

# A STUDY OF MOTIVATION AND STRATEGIES IN LEARNING OF ENGLISH BY MIDDLE-AGED AND ELDERLY IN CHINA

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## Abstract

With the development of globalization, English has become a global language. More and more Chinese want to learn English which includes middle-aged and elderly people. However, in recent research, most are focusing on children, teenagers and college students. There is little research that focuses on middle-aged and elderly and there is also a lack of comparison of study of learning motivation, learning strategies and learning barriers of middle-aged and elderly. Thus, the research objective of this study is to analyze the differences in learning motivation, learning strategies and learning barriers of middle-aged and elderly.

**Key words:** middle-aged and elderly, English learning strategies, barriers, motivation

## Introduction

With the continuous development of globalization, English is no longer a particular language of a country or a nation. It has become a multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-functional language. At present, nearly one third of the population in the world has a good knowledge of English, and the number of using English as a foreign language has exceeded the number of English as a first language. English has become the language of the whole world (Li Shaohua , 2005).

Today English plays an important role in China. China feels that English is the international language of business and that by speaking English, China will be more effective in its business dealings with the West. In addition, the government feels that understanding English will allow China to better adapt technologies from the West and also provide increased

impetus to its current and long-term growth (<http://thornhillcapital.info>).

However, population aging is a common challenge that every country is concerned with, and nearly every developed country is faced with the phenomenon of aging. It is expected by the United Nations that in 2025, people over 60 years old will reach 2.83 billion. It will be the 19.1% of the total population. In 2050, people who are 60 and over will reach 4.35 billion, around 29.3% of the total population (<http://www.who.int>).

The middle-aged and elderly people are those whose age ranges from 45 to 74. After retiring, they tend to stay at home. One of the hobbies they could choose is to learn English. They may want to stay with their children in other countries; they may use English to travel around the world; they might want to communicate with foreigners; they want to be a volunteer to help people from foreign countries if there are international events such as the Olympic Games as happened in Beijing. So their first choice is to attend a LaoNian DaXue (Senior Citizen University).

In China, the rise of the elderly education is connected with abolishing the system of life tenure in leading cadres and the implementation of the cadre retirement system. In order to make their own life to be substantial, a number of old cadres explored new ways to develop their ability. The first Chinese LaoNian DaXue (Senior Citizen University) was set up in Shandong Province in 1983. Schools set up elderly health care, psychology and sports courses. These courses are diversified, such as ideological cultivation, literature, history, calligraphy, painting, drama, folk art, flowers, qigong, etc. The students could choose to learn according to their own interest and hobbies (Zhang Miaomiao, 2012).

## Literature Review

Masgoret (2003) mentioned that the motivated individual refers to goals, desires to learn, effort and aspirations, and enjoys the activity, experiences reinforcement from their success and disappointment from failure. Gardner (1994) stressed that people who have high motivation will make great efforts to learn. Clement (1994) theory of language confidence said that self-confidence plays a more important role in an integrative motive in second language acquisition. Dornyei (1994) proposed three dimensional model of language learning motivation. He thought that there are three aspects to study and measure motivation which are integration, language self-confidence and classroom environment.

Learners who have intrinsic learning motivation have higher grade and are more active while learning. Thus they think the intrinsic motivation is greater than extrinsic motivation (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

Oxford (1990) considered strategies taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. Oxford classifies language learning strategies into direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies have direct relationship with the target language which includes memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies are to deal with in learning such as metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies.

Table 1. Oxford's Classification of Learning Strategies (Oxford, 1990)

Learning strategies	Direct strategies	Memory strategies	1. Creating mental linkage 2. Applying images and sounds 3. Reviewing well 4. Employing action
		Cognitive strategies	1. Practicing 2. Receiving and sending messages strategies 3. Analyzing and reasoning 4. Creating structure for input and output
		Compensation strategies	1. Guessing intelligently 2. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
	Indirect strategies	Metacognitive strategies	1. Centering your learning 2. Arranging and planning your learning 3. Evaluating your learning
		Affective strategies	1. Lowering your anxiety 2. Encouraging yourself 3. Taking your emotional temperature
		Social strategies	1. Asking questions 2. Cooperating with others 3. Empathizing with others

Li Chuanyin (2007) considered that from personal point of view, adult

may have six kinds of learning barriers which were physiological barrier, intention barrier, emotional barrier, experiential barrier and learning method barrier. The physiological barrier is aging phenomenon of various functions of body function, such as visual degradation, hearing weakness and memory declination, which influences the learning to adults in the process of the development of adulthood. Intention barrier is a barrier of faith, value and attitude that influence adult learners learning activity when they join in. Emotional barrier indicates that an adult performs different roles in different social network. It happens frequently that adults do not have enough time to study and consequently do not have time to learn. There may be some family issues, work tasks which interrupt learners to devote themselves to learning. Learners have difficulty in completing tasks that teachers ask and delay their own learning plan may cause some issues that can make learners anxious and depressed.

The experiential barrier means that much experience in work and family can have a negative effect for adult learners. Because it is not easy for adults to forget old habits and existing knowledge in order to accept new points of view and they are not prepared to accept new ideas. They might exclude new knowledge or take a critical attitude especially when the new opinion is contradictory with their original conception and experience. This may have an influence in adult learning efficiency. Learning method barrier is that adult learners do not master and use the learning methods effectively which can cause low efficient learning.

## Methods

In this paper, the English learners consisted of two types of adult: middle-aged and elderly Chinese. According to their age period, middle-aged Chinese referred to age 45-59, elderly Chinese referred from 60 to 74.

In order to survey the issues of elderly learners' motivation two types of English learners (middle-aged and elderly Chinese who are from Guiyang LaoNian DaXue (Senior Citizen University) in China and Nanjing Library) were chosen to answer a questionnaire designed for this study. The researcher also chose 9 people who were from the 40 who filled the questionnaire in order to obtain direct face-to-face information. The questionnaire and questions in the interview were translated into Chinese. The interviews were recorded and translated into English.

The analysis of this research based on Li Chuanyin's theory of learning

barriers which were divided into personal aspects and social aspects. The learning strategies based on Oxford's learning strategies. The researcher also analyzed middle-aged and elderly learners' motivation through Gardner's (1994), Clement (1994) and Dornyei (1994) theory of learning motivation. The collected data was analyzed by both descriptive and inferential statistics.

## **Questionnaire**

A set of questionnaires was distributed to 40 middle-aged and elderly people who were learning English, including the nine participants that were interviewed. The questionnaires comprised a mixture of closed and opened questions. There were five parts to the questionnaires as follows:

### **Part I Middle-aged and elderly people's motivation for learning English**

In the motivation section, participants were required to rate the questions on a five-point scale, where "1" corresponds to "strongly disagree", "2" corresponds to "disagree", "3" corresponds to "uncertain", "4" corresponds to "agree", "5" corresponds to "strongly agree". The reason for this part of the questionnaire was to rate the most popular motivation for middle-aged and elderly people who were learning English.

### **Part II Middle-aged and elderly people's strategies for learning English**

The second concerned learning strategies, from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), as designed by Oxford in 1985 (Oxford, 1985) and revised later (Oxford, 1989 & 1990). It was employed to measure the use of learning strategies that students used to study language. This instrument in this research has many advantages. First, Oxford's classification is very comprehensive covering all aspects of learning strategies and systematic in linking individual strategies and strategy group. Second, SILL is the "most often used strategy scale around the world", and this instrument has been extensively field-tested in multiple ways for its validity and reliability (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). Third, during the process of doing this part of questionnaire learns can also be aware of the complex strategies that they never use in their study, and this can be exploited to help their learning.

SILL covers all the main aspects of learning strategies and also connects the different learning strategies in one test, so it gives us a whole recognition of the learning strategies used by learners. It contains 50 items in all, followed by: memory strategies (9 items), cognitive strategies (14 items),

compensation strategies (6 items), metacognitive strategies (9 items) and affective strategies (6 items), the last is social strategies including 6 items. Participants respond to all the items with a Five-Point Liker-type scale (Oxford, 1990): where “1” corresponds to “Never or almost never true of me”, “2” corresponds to “Usually not true of me”, “3” corresponds to “Somewhat true of me”, “4” corresponds to “Usually true of me”, “5” corresponds to “Always or almost always true of me” (Zou Dan, 2009).

### **Part III Middle-aged and elderly people’s barriers for learning English**

This part comprises a mixture of closed and opened questions. Adult learners are expected to respond to this section through reflection on their learning experience. The data obtained from this part is very useful, for it indicates what barriers/obstacle faced by middle-aged and elderly students in learning English.

### **Part IV Self-assessment**

In this part, adult students are asked to evaluate every item with a score around 0-5, 0 point indicated lowest, 5 point is the highest score.

### **Part V Personal data**

This part covers the respondents’ gender, age, career, previous education, frequency of study and duration of learning, and a multiple choice question which concerns their way of learning English. The data obtained from this part should help the researcher to understand the background of individuals in this study, and therefore to discover the factors that might make their answers vary.

## **Interview**

At the end of the experiment, nine participants were interviewed to collect qualitative data for study. These participants volunteered to be interviewed. The interview was conducted through semi-structured questions that focused on:

- (1) Middle-aged and elderly learners’ own view about English learning.
- (2) The difficulties, if any, middle-aged and elderly learners encountered in attempting to applying the instructed strategies to oral English learning
- (3) Middle-aged and elderly learners’ motivation and interests in learning.

Nine participants were asked to be interviewed. The questions were translated into Chinese by the researcher so they could understand. Each interview lasted for three to five minutes. In order to obtain information and to have a time limit, the researcher asked personal questions, the way that they learned English, why did they choose to learn and what kind of problems did they have while learning. The answers from these participants was then recorded and back-translated into English. The researcher checked the back-translations with the original version. The researcher made corrections as needed.

## **Research questions**

- 1) What motivates the middle-aged and elderly Chinese to learn English?
- 2) What learning strategies do middle-aged and elderly Chinese use in learning English?
- 3) What are the barriers that obstruct the middle-aged and elderly Chinese in learning English?
- 4) What may be the differences of motivation and strategies between middle-aged and elderly Chinese in learning?

## **Data analysis**

The data of questionnaire was collected and analyzed by Graph pad Prism 5.0

- (1) To do statistical description analysis of the results of the questionnaire.
- (2) To analyze the differences of middle-aged and elderly learning English by t-test.
- (3) To analyze the differences of middle-aged and elderly learning result by t-test. This research is also completed by the data from the interview.

## **Findings**

### **The learning strategy of middle-aged and elderly**

Descriptive analysis is used to find out the using frequency of English learning strategies of MG (Middle-Aged Group) and EG. (the Elderly Group) The higher the subjects have, the more frequently they use these

strategies. The use frequency of strategy is divided into three levels, which is high, medium and low (Oxford, 1995). The following Table 2 is to describe of the frequency scale of strategy use.

Table 2. Frequency scale of strategy use

Mean score	Frequency scale	Evaluation
4.5-5.0	High	Always or almost true
3.5-4.4		Usually true
2.5-3.4	Medium	Sometimes true
1.5-2.4	Low	Generally not true
1.0-1.4		Never or almost never true

Table 3. The scale of English learning strategies used by MG

Main Strategies	Sub-strategies	Items	Mean	Average Mean
Memory Strategies (MS)	Creating mental linkage	1,4,5,9	4.011	3.949
	Applying images and sounds	3	3.045	
	Reviewing	2,6,8	4.076	
	Employing action	7	4.227	
Cognitive strategies (CS)	Practicing	10-14	3.982	3.825
	Receiving and sending messages	15-18	3.875	
	Analyzing and reasoning	19-22	3.545	
	Creating structure for input and output	23	3.955	
Compensation strategies (COMS)	Guessing intelligently	24,27,28	3.439	3.515
	Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing	25,26,29	3.591	
Metacognitive strategies (METAS)	Centering your learning	30-32	3.955	3.864
	Arranging and planning your learning	33-37	3.918	
	Evaluating your learning	38	3.682	
Affective strategies (AS)	Lowering your anxiety	39	3.591	3.417
	Encouraging yourself	40,41	3.727	
	Taking your emotional temperature	42-44	3.061	
Social strategies (SS)	Asking questions	45,46,49	3.773	3.788
	Cooperating with others	47,48	3.75	
	Empathizing with others	50	3.909	
Overall Strategies		1-50		3.763



It can be seen from Table 3 that the total average of MG falls into the average frequency levels “3.5-4.4”, which means “always / usually” used. So it suggests that MG learners usually use these learning strategies when they learn English. In MG, the average score of direct strategies (MS, CS, COMS) is 3.799, higher than the average score of indirect strategies (METAS, AS, SS) 3.714.

MG shows more identification of learning English by memorizing and reciting the words and the other forms of learning strategies also have higher scores. It can be seen that the middle-aged Chinese prefer extensive use of memory and repetitive training. They recognize the learning effect that the traditional learning methods bring. The average mean of CS is 3.825 shows that MG is “always/ usually” practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, creating structure for input and output when they learn English. Overall, MG use practicing most in learning English and use analyzing and reasoning least.

In COMS, the two sub-items “Guessing intelligently” and “Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing” shows that MG often uses the two strategies in studying English. The sub-strategies of AS used most frequently by MG is lowering anxiety.

From the data in Table 2, in SS, it suggests that Empathizing is used by MG English learners, while cooperating is used the least.

Table 4. The scale of English learning strategies used by EG

Main Strategies	Sub-strategies	Items	Mean	Average Mean
Memory Strategies (MS)	Creating mental linkage	1,4,5,9	3.792	3.611
	Applying images and sounds	3	2.944	
	Reviewing	2,6,8	3.556	
	Employing action	7	3.722	
Cognitive strategies (CS)	Practicing	10-14	3.922	3.623
	Receiving and sending messages	15-18	3.402	
	Analyzing and reasoning	19-22	3.486	
	Creating structure for input and output	23	3.556	
Compensation strategies (COMS)	Guessing intelligently	24,27,28	3.389	3.331
	Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing	25,26,29	3.241	

Metacognitive strategies (METAS)	Centering your learning	30-32	3.611	3.277
	Arranging and planning your learning	33-37	3.178	
	Evaluating your learning	38	2.778	
Affective strategies (AS)	Lowering your anxiety	39	3.833	3.259
	Encouraging yourself	40,41	3.722	
	Taking your emotional temperature	42-44	2.759	
Social strategies (SS)	Asking questions	45,46,49	3.481	3.611
	Cooperating with others	47,48	3.667	
	Empathizing with others	50	3.889	
Overall Strategies		1-50		3.477

From Table 4, it can be seen that the total average of EG fall into the mean frequency level of “2.5-3.4” which means “Sometimes used”. So it suggests that EG learners sometimes use these learning strategies when they learn English. What is more, it shows that EG learn English by using different level of learning strategies.

The average score of Memory Strategies is 3.611 and indicates that EG shows more identification of learning English by memorizing and reciting. It seems that the elderly Chinese employ extensive use of memory and repetitive training. They recognize the learning effect that the traditional learning methods bring. But “applying images and sounds” in Memory Strategies indicates that the memory strategy in EG is more rigid as seen with MG..

Cognitive Strategies of “Receiving and sending messages” and “Analyzing and reasoning” show that EG lack learning strategies of acceptance and expression of information and analysis. But the score of sub-strategies “Practicing” and “Creating structure for input and output” indicate that EG is “usually” practicing, creating structure for input and output when they learn English. EG uses practicing most in learning English and use receiving and sending messages the least.

In COMS, the two sub-items “Guessing intelligently” and “Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing” indicate that EG sometimes use these two strategies in their study of English.

The average score of total of METAS that means EG “Sometimes” use the three sub-items “Centering” ‘Arranging and Planning” and “Evaluating”. From the average score of the sub-strategies of AS, “Lowering your anxiety” has the highest score while taking ‘emotional temperature’ is in the category

of “Sometimes used”. In SS, it can be seen that “Empathizing” has the highest score, and then Cooperating and Asking questions, which suggests that EG English learners use “Empathizing” the most “Asking questions” least.

**Comparison on English learning strategies Use between MG and EG objects**

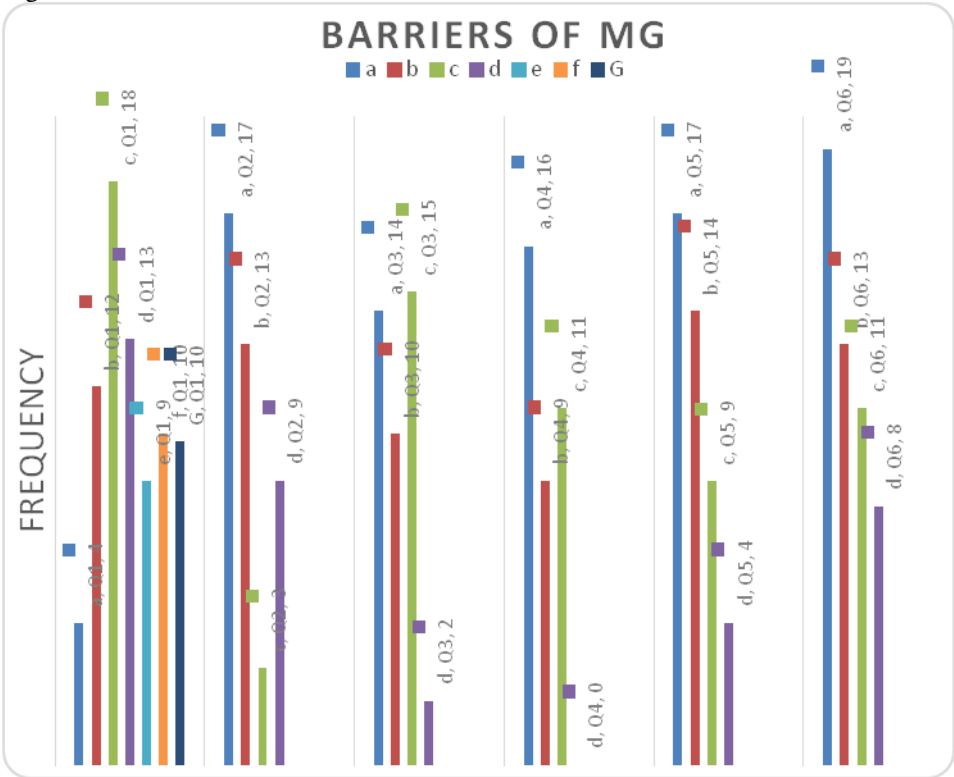
Table 5, indicates that MG and EG secondary English learners have different mean scores not only in the overall English learning strategies (ELS) use but also the six main categories of ELS. MG secondary learners score higher than EG in overall strategy use, which means that on the whole MG learners employ ELS more frequently than EG.

Table 5. Comparison on English learning strategies Use between MG and EG

Main Strategies	Group	N	Mean±SD	P value
Memory Strategies (MS)	MG	22	3.949±0.299	0.0381*
	EG	18	3.611±0.334	
Cognitive strategies (CS)	MG	22	3.825±0.291	0.1515
	EG	18	3.623±0.41	
Compensation strategies (COMS)	MG	22	3.515±0.465	0.5080
	EG	18	3.311±0.543	
Meta-cognitive strategies (METAS)	MG	22	3.864±0.146	0.011*
	EG	18	3.277±0.592	
Affective strategies (AS)	MG	22	3.417±0.453	0.6023
	EG	18	3.259±0.554	
Social strategies (SS)	MG	22	3.788±0.085	0.2297
	EG	18	3.611±0.327	
Overall strategies	MG	22	3.763±0.34	0.00073*
	EG	18	3.477±0.472	

The learning barriers of middle-aged people

Figure 1 Barriers of MG



As can be seen from MG (Figure 1). *The first question* “What are the major problems in your learning of English?” shows that MG main the learning barrier is because of work.

*The second question* “Which of the following abilities do you think is the most difficult during English learning?” MG thinks that “listening” is the most difficult followed by “speaking, writing, reading”

*The third question* “What is the main problem in your English listening?” shows that the thinking patterns of mother tongue seem to have greater influence on second language learning.

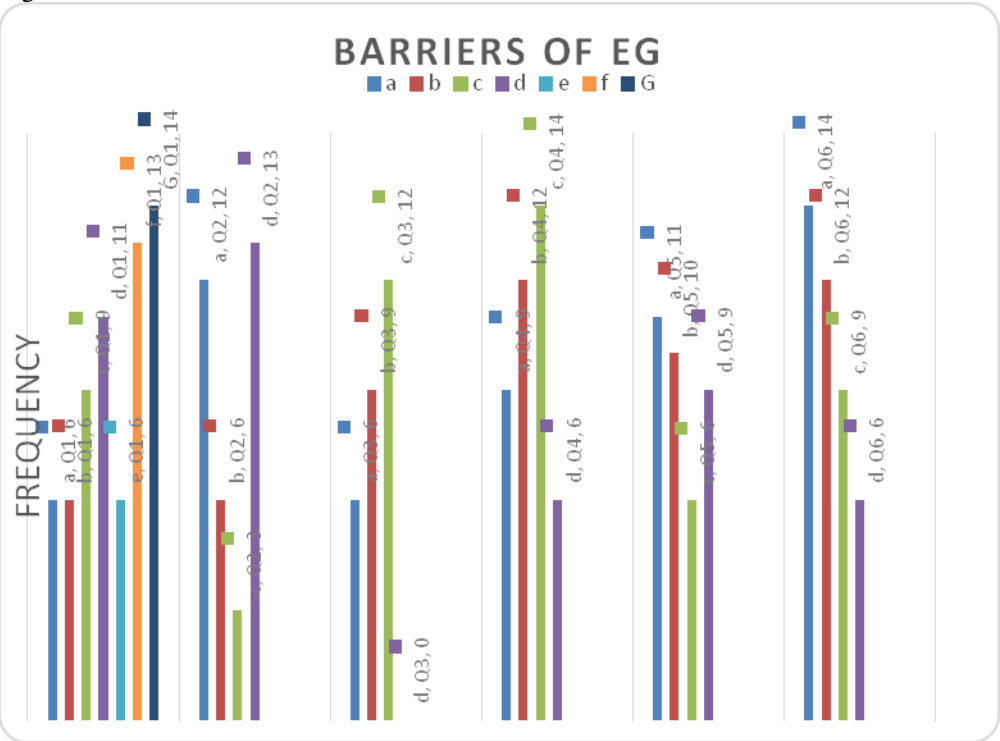
*The fourth question* “What is the main problem in your English speaking?” shows that the main problem in speaking English is lack of vocabulary, followed by the fear of making mistakes.

*The fifth question* is the barrier of “Too many new words” in reading which the followed by “Difficulty with complex sentences due to grammar”.

The sixth question “What is the main problem in your English writing?” indicates that the lack of vocabulary is the main problem in writing and the fear of writing because of “Lack of fluency or vividness”

The learning barriers of elderly people

Figure 2 Barriers of EG



‘What are the major problems in your learning of English?’ indicates that the main problem of learning English are due to the increasing age and poor long term memory as well as. “Being better at reading and writing than speaking and communicating.” The EG think that the biggest barrier is “writing and listening” that their frequency is 13 and 12 times. While the frequency of “speaking and reading” are 6 and 3 times. The listening barrier indicates that EG have which seem according to them related to their mother tongue

Another difficulty relates to the speaking English of EG who are afraid fear to speak and have greater dependency on their mother tongue. Lack of vocabulary is another issue as well as ‘Difficulty with complex sentences’. EG have the general idea of the text, but still lack the abilities to analyze and

generalize. In addition this lack of vocabulary hinders EG to express what they think accurately as well as grammar mistake.

**The data analysis of interview**

After completing the questionnaire, the research invited middle-aged and elderly to do the interview. However, only 9 individuals were willing to be interviewed which is accounting for 22.5% of the total. It may be that middle-aged and elderly in China are more conservative. Since research is in mainland China, this study used Mandarin in the interview. Thereby, eliminate the tension of the respondents and make them relaxed to express their point of view. The interview had been translated into English.

The interview is an attempt at in-depth refinement of the questionnaire. According to the interview, the researcher found that most of the respondents think that English is a tool which helps them in their work and communicate better with others internationally. For example, these respondents learn English to have access to a wider range of knowledge. MG think the main barrier of learning English is that they do not have the learning environment. While the main barrier for the Chinese elderly is memory loss.

Table 6. Conclusion of interview

Research questions	Participants	Interview
Age	Participant1	Not retired
	Participant2	Retired
	Participant3	Retired last year
	Participant4	Not retired
	Participant5	Not retired
	Participant6	Not mentioned
	Participant7	65 years old
	Participant8	Not mentioned
	Participant9	Not mentioned
Gender	Participant1	Female
	Participant2	Female
	Participant3	Female
	Participant4	Male
	Participant5	Female
	Participant6	Female
	Participant7	Male
	Participant8	Male
	Participant9	Female

Education	Participant1 Participant2 Participant3 Participant4 Participant5 Participant6 Participant7 Participant8 Participant9	Bachelor degree Bachelor degree Bachelor degree Not mentioned Not mentioned Bachelor degree Bachelor degree Bachelor degree Bachelor degree
Occupation	Participant1 Participant2 Participant3 Participant4 Participant5 Participant6 Participant7 Participant8 Participant9	National staff Worked in a Cultural unit Teacher Sound engineer Librarian Teacher Teacher Engineer Public servant
Learning motivation	Participant 8	<p>The occupation of is an engineer which he needs to consult the latest literature to do scientific research. In his interview, he said “while at work, if one knows English, he has more access to English information, and it is easier for him to know about international advanced technology. If he doesn’t, he will only have access to second-hand information translated by others. It’s especially in the field of computer. Nowadays advanced software and hardware are all invented by western countries, for example, programming languages. They are all in English, none in Chinese. If we don’t know English well, Chinese versions are our only options. And we don’t get the newest software, and we don’t have some of the functions.”</p> <p>He also said that I feel a little <u>awkward</u> to talk to foreigners. I have to talk to them with the help of interpreters. But, sometimes I think interpreters can’t express what we are thinking, because we do engineering with which interpreters are not so familiar. Sometimes they can’t express what we are thinking and we don’t know what to do, because we can’t, either. But sometimes we can draw pictures to communicate. It was a little awkward, though. Sometimes we were embarrassed but still couldn’t make them understand.</p>

		Participate 8 said that I can only buy something in shopping malls and communicate through body language.
Learning barriers	Participant 3	The participant 3 said “I think learning English is inexorable trend. English is important to us. And for me, learning English is good for the next generation. It is important for child to go to school.”
	Participant 4	Participant 4 said “Because my daughter is good at English. She influences me to learn English. She will communicate with me after class. Though I learned English before, I have nearly forgotten everything. With my daughter learning the English, I feel that I have the motivation of learning and she creating a learning environment through the interaction.”
	Participant 6	Participant 6 said “I learned in universities. Now I learn English through TV series. Sometimes, I learn with my daughter. ”
	Participant 7	The participant 7 said “My children are abroad now. My wife is an English teacher. I learnt English at the college for the aged. I learnt from her, too. She taught me for several months to prepare me for an exam...She taught me in the way that she teaches pupils English. Mostly, she taught me how to memorize words and I memorized a lot.”
How to improve English learning	Participant I	The participant I said “I usually buy the tape and books about life and tourism. I will listen to the tape, CD, and so on. But I do not think it is very useful. I think I have to enter into the context. I usually listen to the tape half an hour a day, half an hour in the afternoon. But I think it is still not good. I think I have to carry out systematic training.” She thought that the teacher in English training class could help her improve English level.
How to improve English	Participant 6	The participant 6 said she wants “an English teacher who is like my daughter that answers my questions patiently.



learning	Participant 7	For participant 7, when interviewer asked what kind of English teacher do you like? He answered "those who know the laws of memorizing words and the way to improve students' scores. I think it would be better if a younger teacher comes to teach me English and do some activities to help me memorize words."
	Participant 8	Participant 8 said teachers who are "strict or easy, both are ok. All I want is result, as long as I can improve my listening and speaking ability."

(1) Learning motivation: participant 2's national shame makes her to learn English and she hopes to correct her English mistakes. The interesting phenomenon is that the participant 1 and 8 referred "awkward", "ashamed" when they were talking to foreigners. Sometimes, they could not understand what foreigners say to them or it is not easy for them to express what they want to say. These communication barriers seem to involve some element of embarrassment. The participants 1, 4, 5 and 8 prefer to do daily English in order to travel. They will use their body language to express themselves when they are facing difficulties in communication.

(2) Learning barriers: the main barrier of learning English is lack of learning environment. Except participant 2, the other 8 participants said that their learning barriers are lack of learning environment. The participant 3, 4, 6 and 7 could continue learning English because their family members are good at English or due to the fact that they are themselves teachers. Thus it can be seen that the learning environment is important.

(3) How to improve English learning: Due to the poor learning environment and self-learning ability, respondents want to participate in training courses or have teachers' to help them learn. Participants think that teachers could improve students' learning by organizing activities. They want teachers who use more effective, faster way to improve their English.

### **The motivation of middle-aged and elderly learning English**

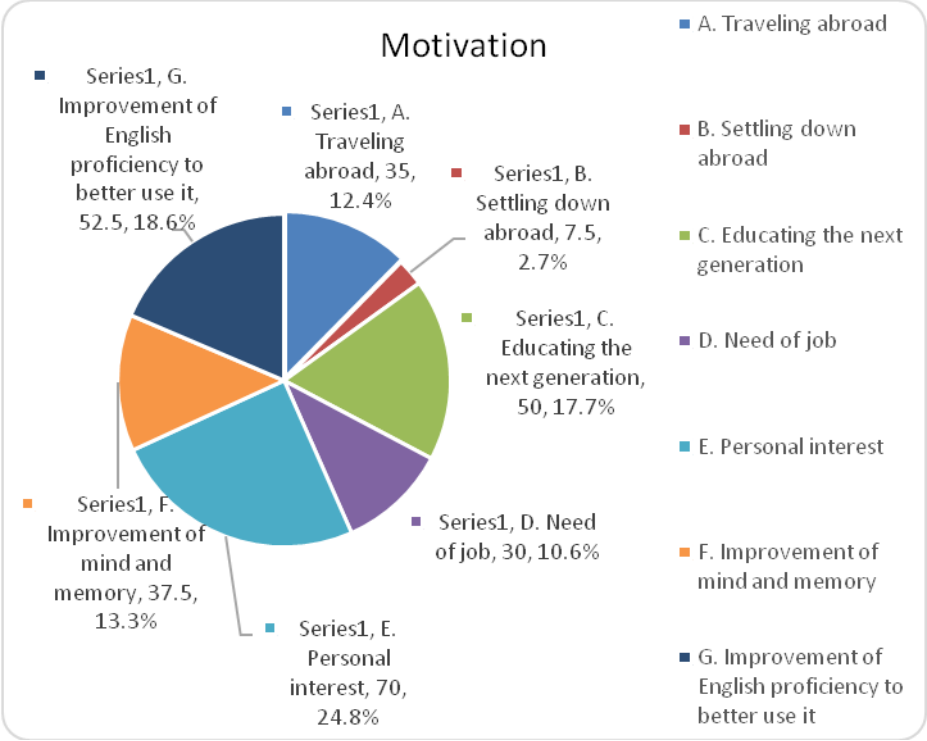
Through the analysis of the frequency of various types of learning motivation respondents, it shows to that the frequency of the subjects in learning motivation is personal interest, improvement of English proficiency to better use it, educating the next generation, improvement of mid and memory, traveling abroad, need of job, settling down abroad. Personal interest has the highest frequency accounting for 70%, while settling down abroad is the lowest, at 7.5%. The learning motivation is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Learning motivation

Motivation	Frequency	Percentage
A. Traveling abroad	14	35%
B. Settling down abroad	3	7.5%
C. Educating the next generation	20	50%
D. Need of job	12	30%
E. Personal interest	28	70%
F. Improvement of mind and memory	15	37.5%
G. Improvement of English proficiency to better use it	21	52.5%

There are seven types of motivation A-G in the questionnaire. A-D are extrinsic motivation, E-G are intrinsic motivation. The pie chart shows that 43.4% of the subjects had extrinsic motivation while the intrinsic motivation of study object is 56.6% (Figure 3). In summary, the subjects had strong intrinsic motivation which shows that middle-aged and elderly learn English for personal interests and hobbies. They have high motivation because their intrinsic motivation is motivated.

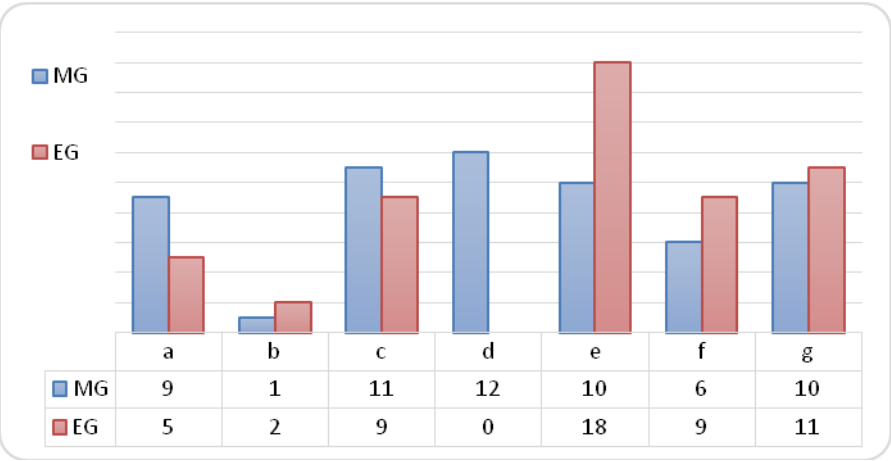
Figure 3 Learning Motivation



The analysis of differences of English learning motivation in middle-aged and elderly

The learning motivation of the subjects is concentrated on the motivation C/D/E/F/G, as shown in Figure 4. For middle-aged group there are 22 people and 18 elderly (Figure 4).

Figure 4 The Motivation of MG and EG



The learning motivation of MG and EG were classified as follows (Table 8).

Table 8. Classification of motivation in MG and EG

Motivation	MG		EG	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
A. Traveling abroad	9	40.9%	5	27.8%
B. Settling down abroad	1	4.5%	2	11.1%
C. Educating the next generation	11	50.0%	9	50.0%
D. Need of job	12	54.5%	0	0.0%
E. Personal interest	10	45.5%	18	100.0%
F. Improvement of mind and memory	6	27.3%	9	50.0%
G. Improvement of English proficiency to better use it	10	45.5%	11	61.1%

Figure 5 Motivation of MG

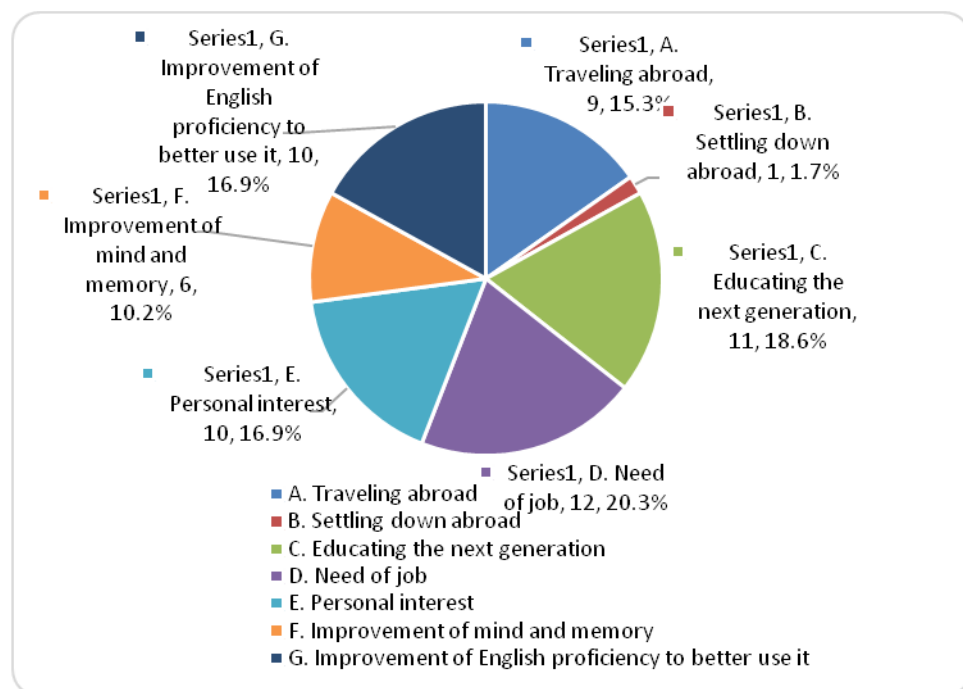
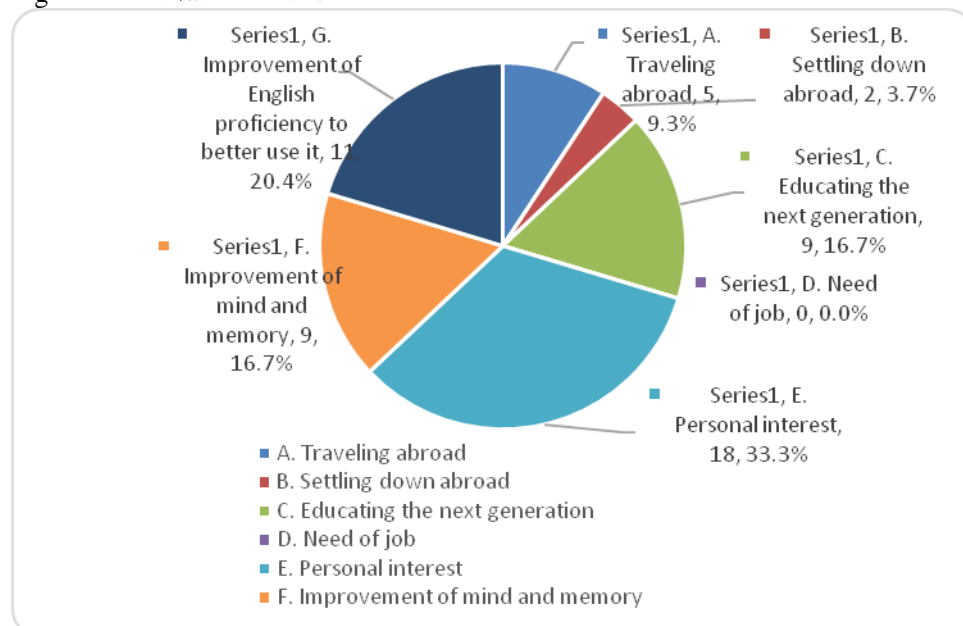


Figure 6 Motivation of EG



First, the intrinsic motivation (E/F/G) of elderly in learning English is greater than for middle-aged group. There are four motivations: traveling abroad, need of job, personal interest, improvement of mind and memory that middle-aged and elderly share while they learn English. The motivation level of EG is significantly higher than MG. It shows that compare with middle-aged, elderly prefer to have their own interest, they desire to improve thinking by learning English and to improve their English level. But there is no need for them to learn English for jobs which is probably connected with their retirement (Figure 5,6 ).

## Conclusions and limitations of the study

The majority of the middle-aged and elderly English learners are female, accounting for 75% of the learners, which may indicate that females in these groups are more active in learning English. The education of the middle-aged and elderly English learners is mainly above college level, which indicates that people who have received higher education are more likely to learn and use a new language. Similarly, the middle-aged and elderly English learners in this study are mainly from big cities, accounting to 87.5% of all the learners, while the rest come from medium-sized cities. This indicates that cities have better education resources and demands, and the fact that these English learners are mainly working in the government institutions.

This study has a number of limitations as the learning of English in China has been more focus on younger rather than the middle aged and elderly people.

Secondly, the people to be interviewed were relatively few. For the interview, many of the participants were reluctant to be interviewed and the researcher was entirely dependent on the willingness of the middle aged and elderly groups.

Finally more studies are needed to broaden the picture of middle-aged and elderly groups in learning English to be able to draw any generalizable conclusions.

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