



Factors Affecting Perception of English Comprehension of Students in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to study the level of English comprehensive ability and material factor, teacher factors and student factor as perceived by students, to examine the relationship between material, teacher and students' motivation factors and English comprehensive English ability and to investigate the predictors of English ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha , Hangzhou, China. This research studied factors affecting English comprehensive ability. There are three kinds of factors: material factor, teacher factors and student factor. Material factor includes curriculum. Teacher factors include teaching method and teaching quality. Students' factor includes students' motivation. This research studied factors in order to improve the comprehensive level of English.

This research used quantitative methods. The population of this study was 99,916 students. The quantitative sample group consisted of 478 students. The finding revealed that the overall level of English comprehensive ability from six universities in Xiasha ,Hangzhou, China was at the moderate level with an average mean score of 2.80. College students did not achieve testing hypothesis that the mean score should get a mean score at a high level. The finding revealed that the overall level of material factor, teacher factors, student factor was at a moderate level with the average mean score of 3.40. The finding showed that there was a significant relation between the four factors and college English comprehensive ability. From four factors, curriculum shows the highest level of relationship with English comprehensive ability with .377, while the teaching method has the lowest level with .215. Curriculum was the highest prediction factor among three factors, predicting 14% of college English comprehensive ability of students. Students' motivation could predict 3% of college English comprehensive ability of students. Comparing two variables, curriculum is the powerful predictor factor of students' English comprehensive ability.

Key words: *English comprehensive ability, Xiasha, Hangzhou*

1. Introduction

China hosted the Olympic Games successfully in 2008, which is a great achievement of reform and opening up policy within 30 years and it is to enhance Chinese international status. The whole world has watched this great country (Hu, 2012). Now China has stood in the center of the world, college English also plays an increasingly important role. Nowadays, English is not only helping us learn advanced foreign technology, excellent culture and management experience but also spread Chinese culture and opened up the world market (Wang, 2016).



G20 Business Summit opened in Hangzhou in 2016. The Group of Twenty (abbreviation: G20) is an international economic cooperation forum. This is China's first time to host the G20 and the second country in Asia to host it. Russian President Vladimir Putin said that China's economy had an indispensable positive impact on the development of the world economy and highly evaluated the tremendous achievements made by the Hangzhou Summit.

"National medium and long-term education reform and development plan (2010-2020)" (Planning Outline) pointed out that improving the quality of higher education. Improving quality is an important task of higher education and a basic requirement of a powerful country. In order to improve the quality of higher education teaching, it requires for providing high-quality college foreign language and to cultivate high-quality college students. On the one hand, this policy is to meet the national strategic needs for the country's reform and opening up, economic and social development services; on the other hand, this policy also is to meet the students professional learning, international exchanges, further study, and employment needs. The Planning Outline stated that higher education should train a large number of talented students who have international vision and can participate in international affairs and international competition. College English curriculum is charged with the mission of developing the English proficiency of international talents (The State Council, 2010)

"The college English curriculum teaching requirements" formally used in 2007. It has three levels: the basic level, the intermediate level, the high level. This study chose the intermediate level as standard to see whether students achieve or not. The main goal of college English is to develop students' comprehensive abilities especially listening and speaking abilities. It advocates a student-centered teaching model where the role of the teacher is encouragement, enlightenment, and reforms from the teaching methods, teaching goal, and teaching evaluation. College students' English proficiency and awareness have greatly improved. It has also increased our country's international status and international competitiveness (Chen, 2014; Wang, 2016). There is an urgent need to upgrade the comprehensive level of English.

It was first time to evaluate the intermediate level of students' college English comprehensive ability in Xiasha, China.

This research studied factors affecting English comprehensive ability. There are three factors: material factor, teacher factors and student factor. Material factor includes curriculum. Teacher factors include teaching method, teaching quality. Students' factor includes students' motivation. This research studied factors in order to improve the comprehensive level of English.

Material factor as the first factor is curriculum which affects English comprehensive ability of the students. Because it is the sum of all disciplines or the total number of activities a student under the guidance of a teacher. Dewey and Kelly explain explicit curriculum: subjects that will be taught by teachers. Curriculum also is identified as the "mission" of the school. It means that school wants students to acquire knowledge and skills (Smith, 1996; Dewey, 1902; Kelly 2009).

Teacher factors as the second factor are teaching method and teaching quality which affect English comprehensive ability of students. Because teaching methods consider how the student can learn effectively (Westwood, 2008). A student-centered approach can cultivate students' independence and autonomy. It requires students to deal with questions, appeal knowledge and apply knowledge by themselves with a little



direction of the teacher (Hannafin & Hannafin, 2010). Teaching quality is the most important factor influencing students' achievement. To some degree, teaching quality equals student quality (Wang 2004).

Student motivation as the third factor affects English comprehensive ability of students. It is because it is a kind of internal power to stimulate student's learning to make an effort to achieve teaching goal. It is an energy that gives strength to stop giving up and go on (Qin, 2002). The framework is shown in Figure 1.

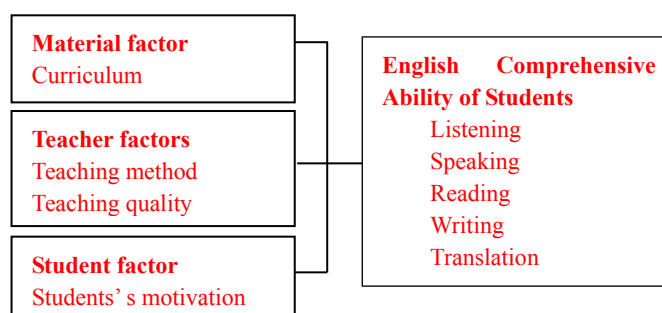


Figure 1 Frameworks

2. Objectives

1. To determine the level of English comprehensive ability from six universities in Xiasha ,Hangzhou, China.
2. To determine the level of material factor, teacher factors, student factor as perceived by college students from six universities in Xiasha , Hangzhou, China.
3. To examine the relationship between material, teacher and students' motivation factor and English comprehensive English ability from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China.
4. To investigate the predictors of English ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Participants

This study was carried out as a survey to study factors affecting English comprehensive ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China. The total population were 99,916 students from six universities under Xiasha, Hangzhou. The total sample were 478 college students in six universities under Xiasha, Hangzhou. The population and sample is shown in the Table 1.

3.2 Quantitative method

To study the level of the level of material factor, teacher factors, student factor as perceived by college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China. The factors of curriculum questionnaire were based on Yilmaz (2011), teaching method questionnaires were based on Yang and Yuen (2014), teaching quality questionnaires were based on Pavlina, Zorica, Pongrac (2011) and students' motivation



questionnaires were based on Alkaabi (2016).

The questionnaire consists of 37 items. A five-point Likert Scale was used to measure the degree of agreement with the statement. The score for each item was 5 to 1 representing from always to never respectively.

In order to evaluate the college students whether achieve intermediate level of college English comprehensive ability or not, a five-point Likert scale ranging from highest quality to lowest quality was used. The researcher designed the questionnaire based on the intermediate level of college English teaching requirements (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007). The questionnaire included 15 items.

Table 1 Population and sample of six universities under Xiasha Campus of Hangzhou

No.	University's name	Population (N)	Sample (n)
1	Hangzhou Normal University	15,987	78
2	Hangzhou Dianzi University	21,982	105
3	Zhejiang Gongshang University	17,984	85
4	Zhejiang University of Finance & Economics	11,990	56
5	Zhejiang Sci-Tech University.	19,983	97
6	China Jiliang University	11,990	57
	Total	99,916	478

4. Results and discussion

4.1 The Level of Material Factor, Teacher Factors, Student Factor as Perceived by college Students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China

In Table 2 the descriptive statistics of all observed variables under Material Factor, Teacher Factors, Student Factor were presented.

Table 2 Overall Level of Material Factor, Teacher Factors, Student Factor as Perceived by Students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China (n=478)

Factors	Mean	S.D.	Perception level
1. Curriculum	3.09	1.10	Moderate
2. Teaching method	3.62	1.07	High
3. Teaching quality	3.62	1.00	High
4. Students' motivation	3.25	1.13	Moderate
Overall	3.40	1.08	Moderate

Note: The rating scale was divided into 5 levels to the mean score from 4.21-5.00 as highest, 3.41-4.20 as high, 2.61-3.40 as moderate, 1.81-2.60 as low and 1.00-1.80 as lowest.

From the result of the statistical analysis indicated in the Table 4.2, it was indicated that the



overall level of material factor, teacher factors, student factor was at a moderate level with the average mean score of 3.40 and moderately affected students' college English comprehensive ability from six universities in Xiasha, China. When each item under the curriculum was considered, the teaching method and teaching quality at the high level has the highest mean scores of 3.62. It means that the choice of teaching method helps student learn effectively and the high quality of teacher performance satisfied with the student needs (Westwood 2008), while curriculum was perceived at a moderate level with the lowest mean score of 3.09. It means that students were a little satisfied with the curriculum because it cannot help students achieve goal and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of students is not strong (Chen, 1989; Duan, 2012).

4.1.1 Curriculum

The finding showed that college students from six universities in Xiasha, China perceived curriculum at a moderate level with the mean score of 3.09. This study agreed with the finding of Fan and Mei (2009) who studied on college English curriculum and showed that finding did not improve comprehensive ability and ignores the cultivation of students' English proficiency. Item 3 of the study "college English improve my comprehensive ability" at moderate level with 3.03. Although the goal of the curriculum is to improve college students' comprehensive ability, it showed that the goal cannot meet the actual situation. From a practical point of view, the goal is still a long way to go because examination-oriented, limitations of resource, traditional and out-of-date teaching methods have also created obstacles to the cultivation of practical ability of students (Sun, 2014). Nowadays, college students' comprehensive ability is better than before, but still there are some problems.

Comparing item 4 "I feel that college English comprehensive improve my listening skill" with a mean score of 3.00, item 5 "I feel that college English comprehensive improve my speaking skill" with mean a score of 2.98, item 6 "I feel that college English comprehensive improve my reading skill" with mean a score of 3.15 and item 7 "I feel that college English comprehensive improve my writing skill" with a mean score of 2.97, we found that the quality of reading is better than listening, speaking and writing. Because of examination-oriented system, there are many reading passages in exams and college students must pass the examination.

4.1.2 Teaching method

The finding showed that college students from six universities in Xiasha, China perceived teaching method at a high level with a mean score of 3.62. It revealed that teachers used a student-centered teaching approach to cultivate college students' independence and autonomy. Student-centered approaches reduces time on lecture and increase time in class activities which educated students' ability of problem-solving (Young and Paterson, 2007, Hannafin & Hannafin 2010)

The teaching method mean score of group discussions, individual presentations, group presentations and dialogue activities were at a high level. Yang and Yuan (2014) studied college English teaching method in Hefei, China: a plot study. The finding also showed two activities of group discussion and dialogue in pairs are more frequent in class. It helped students to deal with questions, appeal knowledge and apply knowledge by themselves with a little direction of teacher.

(Young & Paterson, 2007)



4.1.3 Teaching quality

The finding showed that college students from six universities in Xiasha, China perceived teaching quality at a high level with a mean score of 3.62. It reflected that students were very satisfied with the teaching quality from six universities in Xiasha, China. Item 10 “I feel that college English teachers treat students properly and respectfully” and item 11 “I feel that college English teachers work hard and conscientiously complete the task” are the highest mean scores in teaching quality, because teachers should love students, work and educate as their basic behavior (Zhao, 2012).

Item “I feel that English teachers use computer technology in order to improve teaching quality. For example: computer network curriculum” is at a high level. Information technology is one of the qualities of teachers in China. College English teachers should use multimedia teaching to improve students' English proficiency and promote self-development. Teachers should use their Internet resources to build their own personal teaching database to promote teaching (Hu & Wu, 2012). Therefore, almost all college teachers used information technology to teach students.

4.1.4 Students' motivation

The findings show that college students from six universities in Xiasha, China perceived students' motivation at a moderate level with a mean score of 3.25. It revealed that students' motivation is neither high nor low. Among total 10 items in students' motivation, item 2, item 5 and item 10 were at a high level with a mean score of 3.42, 3.59 and 3.45. Item 2 “passing the exam” showed that China has a strong examination system so that college students have to pass the exam, otherwise they cannot graduate from university. This finding also was as the same as the finding of Dong (2010) who showed almost all college students learn English is to pass the examination because of the exam-oriented education system in China. Teachers just teach students how to get a high score. They spent little time on students' interest. Item 5 “getting a good job” showed that after college students graduated from university, they would try their best to find a job based on learned in university. Nowadays, China has stood in the center of the world, more and more foreigners have come China to invest, do business and open a company or bank. The need for foreign language communication has dramatically increased (Chen, 2010 & Wang, 2016). If students master not only professional knowledge but also English well, they have more chance to get a good job. Item 10 “communicating with foreigner” showed that students were very interested in communicating with foreigners.

4.2 The level of college English comprehensive ability from six universities in Xiasha, China perceived by college students

The descriptive statistics of all the observed variables of English comprehensive ability of students were presented in this part. The descriptive statistics include mean and standard deviation.

**Table 3** The level of college English comprehensive ability from six universities in Xiasha, China (n=478)

Dimension of	Mean	S.D.	Level of English comprehensive ability
1. Listening	2.78	0.96	Moderate
2. Speaking	2.84	0.96	Moderate
3. Reading	2.88	0.96	Moderate
4. Writing	2.76	0.98	Moderate
5. Translation	2.76	0.95	Moderate
Overall	2.80	0.96	Moderate

Note: The rating scale was divided into 5 levels to the mean score from 4.21-5.00 as highest, 3.41-4.20 as high, 2.61-3.40 as moderate, 1.81-2.60 as low and 1.00-1.80 as lowest.

From the result of the statistical analysis indicated in the Table 3, the overall level of college English comprehensive ability was at moderate level with the average mean score of 2.80. This revealed that the level of students' college English comprehensive ability is neither high nor low. However, the hypothesis in this study should achieve a high level, so it cannot be supported. This result indicated students' college English comprehensive ability from six universities in Xiasha was China was poor. This finding compared with finding of Sun (2014), now students' comprehensive English comprehensive go forward and is better than before because the Ministry of Education had set a plan and implemented the plan to improve the quality of students' English comprehensive ability (the State Council, 2010). It is not far from the actual situation.

Reading with the mean score of 2.88 was the highest mean score in English comprehensive ability because of examination-oriented atmosphere (Fan & Mei, 2009). Before speaking and listening is far from reading, writing and translation. Now Speaking with a mean score of 2.78 and listening with a mean score of 2.84 is nearly the same with reading, writing and translation because the main goal of college English is to develop college students' comprehensive abilities especially listening and speaking abilities (Chen, 2014). The findings revealed that the listening and speaking were implemented successfully.

4.3 The relationship between material, teacher and students' motivation factors and college English comprehensive ability of the students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou

This study choose Pearson product-moment correlations to judge whether the relationship existed between material, teacher and students' motivation factors and college English comprehensive ability of students in Xiasha, Hangzhou. The correlation between the two variables is showed in the Table 4.



Table 4. Correlation of two variables; material, teacher and students' motivation factors and college English comprehensive ability of students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou (n=478)

Research Variables	C	TM	TQ	SM	CECA
Curriculum	1.00				
Teaching method	.437**	1.00**			
Teaching quality	.601**	.610**	1.00		
Students' motivation	.387 **	.316 **	.445 **	1.00	
College English Comprehensive Ability	.377 **	.215**	.279**	.317 **	1.00

** P< 0.01

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

C =curriculum, TM=teaching method, TQ=teaching quality, SM= students' motivation, CECA=college English comprehensive ability.

As shown in Table 4, the findings revealed that there was a positive correlation between material, teacher and students' motivation factors and college English comprehensive English ability of students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou with statistical significance at 0.01 level ($r=.377$, $r=.215$, $r=.279$ and $r=.317$). There was a relationship between material factor and college English comprehensive English ability of college students with statistical significance at 0.01 level ($r=.377$). College English curriculum is not only a basic curriculum but also a compulsory curriculum, including five parts: listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, so this curriculum has a high relationship with comprehensive ability of students and is based on the theory of foreign language teaching as the guidance, English language knowledge and application skills, intercultural communication and learning strategies as the main content, and a variety of teaching modes and teaching methods as one teaching system (Han, 2011).

There was a relationship between teacher methods and college English comprehensive English ability of college students with statistical significance at 0.01 level ($r=.215$). There was a relationship between teacher quality and college English comprehensive English ability of students with statistical significance at 0.01 level ($r=.279$). Xia (2000) said that one of the factors affecting English comprehensive ability are teachers, including teacher methods and teaching quality. Students' English comprehensive ability which includes listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation were cultivated by teachers through the quality was improved comprehensively.

There was a relationship between students' motivation and college English comprehensive English ability of college students with statistical significance at 0.01 level ($r=.317$). Ryder and Grave (1994) said that the amount of students' effort to learn English is determined by the level of motivation in the comprehension of English.

4.4 Factors as predictive factor for English comprehensive ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China

This part reflected the predictive factors from three factors that can predict college English comprehensive ability. It was analyzed utilizing Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA). The results are shown in Table 5.



Table 5 Factors as predictive factor for English comprehensive ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China

Independent variables	B	t	R	R ²	F	R ² change	F change
Curriculum	.27	6.23	.38	.14	78.88	.14	78.88
Students' motivation	.21	4.44	.42	.18	50.87	.03	19.75

From the result in the Table 5, it revealed only curriculum and students' motivation can predict English comprehensive ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou. Curriculum had influence English comprehensive of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China at (B=.27) and could predict 14% of English comprehensive ability with statically significant at 0.001level. Curriculum had a positive relationship with English comprehensive ability with the highest relationship among teaching method, teaching quality and students' motivation. Curriculum can predict 14% of English comprehensive ability. Students' motivation had influenced English comprehensive of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China at (B=.21) with statically significant at level at the 0.001 level and could predict within a range of 3%. Students' motivation had a positive relationship with English comprehensive ability with the second high relationship among teaching method, teaching quality and curriculum and can predict 3% of English comprehensive ability. Interest of motivation was found to predict the ability and course level (Schiefele & Csikszentmihalyi, 1995). Comparing two variables, curriculum is the powerful predictor factor of students' English comprehensive ability. The hypothesis was conformed by using multiple regressions that curriculum and students' motivation can predict English comprehensive ability

$$\text{English comprehensive ability} = 1.229 + .271(\text{curriculum}) + .218 (\text{students' motivation})$$

5. Conclusion

The study was intended to determine the level of students' college English comprehensive ability from six universities in Xiasha, China as perceived by students, the level of material factor, teacher factors, student factor as perceived by college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China. The relationship between material, teacher and students' motivation factors and college English comprehensive English ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou and factors were the predictors of English comprehensive ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou.

5.1 The level of college English comprehensive ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha, China

The level of college English comprehensive ability of students, Xiasha, China was measured by mean and standard deviation based on listening, speaking, reading and writing. In conclusion, the overall college English comprehensive ability of students at moderate level with the mean score of 2.80. The reading of college English comprehensive ability was at a moderate level with the highest mean score of 2.88 and the writing and translation of college English comprehensive ability of students were at a moderate level with lowest level of 2.76.



5.2 The level of material factor, teacher factors, student factor

The level of material factor, teacher factors, student factor was measured by mean and standard deviation based on curriculum, teaching method, teaching quality and students' motivation. The overall level of material factor, teacher factors, student factor was at a moderate level with an average mean score of 3.40. The teaching method and teaching quality at a high level with the highest mean scores of 3.62, while curriculum was perceived at a moderate level with the lowest mean score of 3.09.

5.3 The relationship between material, teacher and students' motivation factors and college English comprehensive English ability of college students.

The relationship between material, teacher and students' motivation factors and college English comprehensive English ability of college students was analyzed by Pearson's Product Correlation Coefficient. Findings showed that the four factors and college English comprehensive ability had a positive correlation at the .01 level. Curriculum had a positive relationship with English comprehensive ability with .377. Teaching method had a positive relationship with English comprehensive ability with .215. Teaching quality had a positive relationship with English comprehensive ability with .279. Students' motivation had a positive relationship with English comprehensive ability with .317.

5.4 Factors were the predictors of English comprehensive ability of students

Curriculum and students' motivation can predict English comprehensive ability of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou. Curriculum had influenced English comprehensive of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China at ($B=.27$) and could predict 14% of English comprehensive ability with statically significant at level. Students' motivation had influence English comprehensive of college students from six universities in Xiasha, Hangzhou, China at ($B=.21$) with statically significant at the 0.001 level. Students' motivation could predict 3% of prediction. Comparing two variables, curriculum is the powerful predictor factor of students' English comprehensive ability.

Nowadays, China's position in the world is getting higher and higher and has held some important conferences, such as: Olympic Games, G20 Business Summit and so on. China formulated the Planning Outline and implemented it, from the result of college students' English comprehensive ability, students' comprehensive English comprehensive ability go forward and is better than before Sun (2014). However, their English comprehensive ability is still poor and the goal of curriculum still has a long way to go because of an examination-oriented structure, limitations of resource, traditional and out-of-date teaching methods, and low motivation of college students (Fan & Mei, 2009).

Based on findings of this study, the researcher would like to suggest the following recommendations to relevant stakeholders in order to improve English comprehensive ability of students. Suggestions to the Ministry of Education, according to the findings, curriculum was the highest positive relationship with college comprehensive ability of students and the highest predictor on college comprehensive ability of students. It suggested that the Ministry of Education should reform curriculum for improving students' comprehensive ability. The level of students' comprehensive English ability was not high, because of an exam-oriented educational system. The Ministry of Education should find a way to



change the Chinese education system. Suggestion to teachers, from the findings, the level of students' motivation is not high. Teachers should encourage students to be interested in learning English and tell them why they should learn English. From the findings, the level of students' English comprehensive ability did not achieve a high level. Teachers should improve comprehensive ability skills to help students achieve a high level. Suggestion to further studies, this study was based on the intermediate level of English comprehensive ability, as further researchers should choose a high level or a basic level to evaluate the level of English comprehensive ability. Further research was suggested to use a quality method or a mixed method. The further research could use other different variables in factors.

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