

A STUDY ON THE USE OF ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE CHINESE
COLLEGE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH

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Abstract

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This study explores how assessment strategies can be used to motivate students in L2 learning based on data collected from 30 non-English majors in a regional university in China. The data reveal that formative assessment could motivate students more effectively, especially during the process of English learning. The data also reveal some problems with the assessment strategies implemented in this study, such as the poor quality of peer-assessment and group work. This paper concludes with recommendations for utilizing assessment strategies to motivate students.

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Chapter I Introduction

The focus of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has been shifted from teachers to students, which means teachers should care more about students' needs. However, college non-English majors in China are relatively passive in English class because most of them are not in need of English in reality even after graduating from universities. Often their goal is limited to passing the required College English Test Band 4 (CET-4). Having no need of or interest in English, they are not willing to put effort into learning English.

Zhang (2010) believes that positive motivation is the prerequisite for effective L2 teaching. This argument has been supported by other prominent Chinese scholars such as Jiang (2004), Qin and Wen (2002), and Yan (2002). Liu and Dai (2003) claim that most Chinese non-English majors have instrumental motivation. Abraham H. Maslow believes that intrinsic motivation would improve students' learning outcomes better than extrinsic motivation (as cited in Qin, 2003). However, compared with extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation is difficult to be monitored and controlled (Zacharis, 2010).

Assessment is regarded as one effective means to improve extrinsic motivation (Zacharis, 2010). The assessment system widely used in China currently focuses on summative assessment that overvalues learning outcomes in the form of scores rather than the learning process. However, summative assessment may inevitably result in students learning for examinations, which is harmful for effective learning in the long run (Yan, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

This study explores the relationship between assessment strategies and Chinese non-English majors' L2 motivation. It aims to answer three questions as follows: 1) Does assessment enhance the development of L2 motivation? 2) If so, what type of assessment

motivates students better? 3) What assessment strategies can be used to enhance Chinese College students' motivation to learn English?

Definitions of Terms

L2 motivation: the effort that learners make during the process of learning a second language (Ellis, 1994).

Student engagement: students' willingness to participate in routine school activities, such as attending class, submitting required work, and following teachers' directions in class. (Chapman, 2003)

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to find out the advantages and disadvantages of summative assessment and formative assessment in the first place; it examines several assessment strategies that could enhance students' extrinsic motivation and instrumental motivation. The study also aims to provide teachers with suggestions on selecting assessment strategies that could effectively enhance learners' L2 motivation.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in it offering suggestions on what assessment strategies Chinese regional colleges can employ to enhance students' motivation. There are many studies on assessment strategies, but few of them focus on students in regional colleges in China. Students in regional universities are comparatively lower in English proficiency; therefore, the assessment strategies implemented in universities located in developed areas may not be applicable to regional universities.

This study will serve as the basis for future assessment planning in Honghe University, where the study was conducted. It will benefit the entire student body as it will enhance their

motivation as well as English learning outcomes. Furthermore, this study will serve as a practical model for future studies under similar circumstances.

Delimitations of the Study

The study examined the relationship between L2 motivation and assessment strategies implemented in a Chinese regional University, where students have lower English proficiency. It involved 30 participants, whose ages ranged from 18 to 20. Due to the small number of samples collected and the participants' English proficiency, those assessment strategies identified in this study may not be applicable to high proficiency learners, who are more capable of learning English independently and voluntarily.

Chapter II Review of Related Literature

This chapter reviews relevant literature on motivation, assessment, and the relationship between motivation and assessment.

Definitions of Motivation

Motivation, a rather complicated concept, has been defined in various ways. For example, Ellis (1994) defines L2 motivation as “the effort that learner made during the process of learning a second language” (p. 175). Dornyei (2003) believes that motivation is the wishes and desires that negatively or positively affect learners’ attitude and achievement.

The most prominent motivation theory is brought forward first by Gardner and Lambert in the late 1950s. From a socio-educational perspective, they classified L2 motivation as instrumental motivation and integrative motivation; the former refers to the desires to realize ultimate goals, for instance, getting a job, developing a career, and appreciating or translating academic materials in a target language while the latter can be defined as the desires to know about the target culture or participate in the target language community (as cited in Dornyei, 2003). It has long been a matter of dispute whether instrumental or integrative motivation is more decisive to L2 learning. Gardner, who believes that integrative motivation may be an important or even crucial factor for successful language learning, focuses on integrative motivation in his study (Dornyei, 2003). However, Williams (1994) points out that L2 English learner with higher instrumental motivation would score higher in English proficiency tests. Recent studies reveal that integrative motivation and instrumental motivation are not mutually exclusive because L2 learners are seldom motivated by instrumental or integrative motivation alone (Wang, 2000).

Cognitive psychologists divided motivation into two categories: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is inwardly driven motivation, such as the willingness to participate in interesting and challenging activities; on the contrary, extrinsic motivation is outwardly driven motivation, such as the wishes and desires generated from parental pressure, awards, or punishment (Ellis, 1994).

Abraham H. Maslow, a famous humanist psychologist, believes that intrinsic motivation would improve students' learning achievement better than extrinsic motivation (as cited in Qin, 2003). Another psychologist, Jerome Bruner, also states that overusing outward rewards may be harmful to students' desire to learn (as cited in Qin, 2003). However, Zhang (2010) argues that extrinsic motivation is more likely to be monitored and controlled and could enhance learning achievement more effectively.

L2 Motivation Research in China

Liu and Dai (2003) conducted a survey on the L2 motivation of Chinese college students. They chose 165 non-English majors from Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (NUAA) as participants. These participants were divided into two levels according to their English proficiency. Level A refers to students with higher English proficiency; level B refers to those with lower English proficiency.

Liu and Dai's (2003) study shows that most participants, 80.26% participants at level A and almost 95% participants at level B, have instrumental motivation in L2 learning (see Table 1). The study also reveals that learners' English proficiency is in inversely proportion to instrumental motivation (Liu & Dai, 2003). This point has been supported by Liu and Wang (2010), who interpret instrumental motivation as short-term motivation that would not push learners forward persistently. It is challenging for those who have instrumental motivation only

to make significant progress in the long run.

Table 1

L2 Motivation in NUAA

Level	Purpose of L2 Learning				
	Study abroad	Pass exams	Entertain	Get a high-paying job	Others
A	19.74%	19.74%	7.89%	38.16%	0.00%
B	2.86%	30.00%	7.14%	51.43%	1.43%

Liu and Dai's (2003) survey also investigated the degree of learners' interest in English. In the following table, *****stands for students who like English very much; *** stands for those who somewhat like English; ** stands for those who somewhat dislike English; * stands for those who do not like English at all.

Table 2

The Degree of Students' Interest in NUAA

Level	Interest in English			
	*****	***	**	*
A	25.00%	64.47%	10.53%	0.00%
B	12.86%	54.29%	25.71%	7.14%

Liu and Dai (2003) argue that intrinsic motivation is in proportion to L2 proficiency because the study shows that 89.47% of students at level A express interest in English. On the contrary, Liu (2007) finds out that the motivation of most Chinese L2 learners, who are motivated by extrinsic factors, may disappear soon after they fulfill their preset goals, and it is

more difficult for them to maintain their enthusiasm in English. They may even lose enthusiasm when encountering frustration, and ultimately give up learning English.

Assessment

Assessment could be defined as “the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning” (Walvoord, 2004, p. 2). The concept of assessment was brought forth in 1911 by Frederich Taylor, who defined assessment as a tool to understand how well students have learned and thus focused his attention on the significance of tests and examinations; later, Ralph Tyler, the initiator of modern educational assessment, asserted that the key task of assessment was to check if the teaching plan has been fulfilled rather than distinguish or select students (as cited in Wang & Fu, 2006).

Michael Scriven is the first researcher who distinguished summative assessment from formative assessment; he suggested that assessment “has a role in the on-going improvement of the curriculum”, and proposed “to use the terms ‘formative’ and ‘summative’ evaluation to qualify evaluation in these roles” (as cited in Dylan, 2006, p. 283).

Summative Assessment (SA). SA refers to using tests or examinations to assess learning achievements and summarize the development of learners (Lynch, 2001). SA is used to assess learning outcomes whereas formative assessment aims to assess the learning process. SA could provide information on learners’ achievements or teachers’ teaching effectiveness over a certain period of time.

Formative Assessment (FA). FA is the approach that teachers employ to collect information during the process of teaching (Black & William, 1998). Anthropologists Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers and Arthur Combs believe that the process of learning is the progress of

self-discovery, which involves not only acquiring knowledge, but also gaining experience during the process of learning (Harlen & Winter, 2004). Therefore, teachers should fully utilize the information collected during the learning process (Fu & Peng, 2006).

Taras (2005) believes posing questions is an extremely effective teaching technique in FA and a critical index to assess students' achievement. However, Black (2003) points out that many teachers would not prepare in advance for every specific word or detailed question that would be presented in class. With regard to posing questions, there are two points deserving our attention. First, what type of questions should teachers pose? Fu and Peng's (2006) research implies that simple YES/NO questions should be avoided if the purpose of questioning is to enable L2 learners to get a full understanding of something. Second, how much time should students be given to prepare for questions? Row's (1986) study reveals that one to two seconds allocated for preparing medium level questions is too short for learners to recall what they have learned, let alone those difficult questions, which they need to think about. Fu and Peng (2006) suggested increasing time for students to prepare for questions.

Fu and Peng (2006) also suggested giving feedback in time in the process of FA so as to help students identify the gap between their learning goals and their status quos, and then guide them to narrow the gap. Harlen and Crick (2002) believe that teachers' timely responses like praises or suggestions could give students guidance on their leaning goals and methods, enhance learning motivation, and improve learning outcomes. Harlen and Crick (2002) claim that compared with negative feedback, positive feedback contributes more to improving students' learning motivation; however, general and mechanical positive feedback, such as "good" and "very good," cannot motivate students well. Lynch (2001) believes feedback in the form of grades, scores, or comments could motivate students relatively effectively.

Assessment from teachers, peers, and students themselves are equally important in FA. Fu and Peng (2006) asserted that compared with mutual-assessment, self-assessment – the process for students to engage in self-reflection and self-regulation – could motivate learners directly.

Relationship between SA and FA. FA and SA have a lot in common. Fu and Peng (2006) suggested differentiating them from the following perspectives.

Table 3

Differences between FA and SA

	FA	SA
Purpose	Adjust and promote teaching	Assess the achievement of teaching
Time	During teaching	After teaching
Place	Every aspect of teaching	Divorced from a teaching process
Focus	Process of teaching	Outcomes of teaching
Participants	Educator, teachers and learners	Assessors
Form of outcome	Comments or feedback	Scores or grades

FA is difficult to be implemented since its measurements – collecting information such as teaching goals, methods, learner needs, learning goals, motivation, teachers’ language proficiency, and attitude towards teaching – are so complicated that no unified standard has been put forward (Genesee & Upshur, 2001). In contrast, SA is well accepted for its conveniences in standardization and implementation.

Relationship between Motivation and Assessment

The influence of assessment on L2 motivation has two sides. On the one hand, students’

L2 motivation could be intensified by satisfactory scores or praises from peers or teachers (Wang, 2000). Qin (2002) claims that it is necessary for L2 learners to get affirmative feedback from teachers, parents, and peers. Wang (2000) believes that learners' expectations or desires to receive positive feedback could have impact on their motivation. This point has been supported by Zacharis (2010), who mentioned that some psychologists believe that learners' confidence to achieve certain goals during a specified period of time is influenced by others' opinions, feedback, and evaluation. On the other hand, assessment could affect motivation negatively. Although assessment has been regarded as the main approach to generating extrinsic motivation and instrumental motivation, it could only improve learning attitude temporarily, and would lead to negative emotions like fear, panic and anxiety; therefore, it would not be effective in the long run (Zacharis, 2010).

Summary

Most college students (i.e., non-English majors) in China are motivated by instrumental motivation and extrinsic motivation; besides, the level of students' English proficiency is in inversely proportion to the degree of instrumental motivation and extrinsic motivation (Liu & Dai, 2003). Instrumental motivation is short-term motivation, which cannot motivate learners effectively in the long run (Liu & Wang, 2010). Compared with intrinsic motivation, the extrinsic motivation is easy to be monitored and controlled (Zhang, 2010).

Assessment is an effective means to enhance learners' instrumental motivation and extrinsic motivation. Compared with FA, SA focuses on the outcomes of learning. However, SA is more likely to result in students learning for examinations. On the contrary, FA, which puts more emphasis on the learning process, can enable teachers to monitor and control the learning process more effectively. It provides feedback for learners so that they can adjust their learning

strategies and improve learning outcomes. To enhance students' motivation, FA and SA should be both used effectively (Tara, 2005).

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

This study was designed to find out the relationship between assessment strategies and students L2 motivation, and accordingly give some suggestions on using assessment strategies. The study was conducted in Honghe University, a regional university in Yunnan province, China from March 1st, 2012 to June 30th, 2012, involving some students enrolled in a course entitled “English Viewing, Listening and Speaking.”

This study is based on action research. Eileen (2000) defines action research as “a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research” (p. 1). Some scholars used to believe that action and research are two concepts without any connection between each other. They argued that the former refers to activities of teaching practitioners while the latter refers to the work of experts or scholars (Rui, 2004). Qiao and He (2007) believe that conducting action research, the combination of action and research, is critical to improving teaching practice.

Participants. There were 60 students enrolled in the English course. After being introduced to this study, 30 students showed their willingness to participate in the study while the other 30 students were not willing to participate. All participants were sophomores, who had studied English for about 7 years. Most of them had finished a one-year fundamental English course that prepared them for more advanced ones. The participation was completely voluntary, and any participant could withdraw from the study without penalty.

Instruments. Two questionnaires were developed for this study, which surveyed students’ learning attitudes, engagement in learning, and opinions on assessment strategies. The

pre-study survey aims to find out how much effort students had put into learning English, the assessment strategies their former English teachers adopted, and their views on these assessment strategies. The pre-study survey involves 9 questions that fall into two parts:

The first part includes questions on students' engagement in learning as follows:

1. Number of hours per week spent on preparing for class;
2. Frequency of class presentation;
3. Frequency of working with other students in in-class group activities;
4. Frequency of teaching other students English;
5. Frequency of working with classmates outside the class to prepare for the class;
6. Frequency of asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions;
7. Frequency of discussing ideas on English learning with others outside the class;

The second part includes questions on students' views on the assessment strategies they had experienced:

8. How did your former English teacher assess your learning achievement? What assessment strategies did he/she employ? What did your score consist of?
9. Do you like these assessment strategies? Why?

The post-study survey aims to find out the changes in students' engagement in learning, and their attitudes towards the assessment strategies implemented in this study. It involves 7 questions that are the same as the top 7 questions in the pre-study survey. Besides, it required students to express their opinions on the following 3 open-ended questions that focus on the new assessment strategies adopted in this study.

1. What did you often do to improve your English prior to participating in this study?
2. What are changes of your L2 motivation during this semester?

3. According to your learning experience, what needs be improved concerning the new assessment strategies?

Data Collection

During the first week of the semester (from March to June, 2012), all 60 students in the English course were required to take a diagnostic listening test that aimed to find out students' English proficiency. They scored 25.24 out of 100 on average, with the lowest score being 5.71 points and the highest score being 62.86 points. 10 participants whose scores varied from 28 to 63 were grouped into level A, 10 participants whose scores varied from 18 to 27 into level B, and the other 10 participants whose scores varied from 0 to 17 into level C. In other words, the 30 participants were divided into three groups of three proficiency levels, with 10 participants in each group.

The participants, aged between 18 and 20, had been trained on what SA and FA are, and the functions and standards of peer-assessment, self-assessment and teacher-assessment in the first class period so that they had no difficulty with terminologies in the questionnaires. All of the students were informed of grading components and percentages (see Table 4).

The participants were required to finish the pre-study survey at the beginning of the semester. After finishing the final examination, the participants were required to finish the post-study survey.

Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel was used to analyze all collected survey data. Data collected from the diagnostic test was analyzed in terms of mean scores, standard deviation (SD), and highest and lowest scores. A bar chart was employed to display the changes in students' engagement in learning.

Table 4

Assessment Policy: Grading Components and Percentages

ITERM	DESCRIPTION	%
Teacher's assessment	Attendance (0.5 pts. per/period)	
	Homework (0.5 pts. per/ period)	40%
FA Peers' assessment	Autonomous Learning(0.5 pts. per/ period)	
	Individual performance (1-3 pts. each/ performance)	20%
	Group performance (1-3 pts. each/ performance)	
Self-assessment	Online assessment system	10%
Mid-term exam	Oral exam (role playing)	10%
SA Final exam	Written exam	20%

CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSTIONS

30 participants took the surveys voluntarily. Their diagnostic test results are summarized in Table 5:

Table 5

Students' Diagnostic Test Results

Level	N/Female	N/Male	Mean Score	Highest	Lowest	SD
A	8	2	43.00	62.9	28.6	12.20
B	7	3	22.14	18.6	27.1	2.63
C	5	5	14.00	17.1	10	2.50

Note: N refers to the number of participants.

The standard deviation (SD) was calculated to compare the differences among levels A, B and C. The indexes (SD-A=12.20, SD-B=2.63, SD-C=2.50) show striking differences between group A, the best group, and group C, the worst one. It suggested that individual differences ought to be taken into consideration when assessment strategies are formulated.

According to Liu and Dai's (2003) study, students with lower English proficiency are likely to be driven by instrumental motivation. In this study, the mean score of level A is only 43.00 out of 100, which implies that even the best group of students are still not good enough in English proficiency. The participants in this study are more likely to be motivated by instrumental motivation instead of integrative motivation.

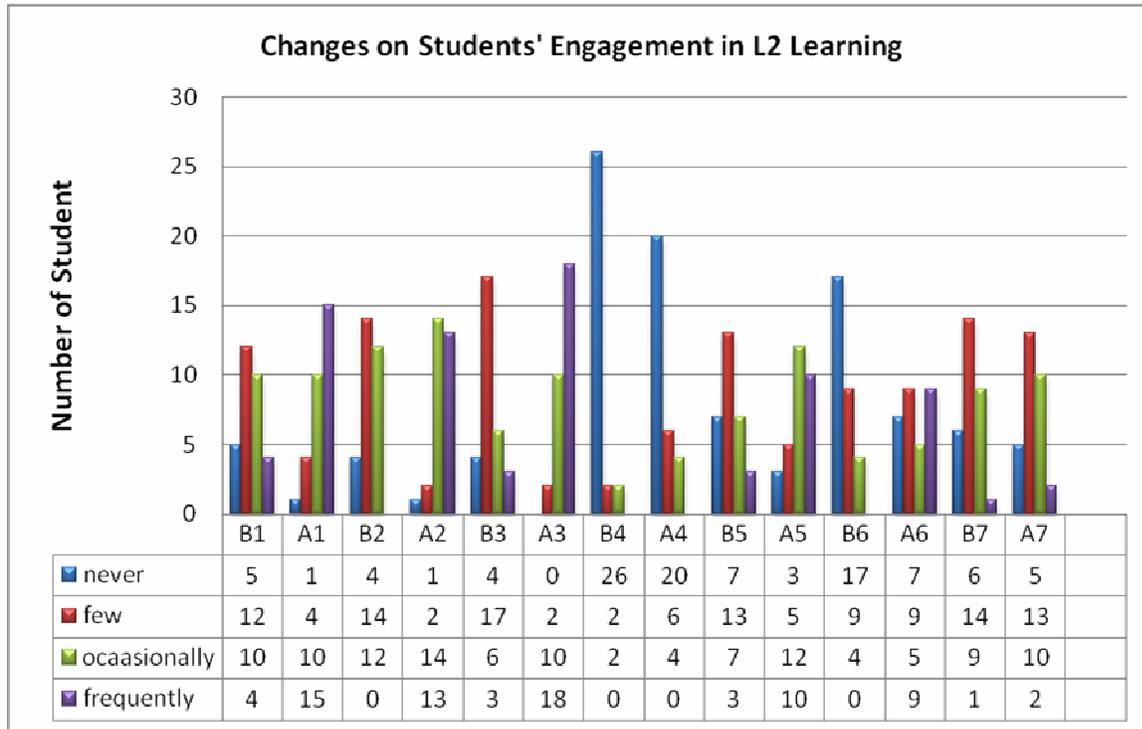
Changes in Students' Engagement in L2 Learning

The 30 participants were asked about the effort they put into preparation, class activities, active learning, and collaborative learning. Figure 1 shows the changes in the students'

engagement in L2 Learning before and after the study.

Figure 1

Changes in Students' Engagement in L2 Learning



Note. Never=0, few=1~2, occasionally=3~6, frequently \geq 6 times per term; B_x refers to answers to the X question in the pre-study questionnaire; A_x refers to answers to the X question in the post-study questionnaire.

Chinese non-English majors are required to spend 2-4 hours attending English classes each week, and they are supposed to spend at least 2 hours working on English after class each week. However, B1 shows that 36% of the participants spent less than half an hour, and 33% spent only a half to one hour preparing for class per week. What is shocking is that 17% of the participants had never prepared for class, which means the assessment strategies they had experienced before this study had not motivated them to learn effectively during the learning process. B2 and B3 show that prior to participating in this study, about 70% of the participants seldom engaged themselves in class activities and were apt to study alone. B4 shows that 26 students, accounting for nearly 90% of the participants, admitted that they had never helped

others learn English in or outside of class. According to B6, 60% of the participants never posed questions to their English teachers. Coming from different majors, the participants had limited opportunities to communicate with their classmates after class. B5 and B7 show that over 66% of the participants seldom cooperated with their classmates after class. Nevertheless, it is exciting that nearly 34% of the participants had tried to communicate via the Internet or other platforms after class.

The level of engagement has changed significantly by the end of this study. To make it clear, the increased rates are showed in Table 6.

Table 6

Students' Engagement in Learning

	Never	Few	Occasionally	Frequently
ΔRQ1	-13.3%	-26.7%	0.0%	39.7%
ΔRQ2	-10.0%	-40.0%	6.7%	43.3%
ΔRQ3	-13.3%	-50.0%	13.3%	50.0%
ΔRQ4	-20.0%	13.3%	6.7%	0.0%
ΔRQ5	-13.3%	-26.7%	16.7%	23.3%
ΔRQ6	-33.3%	0.0%	3.3%	30%
ΔRQ7	-3.3%	-3.3%	3.3%	3.3%

Note. $\Delta RQ = (A1 - B1) / 30$

Table 6 clearly shows that the students' engagement in learning English has changed.

Below are highlights from Table 6:

1. ΔRQ1 shows that compared with the pre-study survey results, 39.7% more students have spent more than one hour studying English after class.

2. Δ RQ2 shows that nobody was willing to give a presentation in class prior to participating in this study; however, 43.3% of them were willing to give presentations frequently after taking part in this study.
3. Δ RQ3 shows that the number of students joining in group activities frequently in class was increased by 50%;
4. Δ RQ5 show that the number of participants who prepare for class after the study tripled.

However, Δ RQ4 and Δ RQ6 reveal that there were small changes in teaching classmates English or discussing learning methods with classmates in or outside of class, which suggests that teachers should focus on how to guide students to learn from each other.

Views on Assessment Strategies

This section presents participant responses to the open-ended questions in both surveys.

Responses to the Pre-study Survey. There were two open-ended questions on students' opinions and attitudes towards the assessment strategies their former English teachers adopted. The first question was "How did you former English teacher assess your learning achievement? What assessment strategies did he/she employ? What did your scores consist of?" The second question was "Do you like these assessing strategies? Why?"

The answers to the first question were amazingly consistent. The assessment strategies students experienced fell into two broad categories. SA, in the form of listening and written tests, accounts for 70%; FA, which usually consists of attendance, homework and class participation, accounts for only 30%. The answers indicate that most English teachers had realized the importance of FA and integrated FA into their assessment system.

The answers to the second question were diverse in many aspects. 3 students admitted

that their teachers had never used FA, and their scores were based on SA, i.e., their final examination. One of them was in supportive of SA while two others did not like it.

The supporter expressed her feeling as follows: “I like the way my former English teacher used. I believe examination is good for us for it could motivate us to learn more.”

The other two students were firmly against SA. One wrote, “We cannot keep our best shape every time we take the examination....” The other stated, “The score of final examination can not represent my learning achievement. Those who ‘burnt the night oil’ (refers to those students who studied or memorized the language points a few days before the final examination) can get higher score if the teacher overweighs final examination.”

27 students claimed that their former English teacher had adopted FA to assess their learning achievement. Most of them spoke positively about their experience with FA. However, they did express their dissatisfaction with FA.

Some of them believe that FA makes them embarrassed because the questions their teachers posed were too difficult to answer. One wrote, “I don’t like FA. My English is poor, I’m fearful that teacher asked me question in class.”

Others did not like the techniques their former English teachers used for FA. One wrote, “My teacher deducted my marks when I answer question incorrectly. I don’t like teacher’s questions because deducting marks give us too much pressure.” Another wrote, “I don’t think FA fair to all of us because my former English teacher assessed me only by the rates of attendance and frequencies of homework submitted.”

Some of them blamed their English teachers for being irresponsible. One wrote, “My former English teacher is not responsible for us. Although I performed actively in class, she didn’t give me the marks I deserved. Her action made me depressed and frustrated.” Another

wrote, “There were too many students in our class. I sat in the last row of the classroom so I didn’t give my teacher any impression. Of course, I didn’t get satisfactory marks in the end of the term.”

Students’ responses implied that although the assessment strategies their former teachers employed were called “formative assessment,” they could not, to some extent, reflect the performances of students during the process of learning; the so-called “FA” they experienced previously did not take students’ needs into consideration.

Responses to the post-study Survey. Students were first required to describe the activities they had done to improve their English proficiency before this study.

The responses to question 8 show that 21 students admitted that they started to review only 1 or 2 weeks before the final examination. Five of them confessed that they liked watching English movies or listening to English songs more than reviewing every week; one of them stated, “I tried to review or memorize new words after each class, but forgot most before the final examination; consequently, I gave up (reviewing after each week).”

Other 9 students spent some time studying or reviewing English every week because they had to pass the CET-4 examination.

The result confirmed again that SA would lead to student learning for examinations. Students are unwilling to put effort into the learning process because the final examination only tested what teachers asked them to memorize before the final exam rather than what they had really learned.

Next, the participants were asked to identify any changes in their learning motivation after the study. The responses to question 9 shows that 23 participants felt their learning motivation and learning interest have been strengthened while 7 others emphasized that there

was no change in their L2 motivation.

Some enjoyed their progress. Below are some sample responses:

“I become aware of the importance of English.”

“I like reading English novel and watching English movies now.”

“I began to review after each class, and have learnt about some useful ways to practice my listening ability.”

Finally, students were encouraged to evaluate the assessment strategies implemented during the semester. They were also asked to give some suggestions and advice on how to improve the assessment strategies.

29 participants expressed their satisfaction with the new assessment strategies. Below are some sample responses:

“It is perfect. Scores of written test no longer stands for everything now. I like it because it makes me pay more attention on the process of learning instead of the examination only.”

“The new strategy makes us active in class; I like the atmosphere in your (the teacher’s) class.”

“English learning needs to be persistent during the whole semester rather than work for the exam only. The new assessment system made us concentrated on the process of learning.”

Only one student suggested that the teacher should consider making learning English songs or cross-culture issues grade components.

It is worth mentioning that many of them expressed their doubts about peer-assessment while others were firmly supportive of it.

Below are sample responses from some opponents:

“Peer-assessment can be affected by emotion; it irrevocably leads to one-sided solution

and injustice. Some excellent performers didn't get the vote they deserved because they had not canvassed for themselves."

"Some student-judges didn't grasp the skills on how to assess the performances even though teacher has set some detailed assessing standards for reference. The final scores are not convincing."

"Some student-judges are not responsible for their judgment. Some of them even made assessment without watching the performance carefully."

Some of them believe that the peer-assessment is practical. One wrote, "Giving the voting right to our classmates makes everybody engaged into the class activities and strengthened our interests in English." Another wrote, "Justice is a comparative concept. I believe most students-judges are responsible for the performers and would not regard such important work as a trifle matter because the judges will, someday, become performers and be judged by other groups."

Summary

The participants were relatively low in English proficiency. Their engagement in learning has been improved significantly after they participated in this study. The study reveals that the time students spent preparing for and reviewing class increased dramatically. This is partly because autonomous learning was taken into consideration when the new assessment strategies were formulated. The study also shows that class participation increased because students had to earn scores based on the frequency and quality of their class performances.

What deserves to be mentioned is that compared with group work, students were more inclined to gain scores through individual presentation. It implies that students had formed a habit of studying alone. The common ways they employed to learn English were reciting texts or

doing exercises on their own. Seldom were they learning English by communicating with peers, teachers or even foreigners.

In addition, few participants have engaged in cooperative learning, such as teaching other students or asking questions in class. On one hand, some students would not like to teach others even when they have got a full understanding of problems that puzzled others. On the other hand, students are not willing to ask their peers a question for fear of losing face. The most important is that students got used to viewing their teachers as the center of learning; therefore, they turned to nobody but teachers when encountering difficulties, let alone their peers or themselves.

Most participants asserted that the assessment strategies their former English teacher adopted need to be improved. They believe that FA could have motivated them better if their teachers knew how to effectively use FA.

Most participants showed their satisfaction with the assessment strategies implemented in this study. However, some participants think that peer-assessment is unfair.

Chapter V Conclusions and Recommendations

Studies on L2 motivation in the Chinese context show that most Chinese non-English majors, especially those with lower English proficiency, are motivated mainly by instrumental motivation and extrinsic motivation. Assessment is an effective tool to improve instrumental and extrinsic motivation. Nowadays, Chinese college English teachers prefer SA to FA because there are no fixed standards for FA, and using FA needs more time, energy and skills; on the contrary, SA is widely used in L2 teaching thanks to its standardization and conveniences. Most teachers put too much emphasis on SA; consequently, most non-English majors in China chose to learn for examinations.

In order to solve the problem caused by SA, this study experimented with a set of new assessment strategies. The study shows that the participants did put more effort into the learning process instead of simply studying for examinations as a result of the new assessment strategies.

This study offers us some useful practical suggestions on how to formulate assessment strategies.

First, teachers can find out the motivation and proficiency of their students beforehand. Motivation is the prerequisite for learning. Teachers should choose assessment strategies in accordance with students' learning motivation and English proficiency.

Second, a student's final grade can be calculated on the basis of multiple components so that students could earn scores in various ways.

Third, teachers can focus on the learning process in addition to student learning outcomes. Because learning English is a long-term process, one or two standardized examinations may be insufficient to find out students' proficiency.

Fourth, teachers can make use of technology to lessen their workload in assessment. In this study, the online assessment system presented students' self-assessment results quickly and effectively; it accordingly saved teacher's time and energy.

Fifth, teachers can identify groups and help group members get familiar with each other. The good relationship among group members could improve the quality of cooperative learning.

Sixth, peer-assessment can be an indispensable part of assessment. Although some students may not be comfortable with peer-assessment, it can enhance learning engagement among students, especially those who have never provided feedback to their classmates' performances.

Seventh, teachers should supervise students' autonomous learning. Otherwise, students may lose the motivation to learn autonomously.

This study also reveals some problems with the assessment strategies adopted in the study.

First, the participants showed little change in cooperative learning. Teachers should help students get used to cooperative learning and form a habit of learning cooperatively.

In addition, the approaches students employed in cooperative learning are relatively simple and mechanical, mainly in the form of asking for answers. What they gained in group work is nothing but closed answers. Such ineffective group work would not be beneficial to students' further study because they could not acquire necessary skills and knowledge.

Additional questions for future studies and teaching are as follow: How can students be grouped? How can students collaborate more effectively? How can students develop a habit of cooperative learning?

Furthermore, due to the lack of skills and training on peer-assessment, some students

performed subjectively when evaluating other students' work; as a result, some participants questioned whether the assessment strategies implemented in this study are fair. Therefore, teachers should formulate detailed rules and regulations on peer-assessment to prevent subjective evaluation.

Assessment could enhance learners' instrumental motivation and extrinsic motivation. However, instrumental motivation cannot stimulate students to learn in the long run (Liu & Dai, 2003). In addition, overusing extrinsic motivation may be harmful to students' desire to learn (Qin, 2003). Therefore, once students gain a sense of achievement, teachers should help them improve their integrative motivation and intrinsic motivation, which could constantly drive them to learn in the long run. More importantly, there is no fixed assessment strategy that fits everyone in every course; therefore, teachers should choose assessment strategies depending on who they are teaching.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire on L2 Assessment Approaches: Pre-study Survey (survey conducted in the first week of the semester)

Gender:

Major:

Age:

Grade in diagnostic test: A / B / C

1. Number of hours per week spent on preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, and other activities related to this course)

a. none

b. less than half an hour

c. a half to one hour

d. more than one hour

2. Frequency of making class presentation.

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

3. Frequency of working with other students in group activities in class

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

4. Frequency of teaching other students on English course (Volunteered or paid)

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

5. Frequency of working with classmate outside the class to prepare class

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

6. Frequency of asking questions in class or contributed to class discussion

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

7. Frequency of discuss ideas on English learning with others outside the class (classmates, Co-workers, family members, or tutors)

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

8. How did you former English teacher assess your learning achievement? What assessment strategies has he/she employed? What did the scores consist of?

9. Do you like these assessment strategies? Why?

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire on L2 Assessment approaches: Post-study survey (survey conducted in the last week of the semester)

Gender:

Major:

Age:

Grade in diagnostic test: A / B / C

1. Number of hours per week spent on preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, and other activities related to this course)

a. none

b. less than half an hour

c. a half to one hour

d. more than one hour

2. Frequency of making class presentation.

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

3. Frequency of working with other students in group activities in class

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

4. Frequency of teaching other students on English course (Volunteered or paid)

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

5. Frequency of working with classmate outside the class to prepare class

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

6. Frequency of asking questions in class or contributed to class discussion

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

7. Frequency of discuss ideas on English learning with others outside the class (classmates. Co-workers, family members, or tutors)

a. never

b. few

c. occasionally

d. frequently

8. What did you often do to improve your English prior to participating in this study?

9. What are changes of your L2 motivation during this semester?

10. According to your learning experience, what needs be improved concerning the new assessment strategies?

APPENDIX C

Diagnostic Listening Test

Student Name:

Student NO.:

Major:

Section A

Directions: In this section, you will hear 8 short conversations and 2 long conversations. At the end of each conversation, one or more questions will be asked about what was said. Both the conversation and the questions will be spoken only once. After each question there will be a pause. During the pause, you must read the four choices marked A), B), C) and D), and decide which the best answer is. Then mark the corresponding letter on **Answer Sheet 2** with a single line through the center.

1. A) The man hates to lend his tools to other people.
B) The man hasn't finished working on the bookshelf.
C) The tools have already been returned to the woman.
D) The tools the man borrowed from the woman are missing.
2. A) Save time by using a computer.
B) Buy her own computer.
C) Borrow Martha's computer.
D) Stay home and complete her paper.
3. A) He has been to Seattle many times.
B) He has chaired a lot of conferences.
C) He holds a high position in his company.
D) He lived in Seattle for many years.
4. A) Teacher and student.
B) Doctor and patient.
C) Manager and office worker.
D) Travel agent and customer.
5. A) She knows the guy who will give the lecture.
B) She thinks the lecture might be informative.
C) She wants to add something to her lecture.
D) She'll finish her report this weekend.
6. A) An art museum.
B) A beautiful park.
C) A college campus.
D) An architectural exhibition.
7. A) The houses for sale are of poor quality.
B) The houses are too expensive for the couple to buy.
C) The housing developers provide free trips for potential buyers.

D) The man is unwilling to take a look at the houses for sale.

8. A) Talking about sports.
B) Writing up local news.
C) Reading newspapers.
D) Putting up advertisements.

Questions 9 to 12 are based on the conversation you have just heard.

9. A) The benefits of strong business competition.
B) A proposal to lower the cost of production.
C) Complaints about the expense of modernization.
D) Suggestions concerning new business strategies.
10. A) It cost much more than its worth.
B) It should be brought up-to-date.
C) It calls for immediate repairs.
D) It can still be used for a long time.
11. A) The personnel manager should be fired for inefficiency.
B) A few engineers should be employed to modernize the factory.
C) The entire staff should be retrained.
D) Better-educated employees should be promoted.
12. A) Their competitors have long been advertising on TV.
B) TV commercials are less expensive.
C) Advertising in newspapers alone is not sufficient.
D) TV commercials attract more investments.

Questions 13 to 15 are based on the conversation you have just heard.

13. A) Searching for reference material.
B) Watching a film of the 1930s'.
C) Writing a course book.
D) Looking for a job in a movie studio.
14. A) It's too broad to cope with.
B) It's a bit outdated.
C) It's controversial.
D) It's of little practical value.
15. A) At the end of the online catalogue.
B) At the Reference Desk.
C) In The New York Times.
D) In the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature.

Section B

Directions: In this section, you will hear 3 short passages. At the end of each passage, you will

hear some questions. Both the passage and the questions will be spoken only once. After you hear a question, you must choose the best answer from the four choices marked A), B), C) and D). Then mark the corresponding letter on **Answer Sheet 2** with a single line through the center.

Passage One

Questions 16 to 18 are based on the passage you have just heard.

16. A) Synthetic fuel.
B) Solar energy.
C) Alcohol.
D) Electricity.
17. A) Air traffic conditions.
B) Traffic jams on highways.
C) Road conditions.
D) New traffic rules.
18. A) Go through a health check.
B) Take little luggage with them.
C) Arrive early for boarding.
D) Undergo security checks.

Passage Two

Questions 19 to 21 are based on the passage you have just heard.

19. A) Beauty.
B) Loyalty.
C) Luck.
D) Durability.
20. A) He wanted to follow the tradition of his country.
B) He believed that it symbolized an everlasting marriage.
C) It was thought that a blood vessel in that finger led directly to the heart.
D) It was supposed that the diamond on that finger would bring good luck.
21. A) The two people can learn about each other's likes and dislikes.
B) The two people can have time to decide if they are a good match.
C) The two people can have time to shop for their new home.
D) The two people can earn enough money for their wedding.

Passage Three

Questions 22 to 25 are based on the passage you have just heard.

22. A) Because there are no signs to direct them.
B) Because no tour guides are available.
C) Because all the buildings in the city look alike.
D) Because the university is everywhere in the city.

23. A) They set their own exams.
 B) They select their own students.
 C) They award their own degrees.
 D) They organize their own laboratory work.
24. A) Most of them have a long history.
 B) Many of them are specialized libraries.
 C) They house more books than any other university library.
 D) They each have a copy of every book published in Britain.
25. A) Very few of them are engaged in research.
 B) They were not awarded degrees until 1948.
 C) They have outnumbered male students.
 D) They were not treated equally until 1881.

Section C

Directions: In this section, you will hear a passage three times. When the passage is read for the first time, you should listen carefully for its general idea. When the passage is read for the second time, you are required to fill in the blanks numbered from 36 to 43 with the exact words you have just heard. For blanks numbered from 44 to 46 you are required to fill in the missing information. For these blanks, you can either use the exact words you have just heard or write down the main points in your own words. Finally, when the passage is read for the third time, you should check what you have written.

Russia is the largest economic power that is not a member of the World Trade Organization. But that may change. Last Friday, the European Union said it would support Russia's (26) _____ to become a W. T. O. member.

Representatives of the European Union met with Russian (27) _____ in Moscow. They signed a trade agreement that took six years to (28) _____.

Russia called the trade agreement (29) _____. It agreed to slowly increase fuel prices within the country. It also agreed to permit (30) _____ in its communications industry and to remove some barriers to trade.

In (31) _____ for European support to join the W. T. O., Russian President Putin said that Russia would speed up the (32) _____ to approve the Kyoto Protocol, an international (33) _____ agreement to reduce the production of harmful industrial gases.

(34) _____

Russia had signed the Kyoto Protocol, but has not yet approved it. The agreement takes effect when it has been approved by nations that produce at least 55 percent of the world's greenhouse gases. (35)

The United States, the world's biggest producer, withdrew from the Kyoto protocol after

president Bush took office in 2001. So, Russia's approval is required to put the Kyoto Protocol into effect.

(36)

Russia must still reach agreements with China, Japan, South Korea and the United States.