

The Role of Motivation in Second Language Acquisition --- A View from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs of Second Language Acquisition for Chinese ESL Learners

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Abstract: *Motivation is considered a crucial factor in second language learning. This present study aimed to study Chinese ESL learners' motivation through the lens of conceptual framework of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Adopting a mixed-method approach, this study gave questionnaire and observation of the Chinese students learning ESL in every lesson. The participants were 100 undergraduate students. The results were that Chinese ESL students are strongly lacking their self-esteem. And to achieve the self-esteem and self-actualization, it suggests that teachers need to provide the love and belonging in the classroom to reinforce positive learner behaviours. The findings also suggest that teachers should improve their own abilities to grow Chinese students' L2 motivation.*

Keywords: *motivation, ESL, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-esteem, self-actualization, love and belonging*

1. Introduction

Previous studies have found that motivation is a crucial factor in the acquisition of second language acquisition. Without motivation, the students may lack the interest digging in the subject resulting the inability to learn a second language proficiently. Motivation apart from the role of age, aptitude, cognitive style, personality in SLA (Ellis, 1999) is an important factor in second language learning, it is closely related to students' learning attitude, strategies and grades. So it is of great significance to find out the different types of motivations and their different impacts in learning a second language. To reach a successful SLA learning, students need to open their mouths and talk. They need to have the environment of the second language with enough interaction; they need to have enough English input to provide a chance for them to get enough intake and practice. However, these outside learning roles are very much lack in most SLA classrooms. Without enough input and interaction outsider the learners, students need to find what is inside themselves to trigger the interest to motivate themselves to learn English, to find the pleasure by themselves thus produce successful learning. According to Schumann, John H (1997), psychological framework and neurobiological mechanism suggest that motivation in SLA stimulus appraisal constitutes the desire to learn a second language. This kind of impulse arouses, incites and stimulates action in learning. Apart from the psychological side of the motivation trigger, according to Gardner (1985), motivation is "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language". I want to transform motivation into the area of needs. Because only when our bodies craving something, the inkling of wanting something will then be strong and invincible. The needs are the successful essence of the motivated selves.

From Maslow's view, when basic needs are fulfilled, people tend to search a greater perhaps which is fulfilling the psychological needs. The main objective of this research was to investigate the roles of Chinese ESL learners' motivation from the views of Malow's hierarchy of needs. This research involved 100 Chinese ESL students who are learning every lesson in English in Wenzhou Kean University. This present study suggested the future classrooms which suite the best environment of learning area from students a teacher could give and provide implications for teachers who could improve their own selves to influence the Chinese ESL students' motivation through Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Different types of motivation*

There are four types of motivation. Instrumental, integrative, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation means that individual's motivational stimuli are coming from within whereas extrinsic motivation means that the stimuli in the individual are coming from outside. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was first introduced by Rotter (1966). He believed a psychological motivational principle is behind the psychological theories. Dörnyei (1998) defined the terms intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. People are motivated to seek out positive stimulation and to avoid negative stimulation. Students would be happy to read a book that intrigues them, and they are self-motivated to engage in this activity because it is internally rewarding while reading to prepare for an exam wouldn't satisfy the basic psychological needs rather to get an external reward in return (like good grades). Maslow (1970) believed "self-actualization" stimulate more vigor to reach the full potential and self-fulfillment which indicates that the intrinsic motivation is more important in a way that innate desire triggers what Maslow explained as "peak experiences". For example, Curry, S., Wagner, E. H., & Grothaus, L. C. (1990) found out the smokers with higher levels of intrinsic motivation relative to extrinsic motivation were more likely to achieve abstinence from smoking. Whereas Rigby, C. S., Deci, E. L., Patrick, B. C., & Ryan, R. M. (1992) presented a different view of extrinsic motivation, arguing the autonomous extrinsic motivation which based on the process of internalization and integration is more useful than rather portrayed intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as dichotomous. In the educational process, Deci and Ryan (1985) state that "Intrinsic motivation is evidence whenever students' natural curiosity and interest energize their learning. When the educational environment provides optimal challenges, rich sources of stimulation, and a context of autonomy, this motivational wellspring is likely to flourish." So just as the scholars above quote, the intrinsic motivation still needs stimulus to motivate the L2 learners. Students always experience intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at the same time. The intrinsic and extrinsic motivation both are important in SLA. Both ways could drive students to learn more and avoid procrastination. Different students have different personalities, so it is hard to compare these two motivations. The dichotomy of integrative and instrumental motivation introduced by Gardner (1972) related to the integrative and instrumental types of orientation in L2 learning. Instrumental motivation refers to learning to accomplish a task or getting a job to use a language as a tool to achieve goals whereas integrative motivation concerns with consolidating with another target language community, like a wish to integrate and adapt to a new culture through use of language (Gardner, 1985). Gardner thinks the integrative motivation is more important in SLA. This model is criticized by Dörnyei (1990) who suggested that instrumental motivation could be more important than integral motivation for L2 learners are not likely to aim for becoming a part of a foreign society in terms of their insufficient second language knowledge. Both motivations have their own importance and it is hard to tell which one is more important because other variable factors. Actually, integrative and instrumental motivations are not mutually exclusive. People could be instrumentally motivated to accomplish a task while wanting to be a part of another society with fervent. Brown (2000) stated that learners may select different types of motivation when learner a second language. Extrinsic motivation and instrumental motivation are not exactly alike. Extrinsic motivation stresses the factors outside the person which influence his L2 learning which instrumental motivation focuses the purpose of people learning a second language. Intrinsic and integrative motivations are also different because intrinsic motivation is about the inner fulfillment and self-satisfaction while integrative motivation focuses the identity of joining another foreign community. These different types of motivation work differently towards the same goal that is prompting students to concentrate themselves and immerse themselves in SLA.

2.2 *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in Psychological Review. According to Maslow, we have five categories of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. At the lowest level of Maslow's hierarchy are physiological needs like air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing and reproduction. Second are safety needs like personal security, employment, resources, health and property. Third is love and belonging needs like friendship, intimacy, family and sense of connection. Fourth level is esteem about respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength and freedom. The highest level is self-actualization needs about the desire to become the most that one can be. In second language teaching class, teacher needs to provide students with resources such as reading material, respect students and do their best to make students communicate in L2 environment. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

emphasize the inner value of learning and lay the importance of the teaching resources and environment a teacher could possibly give. Self-actualizing people have the peak experiences which eventually lead them to actively seeking challenges and extend the learning area. Hence, Maslow added the goal of self-transcendence as the final level, the capstone for a student could achieve.

Three points about Maslow's hierarchy of needs should be made clear: The five needs rise like a ladder from low to high, step by step, but the order is not completely fixed, it can change, there are various exceptions; Generally speaking, if a certain level of needs relatively satisfied, will develop to a higher level, the pursuit of a higher level of needs will become the driving force of behavior. Correspondingly, the need for basic satisfaction is no longer an incentive. Now, with basic needs in China no longer a dominant problem (mainland apart from poor countryside), the education in L2 classrooms now change the direction in focusing the efficiency students perform a language task and teachers' methods to help them better understand the different social context; The five kinds of needs can be divided into two levels. Physical needs, safety needs and emotional needs belong to the lower level, which can be met through external conditions. The need for respect and self-realization are high-level needs that can be satisfied through internal factors, and one's need for respect and self-realization is endless. A person may have several needs at the same time, but in each period, there is always a need that dominates and determines behavior. No need will disappear because of the development of higher needs. The needs of all levels are interdependent and overlapping. After the development of high-level needs, low-level needs still exist, but the degree of influence on behavior is greatly reduced.

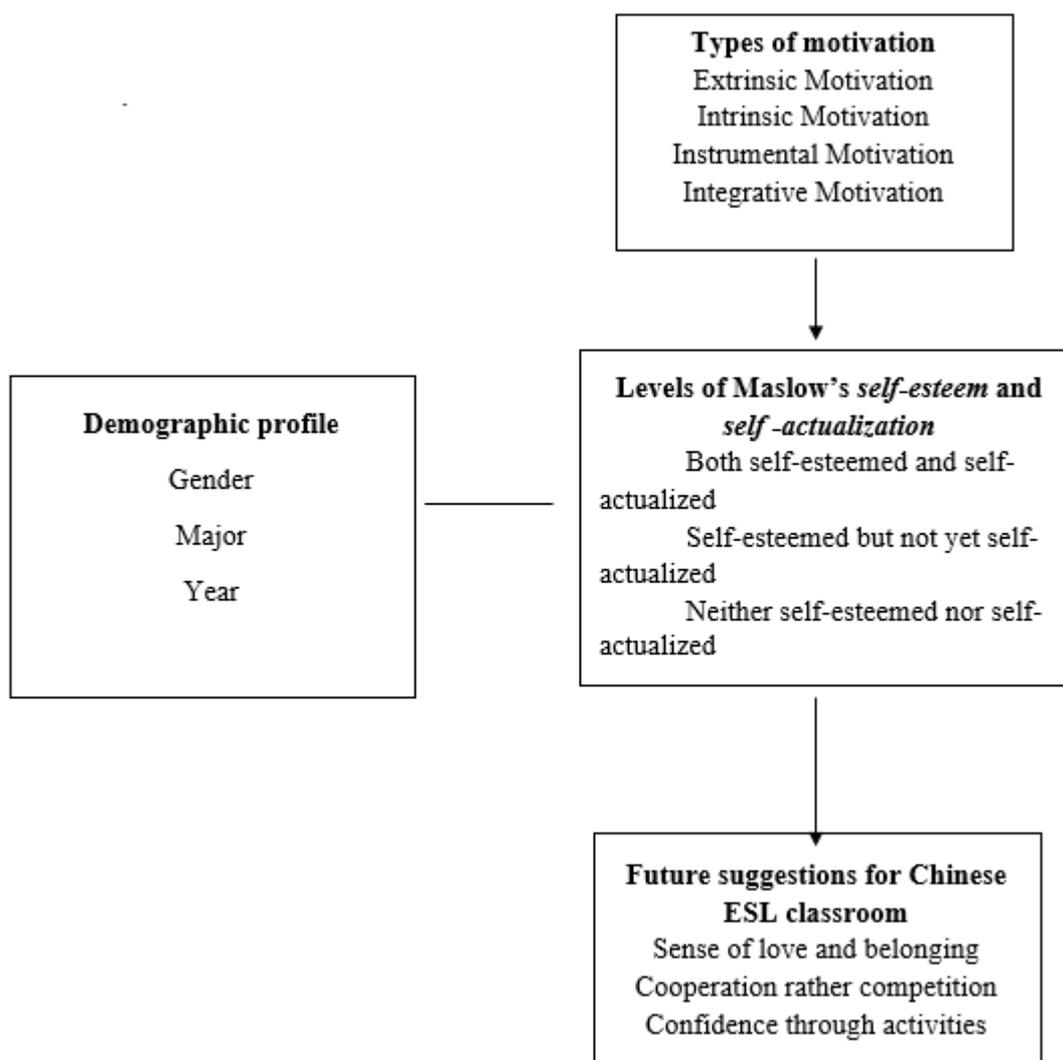


Figure 1: L2 motivational framework through Maslow's hierarchy of needs

3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the role of motivation through Malow's hierarchy of needs in Chinese ESL learners. Two critical questions were addressed in this research.

Do Chinese ESL students have enough confidence in themselves to learning more in English? (not only for study use but for travelling, habits or more)

Do Chinese ESL students put more efforts in English learning if they are pushed by intrinsic motivation?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Questions

(1) What is your number one motivation behind SLA ?

(2) Do you find yourself confident and fulfilling in SLA?

Likert scale questionnaire: Circle a number from 1 to 6 to decide how much you agree or disagree the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Figure 2: 6 point Likert scale from 2 (strongly disagree) to 6 strongly agree scales the participants responses of the following statements.

Statement 1: I like watching English movies and TV shows in English

Statement 2: Learning English is important because my parents made it so

Statement 3: Learning English is interesting to me

Statement 4: I always love to have English classes

Statement 5: Learning English is important to me because I will go abroad

Statement 6: Learning English is pure pleasure to me because I enjoy it

Statement 7: I have to learn English because I don ' t want to fail the class

Statement 8: I love reading English books

Statement 9: Learning English is important to me because the teachers' pressure

Statement 10: The process of learning English is pure pressure

Statement 11: I need to learn English because my parents

Statement 12: Learning English is to gain my access to the society and to get approval from another group(country, area)

Statement 13: I learn English because I love the culture behind it

Statement 14: Group talking in English is fun

Statement15: Same L2 teaching skills(repetition and lecture by teachers only) bore me

4.2 Participants

The participants for this project were Chinese ESL learners from Wenzhou Kean University who are studying every lesson in English. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to 100 students studying in Wenzhou Kean University. The demographic information is shown below in Table 1. There were 42 males and 58 females. Of the whole sample, 60 respondents were English major and 40 had other major. There were 36 female respondents majored in English and 24 male respondents majored in English. Questionnaires were distributed among these students and these questionnaires were conducted under

students' full consent. The students were asked questions about their number one motivation in SLA; the self-esteemed and self-actualization about their learning in SLA; and the efforts they put in SLA.

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Total Number</i>	<i>English Major</i>	<i>Year</i>
<i>Male</i>	42	24	<i>Junior:30</i> <i>Not in junior: 12</i>
<i>Female</i>	58	43	<i>Junior:50</i> <i>Not in junior:8</i>

4.3 Instrument

I used questionnaire to conduct the survey. In the questionnaire, the students were asked to provide some demographic information and to choose the best fit answer in L2 learning in a 6-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-slightly disagree, 4-slightly agree, 5-agree, 6-strongly agree).

5. Data collection and Analysis

The data collection took place in November 11, 2019 in Wenzhou Kean University. The investigator initially emailed the Google Form hyperlink through the After completion of the questionnaire, the researcher converted the data into Microsoft Excel. Because of the small number of participants, the data were analyzed using the means of the responses. In 100 Chinese ESL learners in Wenzhou Kean University, 23 students are motivated by intrinsic motivation(19 females, 4 males), 30 students are motivated by extrinsic motivations(14 females, 16 males), 40students are motivated by instrumental motivation(24 females, 16males), 7 students are motivated by integrative motivation.

6. Results

Part A 1) What is your number one motivation behind SLA

In 100 Chinese ESL learners in Wenzhou Kean University, 23 students are motivated by intrinsic motivation (19 females, 4 males), 30 students are motivated by extrinsic motivations(14 females, 16 males), 40students are motivated by instrumental motivation(24 females, 16males), 7 students are motivated by integrative motivation.

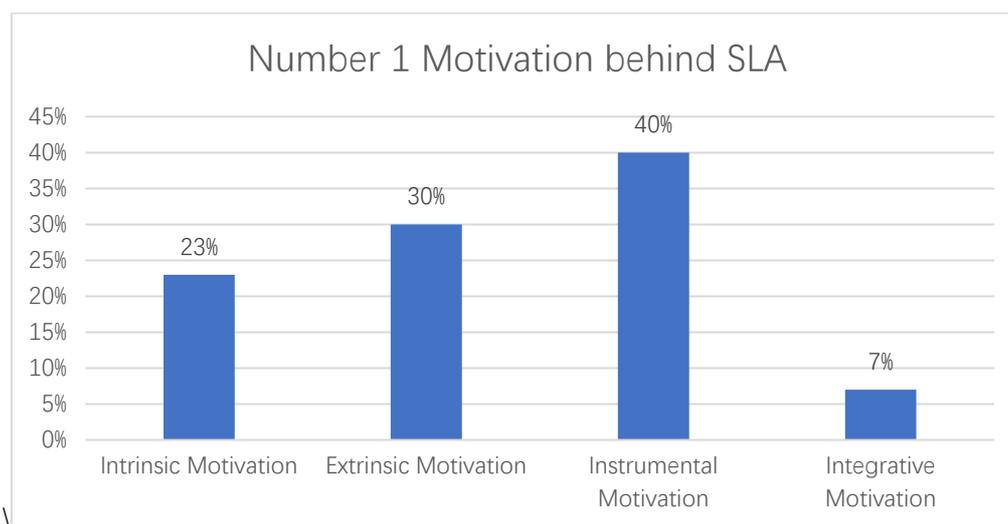


Figure 3: The main motivation (number 1) motivation behind SLA

2) Do you find yourself confident and fulfilling in SLA?

In 100 Chinese ESL learners in Wenzhou Kean University, 65 students present that they are not so much enjoy themselves in learning English(30 females and 25 males), 35 students really enjoy themselves in learning English(28 females and 7 males)

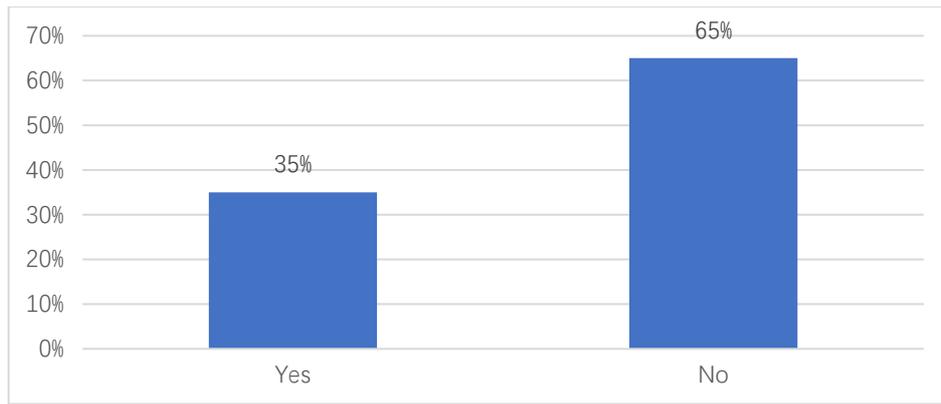


Figure 4: Confidence and enjoyment behind SLA

3) The self-esteem and self-actualization from the best fit answer in L2 learning in a 6-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-slightly disagree, 4-slightly agree, 5-agree, 6-strongly agree). They are measured from the motivational types in down below. The strong level of motivation is considered both self-esteemed and self-actualization. The semi-strong level is considered self-esteemed but not yet self-actualized. The low level is considered neither self-esteemed nor self-actualized. The efforts put in ESL classrooms are measured by students' grades in ESL class.(1-10 points to low to high grades)

Table 2: The motivational variables and the self-esteem levels

Variable	Percentage	Level	Efforts in ESL
<i>Intrinsic interest in L2</i>	23%		10
<i>Self-needs and fulfilling</i>	23%	strong	10
<i>(Integrative) Cultural interest</i>	3%	semi-strong	8
<i>(Instrumental) Future jobs wanting in a positive way</i>	23%	strong	10
<i>Extrinsic force in L2</i>	30%	low	4
<i>Parents and teachers' pressure</i>	30%	low	4
<i>(Instrumental) Future jobs wanting in a negative way</i>	30%	low	4

The table above shows that 23 students from 100 Chinese ESL learners are strongly motivated by the self needs and fulfilling to attain future job. It suggested that they are motivated strongly by the self-esteem and self-actualization. 30 students who are motivated by the extrinsic force are forced to learn in English to fulfill the needs of their parents or teachers. Their self-actualization are low by the judgement of their efforts put in ESL classrooms.

7. Limitations of this research

Motivation is a complex psychological process, so it is difficult to measure. In the last 20 years, the empirical studies mostly used quantitative research methods, questionnaire survey and correlation analysis of the obtained data. This kind of method first ignores the plasticity of motivation, because motivation changes with time and place, and the definition of motivation itself has some ambiguity. The rationality of questionnaire design is often questioned. There are also some questions about whether the answers provided by the test takers are objective and fair, and whether the data collected by the experiment are sufficient and reliable. In some past studies, it is not difficult to find that people using similar research methods have different results, some even very different.

8. Conclusion

The results suggest that Chinese ESL students' main motivation comes from the usage of English rather than driven interest from inside. They are strongly lacking the self-esteem and self-actualization due to the pressure from parents, teachers and the Chinese society. Also, the gender different purpose in learning L2 is suggested too. In order to provide some sense of love and belonging in L2 classrooms. Teachers' words and attitudes are of most importance. Smile and eye contact are very important in teaching. Teachers should respect each student so that they feel unique and have potential. They can try

to stimulate their interest and confidence as well as intrinsic motivation. In the classroom, a similar pattern will always reduce students' interest. Teachers can change the routine and provide them with some new and creative materials and activities. Try to arrange students to use a second language in a real environment to stimulate their comprehensive and instrumental motivation. Considering the productive motivation, teachers should make students feel successful in learning a second language. Teachers can design many activities that require cooperation, but not competition. In the process of completing a task or solving a problem, teachers should praise them and give them confidence. Most comments should be praise and encouragement.

Today, Chinese education authorities recognize the importance of students' abilities, not just book knowledge. As the system and content of the examination are gradually reformed, teachers should learn more teaching theories and apply more innovative methods to motivate students and achieve better results

Even though Maslow's theory has some shortfalls, it is still important in education. For this research paper, we rather highlight its importance in relation to the research.

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