

# A Survey Report of Chinese College Students' Perceptions of the College English Course

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**Abstract**—This study examined Chinese college students' perceptions of the college English course. The participants were freshmen and sophomores in a Chinese university. We handed out the original English version questionnaires to 419 students. The results indicated that there were learning problems in students' motivation with respect to empowerment, interest, and success. There were also gender and class standing differences among the participants. Data from exploratory factor analysis (EFA) illustrated that the factors of usefulness, empowerment and interest received the most attention from the participants (n=367). The results indicated that it was necessary to implement the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in the college English course. Suggestions on how to change the classroom environment were also discussed.

**Index Terms**—survey report, English as a foreign language, student academic motivation, CLT, higher education

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. CLT in the College English Course Syllabus in China

The calling for the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Chinese Higher Education happened at the threshold of the 21st century (Ministry of Education, 2004). The new national syllabus of college English course stated that the goal of the college English course was to improve college students' communicative competence, especially their listening and speaking comprehension. At the same time, the English course should enhance students' competency of self-regulated learning ability and meet the needs of the nation's social development and international exchange. More importantly, the English course should recognize the central position of the students in class, provide them with various activities, increase their interest, and finally help them become genuine self-regulated learners. (Ministry of Education, 2004). As a result, in the national college English test (NCET), the part of vocabulary and structure was cancelled and the percentage of listening increased from 20% to 35% (Zheng & Cheng, 2008). In January 2016, the NCET took a reform in which the former short dialogue and conversation were removed and three pieces of radio news and three excerpted lectures were added to the tests. The content of the revised listening section was the same type and level as those in TOEFL ("the reform of listening section in CET," January 1st, 2016). These changes both in the national syllabus and the NCET demonstrated that the present goal of the college English course was to improve students' communicative competence.

### B. The Background of CLT

The increased demand for language learning in the 1960s for European Common Market and the new trends of applied linguistics contributed to the appearance and development of CLT (Savignon, 2000; 2005). When the European Common Market came into being in the late 1950s, more and more people from different countries need to learn another language for communication (Savignon, 2000). At this moment, the language learners realized that the traditional grammar-translation approach was not useful, because it emphasized the structure/form of the language rather than how to use it appropriately in the context of communication (Richards and Rogers, 2001). Further, what the adult learners needed most was the immediate payoff of the language teaching, so a new approach about how to meet the language learners' needs and how to motivate them became the urgent issue for language instruction (Mitchell, 1994).

At the same time, a new trend of modern applied linguistics, notional and functional linguistics, appeared in Europe and North American (Savignon, 2000), which was the theoretical foundation of CLT. American linguist and anthropologist Hymes put forward the concept of communicative competence (Hymes, 1966), as a reaction to Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence (Savignon, 2000, 2005). Similarly, Candlin and Widdowson (Richards and

Rogers, 2001) held that mastery of language form/ structure cannot meet students' functional goal, and that a new method, different from grammar-translation approach, was needed to improve students' communicative and functional competence. Halliday (1978) argued that the function of language was its potential and the central issue should be how to understand language in the context of situation and how they serve for communication (Savignon, 2005). In summary, communicative competence was the focus of modern systemic functional applied linguistics and the new direction of language instruction.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *The Definition and Features of CLT*

The concept of communicative competence can be traced back to Hymes in the 1960s (Savignon, 2005). Hymes (1966) emphasized that the communicative competence is more important than the mastery of linguistics or grammar/form. In other words, how to use the language to interact with people verbal or in writing is more important than the grasp of its structure (Fotos, 2005; Savignon, 1991, 1997, 2005). Similarly, Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2013) argued that communicative competence means to know when and how to say what to whom. Given the focus of reading and writing in grammar-translation approach (Ham and Schueller, 2012), CLT paid attention to both the grammar aspect of reading and writing and communicative competence in speaking and listening (Savignon, 2000). Therefore, in order to increase language learners' communicative competence, "the essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence" (Savignon, 2005, p. 635). In other words, CLT is an approach that meets learners' needs by designing various activities in order to motivate them to engage in the learning process.

Based on the development of CLT in the 1970s in Europe and in the 1980s in North America (Ham & Schueller, 2012; Savignon, 2005), and its essence of engagement, CLT approach usually encompasses the following features: 1) the learner's autonomy or choice; 2) the learner's needs in the specified context; 3) the process of communication; 4) the learners' participation in activities such as role-play, games, tasks, pair work or group work; and 5) a friendly classroom environment for students' independence and teachers' role of facilitator (Fotos, 2005; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Savignon, 2000, 2005). Therefore, the features of CLT focus on language learners' motivation, such as autonomy, learners' needs, and relatedness, and their engagement in the learning process. As a result, language learners' academic motivation and engagement play an important role in the implementation of CLT in class.

### B. *The Grammar-translation Approach*

Given the big gap between traditional grammar-translation method and CLT, it is necessary to group the differences of the two methods into four points: 1) knowing and accuracy versus doing and fluency; 2) passive rote memorization versus active learning; 3) reading and writing versus listening and speaking; 4) sage at the stage versus facilitator in class.

#### **1. Knowing the language and its accuracy**

The traditional grammar-translation language teaching method can be traced back to ancient Greek and Roman times (Ham & Schueller, 2012). In this approach, a teacher is the center in class lecturing the linguistic forms, grammar rules, and written translations of the classic texts, and students are passive listeners who memorize the vocabulary and grammar and seek correct answers to any language exercise items (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). In grammar-translation method, teachers use native language for instruction and speaking and listening second/foreign does not included in the instruction (Kim, 2008). As a result, there is no communication or interaction in target language in the lecture class.

#### **2. Passive rote memorization**

In the traditional grammar-translation teaching, students are taught the grammar systematically guided by fixed syllabus and prescribed textbooks (Fotos, 2005; Littlewood, 2007). Teacher explain the grammar, provide students with pattern drills for practice, and then ask them to apply them in their reading and writing (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Passive rote memorization is typical in the grammar-translation class. As a result, students can be easily bored without any enjoyment in the learning process. Further, the function of communication for language learning does not appear in class (Zhou & Niu, 2015).

#### **3. The focus of reading and writing**

In the grammar-translation teaching approach, the focus of teaching is reading and writing. All students share the same prescribed textbooks, follow the same steps set up by teachers, and focus on the analysis of the sentence-level of the texts (Fotos, 2005; Harmer, 1991). So in such class, listening and speaking are neglected and pair work or group work seldom happen. In some degree, students' English are "dumb" English because they cannot speak in English (Zhou & Niu, 2015).

#### **4. Sage at the stage**

In the traditional lecture class, teachers are regarded as sages at the stage. They are respected as the sole sources of knowledge and the authority in the classroom (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). Teachers are the sole judge of students' performance in class and students seldom challenge teachers by asking questions (Fotos, 2005).

From the above review of the literature in language teaching approaches, we can see that the traditional

grammar-translation approach pays attention to the form of language, the accuracy of the grammar, the learner's reading and writing competence, and the authoritative position of teacher. In contrast, CLT focuses on the use of the language, the communicative competence, the learners' active interactions with peers and teachers in the target language. Thus, the "dumb" target language learned from the grammar-translation approach becomes the useful tool for communication learned from the CLT class. In sum, the essence of CLT is students' engagement in the learning process and the challenge of CLT for teachers is how to motivate their students to engage in such learning process.

### C. *The Gap of the Current Research*

The research in CLT in the college English course in China was very young since the calling for CLT in the national college English syllabus (Shu & Hua, 2009). Most of them examined the effectiveness of CLT from different perspectives such as group work activities, task-based learning, or cooperative learning strategies (Deng and Zheng, 2008; Rao, 2002; Shi, 2010; Tian, 2007; Zhang and Head, 2010). However, little is known about student academic motivation and their engagement in their college English course. Given the essence of CLT and its features, we plan to conduct research to examine Chinese college students' perceptions of their college English course, in order to identify their learning problems related to academic motivation and engagement. Such research will serve as a foundation for the future research in the implementation of CLT in the college English class.

### D. *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to answer the question: How do Chinese college students perceive their English course? The specific research questions for this study were:

1. What are the overall perceptions of the College English course among freshmen and sophomores in a Chinese university?
2. How do the college students perceive the College English course based on gender and class standing?
3. What are the latent factors in the questionnaire that receive the most attention from the participants?

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. *Participants*

The participants were freshmen and sophomores enrolled in a College English course at a university in central China. Of the 419 students, 382 participated (91% response rate). One hundred and twenty nine (35.1%) were freshmen, and 238 (64.9%) were sophomores. One hundred and eighty six (50.7%) were female students and 181(49.3%) were male students. The majority of the participants were Han nationality (n=358, 97.5%), and seven (1.9%) were minority nationality. One (0.3%) reported that he was an international student, and one (0.3%) reported he did not belong to the above three groups.

### B. *Materials*

We used the college version MUSIC Model of academic motivation inventory (Jones & Skaggs, 2016) as the instrument to test Chinese college students' course perceptions. There are five major components in the MUSIC model, empowerment, usefulness, success, interest, and caring. The components of empowerment and usefulness consist of five items; the components of success include four items; and the interest and caring components consist of six items respectively. In order to identify more information about students' perceptions and involvement in the college English course, we added effort (four items) and self-regulation (eight items) to the questionnaire. We rated the five components in the MUSIC Model (empowerment, usefulness, success, interest, and caring) and the component of effort on a 6-point Likert-format scale. We rated the component of self-regulation on a 5-point Likert-format scale. The items in each instrument were averaged to create a mean score for each instrument. The average internal consistency reliability of the 28 items was .898 (n=367). An example item from each variable is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
EXAMPLE ITEMS OF THE MUSIC MODEL COMPONENTS, EFFORT AND SELF-REGULATION.

Variable	Example
Empowerment	I have opportunity to decide for myself how to meet the course goals.
Usefulness	In general, the coursework is useful to me.
Success	I am confident that I can succeed in the coursework.
Interest	I enjoy completing the coursework.
Caring	The instructor is willing to assist me if I needed help in the course.
Effort	I put a lot of effort into this course.
Self-regulation	I try to monitor my progress when I study.

Note: The first six variables are rated on a 6-point Likert-format scale. 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= somewhat disagree, 4= somewhat agree, 5= agree, 6= strongly agree. Self-regulation is rated on a 5-point Likert-format scale. 1=almost never, 2= seldom, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5= almost always.

### C. *Procedure*

The research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at a public university on the east coast of the United

States. We handed out an invitation letter to the college English teachers in a Chinese university. One of them agreed to collect the data for this survey. This teacher got help from the students' tutors for the survey. Before the participant students decided to fill in the questionnaire, their tutors emphasized that they were voluntary to this survey. If they did not want to answer the questionnaire, they could leave or just sit at their seats while the others answered the questionnaire. The teacher and the tutors cooperated together and gave the participants 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Then they collected the response survey. After they collected all the response survey, they put all the data into the SPSS system, and then sent the data to the researchers in the United States.

We checked the quality of the data before we analyzed them. First, we checked the input data in order to identify if there were some extreme or error values. In this process, we deleted 15 (3.93%) pieces of the survey. Therefore, we kept 367 responses. Second, we conducted the homogeneity test for correlation and tested the communalities about the factor loading from the component matrix among the items in the questionnaire. The results indicated that there were 12 items whose value of correlation was below 0.20. They included two items of empowerment, four items of caring, five items of self-regulation, and one item of teacher evaluation. Therefore, we finally kept 28 of the original 44 items as the data base for our analysis.

#### IV. RESULTS

##### A. Question 1: What Are the Overall Perceptions of the College English Course among Freshmen and Sophomores at a Chinese Universities?

TABLE 2  
MEAN VALUES OF THE MUSIC MODEL COMPONENTS AND EFFORT.

Variable	Empowerment	Usefulness	Success	Interest	Caring	Effort
N	367	367	367	367	367	367
Mean Value(SD)	3.97 (0.85)	4.78(0.84)	3.93(0.93)	3.92(0.79)	4.85(0.94)	4.19(0.90)

Note. All items in the MUSIC model and effort are rated on a 6-point Likert-format scale. N stands for the total number of the participants.

First, we identified the components with the higher mean value. Table 2 indicated that the component caring had the highest mean value ( $M = 4.85$ ). It revealed that students' perceptions of the teacher's caring toward them were between "agree" and "strongly agree". Further, the instructor showed respect toward their students and there was a harmonious relationship between instructor and students. The component with the second highest mean value was usefulness. The value ( $M = 4.78$ ) demonstrated that students' perceptions of usefulness were nearly "agree". In other words, students realized that the College English course was very useful.

Second, we examined the components with the lower mean values. Further, Table 2 indicated that the components with lower mean values were interest, success and empowerment. The component with the lowest mean value was interest ( $M = 3.92$ ). The value signified that students' perception of interest in the course was far from "agree", and the data showed that most of them did not have strong interest in the English course. The component with the second lowest mean value was success ( $M = 3.93$ ). The value signified that most of the students did not have a sense of success in the course. The component with the third lowest mean value was empowerment ( $M = 3.97$ ), the value indicated that students did not think they have enough freedom to make choice and decision in their coursework.

In addition, we could also identify the components with a relatively higher and lower value from the percentages of the participants from Table 4. The components of caring and usefulness had higher mean values. For the component of caring, 87.6% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that 'the instructor is available to answer my questions about the coursework.' For the component usefulness, 71.7% of the participants agreed that 'in general, the coursework is useful to me.' Success, interest, and empowerment were the three components with the lower mean values. For the component success, 34.6% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that "I feel that I can be successful in meeting the academic challenges in this course." For the component of interest, 39.8% of the participants agreed that 'the coursework holds my attention.' For the component empowerment, 37.3% of the participants agreed that 'I have the opportunity to decide for myself how to meet the course goals.' In sum, most of them agreed that the instructor was respectful toward them and they had a harmonious relationship with the instructor. They also realized the course was very useful. However, most of them felt that the coursework and the instructional methods cannot hold their attention, and most of them had no sense of success in this course and they had little sense of control over the coursework.

TABLE 3.  
MEAN VALUE OF THE THREE SELF-REGULATION COMPONENTS.

Variable	SR3	SR7	SR8	Total
Mean Value(SD)	2.84(0.938)	3.41(0.919)	3.31(0.966)	3.18(0.705)

Note. SR stands for self-regulation. The value of SR is rated on a 5-point Likert-format scale.

1=almost never, 2= seldom, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5= almost always.

From data analysis in Table 2, 3, and 4, we concluded that in the College English course, more than 80% of the participants felt that the instructors were respectful of them, and that there was a friendly environment in class. At the same time, most of them (74%) recognized that the College English course was very useful. However, most of them were less motivated with respect to empowerment, interest, and success. Therefore, it appears that there is a sense of

contradiction and frustration in their course perceptions: English is important and useful for their life and future, but they have no strong interest or sense of success in the course. They do not have a sense of control over the coursework, either. Only 31.3% of the participants reported that they put a lot of effort in this course. Half of them did not have self-regulated strategies in their coursework. Each and every Chinese college student is required to take a two year mandatory College English course, and each week they have three sections (a total of six hours) throughout the semester. Consequently, it is worthwhile for instructors to find ways to solve these problems.

TABLE 4.  
THE FREQUENCY OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE STUDENTS PERCEIVE THE COURSEWORK

Item	1strongly disagree	2 disagree	3somewhat disagree	4somewhat agree	5 agree	6strongly agree
eMpowerment 1	14 (3.8%)	35(9.5%)	73(19.9%)	108(29.4%)	108(29.4%)	29(7.9%)
Usefulness 1	2(0.5%)	11(3.0%)	22(6.0%)	69(18.8%)	153(41.7%)	110(30%)
Success 1	15(4.1%)	34(9.3%)	40(10.9%)	106(28.9%)	121(33%)	51(13.9%)
Interest 1	13(3.5%)	27(7.4%)	56(15.3%)	125(34.1%)	123(33.5%)	23(6.3%)
Caring 1	8(2.2%)	11(3.0%)	12(3.3%)	36(9.8%)	133(36.2%)	167(45.5%)
Effort 1	9(2.5%)	51(13.9%)	60(16.3%)	132(36%)	80(21.8%)	935(9.5%)
	1Almost never	2 seldom	3 sometimes	4 often	5almost always	
SR1	24(6.5%)	109(29.7%)	146(39.8%)	77(21%)	10(2.7%)	

### B. Question 2: How Do the College Students Perceive the College English Course Based on Gender and Class Standing?

Regarding the different course perceptions based on gender, we conducted an ANOVA analysis using the seven variables in the survey. The results showed that there was significant difference in the components of success and self-regulation between male and female students.  $F(1, 366) = 9.219$  ( $p < 0.05$ ),  $F(1, 366) = 7.532$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The female students had more sense of success than male students. The female students had more sense of confidence in themselves being as self-regulated learners than the male students (See Table 5).

TABLE 5  
ANOVA TABLE OF THE FIVE COMPONENTS IN THE MUSIC MODEL, EFFORT, AND SELF-REGULATION BETWEEN GENDERS.

Variable	df	F	P
Empowerment	1,366	2.192	0.14
Useful	1,366	2.561	0.11
Success	1,366	9.219	<b>0.003</b>
Interest	1,366	1.605	0.206
Caring	1,366	1.877	0.171
Effort	1,366	2.593	0.108
Self-regulation	1,366	7.532	<b>0.006</b>

Note. Values in bold are statistically significant at an alpha value of 0.05.

Among the seven variables in the response questionnaire, there were statistically significant differences in the components of interest, empowerment, and usefulness between freshmen and sophomores. The freshmen had more positive course perceptions than that of the sophomores ( $F(1, 366) = 19.006$  ( $p < 0.05$ ),  $F(1, 366) = 6.698$  ( $p < 0.05$ ),  $F(1, 366) = 23.385$  ( $p < 0.05$ )). In other words, the freshmen had more interest in the English course than the sophomores; the freshmen perceived more sense of control over their course than the sophomores; the freshmen also felt that the English course was more useful than the sophomores. Why did we find that the sophomores were less motivated than the freshmen in English coursework? The more time they spent on the English course, the less sense of interest and empowerment they had in the course. These different course perceptions between freshmen and sophomores indicated the importance of the problems occurring in this course (See Table 6).

TABLE 6  
ANOVA TABLE OF THE FIVE COMPONENTS IN THE MUSIC MODEL, EFFORT, AND SELF-REGULATION BETWEEN CLASS STANDINGS.

Variable	df	F	P
Empowerment	1,366	19.006	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
Useful	1,366	6.698	<b>0.010</b>
Success	1,366	0.298	0.585
Interest	1,366	23.385	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
Caring	1,366	3.171	0.076
Effort	1,366	0.494	0.483
Self-regulation	1,366	0.104	0.747

Note. Values in bold were statistically significant at an alpha value of 0.05.

### C. Question 3: What Are the Latent Factors in the Questionnaire That Received the Most Attention from the Participants?

We wanted to know further which aspects the students paid the most attention to in regards to their courses. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was a proper choice for such research (Field, 2009; Matsunaga, 2010; Widaman, 1993). Before we conducted EFA analysis, we deleted some items for the lower correlation value between the item and

the commonality (below 0.20). We kept 28 items for our analysis. Cronbach's alpha on all the 28 items combined was 0.889. To verify the sampling adequacy of the data, we used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Normalization statistic and generated a KMO of 0.871, which was classified as "great" (Hutcheson and Sofroniou, 1999, p. 224). So, we were confident that factor analysis was appropriate. Bartlett's test of sphericity generated  $\chi^2(378) = 3433.879$  with an alpha < 0.001, which indicated that a correlation between the 28 items was strong enough for conducting an exploratory factor analysis.

TABLE 7  
KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.871
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3433.879
	df	378
	Sig.	0.000

TABLE 8  
TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.150	25.536	25.536	7.150	25.536	25.536	3.975	14.195	14.195
2	2.798	9.992	35.528	2.798	9.992	35.528	3.279	11.709	25.905
3	1.700	6.070	41.598	1.700	6.070	41.598	2.327	8.312	34.217
4	1.569	5.604	47.203	1.569	5.604	47.203	2.243	8.010	42.227
5	1.284	4.584	51.787	1.284	4.584	51.787	2.063	7.369	49.596
6	1.059	3.782	55.569	1.059	3.782	55.569	1.672	5.973	55.569
7	.989	3.530	59.099						
8	.937	3.348	62.447						
9	.850	3.034	65.481						
10	.739	2.639	68.120						
11	.714	2.550	70.670						
12	.704	2.514	73.184						
13	.667	2.383	75.566						
14	.655	2.340	77.906						
15	.634	2.265	80.171						
16	.601	2.146	82.317						
17	.562	2.008	84.325						
18	.521	1.860	86.184						
19	.494	1.764	87.948						
20	.473	1.689	89.637						
21	.449	1.603	91.240						
22	.437	1.562	92.802						
23	.396	1.413	94.216						
24	.376	1.341	95.557						
25	.353	1.262	96.819						
26	.321	1.146	97.965						
27	.308	1.098	99.064						
28	.262	.936	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

TABLE 9.  
ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIXA

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q18	.727	.168	-.016	.097	-.107	.091
Q17	.726	-.042	.066	-.046	-.004	-.046
Q3	.673	.019	.236	-.017	.104	.192
Q23	.645	.199	-.007	.198	.200	.004
Q16	.624	.110	.163	.185	.070	.107
Q15	.602	.117	.217	.116	-.105	.206
Q2	.594	-.049	.185	.134	.341	-.087
Q19	.554	.354	.212	.050	-.267	-.137
Q10	.003	.704	.139	.244	.168	.013
Q13	.076	.681	.074	.014	.205	.152
Q12	.045	.677	.195	.053	.012	.241
Q14	.143	.621	.088	.202	.312	.146
Q9	.152	.598	.145	-.060	.193	.041
Q20	.321	.467	.060	.098	-.056	.129
Q4	.040	.221	.768	.137	.074	.054
Q6	.205	.109	.710	-.020	.262	.007
Q1	.309	.069	.512	.013	.135	.050
Q25	.134	.152	.510	.277	-.121	.280
Q8	.427	.243	.480	.004	.053	-.119
Q24	.027	.143	.093	.826	.080	-.004
Q21	.153	.217	.183	.746	.178	.139
Q22	.294	-.006	-.031	.731	.107	.179
Q5	.033	.130	.169	.018	.782	.022
Q7	.089	.228	.122	.164	.664	.142
Q11	-.055	.355	.028	.233	.560	.080
Q27	.046	.117	.215	.034	.120	.722
Q28	.107	.272	-.174	.169	.199	.679
Q26	.097	.421	.086	.162	-.097	.515

The MUSIC Model was well normed in the United States, and the items in the model had known and expected correlations. For this reason, we selected an oblique rotation to extract and examine the strongest EV variables into factor groupings or loadings (Field, 2009; Kline, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

From the EFA, we found that there were six latent factors that received students' most attention in the response survey. We planned to analyze the top three factors as the most latent factors. The first latent factor (see Table 9.) identified in the factor analysis was comprised of eight items in the MUSIC Model survey. These items represented the college students' perceptions of usefulness of the course with an alpha coefficient of 0.833. The second strongest factor was comprised of five items indicating the college students' perceptions of empowerment within the course. The alpha coefficient was 0.738. The third component was from five items in the MUSIC Model, which represented the college students' perceptions of interest in the English course. It had an alpha coefficient of 0.714. Overall, the factor that obtained the participants' most attention was the usefulness of the English course. It was closely followed by the factor of empowerment. The third was the factor of interest. Integrated with the results of Question 1, the results from the factor analysis indicated that college students realized the English course was very useful for their life and future. However, they could not perceive a sense of autonomy or control over the coursework. As a result, they did not have a strong interest in the English course. Therefore, the instructors must take actions to redesign their instructional methods in order to motivate students. These results were consistent with the results in Question 1, indicating the urgency of instructional change in the English course.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the data analysis from the survey indicated that the main problems in Chinese college EFL course were closely related to student academic motivation. This was consistent with the big differences between grammar-translation approach and CLT (Fotos, 2005; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Savignon, 2005). Second, students' perceptions of the college English course had a close relationship with their efforts and self-regulated strategies. This was consistent with the essence of CLT (Savignon, 2005). The data suggests that the lower mean value of self-regulated items may result from the passive role of students in the traditional lecture class (Richards & Rogers, 2001; Savignon, 2005). Taken together, the mean value of all components of the MUSIC model and the items with lower mean value revealed that Chinese college students need the new CLT approach in order to meet their needs in communicative competence (Ministry of Education, 2004). The lowest mean value of self-regulation demonstrated that the big challenge for Chinese college EFL teachers would be how to increase student engagement when they tried to use the CLT approach in their class (Savignon, 2005).

In the literature review part, we knew that motivation played a crucial role in the learning process. If students just wanted to pass the English exams instead of enjoy the learning processes, how could they be truly engaged in their English learning? As for students' engagement in English learning, we would like to cite Sivan's (1986) views on the

internalized motivation for teaching and learning. Sivan held that it was clear that instruction and motivation share a common goal: to develop an internalized capacity for activity. Only when teachers and students see themselves invested in the outcomes or goals and as able achievers of the goals, can they become independent proactive individuals in teaching and learning. In other words, teachers and students develop a common understanding about motivations and the pay-off of the activities, and then they will desire the same outcomes (Sivan, 1986). How to maximize both student and teacher motivation in the learning process will be a topic for future research.

## VI. LIMITATIONS

We must interpret the findings of this study with the context of the limitations. First, we took the sample from one university in China. We cannot generalize the results to all Chinese universities. Second, the sample size was 367 students, and this number was sufficient for the current study. But if we had included more students in the sample, we would have made more comparisons between the sub-groups in regards to class standings, programs, and demographics. Third, all the data analysis was based on the response questionnaires. Fourth, in the questionnaire, the components in the MUSIC model and the component of effort were rated on a 6-point Likert-format scale, while the component of self-regulation was rated on a 5-point Likert-format scale. This difference decreased the quality of the results. Fifth, there were no open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Sixth, during the study, we did not conduct interviews with the students. We did not observe the teaching practice. Therefore, the results of the data analysis would have been more forceful if we had conducted the triangulation (questionnaire, interview, and observation) in future research. Seventh, we used the original English version of the MUSIC model questionnaire to examine students' course perceptions of the English course. Given the monolingual language environment on campus and in daily life in China, there might be some gap between the two languages. That was why we deleted some items due to the lower value of commonality. We had better provide an approved Chinese version of the MUSIC Model questionnaire in order to help Chinese students understand the meaning of each item fully. In doing so, we will increase the trustworthiness of the results.

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