Investigating Students' Needs in a Chinese Language Program

Ko-Yin Sung, Hsiao-Mei Tsai

Abstract-**This study investigates students' needs in a Chinese language program from a university in Utah, the United States. The present study had two aims. First, the study attempted to find students' necessities, lacks, and wants. Second, the study tried to determine to what extent the students' perceived needs differ from the teachers' views and the learning objectives posted by the department. The study results showed that the students rated speaking and listening skills as highly important. Moreover, the skill the students lacked most was grammar. Additionally, the students desired to take conversation and business courses most. Finally, this study found that the students, the teachers, and the department learning objectives only partially agreed with each other. Based on these findings, implications were given and teaching suggestions were recommended.**

Index Terms- needs analysis, Chinese, college level, foreign language learning

I. PURPOSE OF STUDY

Due to the rising economy of China and Mandarin Chinese being identified as a critical language, higher educational institutions in the United States have realized the importance of teaching the Chinese language in the past decade. The number of college students studying Chinese in the U.S. reached a new high in 2009 with more than 61,000 college students studying Mandarin Chinese [8]. Despite the growing number of students studying Mandarin Chinese, researchers observed that Chinese language programs have difficulty attracting and keeping students in the programs for more than two years [12], [13]. Many students find the Chinese language challenging to learn, thus some of them lose interest and discontinue within a year or two [12]. The high dropout numbers in Chinese programs hinder the long-term growth of the programs. As a result, well-trained and highly proficient Chinese speakers from Chinese programs are few and far between, which defeats the good intention of higher educational institutions for placing emphasis on Chinese language teaching. Shirane [13] explained that teaching East Asian languages such as Chinese and teaching Romance languages such as French, are significantly different. As identified by Foreign Service Institute as a Category 4 language, which is the type of languages most difficult to learn, it is estimated that it would take three times the instructional

hours to bring students who learn Chinese to the same proficiency level reached by students who learn a Category 1 language (e.g. French, Spanish, and German) [13]. The distinctive nature of the Chinese language compared to Romance languages could place different kinds of learning needs on the students. In order to offer an effective Chinese language program, a study such as the current one is necessary to investigate what the learners of Chinese need. In addition, the current study attempted to see whether there was an expectation gap among the students, the teachers and the department learning objectives.

II. NEEDS ANALYSIS

Needs analysis is defined as "a process for identification and defining valid curriculum and instructional management objectives in order to facilitate learning in an environment that is closely related to the real life situations of the student [7, p. 39]. Kayi [11] stated that if language instructors are not aware of their students' needs, developing a curriculum could be problematic. Hence, in order to create an effective curriculum and run an efficient language program, it is imperative to learn about students' needs such as the reasons they study the language, their perceived language level, their expectations from courses in the language program, and their learning styles. A well-known approach to learn about students' needs is Hutchinson and Water's [9] needs analysis approach, which divides needs into two main categories: target needs and learning needs. Target needs include learners' necessities (what the learner has to know), lacks (the gap between the learner's target and existing proficiencies), and wants (what the learner feels he or she wants to learn). Learning needs refers to the condition of the current learning situation (e.g. learners' learning styles, backgrounds, and interests). According to Hutchinson and Water [9], target needs analysis identifies the starting point and the destination of a learning journey, and learning needs analysis helps choose the best route to the destination. The needs analysis approach proposed by Hutchinson and Water [9] is seen by other researchers [2], [3], [5], [10] as robust, thorough, and appropriate for evaluating curricular objectives and language

programs. This justifies the use of this approach in the current study.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The needs analysis studies have been conducted in a variety of language learning contexts with the goals of developing new curricular or evaluating courses and programs. In many of these studies [3], [4], [11], [15], it has been reported that learners considered all four language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, highly important. At the same time, the learners often expressed challenges in each of the four skills. For example, the community college learners of English as a second language in Kayi's [11] study reported that within listening, they had a hard time understanding different accents of English. Within speaking, they did not know the best way to say something in English during oral presentations. Within reading, understanding the main points of a text and vocabulary are challenging. Within writing, using the right grammar and developing ideas are problematic. These findings could explain the results found in a few studies [3], [4], [11] that learners did not feel that they could use the language effectively and would need training in all four language skills. With respect to learning style, a couple studies [1], [14] reported that learners favor communicative activities over non-communicative ones in the classroom and believed that communicative skills are important to acquire. With regard to the learning of culture, the Chinese students in Xiao's [14] study who majored in English in China showed high interest in learning English culture and hoped to receive more teaching of culture. A similar result was found in Chaudron, et al.'s study [6] involving students in a tertiary Korean as a foreign language program. The study result showed that the learners had a general interest in learning Korean culture. On the contrary, the beginning and intermediate students in French, German, and Spanish language program in an US university in Alalou's [1] study did not perceive culture as an important part of language learning, which was a belief stated in the mission statement of the language programs.

In addition to using students as data sources, a few studies also involved language instructors and found that there was a gap between the students' and the teachers' perceived student need. For example, in Zughoul and Hussein's [15] study, the college learners of English in Jordan ranked speaking as the priority while the faculty ranked it as the least important skill. A gap between students' and teachers' perceptions on student need was also reported in Atai and Shoja's [4]study. In the study, the undergraduate students of computer engineering in Iran ranked all four language skills along with vocabulary and translation as high priorities while the teachers only saw reading, listening, grammar, and vocabulary as priorities.

The results of the aforementioned studies indicated that learners acknowledged the importance of and the learning challenges within the four language skills, and appreciated the communicative style of teaching in the classroom. However, some of the findings in the studies were inconsistent, especially in the learning of culture. The inconsistent findings imply that more needs analysis studies such as this one are necessary. In addition, the two studies [4], [15] which involved both students and language instructors as participants demonstrated the tendency of a gap between students' and teachers' perceived student need. Moreover, Alalou's [1] study showed perception differences on learning goals between students and the program mission statement. These findings prompted the current study to investigate potential perception differences between students, teachers, and the language program with the intention to make suggestions that help students, teachers, and program administrators come to a mutual understanding of the course and program goals. Finally, the majority of needs analysis studies were conducted in the English language learning contexts. As mentioned in the purpose of the study section, the Chinese language, which is the focus of this study, is a challenging language to learn. It is possible that learners in a Chinese language program have distinctive needs than learners of other languages. The findings in the current literature cannot be generalized and applied in the learning context of Chinese; hence, a needs analysis in a Chinese program such as this one is much needed.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:
(1) What are the needs of the students enrolled in a Chinese language program?
(2) To what extent do the students' perceived needs differ from the teachers' views and the learning objectives posted by the department?
In this study, student needs were investigated using Hutchinson and Water's [9] needs analysis approach, which encompasses learning needs and target needs. Learning needs were determined by their backgrounds (major and travel experience in a Chinese speaking country), their interest in taking Chinese as a minor, and their learning styles. Target needs were investigated through students' necessities, lacks, and wants. In order to investigate the students' Chinese necessities, the researchers tried to determine their reasons for taking the Chinese courses and their perceptions of the importance of different language skills. The students' lacks were analyzed through the students' self-reported ability in performing the language skills. The students' wants were investigated by asking what types of topic-specific advanced courses the students were interested in taking.

V. THE STUDY CONTEXT

The Chinese program under study was a slowly growing program with approximately 65 students enrolled in it during the time of the study. The program offered Chinese as a minor with the hope to offer it as a major in the near future if there was demand. The existing courses included first, second and third year grammar courses, and advanced level courses in different topics, such as contemporary Chinese culture, literature and film, business Chinese, conversation, and teaching Chinese as a second language. In addition to course offerings, the Chinese program hosted a cultural event (e.g.

the Mid-Alumtum Festival and the Chinese New Year Show) every semester, in which not only the students in the program, but also Chinese native speaking students in the school, and the local community were invited. The program had two full-time faculty, three part time instructors, and one graduate instructor during the time of the study.

VI. PARTICIPANTS

The survey sample consisted of 57 learners enrolled in a Chinese language program in an university in Utah, the United States. The number of learners involved in this study is 88% of the total student population in the Chinese language program. All participants in this study were native speakers of English. With regard to the demographic information of the sample, there were 42 males and 15 females in this study, ranking in age from 18 to 47 years ($M = 22$, $SD = 4.11$). Twenty-eight learners were in the first-year classes, eight learners were in the second-year class, and 21 learners were in the advanced classes.

VII. DATA COLLECTION

The data-collecting methods included audio-recordings of small-group interviews with 14 students, a questionnaire on the 57 participants' opinions about their needs in the Chinese program, one-on-one interviews with six Chinese teachers, and the learning objectives posted by the department. First, the researchers distributed the questionnaires to the students during class time in the mid-Spring semester. The students were informed that involvement in the study was voluntary and that their identities would not be revealed. It took the students approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaires. The questionnaire, adapted from Alalou [1] with changes to fit the aims of the study and the study context, asked for students' demographic information, their majors, their traveling experiences in a Chinese-speaking country, their interest in taking Chinese as a minor, their learning styles, their motivations in studying Chinese, their perceptions of language skills, their self-rated ability in the language skills, and the courses they were interested in taking. After the students completed the questionnaires, the researchers asked for volunteers to be interviewed in small groups. The small-group student interviews were conducted to elaborate on the questionnaire results. Finally, one-on-one Chinese teacher interviews were conducted to find out to what extent the students' perceived needs matched the teachers' views and the learning objectives posted by the department.

VIII. RESULTS
A. Learning Needs: Learners' Backgrounds, Interests, and Learning Styles

The participants' majors were divided into six categories (see Table 1). It is obvious that Business majors was the largest group in the Chinese program. A close look at this group's majors indicated in the questionnaires showed that more than half of them (n=16) were International Business majors, and the rest of them were in Accounting, General Business, and Economics.

Table 1. Learners' majors

Majors	Student number	Percentage
Business	28	49%
Engineering and Science	6	11%
Education	1	1%
Foreign Languages	2	3%
Humanities, Social Sciences, and Liberal Arts	13	23%
Undeclared	7	13%

When asking about the learners' traveling experiences in a Chinese-speaking country, a difference was observed between the lower and advanced levels of students (see Table 2).

Table 2. Time spent in a Chinese-speaking country

Spending Time in a Chinese-speaking country	Student number Yes	No	Percentage Yes	No
Beginning	5	23	18%	82%
Intermediate	3	5	38%	62%
Advanced	20	1	95%	5%
Length of Travel	**Range**		**Average**	
Beginning	one to six months		two months	
Intermediate	two to six months		four months	
Advanced	one month to two years		one year and a half	

The majority of the beginning and intermediate students did not have traveling experience in a Chinese-speaking country, while all except one student in the advanced level classes had such traveling experiences. The length of travel was also distinctive among different levels of students. Among the students who spent time in a Chinese-speaking country, the beginning and intermediate students spent much less time in the country in range and average compared to the advanced students. It is worth mentioning that although the average length of time spent in a Chinese-speaking country is a year and a half for the advanced learners, there were sub-group differences in the advanced group. Many of the advanced learners (n = 14) in the study were returned missionaries from Taiwan. The male returned missionaries spent two years and the female ones spent a little more than a year in Taiwan. The rest of the advanced learners went to a Chinese-speaking country for the purposes of visiting families, studying abroad, and teaching English, but the length of their stay was much shorter than the returned missionaries group with a range between one to six months and an average of four months, which were similar to the intermediate students' traveling experience.

With respect to students' interest in taking Chinese as a minor, more than half of the students (n = 33) in the Chinese program declared Chinese as a minor at the time of the study (see Table 3). Among the 24 students who were not Chinese minors, 17 (71%) of them were considering taking it as a minor, which speaks to the fairly high demand of Chinese as a minor.

Table 3. Interest in taking Chinese as a minor

Chinese Minor	Student	Percentage

	number	
Yes	33	58%
No	24	42%
Considering Chinese as a Minor	Student number	Percentage
Yes	17	71%
No	7	29%

When the learners were asked to select learning styles they thought were effective in the Chinese classes, the results (see Table 4) indicated that learning in pairs and in small groups were seen as the effective learning styles by the majority (79% and 71%).

Table 4. Preferred learning Styles

	Student number	Percentage
Learning in pairs	45	79%
Learning in small groups	40	71%
Learning independently	33	58%
Learning by listening to the teacher's lecture	32	56%
Learning in a large group under the teacher's guidance	27	47%

Three interviewees explained the reasons they thought working in pairs or in small groups was effective. Interviewee 1 stated, "I like working with peers. I learn it best when I need to repeat it, so verbal exercises and group work are good." Interview 2 also expressed, "Sometimes I don't know how to use certain vocabulary. I need more role play with classmates so that we can use the newly learned vocabulary." It seems repeating and applying new knowledge in pair or small group work helped the students learn best.

B. Target Needs: Learners' Necessities, Lacks, and Wants

The students' necessities, lacks, and wants were analyzed through their reasons for taking the Chinese courses, their perceptions of the importance of different language skills, their self-reported ability in performing different language skills, and the types of topic-specific advanced courses they were interested in taking.

Among the nine reasons for taking Chinese courses listed in the questionnaire, four of them were identified as the reasons the majority (more than 80%) decided to study Chinese (see Table 5). The four reasons include the interest in Chinese language and culture, personal reasons such as family and friends speak the language, and career and travel purposes.

Table 5. Reasons for taking Chinese courses

	Student number	Percentage
I like the Chinese language and culture.	56	98%
I am personally interested in Chinese (family, friends speak the	50	88%
language etc.).		
I would like to use Chinese in my career (business, international relations, etc.).	50	88%
I want to use Chinese when I travel.	48	84%
I plan to minor in Chinese.	39	68%
I want to fulfill a language requirement.	31	54%
I want to use Chinese for research purposes.	11	19%
I think Chinese is easy to learn.	9	16%
Other	6	11%

The interview results indicated that the four reasons mentioned above were reiterated by the Interviewees. For example, Interviewee 6, who studied Chinese for a personal reason said, " I like that Chinese is challenging. When it is challenging, I study harder for it." Interviewee 4, who studied Chinese for the reason of liking the language and culture said, "Five percent of the population in the world speak Chinese, so I think I can speak with a lot of Chinese people if I learn the language." The large number of Business majors in the Chinese program explained why the majority of the students studied Chinese for career and travel. Interviewee 2 explained, "I am an International Business student, and after doing a little bit of research, I figured Chinese would be my best bet of trying to get a job overseas." Interviewee 5 also expressed, " I hope to live in China or Taiwan to work there." The Business interviewees spoke of their urgent needs of knowing Chinese for their future career.

When investigating the students' travel experiences, a major difference regarding time spent in a Chinese-speaking country was found between the traditional students, most of whom were in the lower division (first- and second-year) courses, and the returned missionaries, who were the majority in the advanced level courses (see Table 2). The amount of time spent in a Chinese speaking country may affect how one perceives the importance of different language skills and the level of their ability in these skills. Hence, it is reasonable to look at the lower division and the advanced groups separately with regard to their perceptions of language skills and their self-rated ability in these skills. The questionnaire results illustrated that both lower division and advanced students perceived listening and speaking as the most important skills. The mean scores of these two skills were close to five on a five-point Likert scale. On the contrary, the language skill, writing, received the least scores by both lower division ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.02$) and advanced students ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.15$). Although writing received the least mean scores, the scores were more than 3, which shows that writing is somewhat important to the students. The rest of the skills, pronunciation and tones, grammar, reading, and Chinese character recognition and production, received mean scores between 4 and 4.5, indicating fair importance of these skills to the students. In the interviews, some of the students reiterated the importance of listening and speaking for different purposes. Interviewee 3, a Business major, stated, "More than likely I

will use Chinese for my work in the future, so eventually I need to be able to have conversations in Chinese, so that I can travel and do business." Interviewee 10 expressed, "I want to live in China or Taiwan for some time. While I am there, I would like to be able to speak my mind and hear what other people have to say." It seems that whether the students were learning Chinese for their future career or for personal reasons, they felt more need to orally communicate with people in Chinese than in written form.

Table 6. Students' perceptions of the importance of different Chinese language skills

In your opinion, how important are the following Chinese skills?			
Least important ....Most important			
1 2 3 4 5			
lower division M(SD)		advanced M(SD)	
Listening	4.75 (.55)	Speaking	4.85(.36)
Speaking	4.72 (.56)	Listening	4.71 (.46)
Pronunciation and tones	4.33(1.01)	Pronunciation and tones	4.54(.75)
Grammar	4.16(.85)	Reading	4.14(.91)
Reading	4.14(.89)	Grammar	4.14(.85)
Chinese character recognition and production	4.08(.99)	Chinese character recognition and production	4.09(.99)
Writing	3.75(1.02)	Writing	3.71(1.15)

When the students were asked to self-rate their abilities in different Chinese language skills, the lower division group was observed to have lower mean scores in all the language skills compared to the advanced group (See Table 7).

Table 7. Students' self-reported ability in different Chinese language skills

In your opinion, how good are you at the following skills?			
Weak...Excellent			
1 2 3 4 5			
lower division M(SD)		advanced M(SD)	
Reading	3.22(.92)	Listening	3.76(.70)
Chinese character recognition and production	3.11(.95)	Speaking	3.57(.81)
Speaking	3.05(1.04)	Pronunciation and tones	3.42(.81)
Writing	2.88(1.03)	Reading	3.19(.87)
Listening	2.81(.95)	Chinese character recognition and production	3.14(.79)
Pronunciation and tones	2.77(.93)	Writing	2.76(.70)
Grammar	2.67(.96)	Grammar	2.67(.75)

This result is understandable as the lower division students, who had a lower language level, probably had a lower self-linguistic confidence level as well; hence, they did not rate their ability as high as the advanced students. Nevertheless, the study found similarities as well as differences between the lower division and advanced groups in terms of how their abilities in different skills were ranked. Both groups believed that their grammar skill was the weakest compared to other skills. The interview results elaborated the difficulty students found in studying grammar. Interviewee 9 said, " Sometimes I will read the sentence, I will understand all the characters, but I still don't understand the sentence. It will be helpful to get the sentence structure down for the teacher to explain what the sentence means." Interviewee 12 expressed, "My grammar needs improvement. I am not Chinese. Their grammar is not the same as mine."

A difference was observed between the lower division and advanced groups on the skills they thought were most excellent. The two skills receiving the highest scores in the lower division group were reading and Chinese character recognition and production, while the advanced group's top two skills were listening and speaking. This result could be attributed to two reasons. First, the majority of students in the advanced group were returned missionaries, who spent extensive periods of time in Taiwan for their missions before entering the Chinese program. Their conversation skills were fairly fluent compared to the traditional students who studied Chinese mainly in a classroom environment; therefore, they gave their speaking and listening skills high scores. Second, the lower division group consisted of traditional students who started their Chinese language training in a classroom environment as true beginners. Even though these students were trained in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in a more balanced way with an emphasis on developing their basic Chinese character knowledge, conversation practice opportunity outside the classroom was not regular. The limited opportunity to practice speaking and listening could be the reason they rated reading, which involves Chinese character recognition, and Chinese character recognition and production the skills they were most good at. The interview results further confirmed these assumptions. Interviewee 11, a returned missionary, said, "I can't read or write much, I speak well." Another returned missionary, Interviewee 13, elaborated, "Traditional students' reading and writing are stronger. Returned missionaries' are not as strong because they mainly focused on religious talk [while they are on a mission]." This finding shows that the sub-groups of the students had distinctive lacks.

Considering that the students ranked listening and speaking the most important skills and that almost half of the students in the program were business majors, it was not surprising to learn that the two courses most interested in by the students were conversation and business Chinese courses (See Table 8).

Table 8. Advanced level courses students were interested in taking

If you continue to study in third-year Chinese, which courses would you likely be interested in?	Student number	Percentage
conversation courses	33	58%
business Chinese courses	30	53%

advanced language courses (grammar, readings, and composition)	29	51%
Chinese for International Affairs	24	42%
culture courses (Chinese songs and pop culture, etc.)	19	33%
teaching Chinese as s second language courses	19	33%
phonetics/pronunciation courses	16	28%
literature courses	15	26%
civilization courses	12	21%
advanced grammar courses (grammar only with exercises)	9	16%
Other: radical and history courses	3	5%

In the interview, Interviewee 7 mentioned his hope to have a summer conversation course. He said, "I would like a summer program to keep us connected with the language. A conversation course in the summer would be good." Interviewee 4 also proposed the idea of having a conversation course. She said,

"I think a supplementary immersion conversation course would be nice. The purpose of it is just to speak Chinese. I know there is an advanced conversation course, but I think like all along, like starting at beginning level and all the way through, having like a conversation course, where you just immerse in a Chinese speaking environment. It is one thing to learn the lessons, but then to actually use it is a completely different ball game."

Interviewee 2, who was a Business major, expressed his need for a business Chinese course. He mentioned, "I need to learn business terms in Chinese, and Chinese business culture. A business Chinese course will be useful." The interviewees' hope for more conversation and business Chinese course offerings restated the students' perceived need for the learning of listening, speaking, and business knowledge. Besides conversation and business Chinese courses, advanced language courses (grammar, readings, and composition), also received high interest. This result shows that although the students placed the learning of speaking, listening, and business knowledge as their priorities, grammar, reading, and writing were also fairly important for them to learn.

It is interesting to note that in the interviews with the students, sometimes the word, culture, was mentioned, but it was not being thought of as a course subject. For example, Interviewee 10 mentioned the annual cultural events held by the program. He said, "I like there is a big cultural event each semester, you know, like the moon festival celebration and the Chinese New Year Show, so we get experience of Chinese culture." Another interviewee, Interviewee 6, also expressed his appreciation of being able to experience Chinese culture through activities. He said, "I like how we go to the moon festival and the new year show. And it kind of shows you Chinese culture and how many Chinese we have in town." In the students' view, culture is something one learns through doing or experiencing, not necessarily something one studies for. The students' view about how culture is learned probably is the reason only one-third of the students in the program thought of learning culture through taking culture courses.

C. Teachers' Perceptions on Students' Needs

All six teachers in the Chinese language program were interviewed about their perceptions on what their students needed and lacked, and the teaching styles employed in their classrooms. In terms of different language skills students needed, all of the teachers agreed that all language skills were important. This finding shows that the teachers' view was different with the students' view, who placed speaking and listening as the most important skills. For example, Teacher 1 mentioned, "One student told me they don't need to learn reading and writing, only speaking and listening. They were frustrated. I told them they must learn how to read and write." The teachers' view was aligned with the learning objectives posted by the department, in which one objective was "to advance students' linguistic proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in their language of study".

With respect to students' lacks, the teachers mentioned several language aspects for which the students needed improvements, such as understanding Chinese idioms, thinking in Chinese, speaking with the right tones, writing essays in Chinese, and translating between Chinese and English. One aspect of students' lacks that the majority of the teachers (four out of six) identified was grammar. This finding along with the student questionnaire and interview results showed that the teachers and the students were in agreement that a major lack of the students was grammar. In the interview, Teacher 2 said, "Students don't know how to put words together into a correct sentence." Teacher 3 pointed out that "Students are used to use English grammar to make Chinese sentences." Teacher 4 further explained how her students make sentences using English grammar. She said, "In Chinese, words that indicate time should not be placed after a verb in a sentence, but my students often use it that way because time words in English can be used after the verb." Despite the students' general lack of using accurate grammar, teachers also pointed out a sub-group difference within the advanced group. A difference was observed between the returned missionaries and the traditional students at the advanced level. The main difference is the different language skills they mastered. Teacher 5 compared the two groups and stated, "I feel the traditional students write characters very well. The returned missionaries are good at speaking and listening, but their writing is not so good." This finding is in support of the questionnaire and student interview results, which indicated a sub-group difference between the returned missionary and traditional student group.

With respect to the kinds of teaching the teachers used in the classes, all of the activities they used required pair or group work. For example, Teacher 6 said, "I used role-play, interview, games, group story telling, and information gap activities in the classroom." The communicative type of activities the teachers implemented in the classrooms was in agreement with the students' preferred learning styles, which were pair and group work.

When asking what advanced courses the Chinese program should offer, four of the six teachers mentioned culture courses. Teacher 2 elaborated that "we should offer culture courses. Our kids can learn through Chinese novels, dramas, and classical Chinese literature." The teachers' view

on the need of learning culture was very different from the students'. It seems that the teachers believed that one way culture can be learned is through teaching of different cultural products such as novels and literature. On the other hand, some of the students in the program believed that culture is learned by doing and experiencing it such as going to a cultural event.

D. The Learning Objectives Posted by the Department

There were seven general learning objectives posted by the language department for all language programs in the department. The first objective stressed the need to advance students' proficiency in all four language skills. This objective is aligned with the teachers' view, but distinctive from the students who place oral skills on top of literacy skills. The second, third, and fourth objectives emphasize students' knowledge in modern literatures, culture, and research methods respectively. These topics were rarely mentioned by the students and were not students' top choices for taking courses. On the other hand, the teachers stressed the importance of literature and culture, but similar to the students, the teachers did not mention the learning of research methods. The fifth and sixth objectives stressed language teaching majors' and minors' knowledge in understanding language teaching theories and implementing language instruction. No students and only one teacher mentioned the knowledge in teaching Chinese. This could be because the Chinese teaching minor was only recently established and no Chinese teaching course was offered yet. The last objective acknowledged the need to prepare students for professional activities in which a foreign language is needed. The professional activities the majority of students related was doing business in China where Chinese language was needed.

IX. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study had several findings worthy of discussion. First, the study found that half of the student population in the Chinese program were Business majors, who indicated that their purpose for studying Chinese was career-related. This finding supports the study findings in Alalou's [1] study which reported that over 40% of the students in the Spanish, French, and German programs studied the languages for career purpose. Alalou [1] pointed out that language programs often offer business or international affairs courses; however, it was unclear how students will use the knowledge and skills they learn in these courses. This implies that the specific needs of students in business-related courses should be identified to make these courses useful. Second, although the students rated most language skills as important, speaking and listening skills were rated as highly important. As a result, one type of course the students were interested in taking was conversation and the learning styles they preferred were pair or small group work, which promote interaction. According to Alalou [1, p. 463], "students who have a strong desire to obtain communicative skills should be able to attain an appreciable level of competency". Hence, an implication of this finding is that the language teachers should try to keep the students' interest in practicing communicative skills by designing lessons students enjoy. Third, this study found that

the language skill the students lacked most was grammar. According to the interview results, students had difficulties understanding sentence structures in Chinese and used English grammar in Chinese sentences often. This finding implies that teachers need to think about how to keep an adequate teaching pace, especially when explaining grammar, so that students would not be left confused about certain grammar points. A teaching suggestion would be to ask students if they have questions before moving on to the next teaching point or informally assess students' understanding by asking them to use the newly taught grammar in an interactive activity. Fourth, this study found different needs in the returned missionary and the traditional student groups. The returned missionary group had a higher level in speaking and listening skills, while the traditional student group were better at reading and writing. This finding implies that teachers should consider the implementation of differentiated instruction when teaching the two groups of students in the same classroom. Teachers can develop individualized instruction so that all students in the classroom can learn effectively. A teaching suggestion would be to set different goals for task completion for students based on their individual needs. For example, in the advanced courses where there are both returned missionary and traditional student groups, teachers can assign the missionary group tasks which focus on the practice of reading and writing and ask the traditional student group to do activities which emphasize speaking and listening. Fifth, this study did not ask the participants to explicitly define culture, however, it seems that not all students in the study saw culture as a subject to learn, but something people do or experience. This view was distinctive from the teachers' view and the learning objectives posted by the department. This finding implies that the teachers need to have discussions with the students about what culture is and how one can learn culture in order to come to a mutual understanding of the goal of learning culture in the program. Finally, not all learning objectives posted by the department were acknowledged by the teachers and the students. For example, knowledge of research methods and the learning of language pedagogy were not mentioned by the students and rarely mentioned by the teachers. This implies that there needs to be more communication between parties on the goals of the program. To be specific, in order to convince the teachers and the students the importance of the objectives, the department needs to explain the significance of the learning objectives and how they will help the students achieve their goals.

X. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study only included one Chinese language program, which is not able to represent Chinese language programs that have different program structures and learner backgrounds. The results of this study can only be applied to similar settings (e.g. a program with both returned missionary and traditional student groups). Additionally, this study only used the methods of interview and questionnaire to gather data. The results would have been more valid if other methods such as classroom observation or analyzing students' language products were used to triangulate data.

REFERENCES

[1] A. Alalou, "Reevaluating curricular objectives using students' perceived needs: The case of three language programs," *Foreign Language Annals*, vol. 34, no. 5, 453-469, 2001

[2] Al, Al-Hadda, and M. Shuib, "Exploring the language needs of Yemeni English majors," in Proceedings of national conference on skills and competencies in education, M. Shuib, Ed. Malaysia: Sinaran Bros., 2005, pp. 264-270.

[3] A. S. Al-Tamimi and M. Shuib. "Investigating the English language needs of petroleum Engineering students at Hadhramout University of Science and Technology," *The Asian ESP Journal,* vol. 6, no.1, 6-32, 2010

[4] M. R. Atai and L. Shoja. "A triangulated study of academic language needs of Iranian students of Computer Engineering: Are the courses on track?," *RELC Journal,* vol. 42, no. 3, 305-323, 2011.

[5] Y. Chen, 2005, Designing an ESP program for multi-disciplinary technical learners. ESP World. [Online] 2(10), Available: http://www.esp-world.info/Articles_10/Chen_Yong.htm

[6] C. Chaudron, et al., "A task-based needs analysis of a tertiary Korean as a foreign language program," in Second language needs analysis, M. H. Long, Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 225-261.

[7] A. Fatihi, "The role of needs analysis in ESL program design," *South Asian Language Review,* vol. 8, no.1&2, 39-59. 2003.

[8] N. Furman, D. Goldberg and N. Lusin, "Enrollments in languages other than English in United States institutions of higher education,"., Modern Language Association, Fall 2009, [Online]. Available: http://www.mla.org/pdf/2009_enrollment_survey.pdf [Accessed: July 2013].

[9] T. Hutchinson, and A. Waters. English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centered Approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

[10] S. Kaur, and L. Hua, 2006, Analyzing workplace oral communication needs in English among IT graduates. ESP World. [Online] 1(12). Available: http://www.esp-world.info/Articles_12/Oral%20Communication%20among%20IT%20Graduates.htm

[11] H. Kayi, "Developing an ESL curriculum based on needs and situation analyses: A case study," *Journal of language and linguistic studies,* vol. 4, no. 1, 29-49, 2008.

[12] J. Yin, " Methods used by American college students in memorizing Chinese characters," *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association*, vol. 38, no. 3, 69-90, 2003.

[13] H. Shirane, "Attraction and isolation: Past and future of East Asian languages and cultures," *Profession*, 66-75, 2003.

[14] L. Xiao. "What can we learn from a learning needs analysis of Chinese English majors in a University context?," *Asian EFL Journal*, vol. 8, no. 4, 74-98, 2006.

[15] M. R. Zughoul, and R. F. Hussein "English for higher education in the Arab world: A case study of needs analysis at Yarmouk University," *The ESP Journal,* vol. 4, 133-152, 1985.

Ko-Yin Sung is an Assistant Professor of Chinese in the Department of Languages, Philosophy & Speech Communication in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Utah State University. Her research interests include Chinese language teaching and learning, language learning strategies, language learning motivation, and technology-assisted language learning.

Hsiao-Mei Tsai is a first grade teacher of Chinese Dual Immersion at Ridgecrest Elementary school in Utah. She graduated from Utah State University with a Master of Arts in Second Language Teaching. She has been working with Dr. Sung conducting research in Chinese language teaching and learning, language learning strategies, and language learning motivation.