

Needs Analysis and Implications: A Case Study of Non-Chinese Speaking Staff at the University of Macau

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Abstract

Although Putonghua is becoming an important lingua franca in Macau, there are no particular learning suggestions dedicating Putonghua curriculum for the non-Chinese-speaking academic staff members who have little knowledge of any Chinese dialect at the University of Macau (UM). The purpose of this research is to conduct a needs analysis study among these University of Macau academic staff members in order to develop a sound curriculum. The researcher has identified, as a result of this study, a number of suggestions relating to Putonghua education in Macau.

Keywords: Needs analysis; implications; putonghua learning

Introduction

Daniel Kane (2006) mentioned that, in the 21st century, the fast development of China's economy, as well as China's reform and opening up process have not only spurred on its interactions with the rest of the world, but also expanded the role of the Chinese language in the world. The Chinese language is gaining growing popularity among China's neighboring countries in Southeast and East Asia. Learning Chinese has become a nationwide campaign in Japan and South Korea. Besides, Britain, generally regarded as a conservative country, is also showing increasing interest in the Chinese language and its importance.

According to the Basic Law of Hong Kong, both English and Cantonese are official languages in Hong Kong. Pennington (1998 b) mentioned that during the British colonial era, English was the sole official language of Hong Kong until 1974. The majority of the population in

Hong Kong were descendants of migrants from mainland China and only a small minority of groups were expatriates. In addition, there were immigrants from the West and other Asian countries, countries such as the Indian subcontinent, United Kingdom, and the Philippines. The multicultural population, as a result, has contributed much to Hong Kong's language diversity.

Hong Kong people speak Cantonese among themselves and English in dealing with expatriates. The expatriate community, once predominantly British, now reflects the full range of national and multinational commercial and banking interests, including those of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan. Luke and Richards (1982) described Hong Kong as having diglossia without bilingualism. It has shown great demands in learning of Putonghua, for growing touristic guests coming from mainland China. In 1997, after the end of the colonial period, Hong Kong has become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the PRC. The compact relationship with Mainland China has increased the accessibility of Putonghua (the standard spoken Mandarin) in both business and entertainment sectors. To match up new diglossic change with the suitable local language policies, Putonghua has been introduced into the school curriculum under the education reforms of *liangwen-sanyu* (the two written codes and the three spoken languages) (So, 1998). This develops "a new trilingual profile in the community" (Pennington, 1998:2).

Let us now attempt to extend the observation into the area of Macau; the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China is a small territory on the southern coast of China. Administered by Portugal until 1999, it was

the oldest European colony in China, dating to the 16th century. The administrative power over Macau was transferred to the People's Republic of China in 1999, and it is now one of two Special Administrative Regions of the PRC, together with Hong Kong. Macau has played a unique and influential role in relations between China and the West, especially between the late 16th and 19th centuries. In 1999 Macau took on a new political shape as a Special Administration Region of China. Residents of Macau mostly speak Cantonese natively; Putonghua, Portuguese, and English, Fujianese, Pilipino, Thai and several other languages are also spoken. Thanks to the rapid development of international communication and co-operation on science and technology in Macau, and the close relation with mainland China, which Putonghua serves as the official language, there has been an increasing demand for foreign staff coming to Macau with considerable Chinese speaking and listening proficiency, especially the practical oral skills necessary for culture exchange or academic activities on cross-culture occasions. This study will take the staff in the University of Macau as an example. In the past 10 years, there have been over a hundred international academic conferences and seminars hosted, let alone those international academic conferences and seminars held elsewhere in Macau. Among these cultural or academic exchange occasions, referring to the University of Macau's statistic record, half of these exchange activities or seminars were conducted with mainland scholars. Moreover, from the introduction of the University of Macau, we can see that starting from 2001, the University has been recruiting students in 14 provinces and cities in China. Meanwhile, many academic staffs from mainland China have been recruited in the University. With the daily tighten relationship with mainland China, undoubtedly, this creates a great number of chances as well as challenges for foreign staff education in Putonghua. Therefore,

there are rising demands to provide foreign staffs with sufficient instructional opportunities to develop the language skills they will need to be successful foreign staffs and academicians or technical personnel.

However, according to the author's observation, there are few Putonghua teaching programs for foreign academic staffs in Macau. What is more, the Putonghua teaching program at the University of Macau does not provide learners opportunities in the classroom to develop the Chinese listening and speaking skills that they will need in their target language encounters. Although communicative and learner-centered approaches to language teaching has been influential at least in the last two decades, classroom instruction in many Chinese teaching programs still concentrate on linguistic accuracy and a general knowledge with a disproportionate emphasis on reading and writing. As a result, after studying Putonghua for more than two years, many foreign staffs might have learned how to analyze sentence structures and memorized a large repertoire of technical terms, and some even score high in HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) but they still remain at a loss when they meet Chinese speakers. They usually have difficulties in expressing themselves in Chinese when they need to communicate their ideas orally in everyday or academic situations. Many are still weak in comprehending oral Chinese. They cannot feel confident when they talk to Chinese-speaking people or listen to authentic materials and speakers with various accents. This inability of listening and speaking greatly limits them in communicating effectively in China with Chinese.

Purpose of the Study

It is worth noting that with the rapid economic and academic development of China, more and more foreigners are in contact with Chinese people. Putonghua is

becoming increasingly important in Macau. As far as we know, there are no curricula specifically designed for the non-Chinese speaking staff members who have little knowledge of any Chinese dialect at the University of Macau. Therefore, this study focuses on the perceived needs of the target group in order to design the curriculum for the target group—the non-Chinese speaking staff members. Thus, the main research question is: what are the perceived language needs of foreign academic staff that have little knowledge of any Chinese dialect at the University of Macau?

Literature Review

Needs

The concept of “needs” is ambiguous. It has been used with various interpretations in the literature, and there has been a lack of clarity in its definition. On the one hand, it could be defined with a narrow interpretation as “the language skills and content with which an individual will be confronted when he finds himself in particular communication situations” (Richerich, 1983, p. 2). On the other hand, it may be used to cover such concepts as ideas, wants, desires, interests, expectations, motivations, and demands.

There is a conflict, as Widdowson, H. G. (1983) points out, between what the learner needs to do in learning the language and what the learner needs to have acquired. The expression—learner needs—is open to two interpretations. One interpretation is that it can refer to what the learner needs to do with the language once he has learned it. The other interpretation is that it can refer to what the learner tends to do in order to actually acquire the language.

Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987) make a similar distinction between “target needs” (i.e. what the learner needs to do in the target situation) and “learning needs” (i.e. what the learner needs to do in order to learn). They argue that the term “target needs” involves three different types of needs: “necessities,” as defined by

Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987), are “determined by the demands of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation.” They define “lacks” as the gap between the learner’s existing proficiency and the target proficiency, and “wants” as what the learner feels she/he needs in a subjective sense.

Another distinction in defining learner needs can be made between objective needs and subjective needs. Needs which are perceived externally by teachers or administrators are called “objective needs” (Richerich, 1972), whereas needs are called “subjective needs.”

In Chinese societies, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, and Shanghai, the learning needs of the Chinese language are thriving. Take Singapore as an example, Singapore was even more multilingual in the 1950s compared to today. Dialect preservationists had criticized Singapore’s bilingual policy for causing the language decline of Chinese dialects in Singapore. Some Singaporeans had criticized that the bilingual education of Singapore was not successful in making sure the Singaporeans are good in both English and the mother tongue. In both mainland China and Taiwan, the use of Putonghua as the medium of instruction in the educational system and in the media has contributed to the spread of Mandarin. As a result, Putonghua is now spoken fluently by most people in mainland China and Taiwan.

In Hong Kong and Macau, which are now special administrative regions of the People’s Republic of China, Cantonese has been the primary language spoken by the majority of the population, for historical and linguistic reasons. Cantonese remains the official government language of Hong Kong and Macau. After Hong Kong’s handover from Britain and Macau’s handover from Portugal, Putonghua is the language used by the governments of the two territories to communicate with the Central People’s Government of the PRC. There have been widespread efforts to

promote usage of Putonghua in Hong Kong since the handover, with specific efforts to train police and teachers.

Putonghua is now spreading overseas beyond East Asia and Southeast Asia as well. In New York City, USA, the Cantonese dialect that dominated the Manhattan Chinatown for decades is being rapidly swept aside by Mandarin, the lingua franca of most of the latest Chinese immigrants.

Needs Analysis

Over recent years, one natural and healthy development in Chinese language learning is the so-called “needs analysis.” The key assumption on which needs analysis is based is that the learner is at the heart of any teaching program. To be more exact, learners are seen to have different needs and interests, which would have an important influence on their motivation to learn and therefore on the effectiveness of their learning. Thus it is claimed that information of the learner’s needs would help in drawing up a “profile” to establish coherent objectives, and take subsequent decisions on course content.

According to Richard West (1994), the term “analysis of needs” first appears in India in the 1920s (see Howats, 1984, p. 245; White, 1988, p. 12-13; Tickoo, 1988), when Michael West introduced the concept to cover two separate and potentially conflicting concepts of “need” contributing to the “surrender value” of learning: what learners will be required to do with the foreign language in the target situation, and how learners might best master the target language during the period of training.

Mentioned by Richard West (1994), there have been several surveys of approaches to needs analysis in foreign language teaching (James, 1974; Jordan, 1975; Chamber, 1980; Cunningsworth, 1983; Brindley, 1989; Riddell, 1991; Van Hest & Oud-de Glas, 1990; Robinson, 1991; Jordan, forthcoming). During the period of 20 years covered by these surveys, both the focus and scope of needs

analysis have changed. The dominant focus of early needs analysis was occupational/EOP, but this later changed to academic language/EAP (for the origin of the terms EOP and EAP, see T. Johns, 1981, p. 16). More recently the focus has shifted again to include general language learning. The scope of needs analysis up to and including Munby (1978) was syllabus specification derived from target-situation needs, but the scope has since been broadened to include areas specially excluded by Munby—practicalities and constraints, teaching methods and learning strategies, and recently, material selection. This evaluation can be summarized by characterizing each of three stages in the development of needs analysis, and to hint at the future by suggesting a fourth stage.

Much of the later work in needs analysis is either not widely known (Richards, 1984, cited by Nunan, 1988, p. 17), it is still assumed that curriculum development in language teaching should concentrate on language syllabuses to the exclusion of broader aspects such as needs, analysis, methodology and evaluation.

In general terms, needs analysis (also called needs assessment) refers to the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for syllabus design that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of students. In more formal terms, needs assessment is defined by Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985, p. 189) as “the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities.”

According to Nunan, information will need to be collected, not only on why learners want to learn the target language, but also about such things as societal expectations and constraints and the resources available for implementing the syllabus. Broadly speaking, there are two different types of needs analysis used by language syllabus designers. The first of these is learner analysis, while the second is task analysis (David Nunan, 1988).

What kind of information should the syllabus designer collect? According to Munby, it is important for the syllabus designer to collect information on each of these components: 1. Participant; 2. Purposive domain; 3. Setting; 4. Interaction; 5. Instrumentality; 6. Dialect; 7. Target level; 8. Communicative event; and 9. Communicative key (John Munby, 1978). James Brown (1995, p. 43) held the more mature opinion that in the process, the analysts should remain flexible carded as the process of needs assessment proceeds. The choices made depend on the philosophy of the needs analysts, as well as their points of view on the various types of information that can be examined. Once all that is clarified, the fundamental techniques used for gathering information are relatively straightforward. Such techniques are simple because they all involve, in one way or another, finding answers to relatively simple questions. In the process of gathering information, different types of questions should be considered. Rossett (1982) identified five categories of questions designed to identify the following: problems, priorities, abilities, attitudes, and solutions. The broadest questions are those that have to do with problems. The purpose of these questions is to identify the problems that are being experienced by the people under assessment in the target group. Besides, questions of priority investigate which topics, language users, skills, and so on are considered most important for the target group to learn. Then ability questions focus on the students themselves, usually to determine the abilities of the students at entry. Attitude questions uncover information about participants' feelings and attitudes toward elements of the program. The last class of questions elicits ideas for solutions to perceived problems in terms of what changes might bring about compromise and resolution.

In this paper, the author would create the needs analysis questions according to the above mentioned five categories of

questions designed by Rossett and remain flexible to the process of needs assessment proceeds.

Curriculum and Syllabus

In the following, we will focus on the term of curriculum and syllabus. Curriculum is a very general concept which involves consideration of the whole complex of philosophical, social and administrative factors which contribute to the planning of an educational program (Allen, 1984, p. 61). The term "curriculum" is defined here in its broadest sense, to include all the relevant decision making processes of all the participants.

Syllabus, on the other hand, refers to that subpart of curriculum which is concerned with a specification of what units will be taught (as distinct from how they will be taught, which is a matter of methodology) (Allen, 1984, p. 61). Syllabus, which prescribes the content to be covered by a given course, forms only a small part of the total school program. Curriculum is all those activities in which students engage under the auspices of the school. This includes not only what students learn, but how they learn it and how teachers help them learn, using what supporting materials, styles and methods of assessment, and in what kind of facilities.

Here we shall take as our point of departure the rather traditional notion that a syllabus is a statement of content which is used as the basis for planning courses of various kinds and that the tasks of the syllabus designer is to select and grade this content. The language curriculum includes specifications for providing inputs to syllabus design and for measuring outcomes of a syllabus-based instruction.

As for curriculum, it is possible to study curriculum of an educational institution from a number of different perspectives. In the first instance, we can look at curriculum planning that is at decision making, in relation to identifying learners' needs and purposes; establishing goals and objectives; selecting and grading content; organizing

appropriate learning arrangements and learning groupings; selecting, adapting or developing appropriate materials, learning tasks, and assessment and evaluation tools. In this study curriculum will mainly be dealt with in this respective. Alternatively, curriculum can be studied “in action” as it were. This second perspective takes us into the classroom itself. Here we can observe the teaching/learning process and study the ways in which the interactions of the curriculum planners, which were developed during the planning phase, are translated into action. Yet another perspective relates to assessment and evaluation.

Methodology

Research Design

In the business world, market research has become an essential ingredient for commercial success so in curriculum design, the fact-finding stage is an imperative prerequisite for decision-making regarding the participants. To find out the problems which might exist in present non-Chinese speaking staff of the University of Macau, this research project employed a mixed method case study design to conduct a needs analysis for these University of Macau academic staff members. In addition, this study examined their language attitudes as well as motivations to learn Putonghua.

Participants

In order to design a syllabus which would meet the communicative needs of non-Chinese speaking academic staff at the University of Macau, needs analysis was conducted along the dimensions consistent with relevant literature frameworks. The participants in this study were a selected sample of the non-Chinese speaking staff.

Seventy-four percent of the 39 participants were males and 26% percent were females. The age of the participants ranged from 29 to 62. Most of the participants were from the faculty of Social Science and Humanities, while 9.2% were in the faculty of Business Administration.

Others were faculty of Education. Many of them had lived in China for a few years.

Instrumentation

Two means are employed to conduct the needs analysis: first, one survey with the non-Chinese speaking academic staff is used to obtain the personal information as well as the basic information about their past learning experiences. The survey was pilot tested with 15 non-Chinese speaking academic staff at the English Language Center of the University of Macau and revised based on the pilot test results. The participants in the pilot-testing were asked to complete the questionnaire and to make comments about the statements themselves, and about face validity of the instrument as a whole. Secondly, interviews were conducted with non-Chinese speaking academic staff who had none or little knowledge of any Chinese dialects at UM. Interviews were included in this study as a method of investigation for several reasons. First of all, it was believed that interviews would provide deeper and more detailed information about learners’ language needs. Additionally, the interviews included further inquiries to provide more complex and deeper information such as participants’ language background, the skills they most wanted to improve, and outside exposure to Putonghua. Further, the interview questions sought non-Chinese-speaking staff’s suggestions as well as criticisms related to the Putonghua course.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

The survey given to the non-Chinese speaking academic staff generally involved questions regarding their past experiences in learning Putonghua or their personal background as well as language background. The purpose of the questionnaire is to find the right person whom I can conduct a following interview with. The right person is one who is a non-Chinese speaking academic staff member, and having little knowledge of any Chinese

dialect. The surveys were given to a selected sample of 64 non-Chinese speaking academic staff at the University of Macau. These 64 non-Chinese speaking staff members' email addresses were randomly chosen from foreign staff's email address book of each faculty at the University of Macau. Of those, 39 questionnaires were returned; all were usable. The 39 returned questionnaires represents a 60.94% return rate.

The variables involved in this survey were categorized as follows: Distribution of Students by Background Variables; Language Proficiencies Variables; Time Spent Learning Putonghua Variables; and Essentiality to Learn Chinese (Putonghua and Cantonese) Variables. The quantitative-natured items were analyzed using descriptive statistics in Excel, which were reported in the findings section.

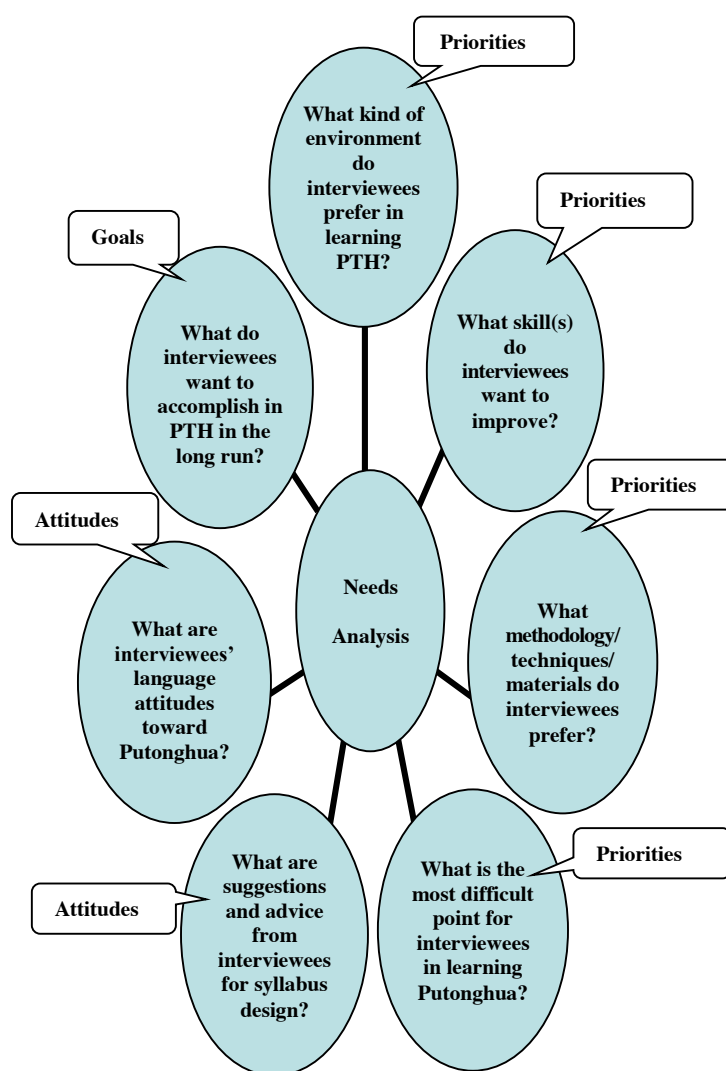
Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

Interview protocols were prepared by the author in order to list the issues to be covered in each interview incorporating features outlined by Richterich R. (1972). These guides were not definitive; therefore, some issues were omitted and others not on the list were discussed as they arose spontaneously. The interviews with the non-Chinese-speaking staff were conducted in the weeks following the completion of the questionnaires. As a result, 11 non-Chinese-speaking academic staff participated in the interviews, which were conducted at each participant's convenience. An Informed Consent Agreement was signed by each participant. All interviews were transcribed for analysis.

Based upon the theories of needs analysis reviewed earlier, the author developed the following analysis framework to analyze the perceived language needs for non-Chinese speaking academic staff to learn Putonghua revealed in the interviews. The three major themes identified in this framework included goals

priorities and attitudes.

Figure 1. Analysis framework



Findings

Quantitative Data Findings

The data suggests that the typical non-Chinese-speaking staff sampled for the study is an adult male/female academic staff whose native language is English. He/She has been in China for a few years. Moreover, he or she has/has not learned Putonghua before. And he or she is in the elementary level of Putonghua learning.

Richards, Platt, and Weber (2003) suggested that the language attitudes refer to the attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language.

The data shows that 77% of the participants considered it essential to learn Putonghua, and mostly they believed Putonghua, the standard language of China, is an essential language. The table indicates that, although they live in Macau where the main language people use is Cantonese, they also believed that Putonghua is more essential. What is more, almost 80% percent of the participants were taking time in learning of Putonghua at the time of the survey. They had motivation to learn and most of them were willing to spend 1-2 hours in a week to learn the language.

Qualitative Data Findings

Eleven (11) non-Chinese-speaking academic staff members participated in the interviews. Among the 11 foreign staff members, four of them were female. The following table provides the basic information on each interviewee. The rest of the findings are reported by each interview question relating to the three themes: goals, priorities and attitudes.

Table 1.
The Basic Information for Each of the Interviewees

Interviewees	Sex	Age	Faculty
A	F	30-40	ELC*
B	M	46-60	FSH*
C	M	Over 60	FBA*
D	M	30-45	ELC
E	F	46-60	FED*
F	F	30-45	ELC
G	M	46-60	FSH
H	M	30-45	FBA
I	M	46-60	FSH
J	M	46-60	FED
K	F	30-45	FSH

Note.

ELC = English language Centre

FSH = Faculty of Social and Humanities

FBA = Faculty of Business Administration

FED = Faculty of Education

What kind of environment do interviewees prefer in learning PTH?

This interview question relates to priorities in the analysis framework.

Interviewees preferred to learn in different environments because they had different backgrounds or different experiences in learning Putonghua. For instance, interviewee F stated:

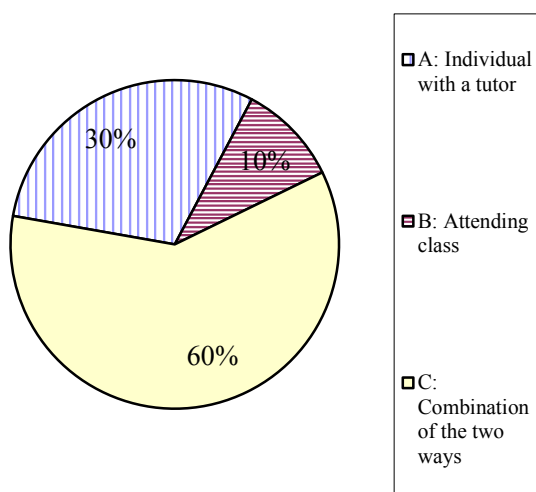
“Individually with a tutor. I am not very good at learning languages, you know, some people learn languages very quickly. I have a very difficult time. And I have taken a PTH class, it went too fast, by the end, I was very confused. And I felt bad, because I don’t understand what was going on. So I think individually would be a lot easier for me, for I can ask questions and I can specifically with others. You know you may have problems different from other people. And for me, with a tutor” (Interviewee F: Line 28).

Another, interviewee K, said:

“At the earlier age, perhaps the stage I am in. I prefer to use software with simple sentence structure, later I may like the well-scheduled, and get more advanced level and to learn with other people” (Interview K: Line 25).

Some of the staff mentioned that they prefer a small group with the same proficiency level and to learn with an instructor. A lot of the interviewees liked a combination environment, that is to say, to combine classroom learning and also to work with a tutor. They believed that they would learn better if they had more resources to consult when they were facing difficulties in learning, and in this way, they could best benefit. Figure 2 shows that most of the staff preferred a combination of the classroom teaching with tutor, and 30% liked to be with a tutor individually. Only 10% preferred attending a class.

Figure 2. Preferred learning environments



What skill(s) do interviewees want to improve?

This interview question relates to priorities in the analysis framework.

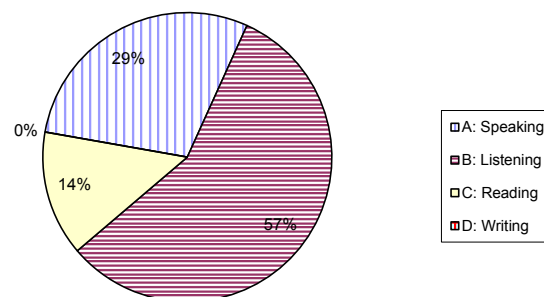
As for the skills, non-Chinese-speaking staff want to improve, Figure 2 indicates that the staff's attitude towards those four skills. Four staff believed speaking was the most important skill, while eight staff considered listening was the most important because firstly, they need to listen to people's conversation, then they can respond accordingly; secondly, they need the skill to get information from the outside, for instance, to listen to the radio in the mainland of China, or to listen to the broadcast in the ferry terminal or airport or train station when traveling in the mainland of China. Two staff believed reading was the most important skill among the four skills. Among the non-Chinese speaking staff at the University of Macau whom I have interviewed, none of them thought writing was the most important. The interview revealed that listening and speaking are the most important skills for the staff, especially the staff at the beginning level. Also, since Macau is different from cities in the mainland of China, Putonghua is not that popular because Cantonese is the native language. Some staff mentioned the extra importance of reading. Through reading they can get

information by themselves. Some of the staff considered it a good way to improve their speaking by reading. Interviewee D said:

“Speaking and listening would be most emphasized; and reading and writing would be the least emphasized” (Interviewee D: Line 26).

From Figure 3, 57% of the interviewees would like to emphasize listening among the four skills. The next most emphasized skill would be speaking. Then reading is also essential for the specific area. None of the interviewees would like to emphasize writing at the beginning level for their learning of Putonghua.

Figure 3. Priorities of the four skills



What methodology/technique/material do interviewees prefer?

This interview question relates to priorities in the analysis framework.

As for the methodology/technique of learning Putonghua, I have provided seven kinds of different methodologies which are widely used in language curriculums today for the interviewees to evaluate. They are:

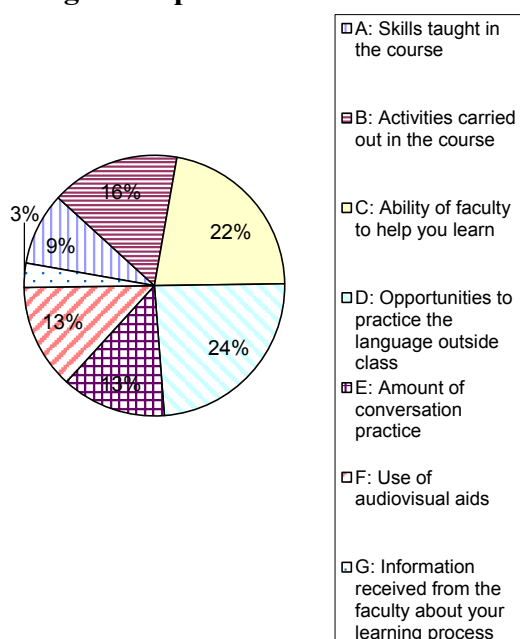
- A. Skills taught in the course. Skills that include: communicative skills; language learning skills; etc.
- B. Activities carried out in the course. The activity indicates: group work; word games; as well as pair discussions, etc.
- C. Ability of the faculty to help you learn. The ability is the professional background for Putonghua teaching; and the skills which the teacher commands.
- D. Opportunities to practice the language outside of class. Opportunities are the

chances or frequencies which students can practice the language.

- E. Amount of conversation practice. Amount of conversation practice means the amount of practice in class.
- F. Use of audiovisual aids. Using audiovisual aids like PowerPoint or Video or Multi-functional Lab to facilitate the language teaching process.
- G. Information received from the faculty about your learning process. During the learning process, the teacher would provide you with information about your learning process to help learn more efficiently.

The following, Figure 4, will indicate the staff's preferences among the seven methodologies.

Figure 4. Methodology/technique foreign staff prefers



From the above figure, we can see that the methodology D, the opportunity to practice the language outside of class, is the most popular for the interviewees. Some of these staff said that they needed to practice the language in the real situation, to go to the supermarket or post office to talk to people in Putonghua, and they believed it was a good way to make them be confident to speak the language. Interviewee A mentioned that, usually, when she spoke

Putonghua to people, but was not able to communicate, she would feel embarrassed or bad. Consequently, she was scared to talk in real situations. Given this and similar concerns, the course could consider offering the chance for students to go outside to use the language in real situations.

What is more, we can see that few people like methodology G. Interviewees said that nobody could know your best learning process. Another interviewee considered it frustrating when people criticized you about your learning process. Interviewee F said: "I don't think I like knowing the learning process so much. I don't like people to judge me, it is not my job, and I do not like the hard time" (Interviewee F, Line 76). Interviewee does not welcome this kind of methodology. However, another methodology appealing to the staff is the ability of the teacher to help you learn. Interviewees thought it was essential for a Putonghua teacher to be knowledgeable and patient. Almost all the interviewees expressed their expectations for a good teacher who can guide the staff and who can model the language. Moreover, the teacher should provide the student with culture knowledge. What is more, an interviewee from the faculty of Social Science and Humanity held a different opinion; he believed immersion is a good way to learn language.

For instance, interviewee B mentioned in the interview that: "In an American university, there is one of the floors of a students' dormitory who are all French majors, and the students there need to use French to communicate with each other" (Interviewee B: Line 51).

In addition, interviewee B also said if one has a boyfriend/girlfriend who speaks that language, they could learn it the most efficiently. This suggests instrumental motivation (Brown, 1994a) may be desirable for language learning. As a Putonghua educator, we should try our best to make the Putonghua teaching classroom more interesting and immersive.

As for the materials, the author did not

include materials into methods and techniques, however, the materials have to be brought up in the interview, because the interviewees will comment on materials. One of the interviewees, A, said that good texts are there, but the important thing is how to put things together. Another interviewee, E, indicated that the textbooks are good, but it depends on how they are made use of. Interviewee F said that there is a really good Chinese textbook, and it is written by the Beijing Foreign Language Institute. It is very detailed and it covers the really helpful and useful areas. The book focuses on things in a realistic order. In the book, there are many situations, and the skills are arranged in a progressing way. In contrast, there are four interviewees who do not believe materials are enough. One of them, interviewee C, said:

“I do not believe the learning materials are enough; there is no logic in them, especially in writing. Things are randomly put together. And they always put speaking first, I think it is wrong. I think reading and writing are more important, at least in Hong Kong and Macau” (Interviewee C: Line 32).

Interviewee K said that:

“I have tried very hard to get the learning materials; therefore, for me they are enough. But I would like to have more software to learn Putonghua” (Interviewee K: Line 30).

From the above, although participants' opinions were different, there are materials in the market. They require people to combine them in an efficient way. It is important to find the appropriate materials in software learning, and to introduce the highest frequency words at the beginning level of Putonghua learning.

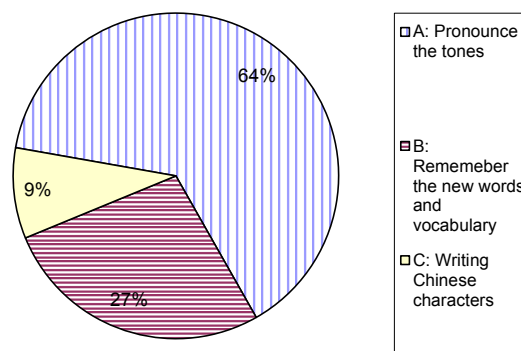
What is the most difficult point for interviewees in learning Putonghua?

This interview question relates to priorities in the analysis framework.

Most interviewees said that the tones are the most difficult for them to learn, because it is hard for the interviewees to pronounce the tones correctly, therefore, errors may lead to misunderstanding in real life conversations. In addition, 27% of the interviewees believed that remembering the new words or vocabulary was the hardest. And 9% of the interviewees considered writing Chinese characters the most difficult; they said that the Chinese characters are totally different from writing in Western languages.

In Figure 5, the interviewees' opinions about the most difficult aspect of learning Putonghua are reported.

Figure 5. The most difficult thing for you in learning of Putonghua



What do interviewees want to accomplish in PTH in the long run?

This interview question relates to goals in the analysis framework.

Almost all the staff interviewed felt that they were weak in speaking and listening skills and expressed their expectations of the language program to improve their survival of Putonghua. Interviewee H said that:

“Since I am living in the Chinese society, I want to understand general conversation in Putonghua community. And try to get the survival level of Putonghua” (Interviewee H: Line 4).

Interviewee B stated:

“I want to communicate with mainland Chinese” (Interviewee

B: Line 5).

Interviewee G said that:

“I realized I am in the Cantonese speaking area. Cantonese is very difficult. I would like to learn Chinese and Putonghuais a well-accepted standard version. And also, I need the version which would give me entry to the culture, I think. Where I work and people I work with, so I really have an obligation and certain interest in the kind of study” (Interviewee G: Line 4).

When asked the purpose of learning of Putonghua, almost all the interviewees shared the same opinion that they need Putonghua to communicate with Chinese people, and they use the language with the people around them for the convenience of life in Macau. Most of the interviewees would like to communicate with students from the mainland of China in Putonghua. Some of the interviewees, however, have different purposes, such as one interviewee who needs the language to do research, and another needs it to do business with people from the mainland of China.

What are interviewees’ language attitudes toward Putonghua?

This interview question relates to attitudes in the analysis framework. Speaking of the language attitude towards Putonghua, most of the interviewees hold a positive attitude towards Putonghua, because they volunteered for the interviews. This can be expected from the methodology which implicitly favors individuals with positive attitudes toward PTH. Almost all of the interviewees have great interest in China. They would like to know the Chinese culture.

Generally, they all believed that Chinese culture is impressive. And a lot of the interviewees considered that the most difficult part in learning of Putonghua would be the tones. But two of the interviewees believed that writing the characters is the most difficult. There was

one interviewee who believed that in Macau, reading is more important than speaking and listening. However, most of the interviewees at the University of Macau considered that it is important to learn speaking and listening first. They also believed that Putonghua is more formal than Cantonese. Three of them stated that: “Putonghua is easier to learn than Cantonese,” and also one of the interviewees said: “I like the sound of Putonghua, and it sounds melodious. It is really a nice language to me.”

All of this indicates that the staff members generally have a positive attitude towards Putonghua.

What are suggestions and advice from interviewees for the syllabus design?

This interview question relates to attitudes in the analysis framework. Interviewees have raised some advice and suggestions for syllabus design, which are really helpful and professional. Interviewee A said:

“Negotiate with the student for the content. Write things down correctly and exactly. What is more, the content should comply with survival reading. The text should combine situations with tasks” (Interviewee A: Line 69).

Another interviewee, H, indicated:

“Please try to make people use the language, if it is possible, take them out to speak in the real situation. Also, the tones are the most difficult for us, please give more time to that, and correct us in the real speaking” (Interviewee H: Line 66).

Some interviewees pointed out that people are different; we need to evaluate people’s proficiency levels. Different people may have different backgrounds as well as language levels. Therefore, the most difficult thing for a syllabus designer is that we need to think about a student’s level, and prepare materials for different language

needs. What is more, two interviewees have mentioned the software as well as audio-visual materials applied to the course would be helpful. We need to take advantage of the new technologies. Another point many interviewees made was they would like to have one month or two months in Beijing at the end of the course, emerging in the language environment to learn Putonghua, and most of them believed that would be a good way to improve their Putonghua skills.

Summary of the Needs of Non-Chinese Speaking Academic Staff

The Putonghua-learning needs of the non-Chinese speaking staff members at the University of Macau has been summarized in the following table:

Table 2. *The Summary of the Needs for Non-Chinese-Speaking Academic Staff*

Everyone said:

1. Speaking and listening are important for them.
 2. They prefer to learn by saying or using the language. To practice the language in the real situations. Emersion would be nice way to learn the language.
 3. Chinese Culture knowledge should be included.
-

Most of them said:

1. The tones are the most difficult.
 2. Basic vocabulary is a must.
 3. Amount of situational exercises is important. They would like to learn survival Putonghua. Learning in small group.
 4. Reading is important for learning the language.
-

Many of them said:

1. High-tech would be helpful in learning the language. Soft wares are amazing for learning the language.
 2. Teachers are important to model the language and manage the class.
 3. Pinyin System is helpful for them to learn Putonghua. The text with the translation of English and Chinese character and pinyin as well.
-

What is more, the author also compared the differences between the non-Chinese-learning academic staff and the Putonghua teaching staff. The result indicates that the teaching staff believes Chinese writing is an essential at the beginning stage of Putonghua learning, however, the non-Chinese-speaking academic staff (NCSAS) holds totally different views on that. The NCSAS consider it is difficult to learn Chinese writing at the beginning stage, and none of the interviewees would like to learn Chinese writing at the early stage. What is more, teaching staff think the learning materials are enough; in contrast, a lot of the NCSAS believe the learning materials are not enough.

The suggestions made by the non-Chinese-speaking staff and faculty members, and the interview findings identified the areas of focus to be included in the syllabus for non-Chinese-speaking staff members at the University of Macau. The needs of the non-Chinese-speaking staff in Putonghua learning at the beginning level were determined to be in the two following areas:

1. Survival skills: ability to communicate in daily circumstances
2. Communication skills: cross-cultural awareness, and communication skills

All of these areas were considered to be important in the learner-centered syllabus design, materials preparation, and tutoring of the course as well as teaching of the course for non-Chinese-speaking academic staff at the University of Macau.

Implications

Based upon the findings of the needs analysis presented above, the author provided a recommended curriculum for non-Chinese-speaking academic staff at the University of Macau including learning materials, teaching methods, and a curriculum schedule.

Materials Selection

There are a number of textbooks available commercially for foreigners to

learn Putonghua. Based on the findings of the needs analysis, several guidelines are followed in selecting, adapting or even producing materials, and these guidelines are suggested by the author according to the real situations at UM.

The following textbooks (these English titles come with the texts and are not the author's translation) are suggested:

1. 《交际汉语》
“Communicative Chinese”
2. 《新实用汉语课本（课文情景会话）》
“New Practical Chinese Reader (situational conversation)”
3. 《中国全景——初级汉语》
“China Panorama—elementary Chinese”
4. 《易捷汉语——实用会话》
“Easy Chinese—speak out”
5. 《易捷汉语——识汉字认招牌》
“Easy Chinese—sights and signs”
6. 《中国全景——语音导入》；《中国全景——轻轻松松学汉字》
“China Panorama—Phonetic Instruction;” “China Panorama—let's enjoy Chinese”

What is more, the software was suggested based on the needs analysis for non-Chinese-speaking staff to learn Putonghua. They are the following items:

1. The Rosetta Stone Chinese (Level.I)¹
2. 汉语宝典 Chinese treasured book²
3. 互动汉语 Interactive Chinese³

Activities and Methodology

Based upon the needs analysis, the following activities and methodologies have been chosen. The course would be task-based approach; the reason for choosing the approach is that every one of the interviewees considered that they prefer to learn by saying or using the language. Therefore, the task-based approach will

bring them more room to say or use the language. One of the interviewees, G, said that: “It is fun to be challenged.” What is more, group work has been included in the curriculum. The author chose this because most of the interviewees hold the opinion that the amount of situational exercises is important, and they would like to learn in small groups. Besides, simulation had been chosen as well. The reason for choosing the simulation method is that every one of the non-Chinese-speaking staff believes that they prefer to learn by saying or using the language and to practice the language in the real situations. Then the simulation method would be the perfect method to practice Putonghua speaking and listening for the staff. Situational language had been adopted for the same reason above.

Task-based Approach

The course seeks to develop speaking and listening skills in the non-Chinese speaking academic staff by offering problem-solving tasks that demands reflection, choice, and selective analysis and simple decision-making before solutions can be found. Therefore, voluntary contributions will be expected in class. Thus, no matter how much individual ability may contribute to the successful completion of a given task, the staff has to come together and interact during the stages of problem solving. They will be engaged in spontaneous and comprehensible oral interaction.

Group Work

As many teachers have discovered, group work can be very rewarding and revealing in the language classroom. The following is a brief summary of Brown's (1994b) view of the main advantages of adopting group work in a language classroom. According to Brown, group work brings interactive language, and he

¹http://reviews.cnet.com/Rosetta_Stone_Chinese_Personal_Edition_Level_I_II/4505-3646_7-30506475.html

² <http://download.enet.com.cn/html/030792003031101.html>

html

³ <http://www.amazon.cn/%E4%BA%92%E5%8A%A8%E6%B1%89%E8%AF%AD/dp/B00117I7RY>

believes the group work method solves the problem that the big class does not have enough speaking opportunities for each of the learners. Brown also mentions group work provides an embracing affective climate. Brown indicates: "A further affective benefit of small group work is an increase in student motivation" (Brown, 1994b, p. 174). In the following, Brown (1994b) also points out the group work generates learner responsibility and autonomy, and he further explains that it is not easy to hide in a small group, that is to say, every learner needs to have responsibility to act. Lastly, Brown mentions that due to the differences of the individual learner, he says that: "Small groups can help students with varying abilities to accomplish separate goals" (Brown, 1994b, p.174). Brown also suggests that the teacher divides the group accordingly. In a Putonghua teaching class, the non-Chinese-speaking staff will be divided into groups according to their cognitive style, or field of study, etc., and different tasks will be assigned to different groups.

Simulations

Since the author would like to adopt the simulations in a Putonghua teaching class, it is important to be clear about the essential elements of simulations. In Jones (1982), there are three essential features of a simulation. Firstly, it is the goal of a simulation to set up a whole environment, to be as close as possible to the reality of a specific target situation. However, Jones points out that the environment is complex. Secondly, Jones thinks that the key pedagogical character of a simulation is that it is based on problem-solving. Thus Jones makes a conclusion that "learners do not practice by repeating a solution already presented by the teacher, but instead arriving at appropriate conclusions via indirect and exploratory process" (Jones, 1982). Then what kind of situations are simulations most often applied? Jones, K. (1982) believes that simulations are most

often employed in contexts that depend greatly on oral-aural, interactive skills. We can suggest that in the needs analysis, the going-out of the classroom to practice Putonghua in the real world is the one activity that the academic staff will like. One of the most distinctive features of this course is the inclusion of simulative daily situations where the staff is expected to perform all kinds of tasks that they may encounter in a real daily situation, ranging from speaking with students from the main land of China on the campus and speaking with people in the local supermarket. Thirdly, Jones has mentioned the structure and emphasizes that a simulation needs a structure and should be a structure around a problem or problems. He means that simulations involves participants inside the event, that the participants have the responsibilities to shape the event and solve the problem. And we can suggest that is simulation's merit to role play.

Curriculum Schedule

In this part, the author briefly introduces the curriculum schedule to Putonghua teaching at the University of Macau. The Putonghua speaking and listening curriculum is specially designed for non-Chinese-speaking academic staff at the University of Macau. Its purpose is to provide the Putonghua listening, speaking and communication skills necessary to function successfully in NCSAS's everyday communication settings and activities. Emphasis is on the practical aspects of language use in the daily life situations.

The curriculum is split into two parts: everyday skills part and communication skills part. The curriculum allows for 76 two-hour sessions and totally amounts to 152 hours in four semesters of two academic years.

Considering the preferences mentioned by interviewees, in this curriculum, the author will set the tutoring group for individual non-Chinese-speaking staff, and also the lesson has been offered for the

group. It means the non-Chinese-speaking staff can attend the classes and they also can have a tutor for consulting in the learning process after class. In the course work part, the teacher is advised to place different emphases on a particular unit with the students' actual Putonghua proficiency and specific needs, or as may be necessary. The text has split up expressions that are used in daily life into several topics; each lesson focuses on some of the expressions on the topic, with situational dialogues, new words, common expressions, cultural backgrounds, language points, notes, and substitution drills. That integrates comprehension with practical usage. To speed up the learning process for learners so that they can communicate with Chinese people in simple situations, each lesson has been divided into three parts: the first two parts mainly explain the dialogue and include explanations of the cultural background and language points, as well as the expressions. It can be seen that dialogue is given a primary role while exercises complement the learning of conversations. The set of teaching materials and accompanied CD aims to allow the non-Chinese-speaking staff to become adept at using Chinese to communicate in daily life.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study focuses on the raising and answering of the following questions.

1. What are curriculum and needs analysis?
The first question is also the one that inspires the author's interest in the exploitation into this area. In the literature review, it explores some theoretical concepts, such as needs analysis and some influential theory of curriculum design, and use them as the foundation for the study.
2. What are the perceived language needs of foreign academic staff that have little

knowledge of any Chinese dialect at the University of Macau?

The study answers the question using both survey and interview instruments developed at the University of Macau for non-Chinese-speaking academic staff and the Putonghua teachers on campus. The results of the this detailed needs analysis reported in the findings section provides a sound rationale for developing a Putonghua listening and speaking curriculum for non-Chinese-speaking academic staff who have little knowledge of any Chinese dialect at the University of Macau.

3. How can the language needs of foreign academic staff be met?

In order to answer this question, the implications section presents the curriculum design process for non-Chinese-speaking staff, covering almost every stage in a curriculum from setting objectives to materials selection, from classroom activities to teaching strategies, from schedule management to course evaluation, serving as the realization of the needs and goals of the non-Chinese-speaking academic staff.

Although this article addressed the three questions mentioned above, there are still many questions left unanswered in the study and the course needs to be modified and evaluated in practice. In addition, the greater challenge lies not in the planning with pen and paper but in the implementation of the curriculum. Therefore, the author hopes that those who are to be involved in developing curriculum for non-Chinese-speaking academic staff in the southeast and south Asia region may derive some benefits from this study and develop further studies in the curriculum development and implementation of Putonghua for non-Chinese speaking academic staff in this region.

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Appendixes

Survey Forms

Putonghua Needs Analysis for Academic Staff

Dear staff members,

I am a graduate student from the Master of Arts in English programme at the University of Macau. I am conducting a research project for my M.A. Thesis, which will examine the perceived needs of academic staff for Putonghua instruction. Your completion of the simple questionnaire, although it will not benefit you directly, will be of great help to the completion of the project, and should take only a few minutes. The questionnaire will ask about your language background and whether you are willing to participate in an interview. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential and no reference to individual participants will be made in the research project.

If you have any questions about the project or this questionnaire, please feel free to direct them to the primary researcher or the academic supervisor.

Yours sincerely,

Aileen Luo (Primary Researcher)

ma45536@umac.mo

Andrew Moody (Academic Supervisor)

amoody@umac.mo

Gender: male female

Age: under 30 30-45 46-60 over 60

Native language(s): _____; Other language(s): _____

1. How long have you lived in a Chinese-speaking environment?

_____ years _____ months

2. Please rate your proficiency in each languages/dialects (place an "x" in the most appropriate box)

	none	basic	lower intermediate	higher intermediate	advanced
Putonghua					
Cantonese					
Others (please specify)					

3. Have you studied Putonghua before? Yes No

If "yes", for how long? _____ years _____ months

How much time do you currently spend learning Putonghua?

- In class _____ hrs/week
- Out of class _____ hrs/week

4. How essential is it to learn the following languages: (please circle the most appropriate number)

not at all essential

absolutely essential

Putonghua 1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Cantonese 1.....2.....3.....4.....5

5. Are you willing to participate in a short (i.e. 30 minutes) interview about your needs and interests in learning

of Putonghua? Yes No

Name: _____ Contact Number: _____

(if "yes" above)

Interview Protocol

Interview Questions 2005-12

1. What is the main purpose in learning of Putonghua? What do you plan to do with Putonghua in the long run?
2. Do you think you can use Putonghua outside University? Where? With whom? What are the five major situations that you use Putonghua?
3. What is your impression to the people who speaks Putonghua? Do you have an interest to Chinese culture? What field? Do you think learning Putonghua is difficult or not? What is the most difficult for you to learn Putonghua?
4. Do you think Putonghua can help you in your job or in finding a job? Why? Do you want any job specific Putonghua courses? If yes, what field?
5. What would you want to improve? Why? How much time did you spend learning Putonghua? Focused mostly on rate (1-4)
 - a. 1 = most emphasized; 4 = least emphasized.
 - b. Speaking/listening/reading/writing
6. What kind of ways do you prefer in learning Putonghua? Self-learning? Individually with a tutor? Or classroom learning? Or combination of the ways?
 - a. Others, please specify.
7. Do you think the learning materials are adequate? If not, what else would you like to have? And why?
8. If we will provide you a Putonghua learning program,
 - a. What are your expectations of the program?
 - b. What do you hope to achieve by the end of the program?
 - 1) Follow a conversation between two or more native speakers?
 - 2) Speak fluently in Putonghua?
 - 3) Understand authentic academic lectures made by Chinese scholars?
 - 4) Present paper at an academic conference in China?
 - c. What do you think you will be able to do in Putonghua at the end of the program that you can't do now?
 - d. How would you continue to learn Putonghua when your course is finished?
 - e. If you were in charge of the program, how would you design the program, give examples?
9. What methodology will appeal to you in an aural-oral Putonghua class? What sorts of techniques are likely to bore/alienate you? What sorts of techniques are likely to motivate you?
10. How helpful do you think the following is in helping you achieve your goals in aural-oral class?
 - a. Skills taught in the course?
 - b. Activities carried out in the course?
 - c. Ability of the faculty to help you learn?
 - d. Opportunities to practice the language outside class?
 - e. Amount of conversation practice?
 - f. Use of audiovisual aids?
 - g. Information received from the faculty about your learning process?