extra-curricular activities enable students to learn English well.					
36. Students can improve their English if they often chat with English native speakers on line.					
37. It is more interesting to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.					
38. It is more useful to learn English in the language lab than in the traditional classroom.					
39. Students normally use a computer to learn English outside the classroom.					



## Appendix 4

### Teacher Questionnaire about Beliefs

(Chinese Version)

#### 英语学习者信念教师问卷调查

资料收集者

贵州大学外语教学部: 王俊

e-mail: [jungwang64@yahoo.com.cn](mailto:jungwang64@yahoo.com.cn)

2007 年 4 月

该问卷是为了收集中国学习者对英语作为外语学习的信念而设计的。该研究的主要目的是调查您对学习英语的信念, 其研究结果将在一定程度上帮助更多的学习者改进学习态度和方法。问卷包括三个部分, 所有答案没有对错之分, 请您仔细阅读并认真作答。本研究者承诺: 您的个人信息以及答卷将高度保密并只用于该项研究。在此, 衷心感谢您的大力支持!

#### 第一部分 教师档案

1. 姓名 (自愿) \_\_\_\_\_
2. 最高学历 (限选一项)  
☐ 学士      ☐ 硕士以上      ☐ 其它, 请注明: \_\_\_\_\_
3. 职称  
☐ 助教      ☐ 讲师      ☐ 副教授      ☐ 教授      ☐ 其它, 请注明 \_\_\_\_\_
4. 教学年限 (年)  
☐ 1-5      ☐ 6-15      ☐ 超过 15
5. 性别: ☐ 男    ☐ 女
6. 对于英语学习难度的信念 (在最能代表你信念的方框里打勾)  
(1) 英语是:  
☐ 很难学的语言  
☐ 较难学的语言  
☐ 中等难度的语言  
☐ 容易学的语言  
☐ 很容易学的语言  
(2) 如果一个人每天花一个小时学习英语, 多长时间能够达到流利程度?  
☐ 两年或者少于两年  
☐ 三到五年  
☐ 五年或者更多

## 第二部分 学习者信念

请仔细阅读每一项，在最能代表你的意愿程度的符号下面打勾。

1=完全不赞同 2=不赞同 3=不确信 4=赞同 5=完全赞同

例子：

学 习 者 信 念	1	2	3	4	5
0: 语言学习主要是通过模仿。				√	

学 习 者 信 念	1	2	3	4	5
1. 儿童比成年人容易学好英语。					
2. 有些人天生一种特别能力，这种能力能够帮助他们学好英语。					
3. 教师教英语时应该适当用一些汉语。					
4. 学英语主要靠模仿。					
5. 学生们用学习汉语的方法学习英语。					
6. 学生们最终会说好英语。					
7. 完美的发音对于说好英语很重要。					
8. 学生有必要了解英国文化以便说好英语。					
9. 学生一开口说英语就应该说得正确。					
10. 定期考试对学生很有帮助。					
11. 学生需要他们的老师告诉他们的学习进展。					
12. 如果学生听到某人说英语，他（她）便会主动走上前打招呼以便练习口语。					
13. 如果学生不知道单词意思，猜测词义是可行的。					
14. 学生喜欢老师告诉他们课后该做什么。					
15. 我具备学外语的天赋。					
16. 学英语多半是学习英语单词。					
17. 课后大量重复和练习非常重要。					
18. 一些学生在其他人面前说英语感到紧张。					
19. 如果允许学生在初学英语时犯错，那么以后将很难改正那些错误。					
20. 学英语多半是大量学习语法规则。					
21. 在语言实验室里练习英语非常重要。					
22. 女性比男性外语学得好些。					
23. 如果学生英语说得好，他将会有很多机会应用它。					

学 习 者 信 念	1	2	3	4	5
24. 说英语比理解英语容易。					
25. 学英语不同于学习其它课程。					
26. 学英语多半是从英语翻译成汉语。					
27. 如果一个学生英语说得好，将有助于他找到一个较好的工作。					
28. 读写英语比说和理解要容易。					
29. 数学及自然科学学得好的人学不好英语。					
30. 当前中国人认为学习英语很重要。					
31. 学生喜欢学英语为的是能与外国人交朋友。					
32. 能说好一门以上外语的人都非常聪明。					
33. 中国人擅长学英语。					
34. 每个人都能学说一门外语。					
35. 课外教学活动有助于学生学好英语。					
36. 如果学生常在网上用英语与人聊天就能够提高他的英语水平。					
37. 在语言室里学英语比在传统教室里更有趣。					
38. 在语言室里学英语比在传统教室里更有用。					
39. 在课外学生一般用电脑学习英语。					
40. 在课外学生常常借助英特网学习英语。					
41. 多媒体应用对学习英语非常有用。					
42. 在课堂上学生喜欢老师告诉他们该做什么。					

第三部分 您有评论或建议吗？如果有，请您写在后面：

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*Thank you!*

**Appendix 5**

**Guided Questions**  
**in Students' Semi-Structured Interview**

**(English Version)**

**Questions:**

1. (1) How do you interpret the term 'aptitude'?
- (2) Do you think that you have foreign language aptitude?
2. Do you think it is easy or difficult to learn English? /If it is easy, in what aspects?  
/If it is difficult, in what aspects?
3. What is the most frequent method you use when you learn English?
4. How much time do you normally spend on learning English every day?
5. (1) Do you often read English magazines, newspapers or books after class?
- (2) Do you often listen to English radios, songs, or watch English movies after class?
- (3) Do you think these after-class activities influence your English study greatly?
6. How do you use your English language?
7. What role do you think vocabulary and grammar play in learning English?
8. (1) During the period at the university, what role does the teacher play in  
your English learning?
- (2) What role do you expect a teacher to play?
9. Can you learn English without your teacher at the university?
10. What motivates you to learn English most?

(Chinese Version)

问题:

1. (1) 你如何理解‘天赋’这个词的含意?  
(2) 你认为你有学习外语的天赋吗?
2. 你认为学英语容易还是困难? 如果容易, 请问在哪些方面? 如果困难, 请问在哪些方面?
3. 你学英语的时候, 最常用的学习方法是什么?
4. 每天你通常花多少时间学习英语?
5. (1) 课后, 你常常阅读英语杂志, 报纸, 或者书籍吗?  
(2) 课后, 你听英语广播, 听歌曲, 看英语电影吗?  
(3) 你认为这些课外活动对你的英语学习影响大吗?
6. 你如何应用你的英语语言?
7. 在英语学习过程中, 你认为词汇和语法占到什么样的地位?
8. (1) 在大学英语学习阶段, 你认为老师有什么作用?  
(2) 你希望老师起到什么作用?
9. 在大学阶段, 如果没有英语老师, 你认为你能学英语吗?
10. 激励你学习英语的首要因素是什么?

**Appendix 6**  
**Guided Questions**  
**in Teachers' Semi-Structured Interview**  
**(English Version)**

**Questions:**

1. How did you learn English successfully?
2. What factor influences most in terms of success of learning English?
3. (1) How do you interpret the term 'aptitude'?  
(2) Do you think that you have foreign language aptitude?
4. Do you think women are better than men at learning English?
5. What role do you think vocabulary and grammar play in learning English?
6. Do you think learning English is just a matter of translating from English into Chinese?
7. Do you think learning English is the same or different from learning other school subjects?
8. (1) Do you often give a test to your students?  
(2) Are College English Test Band 4 and 6 helpful for the students in learning English?
9. What do you think when your students make mistakes in their language communication?
10. How do you usually deal with the students who are poor at English?



(Chinese Version)

问题:

1. 您是如何学好英语的?
2. 谈到英语学习的成功, 您认为什么因素影响最大?
3. (1) 您是如何理解‘外语天赋’这个词的含意的?  
(2) 您认为您有学习外语的天赋吗?
4. 您认为女性比男性更容易学好英语吗?
5. 您认为词汇和语法在英语学习中占什么样的地位?
6. 您认为学习英语只不过就是从英语翻译成汉语吗?
7. 您认为英语学习同其它科目的学习是一样的还是不同?
8. (1) 您常常给学生考试吗?  
(2) 四级和六级考试对学生的英语学习有帮助吗?
9. 您如何看待您的学生在语言交流中犯错的情况?
10. 您如何帮助那些英语学习差的学生?

## Appendix 7

### Administrative Details for Student Questionnaire (1)

**Total: 1, 214 students**

Guizhou Province				
Guizhou University				
Group	Time & Date 2007	Academic Year	Field of Study	Number
1	PM 3:00- 3:30, 10 <sup>th</sup> April	Grade 2005	Science-ori.	43
2	AM 10:00-10:30, 12 <sup>th</sup> April	Grade 2005	non-Sci.-ori.	49
3	PM 2:00-2:30, 25 <sup>th</sup> April	Grade 2006	Science-ori.	35
4	PM 2:00-2:30, 30 <sup>th</sup> April	Grade 2006	non-Sci.-ori.	26
				<b>Total: 153</b>
Guizhou Normal University				
Group	Time & Date 2007	Academic Year	Field of Study	Number
1	AM 11:30-12:00, 16 <sup>th</sup> April	Grade 2005	Science-ori.	41
2	AM 8:50- 9:20, 23 <sup>rd</sup> April	Grade 2005	non-Sci.-ori.	42
3	AM 8:50- 9:20, 16 <sup>th</sup> April	Grade 2006	Science-ori.	64
4	AM 8:50- 9:20, 18 <sup>th</sup> April	Grade 2006	non-Sci.-ori.	75
				<b>Total: 222</b>

*Notes: Science-ori. = Science-oriented majors;  
non-sci.-ori. = non-Science-oriented majors*

## Appendix 7 (CONTINUED)

### Administrative Details for Student Questionnaire (2)

**Total: 1, 214 students**

Sichuan Province				
Sichuan University				
Group	Time & Date 2007	Academic Year	Field of Study	Number
1	PM 3:00- 3:30, 4 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2005	Science-ori. & non-Sci.-ori.	115 (mixed)
2	AM 11:30-12:00, 4 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2005		
3	AM 11:30-12:00, 5 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2006		
4	AM 8:50- 9:20, 6 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2006		
				<b>Total: 243</b>
South-west Jiaotong University				
Group	Time & Date	Academic Year	Field of Study	Number
1	AM 11:30-12:00, 7 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2005	non-Sci.-ori.	38
2	AM 8:50- 9:20, 7 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2005	Science-ori.	51
3	AM 8:50- 9:20, 8 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2006	non-Sci.-ori.	97
4	PM 2:00-2:30, 9 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2005	Science-ori.	56
				<b>Total: 242</b>

## Appendix 7 (CONTINUED)

### Administrative Details for Student Questionnaire (3)

**Total: 1, 214 students**

Yunnan Province				
Yunnan Normal University				
Group	Time & Date 2007	Academic Year	Field of Study	Number
1	AM 10:00-10:30, 11 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2005	non-Sci.-ori.	26
2	AM 8:50- 9:20, 12 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2005	Science-ori.	31
3	PM 2:00-2:30; 15 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2006	non-Sci.-ori.	39
4	PM 3:00- 3:30, 16 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2006	Science-ori.	48
				<b>Total: 144</b>
Kunming University of Technology and Science				
Group	Time & Date 2007	Academic Year	Field of Study	Number
1	AM 8:50- 9:20, 18 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2005	non-Sci.-ori.	32
2	AM 10:00-10:30, 19 <sup>th</sup> June	Grade 2005	Science-ori.	34
3	PM 4:30-5:00, 21 <sup>st</sup> June	Grade 2006	non-Sci.-ori.	73
4	PM 4:30-5:00, 23 <sup>rd</sup> June	Grade 2006	Science-ori.	31
				<b>Total: 160</b>

## Appendix 8

### Administrative Details for Teacher Questionnaire

**Total: 207 teachers**

Province	University	Number
Guizhou	Guizhou University	40
	Guizhou Normal University	27
Sichuan	South-west Jiaotong University	39
	Sichuan University	34
Yunnan	Yunnan Normal University	29
	Kunming University of Science and Technology	38
		<b>Total: 207</b>

## Appendix 9

### Timetable for Student Interviews

University	Date	Time	Activity
<b>Guizhou University</b> (North campus)	16 April 2007	12:30-12:45	Interview SGU1
		12:45-13:00	Interview SGU2
		13:00-13:15	Interview SGU3
		13:15-13:30	Interview SGU4
	18 April 2007	16:15-16:30	Interview SGU5
		16:30-16:45	Interview SGU6
		16:45-17:00	Interview SGU7
		17:00-17:15	Interview SGU8
	23 April 2007	17:15-17:30	Interview SGU9
		17:30-17:45	Interview SGU10
		17:45-18:00	Interview SGU11
		18:00-18:15	Interview SGU12
	27 April 2007	16:15-16:30	Interview SGU13
		16:30-16:45	Interview SGU14
		16:45-17:00	Interview SGU15
		17:00-17:15	Interview SGU16
<b>Guizhou Normal University</b> (Bai Yun Campus)	25 April 2007	12:30-12:45	Interview SGNU17
		12:45-13:00	Interview SGNU18
		13:00-13:15	Interview SGNU19
		13:15-13:30	Interview SGNU20
	30 April 2007	13:30-13:45	Interview SGNU21
		12:30-12:45	Interview SGNU22
		12:45-13:00	Interview SGNU23
		13:00-13:15	Interview SGNU24
		13:15-13:30	Interview SGNU25
		13:30-13:45	Interview SGNU26
<b>Sichuan University</b>	5 June 2007	12:30-12:45	Interview SSU27
		12:45-13:00	Interview SSU28
		13:00-13:15	Interview SSU29
		13:15-13:30	Interview SSU30
		13:30-13:45	Interview SSU31
	6 June 2007	13:45-14:00	Interview SSU32
		12:30-12:45	Interview SSU33
		12:45-13:00	Interview SSU34
		13:00-13:15	Interview SSU35
		13:15-13:30	Interview SSU36
		13:30-13:45	Interview SSU37
		13:45-14:00	Interview SSU38

## Appendix 9 (CONTINUED)

### Timetable for Student Interviews

University	Date	Time	Activity
<b>South-west Jiaotong University</b>	7 June 2007	12:30-12:45	Interview SSWU39
		12:45-13:00	Interview SSWU40
		13:00-13:15	Interview SSWU41
		13:15-13:30	Interview SSWU42
		13:30-13:45	Interview SSWU43
		13:45-14:00	Interview SSWU44
		14:00-14:15	Interview SSWU45
	8 June 2007	12:30-12:45	Interview SSWU46
		12:45-13:00	Interview SSWU47
		13:00-13:15	Interview SSWU48
		13:15-13:30	Interview SSWU49
		13:30-13:45	Interview SSWU50
		13:45-14:00	Interview SSWU51
		14:00-14:15	Interview SSWU52
<b>Yunnan Normal University</b>	18 June 2007	12:30-12:45	Interview SYNU53
		12:45-13:00	Interview SYNU54
		13:00-13:15	Interview SYNU55
		13:15-13:30	Interview SYNU56
		13:30-13:45	Interview SYNU57
		13:45-14:00	Interview SYNU58
		14:00-14:15	Interview SYNU59
	19 June 2007	12:30-12:45	Interview SYNU60
		12:45-13:00	Interview SYNU61
		13:00-13:15	Interview SYNU62
		13:15-13:30	Interview SYNU63
		13:30-13:45	Interview SYNU64
		13:45-14:00	Interview SYNU65
		14:00-14:15	Interview SYNU66
<b>Kunming University of Science and Technology</b>	20 June 2007	18:30-18:45	Interview SKU67
		18:45-19:00	Interview SKU68
		19:00-19:15	Interview SKU69
		19:15-19:30	Interview SKU70
		19:30-19:45	Interview SKU71
		19:45-20:00	Interview SKU72
		20:00-20:15	Interview SKU73
	21 June 2007	12:30-12:45	Interview SKU74
		12:45-13:00	Interview SKU75
		13:00-13:15	Interview SKU76
		13:15-13:30	Interview SKU77
		13:30-13:45	Interview SKU78

## Appendix 10

### Timetable for Teacher Interviews

University	Date	Time	Activity
Guizhou University (North campus)	17 April	16:45-17:00	Interview TGU1
		17:00-17:15	Interview TGU2
	20 April	16:00-16:15	Interview TGU3
		16:15-16:30	Interview TGU4
Guizhou Normal University	25 April	9:15-9:30	Interview TGNU5
	30 April	9:30-9:45	Interview TGNU6
		16:00-16:15	Interview TGNU7
Sichuan University	5 June	15:00-15:15	Interview TSU8
	6 June	16:00-16:15	Interview TSU9
South-west Jiaotong University	7 June	15:45-16:00	Interview TSWU10
	8 June	16:00-16:15	Interview TSWU11
Yunnan Normal University	18 June	15:30-15:45	Interview TYNU12
	19 June	15:45-16:00	Interview TYNU13
Kunming University of Science and Technology	20 June	16:15-16:30	Interview TKU14
	21 Jun	16:30-16:45	Interview TKU15



## Appendix 11

### A Sample of the Student Interview

**A Sample of the Student Interview Script** (The translated version from Chinese into English)

**Interviewer:** Wang Jun

**Interviewee:** Interview SSWU44

**Date:** 7 June, 2007

**Time:** 13:45-14:00

**Place:** South-West Jiaotong University

No.	Gender	Academic Year (1 and 2)	Major (Sci.-ori. and non. Sci.-ori.)	Proficiency S=Successful U=Unsuccessful	Interview Time
44	M	2	S	S English in NSMT: 117; CET-6: 448	15'42''

*(A brief introduction about the purpose of interview was always given before the interview started in order to make the interviewee relaxed. The researcher promised that his/her personal information and responses to the questions will be treated utmost confidential. After a short chat with the interviewee, the researcher started her questions which are related to her research. In this script, the researcher is named as W, which is the first sound letter of her family name; the student is named as P, which is the first sound letter of his family name. )*

W: How did you learn English successfully?

P: I'd like to say firstly that I liked English very much when I was young. My parents said I was especially interested in English alphabets then. I could distinguish very well between English alphabets and Chinese Pin Ying. And when I started learning English in the middle school, my English teacher had a very good sense of humor. He often told us some interesting things related to English. That raised our interest, I think. He spent a lot of time on teaching.

**W: Q1 Do you think that you have foreign language aptitude?**

P: I don't feel that...but probably I am interested in it. In the first year of middle school, I can say that I could not compete with many of my classmates in many ways.

W: When did you change?

P: The second year. Our English teacher left. I was arranged into a key class. There were more good students in this class. I remember what my first English teacher taught, read more, memorize more. Gradually, my English became better and better. So, I think it must be a good method.

W: You mean, read aloud?

P: Yes. Also, I memorize some...knowledge.

W: Still read so far?

P: After I passed CET-Band 6, emm...I got lost. Since English is not my major, I feel there must be some conflicts if I continue to pay my efforts in English. Now, I almost don't put more efforts on that....just watch some English movies, something like that. Practice my spoken language.

**W: Q2 Do you think it is easy to learn English?**

P: It's not difficult. English is a language...we should practice more...approach many sentence patterns...it's not difficult.

W: Does it influence your other subjects when you spent more time on English?

P: No. Every morning I got up and then read English aloud.

W: You stayed at home?

P: No, at school.

W: From when?

P: High School.

W: How far away from your school to your home?

P: About twenty kilometers.

W: Then you managed your own life.

P: Yeah.

**W: Q3 What is the most frequent method you use when you learn English?**

P: The most frequent method I use is to memorize new words...for example, when I memorize a new word, I always pay attention to its sound. I read it for several times. Later, I can spell that word easily...and I sometimes watch English movies...read some short stories...or articles...

W: When did you start doing these activities?

P: At the university.

W: What did you read?

P: 'Friends', and...Prison Brick'...and so on.

**W: Q4 How much time do you normally spend on learning English?**

P: About one hour in the high school...including school management.

W: What about after you came to university?

P: Emm...it depends. In the first year, I hoped to pass CET-Band 4 and 6, normally, I spent one hour...at least more than 40 minutes each day. After I passed the exams, I usually spend about 20 or 30 minutes.

**W: Now, Q5 (1) Do you often read English magazines, newspapers or books after class?**

P: I like reading some short articles.

W: Where do you get the sources?

P: From the library.

W: Read magazines?

P: No, very hard to find. It's still difficult to find some in a bookstore.

W: Read newspapers?

P: '21<sup>st</sup> Century'.

W: Buy it?

P: Some of my roommates subscribed.

**W: Q5 (2) Do you often listen to English radios, songs, or watch English movies after class?**

P: I like watching movies. In the second year of high school, I liked listening to BBC.

W: What program?

P: News.

W: Understand?

P: At the beginning, especially difficult. The pronunciation is different from my teacher's...very fast...rather difficult.

W: When you watch movies, are there Chinese subtitles?

P: Right.

**W: Q5 (3) Do you think these after-class activities influence your English study greatly?**

P: Very much. We have learned English for a very long time, but we still don't know some native slangs or typical expressions.

**W: Q6 How do you use your English language?**

P: Use? Very little. I whisper to myself sometimes.

W: Do you speak English with your classmates.

P: No, they don't like.

W: Now, under what kind of circumstances, do you use your English language?

P: I prefer to speak English with those whose English proficiency is very fluent. Then I can improve my English.

W: Besides spoken English, what about in the written language?

P: In the high school, I kept writing English dairy for a few years.

W: Helpful?

P: Yes, it's very helpful.

W: How much time on your writing each time?

P: Around 20 minutes.

W: How many words?

P: I did not count...nearly one page.

**W: OK. Q7 What do you think the role of vocabulary and grammar in learning English?**

P: Vocabulary is like bricks. You must learn it if you want improve your English. It's important and necessary to store adequate vocabulary.

Grammar...emm...language...my teacher said...read more, then you can understand grammar. Then you know how to use. For me, I don't know how to explain grammar. I don't know the structure but I can express what I want. I still kept what my teacher told me.

W: High school teacher?

P: No, my first teacher.

**W: Q8 During the period at the university, what do you think the role of the teacher in your English learning?**

P: University teachers? Honestly, I say he/she doesn't play an important role.

W: Then what role do you expect a teacher should play?

P: A university teacher might have his own teaching task. In my opinion, I expect my university help me improve my spoken English. Now what we face is not to meet an exam, but to communicate with oral language. Probably, it is due to the students' reluctance of speaking. Our teacher might have no idea how to deal with that. Now, a teacher plays unimportant role, I think.

**W: Q9 Can you learn English without a teacher at the university?**

P: Yes, I can. I like English. One of my previous English teachers said to me, 'You can learn a language well if you feel interested in it and regard it as an art. You can benefit from the success of your language learning in your whole life.' I believe English can make my life meaningful and richer.

W: Do you have a higher goal after you pass CET-Band 6?

P: In terms of an exam, I don't. However, I would like to communicate with foreigners in a higher level in English. That can be described as my next goal in the future.

**W: Q10 What motivates you to learn English most?**

P: It resulted from my interest first, and then I do not easily confess to give up (不服输)。 Why can the other students learn well but not me? That's it. I believe I can learn it well, too.

W: OK. When did you pass CET-Band 4?

P: In June, 2006.

W: What about CET-Band 6?

P: I got 448 marks, just passed, in December, 2006

W: Do you think English will be useful in your future work?

P: I think it will be very useful. Now it's the time of globalization. If you want to have a better job, I must master an international language first.

W: Is there any chance to apply English at the university?

P: Very rare despite I expect.

W: OK. Do you have something to add?

P: No more, I think.

W: Thank you very much for what you have told me.

P: You're welcome.

## Appendix 12

### A Sample of the Teacher Interview

A Sample of the Student Interview Script (The translated version from Chinese into English)

Interviewer: Wang Jun

Interviewee: TSU8

Date: 5<sup>th</sup>. June, 2007

Time: 15:00-15:15

Place: Sichuan University

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No.	Gender	Teaching Experience (years)	Academic Degree
8	F	22	MA

*(A brief introduction about the purpose of interview was always given before the interview started in order to make the interviewee relaxed. The researcher promised that his/her personal information and responses to the questions will be treated utmost confidential. After a short chat with the interviewee, the researcher started her questions which are related to her research areas. In this script, the researcher is named as W, which is the first sound letter of her family name; the teacher is named as Y, which is the first sound letter of his family name.)*

W: Now, my first question is, as a successful language learner, **Q1 How did you learn English successfully?**

Y: Try to practice the language as much as I can.

W: You mean?

Y: Listening, speaking, reading and writing. After all, English is not our native language. If we don't practice enough in all of these four aspects, it's impossible to learn English well. That is why it's so difficult to teach College English, and gain little. Comparatively, we practice too little.

W: You are an experienced teacher here. May I know how many years you have been teaching?

Y: Emm...since 1982, yes, as I graduated. Almost 22 years.

W: Yeah, a very experienced teacher.

**W: OK. Q2 What factor influences most in terms of success of learning English? For example, learners' language aptitude, motivation, strategy or others?**

**Y:** Motivation. First of all, you must have a high motivation, then you can find strategy. Then you can a language well. If you don't have any motivation, although you know a lot of strategy, you would not learn a language. In fact, I think we cannot ignore a learner's language aptitude. Aptitude, motivation, then strategy.

**W: OK, take you as a language learner before, Q3 (1) How do you interpret the term 'aptitude'?**

**Y:** If I say a kind of gift, not exactly, but...that is, 'aptitude', maybe more precise.

**W: Q3 (2) do you think you have foreign language aptitude?**

**Y:** I think...perhaps...just...normal...not much aptitude.

**W:** Then, how do you interpret the term 'aptitude'?

**Y:** My interpretation is that doing half and gaining a whole (事半功倍).

**W:** Yeah?

**Y:** Yeah. Learning a language is like learning some other things.

**W:** How do you estimate your own aptitude?

**Y:** Just average. Not very smart, but I can learn a language.

**W: Q4 Do you think women are better than men at learning English?**

**Y:** In my opinion, at the beginning period, women are better. But till the mediate and advanced, I think men are better. By nature, women are easy to learn a language. It's easy for them to remember something. But in the high school, there are more content to understand rather than memorize, as a result, men will become better.

**W: In English language learning, Q5 What do you think of the role of vocabulary and grammar rules?**

**Y:** Both of them are foundation. No vocabulary, no grammar. If no grammar, all the words are messy, it's hard to make a language. Either one of them cannot be ignored.

**W:** So, when you teach, how do you transfer this idea to your students?

**Y:** Yeah, I regard them as basis and give the students such an idea.

**W: Q6 Do you think learning English is just a matter of translating from English into Chinese?**

**Y:** Absolutely not. We can only learn English well as we speak it. Just like a child how to learn a language, you don't need to tell him how to translate, just lead him to follow you and then he can acquire a language.

**W: Q7 Do you think learning English is as same as or different from learning other subjects? Why?**

**L:** Emm...how to say? A language has its own specialty. It has a lot in common with the other subjects. All need all kinds of different aptitudes. You need work hard, you need to accumulate, on this aspect, they are the same. In terms of language itself, it has its own specialty. At the very beginning, you need to memorize a lot, but later, you may feel freely. But other subjects, you might have your freedom at the very beginning. So, it should be different. For example, those who major in science and technology, they

are not as good as those who major in the arts. In my opinion, science majors are good at logic but arts majors are good at memorizing.

**W: Q8 (1) Do you often give a test to your students?**

L: Em....on the average, not many. There are normally a mid-term and final term tests.

W: How often do you give a test to your students?

L: Actually, we have different dictations, or small quiz, and so on.

**W: Q8 (2) Are College English Test Band 4 and 6 helpful for the students in learning English?**

L: Sure, there are certain effects. It can be regarded as a motivation to the students. Frankly speaking, under many situations, human beings are forced to be successful. CET provides a stage for students to compete, challenge and win. It has a lot of good points, but on the other hand, because it is a nation-wide test, maybe, it's not easy to meet different levels of students in the country. More over, under the commend of the test, most of the teachers lead their students to focus on the test rather than pay enough attention to actual language proficiency. This is its disadvantage. However, it still has its good point, which is just like a whip to chase you go on and on. Many students feel likely giving up, but with the pressure of some benefit in the future, they keep learning.

**W: Q9 What do you think when your students make mistake in their language communication?**

L: Normally, if they don't make very serious mistakes, I ignore it. But later, I will correct it in an unserious way, like telling a joke, or something. Let the student know where he should pay attention and how to improve his language ability.

**W: In the teaching, we always face some students who are really poor at English.**

**Q10 How do you usually deal with such students?**

L: (smile) Tell you the truth, actually, especially when I assign them to do something after class, I always pay my attention to these students. I always explain some difficulties to them and ask them some questions in class. After class, I also care about their learning and always ask them whether they have any questions. In the other aspects, I always treat them as the normal students. I believe if I pay too much attention to them, they might feel much pressure. Don't discourage them. I judge a good student up to how much effort he pays in his study rather than his scores. If he studies hard, he should be encouraged.

W: Well, X Lao Shi (teacher), regarding what I asked above, what else do you like to add?

L: Em...I will teach more grammar and structures to the students.

W: Any more?

L: No more, I think.

W: Thank you very much for your kind cooperation today.

L: It's my great pleasure.

W: Bye.

L: Bye.



## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Wang Jun was born in Guizhou Province, the People's Republic of China on Dec. 27<sup>th</sup>, 1964. She received her Bachelor's Degree in English Literature from the Foreign Language Department of Guizhou University in 1985. She has been teaching English at university since her graduation. In 2003, she came to Thailand to pursue her Master's Degree in English Language Studies at Suranaree University of Technology in Nakhon Ratachasisima, and obtained her Master's Degree in 2005. Then she studied for her doctoral degree. Her academic areas of interest are mainly in cognitive psychology, specifically on beliefs about learning and teaching English as a foreign language in the People's Republic of China. She is also interested in autonomous learning, language and culture, English writing and testing. She can be contacted through:

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