



Differences in the motivation of Chinese learners of English in a foreign and second language context



Qi Li*

College of Continuing Education, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, 29 Yudao Street, Nanjing 210016, Jiangsu, China

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 21 August 2013

Received in revised form 8 January 2014

Accepted 18 January 2014

Keywords:

L2 motivational self system

Motivation

EFL

ESL

Motivated learning behaviour

Context

ABSTRACT

The present study investigated differences in the motivation of Chinese learners of English in a foreign and second language context. The participants consisted of 132 Chinese learners of English in China (English as a foreign language learners – EFL learners) and 122 Chinese learners of English in New Zealand (English as a second language learners – ESL learners). The motivation of 254 learners was measured by means of a self-report questionnaire based on [Dörnyei's \(2005, 2009\)](#) L2 Motivational Self System theory. The results showed that there were notable differences in the motivation between Chinese EFL and ESL learners. The ESL learners expended or intended to expend more effort in learning English, developed stronger idealized self images as competent users of English, and had more favourable attitudes toward learning English than the EFL learners. However, the EFL learners had a higher level of prevention of instrumentality than the ESL learners. In the case of these Chinese learners, English learning experience and promotional instrumentality were two important factors in determining their motivated learning behaviour.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In the second language acquisition (SLA) literature there has been a distinction made between a foreign and second language context. Similarly, when it comes to motivation to learn a foreign/second language (L2), the question of whether motivation differs between learners in a foreign and second language context has been raised by many researchers (e.g., [Au, 1988](#); [Chihara & Oller, 1978](#); [Dörnyei, 1990](#); [Ellis, 1994](#); [Oller, 1978, 1981](#); [Oxford, 1996](#); [Oxford & Shearin, 1994](#); [Schmidt, Borai, & Kassabgy, 1996](#)). Generally speaking, a foreign language setting involves learning environments where the target language is usually learned in an institutional or academic context where learners have no or limited opportunities for interacting with the target language community. A second language setting, which is clearly distinct from a foreign language one, refers to a range of learning contexts where the target language is used for communication in daily life ([Dörnyei, 1990](#)). The investigation of this question in previous studies has resulted in a better understanding of L2 motivation as a situated phenomenon and endeavours to build a model of L2 motivation that is applicable to different language learning contexts and language globalization, which has helped to inform L2 motivation theories. The present research sought to expand the depth of this investigation. The current comparative study is unique in that it was conducted with L2 learners from a similar background (adult English learners from China) but who were learning in a foreign (China) and second language (New Zealand) setting to examine differences in the motivation of Chinese learners of English in a foreign and second language context by using [Dörnyei's \(2005, 2009\)](#) L2 Motivational Self System as its theoretical framework.

* Tel.: +86 13101843210, +86 25 84892488.

E-mail address: qili7@hotmail.com.

2. Literature review

The majority of previous studies have investigated the question of whether motivation differs between learners in a foreign and second language context within Gardner's social psychological paradigm (see Dörnyei, 2001a, 2005; Gardner, 1985, 2001; Gardner & Masgoret, 2003; for comprehensive reviews of Gardner's model). It was initially raised mainly because a number of empirical studies examining integrative motivation/orientations, instrumental motivation/orientations, and their relationships to L2 achievement produced contradictory results (e.g., Au, 1988; Chihara & Oller, 1978; Lukmani, 1972; Oller, 1981; Oller, Hudson, & Liu, 1977). In response to the conflicting findings, Clément and Kruidenier (1983) suggested that the failure to explain the influence of the linguistic milieu on learners' motivation is one of the reasons for the inconsistent results. When exploring orientations in different samples in Canada (defined in terms of the learners' ethnicity, the learning milieu, and the target language), they found that orientations are largely determined by "who learns what in what milieu" (p. 288). Dörnyei (1990) assumed that Gardner's findings obtained from second language contexts were not directly applicable to foreign language contexts. In order to support his opinion, he conducted an empirical study in Hungary, a typical foreign language learning environment, to clarify the relevance and characteristics of integrativeness and instrumentality in a foreign language context. His findings suggested that instrumental motivation might be more important than integrative motivation for foreign language learners as opposed to second language learners. Oxford (1996) and Oxford and Shearin (1994) also concluded that L2 motivation of foreign and second language learners was often quite different in that integrative motivation was more important for second language learners than for most foreign language learners.

L2 motivation researchers in Asian English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts have also questioned the existence and validity of the integrative construct and the integrative-instrumental orientation dichotomy. For example, Apple (2005), Kimura, Nakata, and Okumura (2001), Irie (2003), and Mori (2002) suggested that the integrative-instrumental orientation dichotomy might not be applicable to Japanese students learning a foreign language in Japan. They found it nearly impossible to distinguish integrative reasons from other reasons for studying English. Chen, Warden, and Chang (2005) discovered that the integrative motivation played no significant role in motivating language learning effort in the Chinese cultural environment. Warden and Lin's (2000) findings indicated a lack of integrative motivation among Taiwan EFL learners. Yashima (2000) stated that Japanese university students did not believe that identification with the target language group was important, but perceived instrumental and intercultural friendship orientations as being the most important.

However, these studies are limited because the researchers did not actually conduct a comparison of the differences in the motivation of L2 learners in a foreign and second language context. Rather, they only compared the results of their studies conducted in foreign language contexts with Gardner's findings obtained from second language contexts. The differences in motivation they identified may have arisen not because of the difference in foreign and second language learning environments, but as a result of other contextual factors such as the learners' ethnicity, cultural and sociocultural background, and target language. In line with Clément and Kruidenier's (1983) conclusion that orientations are largely determined by "who learns what in what milieu" (p. 288), it is clear that motivation is affected by contextual variables (e.g., Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Coleman, 1996; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006; Lamb, 2012; Tachibana, Matsukawa, & Zhong, 1996). Therefore, in order to investigate whether and how L2 motivation differs between learners in a foreign and second language context, comparative studies need to be conducted with L2 learners from a similar background (e.g., belonging to the same ethnic and cultural group, speaking the same first language, and learning the same target language) but who are learning in a foreign and second language setting. In this way, it is possible to exclude the influence of other contextual variables. Such comparative studies will enable us to better understand the influence of second and foreign language learning environments on L2 motivation. Moreover, the previous studies that have investigated the differences in motivation within Gardner's social psychological paradigm have showed that Gardner's findings may not be relevant to all foreign and second language contexts. In this case, in order to capture the distinction between motivation in a foreign and second language context, future research needs to employ an L2 motivation theory that is applicable to both foreign and second language contexts as its theoretical basis.

Since many L2 motivation researchers have found that L2 learners' desires to integrate with the L2 community are not basic to the motivational process in all contexts but only in specific sociocultural contexts, and moreover, World English is becoming an international language and associated with a global culture in the worldwide globalization process, they have called for the reconceptualisation of integrativeness to make it better suited to explaining the motivational process in general contexts and the motivational basis of language globalization (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). As a result, the concept of integrativeness in Gardner's model has been reconceptualised and incorporated into a new L2 motivation model – Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System.

The L2 Motivational Self System, which builds on the findings in previous self research concerning possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), ideal and ought selves in relation to self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987) and L2 motivation research relating to integrativeness, is composed of three dimensions: *Ideal L2 Self*, *Ought-to L2 Self*, and *L2 Learning Experience*. *Ideal L2 Self* refers to the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self, which can strongly motivate L2 learners to learn the L2 because they desire to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and ideal selves if the person they would like to become is a speaker of an L2. From the self perspective, if an L2 learner would ideally like to become the person who is proficient in the L2, he/she can be said to have an *integrative* disposition. Thus, traditional integrative motives and internalized instrumental motives (i.e., instrumental motives with a promotion focus) typically belong to this component. Recently, some empirical studies have found that the *Ideal L2 Self* strongly correlates with integrativeness but has the more direct relationship with motivated learning behaviour

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/373439>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/373439>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)