English Learning Motivation for Ethnic Chinese Students in Hong Kong and Sydney

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Abstract
Second language acquisition has social and psychological perspectives. The success of second-language learning depends very much on how a learner is motivated to learn the second language. Motivation is the central element in Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (Gardner, 1985). Factor analysis illustrated four major constructs: Integrativeness, Attitudes toward the Learning Situation, Motivation, and French-Language Anxiety (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). Integrativeness was considered as the most important factor in explaining the language learning motivation (Csizér, Dörnyei, 2005). Language learning is culturally based, and people speaking the same language would quickly identify themselves from people speaking other languages. It is assumed in Gardner's model that if a learner identifies him/herself as a member of the second language group, he/she would have higher motivation to learn the language. In the language-learning context, the attitudes toward language situation, and the anxiety perceived in language class and language use environments affect the learner's persistence in language learning. The present paper tries to identify factors pertinent to the learning of English as a second language in Hong Kong and Sydney, Australia. Path modelling will be used to determine the relative contribution of English language motivation, language anxiety and Attitudes toward English learning.

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**Introduction**

Many of the current theories of second language motivation come from the early work of Gardner and Lambert (1959). They are the first to make a distinction between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation and this has a tremendous influence on virtually all second language related research in this area. Other researchers such as Krashen, Giles and Brynes, Clément, and Allard and Landry have attacked the problem from different perspectives. The studies of bilingualism or multilingualism in Canada, USA, Australia and Hong Kong will shed light on the future development of language policies and practices in the fast growing globalisation in the areas of trade, and the migration of people between countries. The political borders in context such as the European Union (EU) is increasingly being broken down to facilitate cross-over points in order to enhance trade and travel between states (Smolicz, Hudson & Secombe, 1998; Ushioda, 2006). The intercultural contact and sharing will initiate language attitudes and language learning motivation (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005)

**Integrative motivation and the acquisition of second language**

Gardner's (1983) socio-educational model emphasises integrative and instrumental aspects of motivation, attitudes toward learning situations, anxiety in learning a second language and language aptitude in determining language performance. Psychological variables affect motive to learn, to use and retain second language. Integrativeness is a key concept in Gardner’s model that reflects a positive outlook on second language and its culture, to the extent that learners with high scores on this factor may want to integrate themselves into the second language culture and become as part of the second language speakers. Instrumentality refers to pragmatic benefits of second language proficiency and the speakers' perception on the usefulness of the second language. However, Dörnyei (2002) concluded that the traditional instrumental does not really reflect the utilitarian dimension in using English in Hungarian context. Csizér & Dörnyei (2002) accounted this phenomenon to the learning of English, apart from pragmatic goals of getting a job or a place in higher education, it can be from a range of other incentives such as travelling, making foreign friends, understanding the lyrics of English songs. In turn, integrativeness is viewed as the association with one’s ideal self in the mastery of a second language. This ideal language self is a cognitive representation of all incentives associated with second language mastery, and is also linked to professional competence. Csizér & Dörnyei (2002) extended the concept of integrativeness further to explain the motivational set-up in different learning contexts, even there is little or not direct contact with second language speakers.

Krashen's (1981) monitor model postulates that attitudes and motivation play a largely filtering role in influencing the extent to which second-language material is
satisfactorily input. Krashen (1981) proposed that language aptitude relates more to conscious language learning, attitudes, motivation, self-confidence and anxiety in subconscious language acquisition. Gardner's socio-educational model considers motivation and attitudes to be important because they influence how active the individual will be in learning the second language. In Krashen's monitor model, motivation is seen as a component of the passive-cognitive filter that screens incoming language based on the learner's motives, needs, attitudes and emotional states.

Clément's (1980) social context model introduces psycholinguistic vitality, a social variable, to account for second-language achievement. The perceived status of the language determines whether a student will assimilate or integrate with the target language group. Giles and Byrnes's (1982) inter-group model applies social identity theory and considers the process of language acquisition as involving the crossing of group membership boundaries. According to Gardner (1985), the central concept of inter-group model is self-concept and the motivating force is to develop or maintain positive self-image. As remarked by Dörnyei and Csizér (2005), the intergroup model contributes a situated social psychological framework for minority ethnic group members in a multicultural setting to acquire and use of dominant language. With respect to English as a lingua franca for communication between speakers of different language backgrounds, Yashima (2002) extended the concept of integrativeness to refer generalised international attitudes to the international community as large, postulates a concept of ‘international posture’ in English language motivation. The reference group is widened to include non-specific global community of English speaker users. Communicating in English in Japan is seen representing a world around Japan and connecting to foreign countries and foreigners (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004). Ushioda (2006) saw that the non-specific global community can be viewed as part of an internal representation of oneself, and this internal domain of self and identity shifts the thinking of integrative motivation. Political dimension of language learning motivation relates to language choice and also the processes of engagement with language learning, language use and social interaction with second language speakers.

Motivation and the acquisition of second language

Motivation and orientation are different in context. Gardner (1985) stated that motivation to learn a second language is influenced by group related and context related attitudes, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation respectively. Gardner (1985), and Gardner and Lambert (1972) emphasised that if orientation is not linked with heightened motivation to learn the second language, it refers only to reasons for studying a second language and is not energised to direct and reinforce effort to learn the language. Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) stated that integratively motivated students are more active in language classes, are more likely to participate in excursions to other cultural communities when given the opportunity and more likely to interact with members of that community when there, and are less likely to drop out of language study in subsequent years. Scarcella and Oxford (1992) suggested that highly motivated learners interact confidently with native speakers of the language, which in return increases the amount of input that learners receive. Motivation often leads learners to use a variety of learning strategies that can help develop greater language-learning skills. Motivation encourages greater overall effort and results in greater success in terms of language proficiency and achievement (Gardner 1985). Students who are more
motivated develop stronger overall second language proficiency. Strong motivation helps learners maintain their language skills after classroom instruction is over (Gardner, Lalonde, Moorcroft & Evers 1987).

Gardner's (1983) socio-educational model proposes that second language acquisition should be considered within the social milieu in which it takes place and hypothesises that the cultural beliefs within this milieu could influence the development of two sets of attitudinal variables relevant to language acquisition: integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation. Csizér & Dörnyei (2005) noted that the milieu as defined by Gardner and others usually refers to the social influences from immediate environment including the perceived influence of significant others, such as parents, family, friends and socialisation effect of the learners’ peer group.

Gardner’s model also proposes that two variables, motivation and language aptitude, interact with the second-language acquisition context to promote second-language proficiency. In formal language acquisition context, for example in the school classroom, both motivation and language aptitude are expected to play a role. Motivation is expected to play a more dominant role than aptitude in informal acquisition, because it is assumed that motivation levels will determine whether or not students make themselves available to such informal opportunities to learn the language. Once the student enters informal activities, language aptitude should become influential. Motivational factors will continue to dominate because they determine whether or not the student would take advantage of these contexts.

**Anxiety and Acquisition of Second Language**

Anxiety is a state of being uneasy, apprehensive, or worried about what will happen, being concerned about a possible future event (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope 1986). The kind of anxiety seen in the second language classroom is usually situational rather than being associated with trait anxiety. There are two kinds of anxiety, facilitating anxiety -- useful in keeping students alert and debilitating anxiety, which harms a second-language learners’ performance directly by reducing participation and creating over-avoidance of the language and, indirectly, through worry and self-doubt (Horwitz, 1990). In the research by Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001), they found that anxiety has a detrimental effect on language acquisition. Anxiety can also arise from culture shock (Adler, 1987). Second-language learners who are living in the target culture frequently experience culture shock, at least initially. Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) found that French use anxiety was significantly negative related to achievement in their initial trial. As trials progressed, anxiety about the use of French became less relevant. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) suggested that students with high levels of language anxiety might be expected to become more anxious when doing a test and perform poorly as a result. They believed that if language anxiety continues to rise, it will have a permanent and potentially adverse effect on second language learner’s acquisition and performance.

In determining the relationship between anxiety and language learning, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) correlated eleven anxiety scales with the production of French vocabulary after the learning phase and found that French class anxiety correlates significantly negatively with the number correct over all five trials, while French use anxiety correlates significantly negatively with the number correct for the first three trials.
in the study. This indicates that the higher the anxiety level of students the lower their second-language performance. There are many research studies in different areas of anxiety, such as fear of speaking in public, oral performance in class, writing apprehension (Aida, 1994; Chang, 1996; Cheng, 2002; Young, 1991).

**Purpose of the study**

This study tries to identify the factors affecting the second language acquisition and their relative contribution to the determination of language learning outcomes. The variables used in this study are:

- **Milieu** is the social environment where the learners exposed and has a great influence in their second language learning
- **Integrativeness** is a desire to learn the second language in order to integrate with the target culture
- **Motivation** is an exploration of the energisation and direction of behaviour
- **Language anxiety** is a state of apprehension and a vague, undefined fear
- **Attitudes toward second language situation**
- **Goal setting** is the combination of parental goal and student’s goal in educational attainment
- **Language achievement** is measured by a self-reported items on the achievement in reading, listening, speaking and writing in second language

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants were drawn 247 students attending week-end Chinese schools in Sydney. Among them, 133 were immigrants from Hong Kong (61 males, 71 females, 1 missing gender data). They were 9 to 16 years attending school with grades 4 to 10. The sample size for Hong Kong counterparts was chosen to be five times the size in Sydney. 628 students were drawn from 17 classes; 10 classes from primary school and 7 classes from secondary schools.

**Instrument**

The questionnaire was adapted from Gardner’s Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). It consisted of 65 items, using 5-point rating scale assessing participants’ attitudes on motivation. The items were piloted to 71 ethnic Chinese attending week-end Chinese schools in Sydney (different sample from the main study) to evaluate the item reliability and ascertain the items were pertinent to the desired constructs. After factor analysis the scales were redefined. Together with other perception items noting the language spoken at home, expected English grade, and self and parental educational goal. The values used in the study are as follows:

People – attitudes toward English speaking people
Orient – integrative and instrumental orientation to English learning
Flang – interest in learning foreign language
Rolearne – take initiative and active role in the learning of English
Atlearne – attitudes toward the learning of English
Clsx – classroom anxiety in the learning of English
Usex – use anxiety in the learning of English
Teac – evaluation of English teachers
Cou – evaluation of English course
Parent – parental educational goal
Self – self educational goal
Expgrade – Expected grade of English performance

Participants were also required to attempt short tests in Chinese and English, the performances were captured as Chinese and English scores.

The proposed model in the current study is presented in Figure 1, depicting the relationship between latent variables home language (HLANG), integrativeness (INT), motivation (MOT), anxiety (ANX), attitudes toward the learning situation (ALS), goals setting (GOAL), and language proficiency (PROF). The achievement (ACH) was measured by the expected grade.

FIGURE 1 The proposed casual model for the second language (English) acquisition
Procedure

Each participant was asked to complete a questionnaire consisting of 65 items together with a self-perception rating of English performance in four domains, namely, reading, writing, listening and speaking. After collection of the questionnaires, participants were asked to attempt English and Chinese papers to assess their language proficiency. The papers were adapted from the Hong Kong Attainment Test on English and Chinese. They were validated assessment instruments gauging the students’ language proficiency.

Analyses

The opinion data from questionnaires were subjected to factor analysed using SPSS package (version 11.5) with Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) to determine the factor structures, followed by confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL package (Jöreskog & Sörbom, version 8.51 released in October, 2001, to ascertain the scales for latent variables. As Marsh, Balla & McDonald (1988) suggested that goodness of fit indices are affected by sample size, large sample makes it too sensitive to detect significant differences among data and indicate poor fit. The sample size of this study is 93, choosing suitable fit indices becomes the main concern. Non-Normed fit index (NNFI), comparative fit index (CFI) and incremental fit index (IFI) are relatively unaffected by the sample size. Chi square and root mean square residual (RMR) are commonly used to assess whether given theoretical model will fit the data. They were then subjected to full model of path analysis to determine their relationships.

Results

After the initial model was submitted to evaluation using maximum-likelihood estimation, the model provided a relative fit to the data concerned. The model fit indices are CFI=0.78. The relationship between goals and motivation was not significant. Table 1 shows various goodness-fit measures for the model. The path coefficients for the model were presented in Figure 2.

| TABLE 1 |
| Some Fit Measures for the Final model |
| Chi-squares / df ratio | 0.22 |
| NEI | 0.69 |
| NNFI | 0.70 |
| CFI | 0.78 |
| IFI | 0.80 |
| GFI | 0.82 |
| RMR | 0.11 |

NFI=Normed Fit Index
NNFI=Non-Normed Fit Index
CFI=Comparative Fit Index
IFI=Incremental Fit Index
GFI=Goodness of Fit Index
RMR=Root Mean Square Residual
FIGURE 2  The schematic representation of the final model for the second language (English) acquisition with the standardized estimates of the Latent Variables.

Coefficients for Chinese and English papers are respectively 0.11 and 0.18.

Discussion

There is high relationship between motivation and achievement, path coefficient is 0.47, that confirms previous researchers’ findings that high motivation is an antecedent necessary condition for students to learn second language and will produce high achievement. The integrative motivational attitudes are highly influential (-0.44) on their motivation. They need to have respective attitudes before they take action and spend effort in their language learning.

The measuring instruments are fairly useful in determining the latent variables in the model. High contribution from items measuring attitudes toward English speaking people (PEOPLE, 0.64), orientation to English learning (ORIENT, 0.78), Interest in leaning foreign language (FLANG, 0.62), attitudes toward the learning of English (ATLEARNE, 0.95), classroom anxiety in the learning of English (CLSX, 1.00), use anxiety in the learning of English (USEX, 0.71), evaluation of English course (COU, 0.81), parental education goal (PARENT, 0.90), and self educational goal (SELF, 0.55).
The model indicates that the latent variable goal setting (GOAL) was not significant in determining the students’ motivation in their English learning. Also the proficiency of students’ English and Chinese indicate negative relationship with the expected achievement (-0.21).

In the study, although much work has to be done to partial out unrelated elements in the final model, at least we understand that integrative orientation, anxiety in second language learning and attitudes toward the language courses are important in shaping students’ motivation which lean their effort to learn and energise them to sustain the learning process of second language learning.

**Limitation of the study**

The study presented here is part of the large scale exploration of ethnic Chinese students learning English in two different settings: predominant Cantonese environment in Hong Kong and full of inducement of English environment in the metropolitan city of Sydney, Australia. The participants were drawn from those attending week-end Chinese schools which might not be representative of all Chinese students in Sydney. A second factor in the study was the selection of antecedent variables to the motivation, some of which measured the attitudes toward foreign language rather than second language. A third factor is the fit indices of the final model ranged from 0.69 to 0.82, which are far from satisfactory. The present study represents an initial attempt to describe the relationship between the motivational attitudes and the second language learning for ethnic Chinese students in Sydney. A final limitation of the study is the issue of self-reported questionnaire surveys employed in this study. Although much effort had been expended to identify those items which were systematically varied and obvious regularities, some might escape from our detection. The data were drawn from two sets of information: questionnaire survey and the performance of English and Chinese in separate papers. Matching these two sets of information incurred loss of subjects in the path modelling. The number of participants’ data used in the study of path modelling was 93, which is about 70% of total 133 participants in the Sydney sample.
References


