# Learning Motivation Components in an Ecological Perspective of English Major Chinese EFL Students at Heilongjiang International University, China

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**Abstract**

This article aimed to explore the components of learning motivation of English major Chinese EFL students at Heilongjiang International University, China. A learning motivation questionnaire and an interview were used to find out the components of the students' learning motivation in an ecological perspective. The results revealed that the students' learning motivation components ranking from most to least included extrinsic motivation from parents/peers/others, teacher's motivational strategies, intrinsic motivation, teacher's style, expectancy, self-efficacy, extrinsic motivation from seeking self-reward and self-prosperity. The results from the interview confirmed the quantitative findings with additional information notifying that all the components should be kept in concern with the aspects of ecological perspective comprising emergence, relation, diversity, quality, and value.

**Keywords:** English Major Chinese EFL Students, Learning Motivation Components; Ecological Perspective.


**Introduction**

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Chinese educators have shown great concern about learning and teaching English language in China and claimed that English language instruction at present is not sufficiently effective, as it can be seen in Heilongjiang International University, China. Some have claimed that although learning English language is significant, it can appear to be a waste of time and resources because some English learners will not use any English language after they graduated from the university (Yang, 2019). Others have reported some Chinese students have lacked their learning motivation and strategies in learning English language (Ruan & Leung, 2012).

In view of the difficulties of learning an L2, sustaining students' motivation is a key factor for teaching an L2 successfully (Wang & Zhang, 2021). Research concerning L2 learning motivation has been initiated and inspired by the motivation research in a social psychological framework. In China, research on teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) since the 1990s has paid a great deal of attention to learning motivation (Pan & Block, 2011). There seems to be a growing realization that the latent and modifiable factor is too important to be ignored. However, in spite of the increasing research into learners' motivation, motivation gaps of Chinese learners remain to be tested from substantial empirical studies. Moreover, we still have little understanding of their relations with other factors, such as, motivational intensity and achievement (Liu, 2016). These questions remain pressing to be investigated into. Therefore, the current research investigated into Chinese undergraduates' English learning motivation focusing on finding their learning motivation components with regard to the ecological perspective in the Chinese educational setting.

## 1. Review of Literature

It is a widely-held belief that motivation is crucial in language learning. However, the basic motivation concepts require a respectable number of different disciplines to arrive at a reasonable understanding of its various facets (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017). General, educational, social, and cognitive psychology, as well as sociolinguistic theories have something to contribute to understanding of language learning motivation within a formal school context. The complexity of the concept of motivation explains the actions and behavior of individuals (Dörnyei, 2000, 2001a), which cannot be accounted for by a single approach; hence, the varied theories employed as the framework for the current study, theories of motivation, socio-education model, and ecological perspective are to be reviewed, as follows.

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## 2.1 Theories of Motivation in the Psychology of L2 Learning

Motivational psychologists have traditionally sought to understand and explain why people think and behave as they do. Therefore, a substantial amount of effort in motivation research in different sub-fields of psychology (behavioral psychology, cognitive psychology, and social psychology, for example) has been made to establish specific theories to explain human motivation (Dörnyei, 2019).

Since the current research focused on L2 learning motivation, these psychological theories of motivation on which the learning motivation components are based on self-determination theory, expectancy-value theory, attribution theory and self-efficacy theory.

### Self-Determination Theory

Motivation has been recognized of comprising intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation in language learning is likely responsible for the preponderance of human learning, as opposed to externally accredited learning and instruction (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Froiland and Worrell (2016) convergently showed that intrinsic motivation predicted student engagement, which, in turn, predicted higher scores at school. Extrinsic motivation involves behavior performed with a purpose other than to obtain an extrinsic reward (e.g., good grades) or avoid punishment (Dörnyei, 2001b).

During the past two decades the field has rapidly matured and much has been learned about these two dominating types of motivation, especially within the framework of self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2017), a broad theory of human development and wellness, with great implications for school education. SDT specifically holds that for healthy development to help individuals require supports for basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2019).

### Expectancy-Value Theory

The expectancy‑value theory (Atkinson, 2000) and the motivational FIT choice model (Watt & Richardson, 2007) are two important motivational frameworks developed for the interpretation of behavioral motivation. The expectancy–value theory was formed based on J. W. Atkinson's (2000) concept of expectancy–value, which was proposed in order to better understand how individuals' achievement motives, success expectancy, and incentive values influence their achievement behaviors. Despite these distinctions, the empirical work done on this issue shows strong and almost complete overlap of constructs like self-concept of ability and self-efficacy, at

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least as they are currently measured (e.g., Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Marsh et al., (2019).

### *Attribution Theory*

Carson (2019) makes great contribution to attribution theory via explaining why external relational attributions provide slight difference to our understanding of relational attributions. Gardner et al., (2019) examine how internal, external, and relational attributions across leaders and members deferentially predict relationship work, self‑work, and conflict within leader-member relationships. Significant progress has also been made in forming and adapting attribution theory to organizational contexts. In this special issue, the article (Carson, 2019; Gardner et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2019) highlighted variations of relationship attributions. This focus seemed to be, in part, as a response to the recent conceptual and empirical work by Eberly and her colleagues (Eberly et al., 2011; Eberly et al., 2017).

### *Self-efficacy Theory*

The self-efficacy theory focuses on people's judgments about their abilities to carry out specific tasks. Central to this is the belief that a person's sense of efficiency determines the choice of activities they undertake, along with their level of aspiration, the amount of effort they put in, and the persistence they show. These perceptions, in turn, can influence the amount of effort and perseverance employed when undertaking a specific task (Schunk and Pajares, 2012). Rather than a general disposition, self-efficacy is a belief relative to a particular domain or context (Bandura, 2006).

One way students measure their ability is by comparing themselves to their peers, which might positively impact their self-efficacy in learning if accompanied by the motivation to catch up or have a negative influence if they believe their efforts will make no difference (Kesici & Erdogan, 2010; Schwarzer, 2014). Thus, it is possible for a student with high levels of self-efficacy to also possess enough motivation and self-regulation to successfully persevere through a difficult assignment (Solheim, 2011). However, students with low levels of self-efficacy are less likely to participate in it (Høigaard et al., 2015).

### 2.2 Gardner's Social-educational Model

According to Gardner (1985), motivation is composed of three parts: motivational intensity, the desire to learn the language, and attitudes towards learning the language. Motivation is a

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combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning a language skillfully, plus a favorable attitude towards it. These three aspects were tested in the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which measures motivation intensity, desire to learn the language, and attitude. To elaborate, for instance, Gardner et al. (2001) focused on attitudes and motivation inside and outside formal classrooms in Spain, whereas the emphasis of Noels et al. (2001) was French learners of English in Canada. Masgoret and Gardner (2003) investigated English learners' motivation for reading on language learner motivation in multicultural classrooms. Despite the variety of learning contexts of these studies, the findings are relatively congruent, demonstrating that integrative motivation exerts a stronger impact on behavior and achievement than instrumental motivation. Gardner (2012) specifically explored the roles of integrative motivation in the prediction of student achievement. These studies provide insights into the roles and effects of motivation on language learning from different language learning scenarios.

## 2.3 Dörnyei's L2 Motivation Self System

Many theories have guided the L2 motivation research by for decades to provide a comprehensive understanding of such a multifaceted language phenomenon.   Recently, Dörnyei has already proposed a tripartite L2 motivation theory: the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), comprised of ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009).

Clearly, while the ideal L2 self-derived from the long-term L2-related goals learners tend to achieve, the ought-to L2 self is driven by the external and instrumental motive factors that are not yet internalized. Other self-concepts have supported the L2MSS; for example, the ought-to L2 self (Thompson, 2017) is conceptualized as a self that positively responds to challenges or excelling at the unexpected. The third construct, L2 learning experience, is the least theorized. Dörnyei (2019) conceptualized L2 learning experience as motivated learning behavior, whereas Thompson (2017) conceptualized it as the complex relationship between language learners and their micro and macro contexts that help inform their self-formation.

## 2.4 Ecological Perspectives on Language Learning

Ecology, as 'the study of the relationships among elements in an environment or ecosystem, in particular the interactions among such elements' (van Lier, 2010) has its rooted in biology. In second language learning, ecological perspectives examine the many layers of relationships between the language learner and his/her social environment, language being the semiotic mediator

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(Kramsch, 2008; Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008; Pinnow, 2012; van Lier, 2004).

The ecological approach has several characteristics. These amount to a fresh way of looking at language teaching. van Lier, 2004) By way of signpost and statement of purpose, here is a brief introduction to its chief characteristics, including relationships, context, pattern, emergence, quality, value, critical, variability, diversity, activity. Five features are relevant to motivating students: relationship, emergence, quality, value, and diversity.

Three central aspects embedded in ecological theories and relevant to the theoretical focus of this study regard context, relationships, and emergence (Given, 2008; van Lier, 2004, 2011). The context in which language learning is situated has a formative function for learners' cognitive development. Järvinen (2009) points out that 'the ecological perspective views the context either as the source of learning or as a prominent resource of learning'. Relationships are the central tenet of any ecological approach. The relationships between language learners and the world permeate all aspects of their learning activities and practices.

Kramsch (2008) argues that 'if we consider language learning and teaching as a complex system with emergent properties, we can no longer look for cause and effect in the simplistic linear fashion'. Considering the complexity of learners' interactions in diverse settings, linear causality models that pinpoint certain environmental variables crucial to language learning do not seem plausible. In summary, the focus of an ecological perspective is 'to understand that which emerges from the moment rather than to analyze separately the different variables that underlie the moment' and 'how language learning emerges in a particular context and with certain participants' (Thoms, 2014).

## 3. Research Methodology

The current research investigated into what are the components of learning motivation in an ecological perspective of the English major Chinese EFL students in Heilongjiang International University (HIU), China. The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze data through a learning motivation questionnaire and a semi-structured interview.

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## 3.1 Research Participants

The participants of the present research survey included 120 English-major HIU second-year students with the age range from 18 to 20. They comprised 16 males and 104 females with 92 Business English and 28 English-Chinese Translation. All participants had received 12 years of school education with at least 10 years of EFL education in China and all had intermediate competence in English language. Among them, 23 considered themselves successful language learners while 97 reported themselves as less successful. Most of them started to learn English from primary school (n=90), while only a few started from junior middle school (n=5), pre-primary school (n=17) and kindergarten (n=8).

For the participants of the semi-structured interview, twenty students from the survey participants volunteered to participate in the interview. The research sampling for the interview was therefore a convenience sampling.

## 3.2 Research Instruments

The instruments used in the present study included learning motivation questionnaire and a set of interview questions for the semi-structured interview. The learning motivation questionnaire was adapted from Dornyei (2014), while the questions used in the semi-structured interview were constructed and then validated by three experts in the field of EFL instruction. Although the language used in the survey was English, the language used in the interview was Chinese language. It was tape-recorded, transcribed in Chinese language, and translated into English language. The translation validity was verified by back translation method with an EFL Chinese HIU teacher.

### *Learning Motivation Questionnaire*

In this research, motivation measurement questionnaire was conducted in order to measure the motivation levels of the HIU students from the ecological perspective in English classroom. The Learning Motivation Questionnaire (LMQ) was part of the questionnaire items adapted from Dörnyei, (2014). The reason for using the part of it as the learning motivation questionnaire to be administered among the participants in the research is that their reliability and validity have been tested and proved acceptable. Some other items were adopted according to the reviewed literature and some items were adapted based on researcher's teaching experience.

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The LMQ was put into twice of tryouts, firstly with two students and secondly with four students. The students were interviewed in Chinese face to face based on open questions: "Why do you learn English?" and "Do you learn English because you want to go abroad?" The responses from the interviewees helped to either confirm the original items or to revise, change or cancel some items. The first round with two students, the second round with four students. In the second round, the four students were asked one by one to think aloud while doing the questionnaire. In both rounds of the tryouts, some items which were inappropriate were revised or canceled. The students' responses helped in rewriting the drafts, revising the choice of words, and sequencing the items and question types. There were finally 60 items in the LMQ.

For its validity, the LMQ was validated by three experts in EFL instruction with the scores of 0.66 – 1.00, which meant all the items of the questionnaire could be used. However, the language used in a few items were adjusted according to the experts' suggestions. For its reliability, the result of the internal consistency of the questionnaire by Cronbach's alpha was .50 - .70, which meant acceptable. The questionnaire showed satisfactory reliability results in each sub-scale as well as in the whole questionnaire. The LMQ included seven sub-scales, each of which measured on latent variables as follows: teachers' teaching styles, teacher's motivational strategies, intrinsic motivation, expectancy, self-efficacy, extrinsic motivation from seeking self-reward and self-prosperity. The questionnaires were written in accordance to Likert scale with the format of 5-level Likert item. The optimal length of the time was used to complete the questionnaire was controlled within less than 30 minutes.

### Semi-structured Interview

The interview consisted of three parts. The first part was intended to deal with the internal factors of motivation, especially those related to goal setting, interest, attitude, and causal attribution. Questions asked included, "Do you set goals in your learning of English?" "What kind of goals, proximal or distal?" "Do you feel confident or anxious in learning English?"

The second part addressed the external factors. Questions were asked in this part included, "What types of classroom activities do you like?" "In English class, do you like to learn by yourself or work together with other classmates?" "In your opinion, what qualities should an English teacher possess?" The third part was aimed to explore learning behavior.

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Questions asked included, "Do you actively participate in (extra)curricular activities?" "Do you often reflect on your English learning methods?"

The interview questions in the semi-structured interview were validated by three experts in the field of EFL instruction, which meant all the interview questions could be used.

### 3.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

In the process of questionnaire, the students were given around 15 to 20 minutes to provide their response to each item in the questionnaire assigned by the teacher. Meanwhile, they could give comments on each piece from their perspectives. And then, the teacher collected the questionnaires and the researcher key the received answers by a computer software.

For the interview, the interview was conducted in Chinese language and all tape-recorded and transcribed in Chinese, and then translated into English. The translation was approved by the back translation method with the help of a HIU TEFL teacher.

To analyze the data from the questionnaire, all the answers from the participants were keyed and calculated using a computer program. To analyze the data from the semi-structured interview, the interview responses obtained from the transcription and translation were coded and grouped into themes through the content analysis method. For the validity and reliability of the coding and grouping into themes, an EFL teacher colleague was trained and asked to be an intercoder to do the coding and theme grouping with the researcher. Discussions were made between the researcher and the intercoder to assure the comparability of the coding and theme grouping.

### 4. Findings

The findings revealed that the components of learning motivation in ecological perspectives of English major Chinese EFL students in Heilongjiang International University, China comprised seven 'components of motivation' including extrinsic motivation from parents/peers/others, teachers' teaching styles, teachers' motivational strategies, intrinsic motivation, expectancy, self-efficacy, extrinsic motivation from seeking self-reward and self-prosperity.

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There were altogether 120 students took part in the preliminary motivation questionnaire (See Table 1). The results from the questionnaire yielded the answers which sub-components of motivation the HIU EFL English major students consider having ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The results revealed that the students agree to the overall components of motivation (M =3.87, SD = 0.65). When regarding to each component of motivation, it was found that the component of 'Teacher's Motivational Strategies' had the highest mean score (M = 4.15, SD = 0.97), followed by the components of 'Intrinsic Motivation' (M = 4.12, SD = 1.02), 'Teacher's Style' (M = 4.11, SD = 0.99), 'Expectancy' (M = 4.06, SD = 1.00), 'Self-efficacy (M = 3.93, SD = 0.99), and 'Extrinsic motivation from seeking self-reward and self-prosperity'(M = 3.64, SD = 1.11) while the component of 'Extrinsic motivation from parents/peers/others' had the lowest mean score (M = 3.00, SD = 1.26) (See Table 1).

When considering the sub-components within the component of 'Intrinsic Motivation,' it was found that the sub-component that the students reported to most strongly agree included they would like to become global professional, a responsible Chinese citizen (M = 4.28, SD = 1.02), followed by the items that they had thoughts that they wanted to share with people from other parts of the world (M = 4.05, SD = 1.05) and they found learning English really interesting (M = 4.02, SD = 1.00) (See Table 1).

**Table 1**
***Students' components of motivation in ecological perspectives***
Data interpretation: strongly agree (M = 4.50-5.00), agree (Mean 3.50 -4.49), undecided (M = 2.50 -3.49), slightly disagree (M = 1.50 -2.49), and strongly disagree (M = 1.00 -1.49).

| Students' Learning Motivation in Ecological Perspectives (N=120) | M | SD | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Extrinsic motivation from parents/peers/others** | **3.00** | **1.26** | **Undecided** |
| 1. My parents/family believe that I must study English to be an educated person. | 3.50 | 1.24 | Agree |
| 2. I study English because close friends of mine think it is important. | 2.72 | 1.39 | Undecided |
| 3. Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to to so. | 2.65 | 1.30 | Undecided |

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| Students' Learning Motivation in Ecological Perspectives (N=120) | M | SD | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4. I study English in order to gain the approval of my parents. | 2.94 | 1.32 | Undecided |
| 5. Studying English is important to me because, if I don't have knowledge of English, I'll be considered a weak learner. | 2.76 | 1.34 | Undecided |
| 6. I consider learning English important because the people I respect think that I should do it. | 3.17 | 1.30 | Undecided |
| 7. My family put a lot of pressure on me to study English. | 2.35 | 1.29 | Undecided |
| 8. Compared to most of my classmates, I think I study English relatively hard. | 3.36 | 0.97 | Undecided |
| 9. Hardly anybody really cares whether I learn English or not. | 2.66 | 1.36 | Undecided |
| 10.My parents do consider English an important school subject. | 3.87 | 1.11 | Agree |
| **Intrinsic Motivation** | **4.12** | **1.02** | **Agree** |
| 11. I find learning English really interesting. | 4.02 | 1.00 | Agree |
| 12. I would like to become global professional, a responsible Chinese citizen. | 4.28 | 1.02 | Agree |
| 13. I have thoughts that I want to share with people from other parts of the worlds. | 4.05 | 1.05 | Agree |
| **Extrinsic motivation from seeking self-reward and self-prosperity** | **3.64** | **1.11** | **Agree** |
| 14. Studying English is necessary for me because with a high level of English I will be able to make a lot of money. | 3.69 | 1.08 | Agree |
| 15. I have to study English because I don't want to get bad marks in it. | 3.68 | 1.09 | Agree |
| 16. It will have a negative impact on my life if I don't learn English. | 3.61 | 1.14 | Agree |
| 17. I study English because with English I can traveling abroad. | 3.98 | 1.06 | Agree |
| 18. Learning English is important to me, because I have to pass the English test (like CET or TEM in China; ILTS or TOEFL. | 4.22 | 0.94 | Agree |
| 19. I learn English so that I can emigrate to English-speaking countries in the world. | 2.67 | 1.35 | undecided |
| **Teacher's Styles** | **4.11** | **0.99** | **Agree** |

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| Students' Learning Motivation in Ecological Perspectives (N=120) | M | SD | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 20. My English teacher can create a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom. | 4.18 | 1.01 | Agree |
| 21. My English teacher can recognize students' effort and celebrate their success. | 4.14 | 0.97 | Agree |
| 22. My English teacher always build the curriculum based on students' needs. | 4.06 | 0.99 | Agree |
| 23. My English teacher can encourage students to set learning goals. | 4.19 | 0.99 | Agree |
| 24. My English teacher can invite senior students to share their English learning experiences with the class. | 3.80 | 1.09 | Agree |
| 25. My English teacher use the rewards to motivate students. | 3.91 | 1.08 | Agree |
| 26. My English teacher always provide students with positive feedback. | 4.07 | 1.02 | Agree |
| 27. My English teacher encourage students to imagine themselves using English in their future career. | 4.19 | 0.94 | Agree |
| 28. My English teacher create a supportive classroom climate that allows students to make mistakes. | 4.24 | 0.93 | Agree |
| 29. My English teacher use learning technology in her classes such as computer. | 4.31 | 0.92 | Agree |
| 30. My English teacher avoid public comparison, between successful and unsuccessful students. | 4.01 | 1.05 | Agree |
| 31. My English teacher can draw her learners' attention to their strengths and abilities. | 4.17 | 0.97 | Agree |
| 32. My English teacher can teach us self-motivating strategies, such as self-encouragement. | 4.12 | 1.02 | Agree |
| 33. My English teacher present tasks in a motivated way. | 4.22 | 0.94 | Agree |
| 34. My English teacher can help us accept the fact that we will make mistakes as a part of the learning process. | 4.19 | 0.97 | Agree |
| 35. My English teacher give us choices about when we will be assessed. | 4.13 | 0.97 | Agree |
| 36. My English teacher always try to reduce students' language | 4.22 | 0.87 | Agree |

| Students' Learning Motivation in Ecological Perspectives (N=120) | M | SD | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| anxiety when we are speaking in English. | | | |
| 37. My English teacher include activities that lead to the completion of whole group tasks, such as project work. | 4.20 | 0.98 | Agree |
| **Expectancy** | **4.06** | **1.00** | **Agree** |
| 38. Studying English can be important for me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job. | 4.21 | 0.96 | Agree |
| 39. I often imagine myself living abroad and communicating with local residents in English. | 4.06 | 1.01 | Agree |
| 40. Studying English is important to me because English proficiency is necessary for promotion in the future. | 4.15 | 0.90 | Agree |
| 41. Studying English can be important for me because I'll need it for future studies. | 4.17 | 0.99 | Agree |
| 42. With a high level of English proficiency I will be able to be rich. | 3.93 | 1.00 | Agree |
| 43. The things I want to do in the future requires me to use English. | 4.02 | 1.01 | Agree |
| 44. I often imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English. | 4.15 | 1.01 | Agree |
| 45. Studying English is important to me in order to attain a higher social status. | 3.81 | 1.11 | Agree |
| **Self-efficacy** | **3.93** | **0.99** | **Agree** |
| 46. I think that I am doing my best to learn English. | 3.96 | 0.97 | Agree |
| 47. I can overcome the difficulties and remove the interferes when I learn English. | 3.88 | 1.00 | Agree |
| 48. I have my own after-class learning plan. | 3.83 | 1.03 | Agree |
| 49. I have positive impact on my life. | 4.18 | 0.91 | Agree |
| 50. I think I am doing my best to learn English. | 3.82 | 1.02 | Agree |
| **Teachers' Motivational Strategies** | **4.15** | **0.97** | **Agree** |
| 51. My teacher can show good rapport with students. | 4.24 | 0.96 | Agree |
| 52. My teacher can encourage students to try hard. | 4.27 | 0.94 | Agree |

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| Students' Learning Motivation in Ecological Perspectives (N=120) | M | SD | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 53. The teacher use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class. | 4.11 | 1.02 | Strongly Agree |
| 54. The teacher helps students develop realistic beliefs about English learning. | 4.13 | 0.96 | Strongly Agree |
| 55. The teacher always make the learning tasks stimulating and interesting. | 4.20 | 0.91 | Strongly Agree |
| 56. Explain the importance of class rules. | 4.17 | 0.95 | Strongly Agree |
| 57. My teacher can promote group cohesiveness and group norms in our classroom. | 4.14 | 0.94 | Strongly Agree |
| 58. My teachers ask the students to work toward the same goal. | 4.13 | 0.97 | Strongly Agree |
| 59. My teacher can encourage the students to share the personal experience. | 4.07 | 1.03 | Strongly Agree |
| 60. My teacher let us suggest class rules. | 4.02 | 1.03 | Strongly Agree |
| **Overall students' components of motivation** | **3.87** | **0.65** | **Agree** |

The findings from the interview, which was a qualitative part, revealed the motivation components of the English major students in HIU and showed the results of students' interview to answer the questions (See Table 2). The interview which yielded the findings from the qualitative part comprised the responses from 12 students: 8 females – Student A to Student H, and 4 males – Student I to Student L). The interview was conducted on a face to face and one on one basis. The interview data were transcribed, analyzed as themes and topics.

**Table 2**
*Students' Motivation Components – Data from Interview*

| Students' Motivation Components – Data from Interview (N=20) | |
|---|---|
| Themes | Topics |
| Extrinsic motivation from parents/peers/others | a. Promoting learning of English through the positive effect of classmates |
| | b. Increase self-confidence with extrinsic motivation |

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| | c. Learning together or competition is favorable to learning |
|---|---|
| Intrinsic motivation | Setting learning goals towards spoken English |
| Expectancy | Expectancy is beneficial for the construction of knowledge system |
| Self-efficacy | a. Improvement of the integrated skills with self-efficacy |
| | b. Self-efficacy is fit for the current examinations |
| Teachers' motivational strategies | a. Improvement of comprehensible language abilities, including speaking ability through teacher's motivational strategies |
| | b. Teaching strategies and methods with encouragement |
| | c. Improve self-confidence through teacher's motivational strategies |
| Teacher's style | a. Change of learning interests and academic achievement with teacher's teaching style |
| | b. Acquiring integrated language abilities including speaking through discussion |

The answers from the relating interview excerpts and their interpretation were brought to support the quantitative findings about the motivation components of the English major students in HIU. The themes and topics received from the coding and grouping of the interview answers revealed that they supported the quantitative findings of the students' motivation components, as shown in the samples of the students' interview excerpts below.

**Sample excerpt showing the theme of 'Extrinsic motivation from parents/ peers/ others' in the topic 'Learning together or competition is favorable to learning':**

*One of the best way of study is cooperative learning. First, it's useful to learn others' strong points in group. Second, they can encourage and support one another according to discussion together. Third, it's helpful to solve the problems which they meet with in time while they are studying. Fourth, this kind of method can develop our ability to study and solve the problems by ourselves. What's more, the most important thing is that we can learn to work in group.* (Student E)

**Sample excerpt showing the theme of 'Teachers' motivational strategies' in the topic 'Improvement of the integrated skills with self-efficacy':**

*I have a goal of study. Some have a great one but some small. Self-efficacy influences how*

*much efforts I exert as well as how long I out forth that effort in the face adversity. To some degree, a goal determines my success in the future. However, having a goal doesn't mean I can succeed in no time. I still have a long way to go. The next step I should take is to put my goals into action. Maybe I meet with many difficulties, I mustn't stop or give up. I should keep on going, struggling against all kinds of trouble or problems until my goals are hit!* (Student A)

**Sample excerpt showing the theme of 'Self-efficacy' in the topic 'Teaching strategies and methods with encouragement':**

*In the learning process, teaching me with thousand strategies are very important, a good set of teaching strategies can make students better understand their learning. In the class, the content of the class is rich, not limited to the textbook knowledge, but also pay attention to the communication and interaction with students. In addition, encouragement can better stimulate one's potential and make him or her more motivational.* (Student F)

To sum up, the results from the interview could support the results from the learning motivation questionnaire with certain adding information. The findings from the interview showed that the students learned to set up their learning interests with fluency and motivated by teachers' motivational strategies, which helped to develop the students' speaking abilities with ecological perspectives. Self-efficacy, expectancy and teachers' motivational strategies were the important factors in teaching English language in ecological perspectives and they could increase the students' motivation.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

The current research investigated into the components of learning motivation of the HIU English major students using a mixed method design in that a learning motivation questionnaire yielding a quantitative result and a semi-structured interview yielding a qualitative result. The components of learning motivation in ecological perspectives of the HIU English Major Chinese EFL Students ranking from most to least reported by the students were consisted of seven 'components of learning motivation' including Teacher's Motivational Strategies, Intrinsic Motivation, Teacher's Style, Expectancy, Self-efficacy, Extrinsic motivation from seeking self-reward and self-prosperity, and Extrinsic motivation from parents/peers/others.

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Several discussions are made here along with guided pedagogical implications which could provide a useful reference for English teachers in the field of teaching oral English to the EFL students rendering the students to have full benefits from the teaching.

The component of teacher's strategies coming the first rank in the findings suggested a pivotal role of teachers in teaching with primary concerns of their students' internal and external states and desires, making the teaching student-centered. Regarding firstly from the internal to the external students' states and desires, in an English-speaking class, teachers can guide students to set their learning goals towards spoken English. Goal setting can be related to the motivation, which involves students' beliefs or feelings about the purpose of learning (Pintrich, 2003). Setting a proximal goal commits oneself to a specific academic event at a particular in time, such as completing a term paper in two weeks or speaking with a continuous flow for the assigned task. This type of goal produces a definite feedback loop that requires self-evaluation, which supports students in academic achievement and learning motivation (Zimmerman, 2007; Orzechowska & Polok, 2019).

Reducing learners' anxiety is the next crucial way to deal with the students' learning motivation. In the ecological classroom, the students could reduce anxiety because the passion and the freedom to choose the topic could develop their confidence which, in turn, reduced their anxiety. The students can better perform their oral activities, since self-confidence increases when language anxiety is kept low (Dörnyei, 2019).

Moreover, regarding class learning activities, it brought some useful insights on how learning motivation in ecological perspectives could be adopted in spoken English learning and practice. Effective classroom interaction with the students, group discussion, and peer competition could increase the fluency of oral English to a varying extent. Peers' as well as teacher's supports especially in the forms of encouragement can contribute to the reduction in the speech anxiety, while friendly competition can enhance fun and enjoyment of learning (Gillies, 2016; Tullis & Goldstone, 2020). Teachers should therefore have to balance well between class interaction, group discussion, and peer competition, which have different beneficial functions on their own towards developing EFL learners' language learning proficiency in terms of English language skills, especially speaking.

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Suggestions for future studies include that there should be research about how 'introverted students' performance' needs to be taken care of in the class by teachers so that teachers could be able to notice the students who were falling behind and provide immediate help for them. Also, it is interesting to do research on which types of tasks between 'competitive' and 'cooperative' can help learners better in learning English language. From the interview, some students reported problems about the introvertness, while others reported that there were both 'competitive' tasks that they enjoyed not less than 'cooperative' tasks.

Research on learning motivation still has space to grow further, since it has key effects on students' learning process. The investigation into its components and sub-components to recognize its nature and the way it interplays with EFL students' learning. Studies about the methods of how the components can be boosted up and saved from being burnt down are tremendously required for the area of EFL learning and teaching, especially in teaching oral production skill to the students. The socio-educational aspect of ecological perspectives on language learning which is beneficial in adding the lens to the learning of motivation is still also requiring for additional research in the area of EFL learning and teaching.

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