

CHINESE STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONAL BELIEFS ABOUT ENGLISH LEARNING WHEN THEY ARE STUDYING IN AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The current study employs a qualitative research perspective which is quite rare, if not missing, in most of the motivational research literature in second language learning. It utilizes observation and semi-structured interview techniques and attempts to examine three Chinese students' motivational and attitudinal thinking of their English learning when they are studying in an American university, as well as how their motivational beliefs affect their efforts in willingness to communicate in English. Through the analyses of observation and interview data, five themes that affect Chinese students motivational behavior emerge: (i) understanding of English learning, (ii) integrative orientation, (iii) instrumental orientation, (iv) attitudes toward English involved activities, and (v) willingness to communicate. The results also display five independent English learning orientations: (i) friendship orientation, (ii) understanding orientation, (iii) daily life orientation, (iv) self-esteem orientation, (v) self-fulfillment orientation, which are more comprehensive and give a broader perspective when compared to 'integrative and instrumental orientation' dichotomy introduced by Gardner and associates. Further analyses reveal some relationship between orientation and willingness to communicate as well.

INTRODUCTION

During the recent decades, more and more foreign students come to the United States and pursue their academic degrees in various fields at an American university. They speak different native languages and all face the same challenge of speaking English as a second language (ESL). It is not difficult to understand the vital role of English proficiency played in their academic and everyday life. When English has to be taken as a critical medium in their process of achieving success, English learning becomes an important topic attracting more and more attention.

Learning a second language (L2) or a foreign language is different in many ways from learning a concrete school subject. Dörnyei (2003) explained this learning process that "while an L2 is a 'learnable' school subject in that discrete elements of the communication code (e.g., grammatical rules and lexical items) can be taught explicitly, it is also socially and culturally bound, which makes language learning a deeply social event..." (p. 4). The significance of this social dimension has encouraged a lot of researchers to examine language learning from a social psychological perspective instead of a traditional linguistic angle. Meanwhile, it also explains why the study of second language learning motivation is originally initiated by social psychologists.

Although there is a large body of research being conducted on motivation in second or foreign language learning, almost all of them are carried out by following a quantitative paradigm. Various motivational theories, models, and constructs have been tested and examined through quantitative empirical approaches, yet few of them have been tried to be explored through the lenses of a qualitative methodology. The traditional studies on language learning motivation view it as "a measurable affective variable implicated in second or foreign language achievement"

(Ushioda, 2001, p. 94). Yet there should not be ignorance to the highly subjective disposition of motivation. Given the fact that motivation is such an abstract concept in psychological study, there may be different understandings toward it by different people in various cultural contexts. Thus, it cannot be even more ambiguous when this concept is comprehended by people who are language learners with different cultural beliefs and various language proficiencies. Therefore, there is necessity for qualitative study of language learning motivation to complement the long-standing quantitative tradition of research in this particular field, providing a more open and broad investigating perception. As suggested by Ushioda (2001), these two types of approaches should not be treated as mutually exclusive, “since a descriptive qualitative approach will nevertheless entail some degree of coding and quantification of data...and SLA research might usefully benefit from a combination of both approaches to the major theoretical issues” (p. 95-96).

This present study sought to understand Chinese students’ motivational thinking of their English learning when they are studying at an American university. This study was conducted on the basis of Gardner’s motivational study from social psychological perspective (1959, 1985). In the following sections, I will, first, examine two motivational factors---Integrative motivation and instrumental motivation initiated by Gardner and Lambert in 1972, since most of the contemporary language learning motivation studies were based on these two factors. Then I will differentiate two confusing concepts appeared in Gardner’s later research--- motivation and orientation. At last, I will delineate the concepts of integrative and instrumental orientation, and use them as two of the five themes to facilitate the current study on language learning motivation (Gardner & Lambert 1959; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The historical social psychological interpretation of second language acquisition may be traced back to 1945, when Arsenian devoted a section of his review article on bilingualism to “Social Psychology of Language and Bilingualism.” In this section, he discussed factors such as the relation between language and acculturation, and between affect, intergroup relations and language learning. Later, Markwardt (1948) brought out five motives that he considered were important for language learning. He characterized three of them as practical in that they were tangible objectives associated with language acquisition: 1) to foster assimilation of an minority language group, 2) to promote trade and colonization, and 3) to learn a language required for scientific and/or technical use; and two as non-utilitarian motives in that they represent an interest in learning a language where the focus is not so much on learning the language to achieve a specific linguistic goal but rather more general ones (to be a cultivated person and to learn the language of a minority group in another speech area). Similarly, Whyte and Holmberg (1956) noted in their essay on industrial relations, which was relevant to the learning of Spanish, that there were four factors that they felt influenced second language learning. Three of them were contact (with the local community), variety of experience (using the language), and ability (i.e., language aptitude). The fourth was psychological identification, by which they meant the capacity for learners to perceive themselves as Latin Americans. They stated: “If the employee learns the language simply as a tool to get the job done, then he has little incentive to go beyond ‘job Spanish’... If he views language as a means of establishing real bonds of communication with another people, then he has the psychological foundations for language mastery” (p. 15). Therefore, they identified the psychological factor as the most important in learning a second language.

Over the last few decades, Canada has been a hotbed of research into the social psychological

underpinnings of second language learning, pioneered by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert. Following their series of studies in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Gardner and Lambert (1972) published an extensive review of the results of a 10-year research program, in which they recognized two kinds of motivation: integrative and instrumental. Gardner and Lambert claimed that integrative motivation signified the learners' desire to learn the second language, willingness to interact with the other language community, and positive attitudes toward the target language community. On the other hand, instrumental motivation was defined as the practical, utilitarian advantages derived from language proficiency, such as a better employment opportunity or higher salary. Over the years, integrative motivation has often been held as a superior support for language learning. However, "it is not clear that the superiority of integrative motivation is supported by the empirical evidence, because contradictory results have emerged from studies in different contexts" (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991, p. 473).

Another concept Gardner and his colleagues brought out, along with motivation, is orientation. Gardner distinguished clearly between motivation and orientation in his book published in 1985. He firstly defined motivation to learn a second language as "the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p. 10). Then, he explained that "orientation refers to a class of reasons for learning a second language" while "motivation refers to a complex of three characteristics which may or may not be related to any particular orientation" (p. 54). He clarified the three characteristics of motivation as attitude toward learning the language, desire to learn the language, and motivational intensity which referred to the amount of effort that individual expended in learning the language. According to Gardner, a truly motivated individual would show all three components. Therefore, motivation differed from orientation because a student could display a certain kind of orientation (e.g. registered an English class because it is helpful for future career) but not motivated to achieve that particular goal (e.g. did not exert much effort in learning it).

Similar to the dichotomy of motivation, there are also integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. Masgoret and Gardner (2003) explicated that the integrative orientation presented "reasons for learning a second language that emphasize the notion of identification with the community", and on the other hand, the instrumental orientation presented "practical reasons for learning the language, without implying any interest in getting closer socially to the language community" (p. 129).

The differentiation of these two concepts is very important to have a clear and proper comprehension of the wide range of research on language learning motivation from the social psychological perspective. On the one hand, to understand people's motivation for language learning, the most primary element we need to be aware is the reason(s) they choose to learn a language, namely, the orientations for learning the language. Therefore, in my present study, the orientations/reasons that Chinese students perceive for their English learning in America will be my first concern for studying their motivational thinking of English learning. I will use what Gardner (1985) and Masgoret and Gardner (2003) have developed, the dichotomy of integrative orientation and instrumental orientation, as two themes to facilitate this motivation study.

On the other hand, as I have mentioned above, Gardner (1985) pointed out three attributes that would best represent motivation: 1) desire to learn the target language, 2) attitudes toward learning the target language, 3) motivation intensity. Since the present study is designed to adopt the qualitative approach to understand the Chinese English learner's motivational thinking about their English learning instead of examining their specific motivation, I developed another three themes based on Gardner's three concepts of motivation traits: understanding of English study,

attitudes toward English involved activities, and willingness to speak English.

Different from the quantitative studies on language learning motivation which strive to define and classify its components, or examine and measure its relationship with achievement or other variables, such as classroom participation, persistence at learning, etc., this qualitative study endeavors to provide a broader understanding about the perceptions of language learners regarding their reasons, their attitudes and their beliefs of language learning. Meanwhile another concern of the study is to understand how these motivational and attitudinal beliefs affect their efforts and engagement in language learning activities. Therefore, I will not focus my attention on analyzing and classifying the integrative and instrumental motivation, or examining their relationship with language achievement or other variables like most of the quantitative research did. Instead, I will try to understand the thinking and beliefs underlie Chinese students' English learning motivation and how it shapes their engagement in the English involved activities (willingness to speak English). As a result, based on Gardner's research on language learning motivation from social psychological perspective, five themes will be examined in my present study on Chinese students' motivational and attitudinal thinking of their English learning in America: understanding of English learning, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, attitudes toward English involved activities, and willingness to speak English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The very early research on second language learning were exclusively focused on the relationship between language aptitude and language achievement. It was generally believed that language achievement was highly correlated with language aptitude. Gardner and Lambert (1959) pioneered the studies of language learning motivation through a social psychological perspective. Gardner and Lambert focused their study on Anglophone grade 11 students in Montreal, Canada, studying French as a second language. A factor analysis of a set of variables assessing language aptitude, verbal ability, attitudes, motivation and oral skill in French identified three factors, two of which shared variance in common with the measures of French proficiency. One was identified as Language Aptitude, and the other was identified as Motivation, which comprised measures of attitudes toward French Canadians, motivation to learn French, and orientation. It suggested that it was the orientation that apparently provided a strong motivation to learn the other group's language. The individuals who were classified as integratively oriented obtained higher scores on the measure of French proficiency than students classified as instrumentally oriented, leading to the conclusion that the students who were integratively oriented were more successful in learning a second language than the students who were instrumentally oriented.

While early studies on language learning orientation (e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972) supported the importance of the integrative over the instrumental orientation, other studies began to investigate the relationship between orientation and language proficiency. As Clément and Kruidenier (1983) suggested:

Some supported the importance of an instrumental orientation (e.g., Gardner and Lambert 1972, the Maine studies; Lukmani 1972), and in still others, a negative relationship was obtained between the integrative (Oller, Hudson, and Liu 1977) or the instrumental (Oller, Baca, and Vigil 1977) orientation and proficiency. Finally, no significant relationships were obtained by Chihara and Oller (1978) between either the integrative or the instrumental orientation and proficiency in English (p. 274).

Enlightened by the contradictory results obtained from different studies comparing the relative effectiveness of different orientations to second language acquisition, Clément and Kruidenier (1983) designed a study to clarify the definition of orientations in second language learning and to reconcile previous contradictory findings by evaluating the influence of the linguistic composition of the milieu (unicultural vs. multicultural), ethnicity (French vs. English), and the target language (official vs. minority language) on the emergence of orientations to second language learning. A total of 871 grade 11 students distributed in eight groups participated in this study. A questionnaire, which included 37 orientation items chosen from previous studies, was delivered to the subjects. In addition to instrumental orientation, travel, friendship, and knowledge orientations were found for all groups of subjects, while the results did not support the construct validity of a general tendency of integrative orientation. Clément and Kruidenier suggested that “given their stability and generality, reasons related to the acquisition of knowledge, travel, friendship, or instrumentability should be considered as independent orientations in future studies” (p. 286). While the previous studies of the orientation seemed to have assumed the universality and exhaustiveness of integrative and instrumental orientations, Clément and Kruidenier advised an extension of orientations with respect to the influence of the learning context, and they claimed that “the emergence of orientations is, to a large extent, determined by ‘who learns what in what milieu’” (p. 288).

Based on the study conducted by Clément and Kruidenier (1983), Belmechri and Hummel (1998) did a similar study on language learning orientation with the hypothesis that “orientations are context-dependent, not exclusively instrumental or integrative” (p. 224). Their study’s participants consisted of 93 Francophone grade 11 high school students learning English as a second language. By using an adopted form of Clément and Kruidenier’s (1983) likert-type scale questionnaire, Belmechri and Hummel ran factor analysis and a multiple regression analysis on the data. The final results indicated that students’ orientations were: *travel, understanding/School* (for academic purpose---instrumental), *friendship, understanding* (for understanding English art), and *career* (instrumental). The results differed from those of Clément and Kruidenier’s (1983) had obtained in the same context, but there was some important overlap. As for the integrative orientation, Belmechri and Hummel claimed that their subjects in the study did not show an integrative orientation for learning English, although “the integrative orientation appeared as part of general orientation” (p. 239). According to Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972), integrative orientation associated with a positive disposition toward the L2 group and a desire to interact with and even become a valued member of that group. Therefore, Belmechri and Hummel denied the existence of integrative orientation in their study results because of the subjects’ negative desire to become a member of the Anglophone community. In addition, they concluded that some orientations, either instrumental or integrative, 1) emerged as important; 2) stood on their own as general orientations, and 3) exhibited different definitions from one context to another, suggesting that the definition of orientation was context-dependent.

A parallel research conducted to clarify the language learning orientations in different language learning contexts was carried out by Dörnyei (1990). In his study, a motivational questionnaire was developed and administered to 134 learners of English in Hungary, a typical European FLL environment. Based upon the results, a motivational construct was postulated consisting of 1) an instrumental motivational subsystem, 2) an integrative motivational subsystem, 3) need for achievement, and 4) attributions about past failure. Actually, in the first two subsystems, Dörnyei detected several factors which were instrumental or integrative oriented. Although he did not label them as orientation, he did mention that “the instrumental motivational

subsystem is conceived as a set of motives organized by the individual's future career striving" (p. 65). As for the integrative motivational subsystem, he identified four fairly distinct dimensions: 1) socialcultural orientation, 2) knowledge orientation, 3) travel orientation, and 4) friendship orientation. It is interesting to see how Dörnyei classified the orientations such as knowledge, travel, and friendship into the integrative subsystem by claiming that "the integrative and instrumental subsystems overlap in some areas, which is particularly obvious in the case of the desire for actual integrative into a new community" (p. 66).

According to Masgoret and Gardner's (2003) three attributes of motivation, attitudes toward learning the target language refers to the affect experienced while learning the language. Therefore, almost all studies of language learning motivation in the past have included a salient component focusing on the learners' attitudes toward members of the L2 community and toward the community itself. As early as 1975, Gardner and Smythe proposed that attitude variables supported motivation to learn another language and that motivation promoted second language achievement. Gardner (1985) stated that "two attitude variables which have received considerable investigation by a number of researchers are attitudes toward learning the second language and attitudes toward the second language community" (p. 42), namely educationally relevant attitude and social attitude. He further made a comparison of five attitude measures in terms of their correlations with a number of indices of achievement in French. The correlations were calculated from the results from 33 studies involving five difference age/grade levels in seven regions across Canada. The results showed that two attitude measures—attitude toward learning French and interest in foreign language—were the most relevant in that they tended to correlate more highly with the achievement than the other variables. The two least relevant attitude measures were evaluation of the French teacher and attitudes toward French Canadians. It seems clear then, that attitude measures account for a significant and meaningful proportion of the variance in second language achievement, and that some attitude variables are more relevant than others.

Communication is one of the most significant purposes of learning a second or a foreign language. It is more than a means of facilitating the language learning, it is in itself a goal of language learning. No matter what reasons the language learners have to learn a second or a foreign language, integrative or instrumental orientation, the primary purpose for them is to use the language to communicate and to meet their goals. Gardner (1985) argued that a key component of motivation—the goals/reasons endorsed by the student—helped to define the particular language learning orientation a language learner had. Therefore, it is hypothesized that orientation of language learning would influence the language learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001). In a WTC study conducted by MacIntyre et al. (2001), grade 9 students of L2 French immersion, living in a relatively unilingual Anglophone community were involved in as subjects. Willingness to communicate was measured in each of four skill areas: speaking, writing, reading, and comprehension. Five orientations for studying an L2 (French) were examined: travel, job related, friendship with Francophone, personal knowledge, and school achievement. Results showed that endorsement of all five orientations for language learning was positively correlated with WTC both inside and outside the classroom.

Except for the positive correlation between WTC and language learning orientations, it is believed that there are still other affective variables affecting significantly language learners' willingness to communicate, such as: attitudes, perceived competence, anxiety, etc. (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). In MacIntyre and Charos' study in 1996, 97 Anglophone students who were taking introductory level French conversation class were sampled. Self-report scale measurement was

used as the study method. The results showed that communicating in a second language, in a bilingual milieu, among beginning language students, appeared to be related to a willingness to engage in L2 communication, motivation for language learning, the opportunity for contact, and the perception for competence. Moreover, anxiety, intellect, and social context were shown to influence the perception of the L2 language competence. The diversity of influences (social, personality, and affective) converging on these variables showed the complexity involved in L2 communication.

A general review of the previous studies conducted on the motivational variables of orientation, attitudes, and willingness to communicate based on Gardner's social psychological investigation in language learning motivation provided a general understanding about what have been done in these areas. As what have demonstrated above, most of the research in this field was comprised of quantitative studies focused on different relationships among variables or the correlations between some variables and language achievement ultimately. Although some of the specific research focuses have attracted a lot of attention, and have consumed a series of continuing studies from different researchers, it seems that few studies have been conducted in a qualitative way to try to extend the fixed frame of particular understandings toward these different relationships and correlations.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This present investigation is designed to be a basic qualitative study on Chinese students' English motivational thinking and beliefs. Merriam (1998) explained the basic qualitative study in education "typically draws from concepts, models, and theories in educational psychology, developmental psychology..." (p. 11). Consequently, motivational concepts: orientation, attitude, and willingness to communicate will be employed to contribute to a more comprehensive and interactive way of understanding language learners' motivational thinking and beliefs.

Participants

Three Chinese students pursuing their Master's or PhD degree in the programs of computer science, international education, and public administration were selected as the sample. According to Merriam (1998), the most appropriate sampling strategy for qualitative research is nonprobabilistic, and the most common form of which is called purposive or purposeful. Among the different types of purposeful sampling, what I applied in my study is the convenience sampling, which depends on how convenient I could keep in touch with the participants. As a result, I chose three of my Chinese friends in the above-mentioned programs, trying to include diverse persons who were believed to have different English motivational beliefs based on my previous interactions with them.

Data collection

The qualitative data collection methods employed in this study were interview and observation. What I am interested in this study is the Chinese students' motivational thinking, in other words, what they understand about English learning, what they think their attitudes are, what they perceive as their goals or reasons for learning English and making effort to engage in English learning, etc. As Merriam (1998) suggested "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feeling, or how people interpret the world around them" (p. 72). Therefore, I designed the interviews and conducted them before I started any of my observation. Because I believe that only after I have a general impression of what people think about their beliefs toward a certain behavior, can I detect something meaningful in the subsequent observations.

In this study, I utilized semi-structured interviews, which allow for the interviewer to inquire for additional information and follow leads that emerge during interviews while using an interview guide with predetermined questions (Merriam, 1998). All interviews were around 20 minutes in duration and were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. There were 12 interview questions designed according to the five themes I discussed in my framework. After the interviews, I observed each of my subjects in different sites. Among the three observations, two of them were conducted without any notification. I did the observations while I was involved in the activities with the participants. Another observation was accomplished in one of my subject's English conversation class. During the three observations, I seldom constructed any records simultaneously, because, firstly, two subjects involved in were both female, and might have been sensitive and anxious about being observed; secondly, some of the sites were not convenient for doing immediate recordings. I retrospect all the details I had observed during the activities, including the informal interview conversations along with the observation, and wrote them down in my field notes right afterwards.

Data Analysis

When Merriam (1998) discussed about data analysis, she listed out several levels of analysis related to "descriptive accounts, category construction, and theory building" (p. 178). What I applied in the process of data analysis is the category construction level in which categories or themes were constructed to capture some recurring patterns that cut across the data (Merriam, 1998). I first coded interviews by using the five themes drawn from the framework: understanding of English learning, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, attitudes toward English involved activities for academic purpose and social purpose, and willingness to communicate. I, then, created a visual display of the coded data to distinguish orientations, beliefs, attitudes, and WTC across my subjects, demonstrating the features or variables which were identical or unique inside each theme (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For example, I detected that all of my subjects demonstrated a certain kind of instrumental orientation in describing their reasons for English learning. Different variables within instrumental orientation included job, travel, school work, etc. However, only one of my subjects showed a strong tendency of "integrative" orientation. Therefore, after I sorted out the coded data into a grid, it helped me understand the general situation much better and thoroughly. Along with the coding procedure, I wrote memos to keep a record of timely reflections on issues raised in the process. Based on the analysis I did on the interview data and the memos I tracked through the progression, I analyzed the field notes by using the same coding themes. I did detect some new features and variables for some coding themes in the field notes, and what I had done in the interview data analysis facilitated my scrutiny of the field notes. As I have mentioned before, motivational thinking is too abstract to be observed, therefore, what I have discovered through the interview data investigation made the descriptive field notes more revealing and informative.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study was to understand the Chinese English learners' motivational and attitudinal beliefs toward the English learning and how these thinking affect their efforts in engaging in English learning activities, in this case, willingness to communicate. To delineate the findings in the study, I drew on the five themes I used in the data analysis process as following: understanding of English learning, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, attitudes toward English involved activities for academic and social purpose, and willingness to communicate.

Understanding of English Learning

Almost all the previous and contemporary research conducted in language learning motivation were geared to the classroom pedagogy or language achievement. In this research environment, it seems few researchers would bother to think about what indeed the language learning means to language learners. Does language learning simply mean to learn a language as a concrete school subject course, to learn a few words of vocabulary and some grammatical rules?

The interview questions asked the subjects about their understandings in regards to English learning both when they were in China and after they came to the United States. Participants had the strong belief that they, all, thought English learning was learning English as a subject course when they were in China, and it happened predominantly inside the classroom. Only one subject claimed that she also learned English in the daily time from English songs.

Li: "When I was in my middle school, it is the required course. It's one of the three core courses, so it's very important..."

Wang: "English learning is learning English in the class."

Zhang: "...the English learning also, is only inside in classroom."

Wang: "In the daily time, learning English program and English music for me are English study."

However, after they came to the United States, their preliminary belief of English learning obviously changed—English learning turned out to be an activity happened in everyday life. Some of them called English "living language", because "this is the language in this country just like the Chinese in my country", therefore, "...I have to speak English and reading English, listen English everywhere." Wang expressed her comprehension of English learning as:

English study could be everywhere. Not only in class. It could be in life everyday and everywhere. As you have to use it, you learn it no matter you do it intentionally or not intentionally. Like talking with people, you noticed how people did it; next time you know you should use it in this way. You go to a website for shopping, and you learn new vocabularies of what the English names are for a lot of stuff. Your friend may correct your English in a conversation, and that's English study also.

Actually, in the interview, when I asked about their understanding about English learning after their arrival at the United States, none of them emphasized their previous beliefs that English learning was learning English inside the classroom. However, one of my subjects did mention that he went to the English conversation class, which is a program housed by the International Center.

Integrative Orientation

Two "integrative" oriented reasons of English learning were revealed from the data of this current study. One was "to make American friends" and the other was "feeling interested in understanding American culture and society". According to Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972), who first initiated this concept, integrative orientation is associated with a positive disposition toward the L2 group and a desire to interact with and even become a valued member of that group. However, it seems that this definition did not provide a congruent comprehension to what should be considered as an integrative reason. Clément and Kruidenier (1983) gave examples of the ambiguous understanding about the components of integrative orientation in different research results.

For example, *having a chance to be away from home* and *finding out more about what I am like* were considered to be integrative reasons by Spolsky (1969). Gardner (1977)

pointed out that while *travel abroad* was classified as instrumental by Lukmani (1972), it was interpreted as integrative by Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen, and Hargreaves (1974). As noted by Oller, Baca, and Vigil (1977), reasons such as *having friends who speak English*, or *knowing more about English art, literature, and culture* could be classified in either category depending on the intent and understanding of the respondent (p. 274).

After years of receiving positive and critical feedbacks from different studies on motivational orientation, Masgoret and Gardner (2003) developed the concept of integrative orientation as it presented “reasons for learning a second language that emphasize the notion of identification with the community” (p. 129). Therefore, an “integrative” motivational orientation concerns a positive interpersonal/affective disposition toward the L2 group. It implies “an openness to, and respect for, other cultural groups and ways of life; in the extreme, it might involve complete identification with the community” (Dörnyei, 2003).

In this case, whether the language learners demonstrate a psychological or emotional identification with the target group would be treated as a core value to recognize the integrative orientation. In the interview, when Zhang was asked about his reasons for learning English, he said that

“I hope to make friends, and in addition, I go to the International Student Center to learn the English conversation. And there, I make a friend, and several American friends. And I can speak my English more, and then the American culture”

“I think if I want to get a job in America, I need to involve in American culture, in American group.”

Initially, Zhang mentioned about making American friends and learning American culture. He even talked about that he needed to involve in American culture. However, it should be noted that, in the following informal interviews, he clarified the ultimate reason for his prone to the American people and society was for “learning reasons”, because “America provides a good learning environment that I can get more knowledge”. After further confirmation with him, he claimed that the United States could provide him an objective environment without personal relationship influence. “In my case, doing a good research in (the) USA is a(n) easy way to come about. But I do not involve (in) other culture(s) in (the) USA”, he further explained.

Wang expressed her reasons for learning English as *for fun*, *for the interest in American culture, food, and history*, and “You may want to improve your speaking and listening, and you may be interested in American’s opinions about the things you like, so you have to learn English so you can communicate with them.” Some integrative features could be detected from her address, as she mentioned about learning English for *fun*, *interest*, and *understanding the target group*.

As discussed in the previous literature review, Belmechri and Hummel (1998) named the reason of making friends with target group as *Friendship Orientation*, while the reason of interest in understanding English art as *Understanding Orientation*. Although Gardner (1985) automatically classified friendship orientation as an integrative orientation, in my current study, it stands on its own as a general orientation, remaining in the same vein with Belmechri and Hummel (1998). The reason for me to identify these two independent orientations is that I could not trace any definite evidence in favor of having affective tendency toward identifying themselves with the target group, i.e., American society, meanwhile, none of them wanted to be a

valued member of that group.

Instrumental Orientation

Masgoret and Gardner (2003) defined instrumental orientation as “practical reasons for learning the language, without implying any interest in getting closer socially to the language community” (p. 129) Based on their description, there were three instrumental orientations emerged in my study: facilitating academic study (*School*), dealing with daily life activities (*Daily Life*), and job/career (*Career*). Both Wang and Zhang expressed their incentives for English learning in terms of facilitating their school work in an academic setting of American university.

(Wang) “I have to read professional books written in English, have to listen English lecture, have to write paper in English, and have to do presentation in English.”

(Zhang) “...the main reason is not, not change. The main reason is also depend on my academic requirement.

Belmechri and Hummel (1998) labeled *School* as one of the factors of instrumental orientation, which referred to the reason that students learned English in order to get a degree and to finish high school. In that situation, their study participants were high school students who took English as a concrete course. While, in my study, although my subjects did not take concrete English course, they took English as a facilitator to assist their other school work in an American university. Therefore, I labeled this instrumental orientation *School* to keep consistency with their suggestion. Similar incentive of job or career was perceived in my data analysis. Wang stated that she needed to learn English because she was a teaching assistant in her program; while, likewise, Zhang said that “I hope to get a job after I graduate from here. So I need to do, to learn the English, American culture, and make my English conversation or listening better”. Following Belmechri and Hummel’s (1998) term, I also labeled this instrumental orientation as *Career*.

A novel instrumental orientation in my study was *Daily Life*. It emerged as an original factor because of the language environment my subjects were living in. The three subjects in my study were Chinese students who were living in the United States and studying in an American university. They were involved in the English speaking environment and needed to speak English to deal with their daily interaction with the American people. As what they explained in the interviews that they “need” or “have to” speak English to “deal with” billing, credit card, utility, etc. Learning English, to a significant degree, is for living a normal life or even just for “survival”. Like Zhang and Wang talked about their reasons of learning English for “life”:

(Zhang) “The other reasons are ...maybe ...the life. If I want to go to the shopping, if I want to go to see s movie, or go to anywhere in America, or travel, because travel means to say the, to communicated with the airport, the air company, and so I need to make my English more, better.”

(Wang) “You need to deal with your billing, credit card, utilities, and there is no way you don’t need to speak English.”

Except for the three instrumental orientations---*School*, *Daily Life*, and *Career*---which were associated with pragmatic reasons, there were still other two “practical” reasons came in sight from the interviews and field notes data examination: 1) learning English for showing off (Self-esteem), and 2) learning English to realize life goals (Self-fulfillment). According to Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) and Masgoret and Gardner’s (2003) definition of integrative

and instrumental orientation, these two reasons---showing off and realizing life goal---related to either of the two categories. They had no implication of showing interest in getting socially close to the target language community, neither did they have realistic propositions. Even Gardner and Lambert (1972) themselves suggested that “a manipulative or machiavellian orientation might be implicated in second language study” (p. 51), hence, I suggested these two reasons as two independent orientations which stand out of the integrative and instrumental dichotomy.

Attitudes toward English Involved Activities

As mentioned in the previous literature review, Gardner (1985) suggested two attitudinal variables which have received considerable attentions from different motivational researchers---attitudes toward learning the second language and attitudes toward the second language community. He named these two kinds of attitude variables as educationally relevant attitude and social attitude. Based on his suggestion, I divided the theme of attitude in my study into two environmental situations---attitudes toward English involved activities for academic purpose and for social purpose. Here, for academic purpose, I meant that the Chinese English learners’ attitudes toward their participation in activities in the settings of an American university, in which they needed to use English for the purpose of facilitating their academic studies and performances, such as: reading textbook, doing presentation, listening to lecture, classroom communication, etc. I was also interested in the Chinese English learners’ attitudes toward the English involved social activities they engaged in, such as: different student activity programs, social gathering, party, entertainment, etc.

Three types of attitudes appeared from my data analysis---*Active*, *Depending*, and *Negative*. Zhang, demonstrated active attitude no matter the English involved activities were for social or academic purpose. He described his educationally related attitudes as “serious”. He further explained that:

“Because I need to do my research, then write research article, so the writing is very demanding in this situation. The other reason, if I want to present, address my report, or my research to my classmate, or to my professor, or to one conference, the English speaking needs to be improved.”

Besides the academic part, Zhang mentioned his effort in participating into social activities.

“So I tried to find several chance or opportunity to take a social party or social activity. Because maybe have the other opportunity that I can learn the American culture or American conversation, or make American friends.”

There is no specific definition of active attitude in the previous studies of motivational attitudes. As I have mentioned before, language learning motivation research have been focusing their attention on different attitudinal variables and their relationship with motivation and language achievement. I developed the three scales of *Active*, *Depending*, and *Negative* attitude in this study to form a general understanding of the Chinese English learners’ affective attitudes toward English involved activities geared toward academic and social orientations. Therefore, I understood the *Active* attitude as the positive feelings which demonstrated through initiative and dynamic engagement into the English involved activities in my particular study. Consequently, I suggest that Zhang had *Active* attitude because of his initiative and active engagement in various activities, for example: listening to English radio, attending to English development class, participation into social activities, etc.

In the process of data analysis, I identified two other attitudes: *Depending* and *Negative*. By *Depending*, I meant the attitude which always depends on other variables. For example, the educational related attitude may depend on the content concerned in the academic activities, such as interesting book content, familiar cognitive concept, interesting writing topic, etc. On the other hand, for the social purpose, attitude may be affected by whether the topic is interesting or not, whether the conversation participants are friendly or not, etc. For instance, Li demonstrated her attitudes to both domains in a “depending” way:

“If I like, if I really enjoy the content of the reading in English, I think I will not feel the barrier of the language even maybe sometimes I feel difficult, I need to check the dictionary. If the content is enjoyable, it’s ok.”

“If the social activity, all the American friends I like to talk with, or we have some interest to share, we are friends; I think I will enjoy to speak English with them.”

The other subject Wang had both *Depending* and *Negative* attitudes in the two situations. She displayed a strong negative attitude toward English reading, no matter it is for academic or entertainment purpose. However, she showed an active attitude in learning English idioms for the purpose of showing off in front of her roommates who were both English majors in their undergraduate studies. It seemed that her attitudes toward the English social and academic activities depended on the English skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) involved in. She had very impressive comments on her attitudinal tendency:

“I hate reading English all the time. Speaking English is OK. Writing is not as disgusting as reading. When I was in Education department, I never finished a textbook. I read slowly, and even I had enough time, I didn’t like to read them.”

Willingness to Communicate

As mentioned in the literature review, a WTC study conducted by MacIntyre et al. (2001) identified five orientations for learning French from their subjects of Anglophone students in grade 9. Their study results revealed that all of the five orientations---travel, job related, friendship with Francophone, personal knowledge, and school achievement---demonstrated positive correlations with the students’ willingness to communicate in French.

In my current study, I identified six categories of orientation namely: *Friendship*, *Understanding*, *Career*, *School*, *Daily Life*, *Self-esteem*, and *Self-fulfillment*. Having ignored their integrative or instrumental features, I tried to examine their respective relationships with the three participants’ willingness to communicate in English. Through examining the data, a table of the motivational relationship between orientation and WTC in a target language was developed. I marked the orientations which the subjects had directly mentioned, or I have observed that the particular orientation encouraged his/her willingness to communicate in English, or s/he was motivated to communicate in English because of the specific orientation. (See Table 1)

Table 1

	Friendship	Understanding	Career	School	Daily Life	Self-esteem	Self-fulfillment
Zhang	+		+	+			
Li					+		
Wang							

It is hard to detect and describe the relationship between orientation and WTC in a target language through the qualitative method. However, by examining the interview and observation data, some direct motivational relationship could still be perceived, simply for the purpose of a general understanding as how future research could be conducted on this relationship issue by taking in a broader range of orientation factors.

The review of the previous research showed that, two key variables, anxiety about communication and the perception of communicative competence, have consistently appeared as highly correlated with the willingness to communicate in a target language. What Wang explained about her willingness to communicate with an American on the phone in front of her friends provided some congruent supportive evidence from the perspective of the communication anxiety:

“I guess so. I am familiar with you guys. No need to be nervous. Because you know me well, and you won't laugh at me if I make mistakes.”

“I feel extremely nervous when I am in classroom. I even could not understand the question the professor asked me. And I can not speak anything in a completed sentence when I am in class.”

The variable of perception of communicative competence could be also perceived from her other talks:

“If I have to speak, I will choose Chinese. Because I am not confident with my English, there is no misunderstanding in communicating with Chinese. If all Chinese cannot give me a satisfied answer, I would ask American.”

The same situation happened on Zhang as well. Zhang described how he turned off himself when he just arrived at the U.S. simply because he didn't think he had the English competence to communicate with the Americans around him.

Beyond these two key variables mentioned in the previous literature review, in my study, some other variables displayed their influence toward the subjects' WTC in English: 1) willingness to speak English when it is related to social norm; for example, to make the people from other countries feel comfortable in a public communication even there might not be a direct conversation with them; 2) willingness to communicate in English when the situation is related to basic needs, like money; 3) willingness to communicate in English when the communicating population is dominated by the target group, 4) willingness to communicate in English when the cognition knowledge of the communication topic is learned in English; for example, Li's conversation with another Chinese student was always mixed with both Chinese and English. Whenever there were academic terms she learned in America, she tended to use English; 5) willingness to communicate in English when there is previously established knowledge to decrease the feeling of uncertainty.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to understand Chinese students' motivational and attitudinal thinking of their English learning when they are studying in an American university, as well as how their motivational beliefs affect their efforts in engaging in English learning activities---willingness to communicate. This current study was designed as a *basic study* conducted through qualitative methods of interview and observation. The five themes applied in this study---understanding of

English learning, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, attitudes toward English involved activities, and willingness to communicate---were developed from Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) and Gardner (1985) research on language learning motivation. These five themes were used to direct the design of interview questions, to code interview and observation data, and to analyze and discuss the study findings.

There are two important discussions need to be pointed out at this conclusion section. The first one is about the dichotomy of Gardner's concept of motivational orientation. As suggested by Belmechri and Hummel (1998), motivational orientation, instead of including only the integrative and instrumental orientation, would "encompass an indefinite number of orientations, the number of which would depend on the context in which the data is gathered." (p. 240-241). Some of the orientations perceived in this study and previous relative studies are common to a wide array of populations and situations, such as instrumental motivation of *Career* and *School*; while others are found to be various resulted from different learning contexts, such as learning English as a school subject or as a facilitator to improve other school subjects. Therefore, future studies of motivational orientation should not be confined into the dichotomy of integrative and instrumental, but consider the reliability of specific orientation constructs for a particular population and context.

Secondly, communication and second language acquisition are closely tied together. Recent trends toward a conversational approach to second language pedagogy reflect the belief that one must use the language to develop proficiency. Therefore, the instructional and pedagogical applicative meaning of willingness to communicate in a target language might be investigated in a systematic way from the respective of language learning motivation.

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