Motivation in Chinese University EFL Learners in Varying Learning Contexts

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Introduction

Spearheaded by social psychologist Robert Gardner (Gardner, 1983, 1985, 2002; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991, 1992, 1993; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995), motivation research has gained wide popularity in both second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) contexts. SL/FL researchers and theorists have long realized that motivation is a great contributor to the learning of a SL/FL (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Liu, 2007; Noels, 2002; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Ushioda, 2006, 2007, 2008; Vandergrift, 2005). Learners high in integrative motivation tend to learn better than those low in integrative motivation. Meanwhile, motivation interacts with such variables as language aptitude, proficiency, second language learning situation, and language anxiety to have an impact on SL/FL learning. Mainly adopting a quantitative approach, the present research sought to investigate motivation and its effect on students' performance in English in three different university EFL contexts in mainland China.

Literature Review

Gardner and his colleagues claimed that motivation involves three components—"attitudes toward learning the second language, desire to learn the language, and effort expended in learning the language" (Gardner, Lalonde, & Pierson, 1983, p. 2). Thanks to their efforts, integrative motivation and instrumental motivation have become two fundamental concepts in motivation research (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Kouritzin, Piquemal, & Renaud, 2009). Integrative motivation reflects the learner's willingness or desire to be like representative members of the target language community and is often held to

be a superior support for language learning (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Instrumental motivation involves more functional reasons for learning a language, such as getting a better job or a promotion, and pertains to the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). To measure learners' L2 learning motivation, Gardner (1985) developed the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which has resulted in numerous studies on SL/FL learning motivation, revealing that motivation enhances SL/FL acquisition and that learners ranking high on integrative motivation work harder and learn faster than those who are low on integrative motivation (Clèment, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Gao, Zhao, Cheng, & Zhou, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Gardner, 1985, 2002; Gardner, Lalonde, & Pierson, 1983; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991, 1993; Hao, Liu, & Hao, 2004; Lai, 2000; Liu & Huang, 2011; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Wen, 2001; Yang, Liu, & Wu, 2010).

As empirical studies on SL/FL motivation blossom, it has been found that integrative and instrumental orientations are not opposite ends of a continuum (Belmechri & Hummel, 1998; Dörnyei, 1994; Huang & Wen, 2005; Qin & Wen, 2002; Ushioda, 1996). Instead, they are positively related and both are affectively loaded goals that can sustain learning. They both may be enhanced by improved L2 proficiency and higher achievement in the target language (Belmechri & Hummel, 1998; Dörnyei, 1994, 2001; Dörnyei & Clèment, 2002; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Ushioda, 1996, 2006, 2007, 2008; Wesely, 2009).

Research results imply that one cannot simply assume cross-cultural pervasiveness of the integrative and instrumental orientations. L2 learning goals can break up into different orientation clusters, the definitions of which vary depending upon the sociocultural setting in which the data are gathered. For example, success with the language itself can lead to enhanced motivation. Thus, new motivation clusters, which are all considered specific types of orientations for learning the target language, have been identified, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, orientations for travel, and intellectual ability (Clèment et al., 1994; Kouritzin et al., 2009; Noels, Clèment, & Pelletier, 2001; Noels, 2002; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Wen, 2001).

For example, Belmechri and Hummel (1998) explored the emergence of orientations and their relation to motivation in a predominantly monolingual

context. Based on the questionnaires distributed to 93 high school students, they found that the students' orientations were travel, understanding school, friendship, understanding English in general, and career opportunities, and that career orientations and understanding English emerged as most important to ESL learning in the context. They also found that the participants didn't show an integrative orientation for learning ESL and that various orientations functioned as predictors of motivation. Gao et al.'s (2003a, 2003b, 2004) extensive research involved 2,278 participants from 30 Chinese universities who answered a battery of self-developed questionnaires and identified seven motivation types: intrinsic interest, immediate achievement, learning situation, going abroad, social responsibility, individual development, and information medium, which were grouped into three categories—instrumental, cultural, and situational. English majors were found to score significantly higher on cultural motivation and some instrumental motivations than non-English majors; they also scored higher on intrinsic interest than majors of natural sciences, higher on social responsibility than majors of natural and social sciences, and higher on individual development and information medium than social science majors. When evaluating EFL learners, more proficient EFL learners reported significantly more intrinsic interest, and less proficient EFL learners were significantly more driven by immediate achievement. Based on the findings, the researchers suggested that native-culture orientation be incorporated to the traditional motivation framework. Kouritzin et al.'s (2009) study of over 6,000 university students in Canada, Japan, and France revealed that learners in the first two countries exhibited primarily instrumental and integrative motivation respectively, while learners from Japan displayed a social capital motivation.

Students in SL and FL contexts may learn a target language for different reasons, even while sharing some similar learning orientations. Unlike SL learners, learners in FL contexts often do not have the sufficient experience with the target-language community in order to have developed attitudes for or against it. This suggests that affective predispositions toward the target language community are unlikely to explain a great proportion of the variance in FL attainment (Dörnyei, 1994, 2001). Hence, it is imperative to conduct motivation studies in different FL learning contexts in order to highlight motivation patterns and the role of motivation in FL learning.

The present research aimed to examine the English learning motivation patterns of Chinese undergraduate non-English majors in varying learning contexts. The following research questions are of particular interest:

1. What is the general pattern of motivation in Chinese university EFL learners in varying learning contexts?
2. What are the specific causes for the students' motivation to learn English?
3. How is the students' English learning motivation related to their performance in English?

Research Design

The present research utilized a mixed method to investigate English learning motivation in EFL learning contexts and its impact on students' performance in English at the tertiary level in mainland China.

Research Context

Targeting first-year undergraduate non-English majors, the present research was situated in three EFL teaching and learning contexts in Beijing: Tsinghua University (TU), Beijing Forestry University (BFU), and China University of Petroleum (CUP). The first two lie in the center of Beijing while the last is located in a suburb. Although all are top universities in China, the mode of English teaching and learning in these universities is quite different. TU is more competence-oriented while BFU and CUP are more exam-oriented. The exam orientation is due to the constraint that non-English majors at BFU and CUP must pass band 4 of the College English Test[1] in order to graduate with a BA or BS degree. However, non-English majors at TU are exempt from the College English Test; nevertheless, they have to pass a school-based English proficiency and exit test, the Tsinghua English Proficiency Test 1, to be granted a BA or BS degree. Another difference is that students of TU, the top university in mainland China and the most prestigious of the three, enjoy the best English learning environment. For example, they have more opportunities

[1] The College English Test is a nation-wide English proficiency test that is a must for undergraduate non-English majors to be granted a degree. For more information on the College English Test in China, see Sun and Henrichsen (2011).

to access and use English with native and non-native speakers, more qualified English education instructors, and more native English–speaking teachers.

A common factor is that all first-year non-English majors at these three universities have to take the same Beijing English placement test upon entering the university. The test, consisting of listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and cloze, aimed to measure students' English proficiency and place them into different band groups. Nevertheless, only students at TU and CUP are actually divided into different band groups (usually bands 1–3, with band 1 representing the lowest English proficiency level and band 3 the highest level) according to their scores on the test when the present study was conducted. Most students are placed in the band 2 group (intermediate level).

Participants

The data for the study were collected in two phases. In phase 1, one intact class from each band group at each university was required to write two reflective journal entries. In phase 2, a large-scale survey was conducted at the three universities. Thus, the participants in these two phases were different.

Instruments

In this study, data were collected by way of reflective journal entries and a survey, as detailed below.

Reflective Journals

Data about personal and affective variables in language learning and data collected from reflective journals have been used in many research studies and constitute a useful source of information about the students' experiences with language learning (Bailey, 1983; Liu, 2009). Following this tradition, one intact class representing each band level from the three universities in the present study were asked to write two journal entries to reflect and comment on their English learning experiences. For each journal entry, writing prompts were provided, which covered three topics: 1) whether the student was motivated to learn English, 2) the student's specific reasons for learning English, and 3) the impact of motivation on the student's learning of English. In addition to the topics suggested, the learner could write about other aspects related to his or her language learning

experiences. In case the students had difficulty understanding the instructions in English, the instructions were also given in Chinese.

Survey

The 26-item English Learning Motivation Scale (ELMS) was developed with reference to Vandergrift's (2005) and Noels et al.'s (2001) foreign language learning motivation survey. To suit the present research, items about interest in and attitude toward the target language were deleted, whereas items about instrumental and integrative motivation were maintained and, in some cases, modified. At the same time, items peculiar to Chinese EFL learning were added such as learning English for certificates and high marks in exams. The final modified version of the ELMS scale used in this research included 26 items and was intended to measure three dimensions of students' English learning motivation: 1) general English-learning motivation (ELM) with 2 items, 2) instrumental motivation (InsM) with 12 items, and 3) integrative motivation (IntM) also with 12 items. All the items were placed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with values of 1 to 5 assigned to each descriptor respectively. The survey achieved a reliability of .886 in the present study.

Course Grades

Students' final course grades were obtained at the end of the term as a global measure of performance in English.

Procedure

The study was conducted during the first term of an academic year, which lasted from 14 to 18 weeks for freshmen depending on which university they were in. After having obtained approval from the administration, the teachers, and their students at each university, the researcher randomly selected one intact class from each band group at TU and CUP, and one intact class from BFU with both teacher and student permission for collecting reflective journal entries. Considering the fact that the majority of the freshmen needed time to become accustomed to university life and the new teaching and learning modes at university, they were asked to write the reflective journal entries during the tenth and eleventh weeks of the semester. The course teachers described the requirements

of journal writing and distributed to the students the topics for each entry in both Chinese and English a week beforehand. By the end of the twelfth week, all the journal entries had been collected. After that, all the journal entries were read and commented on by the researchers. Then, they were photocopied and returned to the students.

The survey was distributed to 29 intact classes, including the classes required to write reflective journal entries, at the three universities during a normal teaching class in the fifteenth week. The students were asked to complete the survey in five minutes. 1,431 questionnaires were collected, of which 1,203 were valid for statistical analysis. The others were discarded due to incompleteness or absence of the students on the day.

Phase One: Journal Respondents

Altogether, six intact classes at the three universities participated in journal writing: 3 TU classes, 1 BFU class, and 2 CUP classes. Among 95 TU journal participants, 34 were band 1 students, 33 were band 2, and 28 were band 3. Of the 83 CUP journal correspondents, 41 were band 2 learners, and 42 were band 3. It should be noted that since the BFU did not adopt any bench system in English teaching, only one class was randomly selected for journal writing. It is also worth noting that these students, in addition to writing reflective journals, answered the battery of questionnaires as well. However, since not all of them completed the survey or finished the two journal entries, the numbers of journal and survey participants and the actual numbers of students in these classes are different. Table 1 records only the real number of journal writers from each band group at each university.

Table 1. Journal Respondents

	Band 1		Band 2		Band 3		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
TU	28	6	28	5	24	4	95
BFU	18 male and 19 female						37
CUP	0	0	35	6	32	10	83
Total	165 male and 50 female						215

The average age of the journal participants was 18.3, and they majored in various areas such as Chinese literature, chemistry, civil engineering, business management, international politics, and medicine. It must be noted that though all three universities were science- and technology-oriented, BFU oriented more toward humanities disciplines. Thus more women were admitted to BFU while more men went to TU and CUP. And the sample of the present study simply represented the true student population of each institution in terms of English proficiency level (band group) and gender ratio.

Phase Two: Survey Respondents

In the second phase, a survey was distributed to approximately 1,500 first-year students at different English proficiency levels at the three universities from various disciplines, such as computer science, architecture, management, and Chinese. Out of 1,431 collected questionnaires, 1,203 were found valid. The others were discarded because of incompleteness. The distribution of participants across gender, band levels, and universities is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Survey Respondents

	TU			**BFU**			**CUP**			**Total**		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Band 1	93	20	113	116	211	327	0	0	0			
Band 2	150	55	205				216	73	289			
Band 3	93	40	133				96	40	136			
Total	336	115	451	116	211	327	312	113	425	764	439	1203

Note. M = male, F = female, T = total

Among the 1203 respondents, 451 respondents came from TU, 113 of which were band 1 students, 205 were band 2 students, and 133 were band 3 students. There were 327 participants from BFU. And 425 respondents came from CUP, among whom 289 were band 2 students and 136 were band 3 students. More students from the band 2 group at both TU and CUP were selected for the study because they represented the first-year students at both universities in terms of number, population diversity, English proficiency, major diversity, and gender difference.

With an age range from 16 to 25 and an average age of 18.7, the majority of the survey respondents started to learn English formally from junior high school.

Data Analysis

To identify the students' motivation patterns in different learning contexts, the ELMS was computed in terms of mean, standard deviation, median, mode, and score range. Then, one-way ANOVA (Duncan's) was conducted to explore the difference in motivation among students from varying learning contexts. Finally, correlational analyses were run to explore the correlation between motivation and students' performance in English.

The reflective journal entries were subjected to thematic content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002), with recurring themes identified, which were then integrated into the discussion of survey results. The primary purpose in the present study was to identify whether the students had motivation to learn English, what motivated them to learn the language, and the impact of motivation on their performance in English.

Results and Discussion

In order to know the general pattern of the students' English learning motivation in various EFL contexts, statistical analyses of the ELMS and its three subscales were computed. Some questions on the ELMS were negatively worded requiring the researcher to invert the values assigned to different responses. For example, on a negatively worded item, an answer of "strongly disagree" was normally assigned a value of 1. However, on a negatively worded item, this value was inverted to a 5. Similarly, a value of 2 was inverted to a 4 on negatively worded items. Thus, the total score of the ELMS revealed the respondent's motivation to learn English. The higher the score, the more motivated the participant was to learn the language.

A total score of more than 104 on the ELMS implies the respondent is highly motivated to learn English. A total score of 78 to 104 signifies moderate motivation, and a total score below 78 indicates little to no motivation. A total score of more than 8 on the 2-item ELM indicates high motivation, a total score of 6 to 8 suggests moderate motivation, and a score below 6 means little to no motivation. A total score of more than 48 on the 12-item InsM implies that a

respondent is strongly instrumentally motivated to learn English, a total score of 36 to 48 represents moderate instrumental motivation, and a score of less than 36 signifies little to no instrumental motivation. A total score of more than 48 on the 12-item IntM implies that a respondent is strongly integratively motivated to learn English, a total score of 36 to 48 represents moderate integrative motivation, and a score below 36 signifies little to no integrative motivation. It holds true for all the three subscales that the higher the score the more motivated the respondent was to learn English integratively or instrumentally. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of the ELMS and Its Subsections

Scale	Mean and Standard Deviation	TU (*n*=451)	BFU (*n*=327)	CUP (*n*=425)	Total (*n*=1203)
ELM	*M*	7.9	7.7	7.9	7.8
	SD	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.8
InsM	*M*	36.4	38.9	39.0	38.0
	SD	6.1	5.9	5.6	5.6
IntM	*M*	35.8	36.5	36.2	36.1
	SD	6.8	7.2	7.5	7.2
ELMS	*M*	80.1	83.1	83.0	81.9
	SD	10.3	11.4	10.6	10.8

Overall Pattern

As presented in Table 3, participants from all three universities had ELMS means above the scale midpoint of 78. This implies that the participants from each university were moderately or highly motivated to learn the language. This finding is consistent with numerous other studies (Hao et al., 2004; Huang & Wen, 2005; Liu, 2007; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Ushioda, 2006; Wen, 2001; Yang et al., 2010). This finding was not surprising in that, as the world is becoming more and more globalized, the Chinese people have had increasingly more

opportunities to communicate with the world, whose international language is often English.

The subsections of the survey showed a similar perspective to the overall pattern. The ELM mean was 7.9. Because 8 was the highest score possible for this section, this suggests that the participants had moderate or strong motivation to learn English. Likewise, the mean of 39.0 on the InsM section of the survey was above the scale midpoint of 36 suggesting that the students were moderately to strongly instrumentally motivated. This too is typical of other studies in FL situations (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Lamb, 2004; Liu, 2007, 2009; Yang et al., 2010). The mean of the IntM was 36.2. This was just above the scale midpoint of 36 and suggested that the students were moderately integratively motivated. This finding was similar to Lamb's (2004) study but different from Liu's (2007).

The frequencies and percentages of responses to items 1 to 13 reveal that the students were highly instrumentally motivated to learn English. They reported being motivated to learn the language for various instrumental reasons such as personal development (86.1%); future careers (72.0%); improving English abilities in four basic skills (70.5%); higher education (68.4%); and going abroad (58.8%), all similar to what was found in Liu's (2009) study.

When it comes to integrative reasons, most students attributed their motivation to learn English to such reasons as wanting to be a person who can speak English (65.6%); wanting to speak more than one language (65.3%); the satisfaction of finding out new things (47.2%); and the good feeling of doing better in class (42%). At the same time, they were less motivated to learn English for such reasons such as satisfaction of doing difficult exercises in English (56.7%); the excitement of hearing someone speaking English (52.8%); feeling guilty (51.6%); and the excitement of speaking English (47.3%). These reasons suggest that the students' integrative motivation was more concerned with their school performance than their liking of the target language.

These findings are generally supported by the result of the reflective journal data. Of the 215 journal participants, 192 (89%) reported that they were generally motivated to learn English, while only 14 (7%) reflected that they had no motivation to learn English. Some of the reasons given for a lack of motivation

were (1) no interest in English, (2) no pressure to learn, (3) limited need to use the language, and (4) the difficulty of learning new English words and texts.

Institutional Patterns

A closer comparison of the statistics in Table 3 reveals that TU students had the lowest mean scores on all the scales except the ELM. It appears that the TU respondents had the lowest overall motivation to learn English. They were also the least motivated to learn the language both instrumentally and integratively. This might be because English education had become an integral part of quality education rather than a language requirement at TU. For almost all disciplines at TU, it had long become a tradition to search for and study resources in English in addition to those in their mother tongue. As such, the TU students might have considered English a part of their daily study, and thus were not externally motivated to learn the language.

Looking again at Table 3, the BFU students had the highest mean scores on the ELMS and the IntM, while the CUP students achieved the highest mean scores on the ELM and the InsM. The BFU students had the highest overall motivation and were the most integratively motivated to learn English. The CUP learners were the most instrumentally motivated. Although their universities are less prestigious than TU, CUP and BFU still regarded English education as a language requirement of university education, and most of their students learned English primarily to pass CET-4, a national English exam (see Sun & Henrichsen, 2011). It is important to note that there were many more female students in the BFU sample. This might partially contribute to the highest motivation demonstrated by this sample in the present study because, as evidenced in a number of existing studies (Lamb, 2004; Liu, 2009; Yang et al., 2011), female students tend to be more motivated to learn English than their male peers.

The survey responses from the three universities did not fluctuate much except for items 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 24—learning English for a good job, more money, high marks, school requirement, certificates, and the good feeling of doing better than expected. While BFU and CUP students generally agreed with these items, many TU learners disagreed. As students of the top university in mainland China, TU students have always been the most competitive in the market—whether to look for a job, to start a career, or to continue with their

higher education both within and outside the country. This might partly explain the difference between the TU students and the CUP and BFU students on these reasons for learning English.

These findings suggest that the TU students, enjoying the best English learning environment, might be the least motivated to learn English both instrumentally and integratively, and those who had poorer English learning facilities were more motivated either instrumentally or integratively. And some of the differences were statistically significant, as indicated by the ANOVA results reported in Table 4. The TU participants significantly differed from their BFU and CUP counterparts on the ELMS and the InsM, whereas no significant differences were found on other scales. This finding was surprising because, generally speaking, learners who are better at a foreign language are more motivated to learn that language (Belmechri & Hummel, 1998; Clèment et al., 1994; Dörnyei, 1994; 2001; Hao et al., 2004; Oxford & Shearin, 1994), but the case was just the opposite in the present research.

Table 4. ANOVA Results of the ELMS and Its Subscales

			University (Mean) TU=451; BFU=327; CUP=425			Location of sig. difference (a=.05)
Measures	F	P	TU	BFU	CUP	
ELMS	10.73*	.000	80.08	83.07	83.01	TU & BFU; TU & CUP
ELIM	1.47	.231	7.85	7.67	7.88	/
InsM	26.00*	.000	36.42	38.92	38.97	TU & BFU; TU & CUP
IntM	.85	.426	35.80	36.48	36.17	/

* = statistically significant

This result could be attributed to the fact that the TU students were exempt from the national CET-4 while both the BFU and CUP students had to pass the exam to obtain degree certificates on time, which resulted in the different policies and styles of English education adopted by the three universities, as described earlier. With an aim of enhancing students' overall competence in English, a more student-oriented teaching style and a more autonomous learning style prevailed at TU. Without the pressure of passing CET-4, the TU students might have a less

strong motivation to learn English, yet they could also learn the language more for personal interests. By contrast, the BFU and CUP students had to pass CET-4 in order to graduate on time. Thus, the teaching and learning of English in these two universities were more exam oriented, which partially explained why these two samples were more motivated to learn the language. This might also explain why the TU students were the least instrumentally motivated to learn English. The fact that the TU learners generally had more and better exposure to English and that they had a brighter future after graduation could also partially account for the finding. Further, this finding might also be expounded by the fact that the TU learners, already quite proficient in English, had more difficulty making greater noticeable progress, which was easier for their less proficient CUP and BFU peers. In addition, they often had a heavier study load for their major, which usually forced them to spend less time on English. Furthermore, having more girl students in the sample might partly account for why the BFU students were the most motivated to learn English, as discussed earlier. Nevertheless, all these explanations need to be confirmed in future research.

Reasons for Students' Motivation to Learn English

As previously discussed, the majority of the participants were motivated to learn English, but for varying purposes, as listed in Table 5.

As noted in Table 5, the common reasons for students in the three university samples to be motivated to learn English were to find a good or better job, to go abroad, to pursue further study, to pass exams, to improve English, and to communicate with foreigners. Shared motivations also included English being useful and important and the student being interested in English. The TU and CUP learners were motivated also because they wanted to learn more things from English books and to communicate with others more easily. Desire to speak English fluently motivated both the BFU and CUP participants to learn the language.

In addition to these common motivations, each sample had some specific ones as well. For example, the TU participants were motivated to learn English because the language, to them, was beautiful and learning the language was fun. They also admired those who spoke the language well and thus thought they would feel proud if they could speak it fluently as well. By learning English well, they might be able to change their present situation and have more and better opportunities.

Table 5. Reasons for Students' Motivation to Learn English (Source: Journal)

TU (95)	BFU (37)	CUP (83)
• To find a good/better job	• To find a better/good job	• To find a better/good job
• To improve English	• To go abroad	• Interest in English
• To go abroad	• To pass CET-4	• English being useful
• To get more knowledge from English books	• Being interested in English	• English being important
• To pass the TEPT 1	• To communicate with foreigners	• Desire to speak English fluently
• English being useful	• To become graduate students	• To learn more things from English books
• English being not so hard now	• English being a requirement for computer majors	• To pass examinations
• To become a postgraduate	• To listen to English	• To communicate with others better
• Admire those who can speak well	• To speak good English	• To go abroad
• To talk with foreigners	• To understand the difference between dreams and reality	• To be happy in English class
• To change the present situation	• For a beautiful future	• To improve English
• To feel very proud	• American movies being funny	• To do as teachers said
• English being important	• Teachers being interesting and not stiff	• To be better than friends
• Being interested in English	• Realizing what has been learned is limited	• To communicate with foreigners
• English being a beautiful language	• To enjoy the new learning environment	• For further study
• To have more better	• To learn more for graduation	
	• To see English movies	
	• To play computer games	
	• To improve English	

The BFU students were motivated because, in their eyes, English and English movies were interesting. They also wanted to play computer games, to enjoy the new learning environment, and to understand the differences between dreams and reality. The CUP learners were motivated to learn English because their teachers told them to study it hard. Meanwhile, they wanted to be happy in English class and be better than their friends.

Generally speaking, each sample was motivated to learn English both integratively and instrumentally. And the TU participants seemed to be more integratively motivated while their CUP peers appeared to be more instrumentally motivated.

Impact of Motivation on Students' Performance in English

When asked to comment on the impact of motivation on their English learning, 142 of 215 (66%) journal respondents reported that having a purpose was conducive to learning English, 31 (14%) believed that motivation did not have any effect on learning English, and 42 (20%) gave no comment (see Table 7). Table 7 also reveals that 60%, 87%, and 75% of the TU, BFU and CUP students respectively held that motivation could be very or a bit helpful to learning English.

Table 6. Impact of Students' Motivation to Learn English (Source: Journal)

	Very helpful	Helpful	A bit helpful	No effect	No comment
TU (95)	6.3%	34.7%	9.5%	18.9%	30.5%
BFU (37)	5.4%	81.1%	0	5.4%	3.2%
CUP (83)	10.8%	57.8%	6%	13.3%	12%
Total (215)	7.9%	51.6%	6.5%	14.4%	19.5%

Comparison of the three samples shows that more BFU (87%) and CUP (75%) participants believed motivation to be a facilitator than did their TU peers (60%), while more TU learners (19%) reflected that motivation could yield no effect on their learning English than did their BFU (5%) and CUP (13%) counterparts.

All these findings were further supported by the results of correlation analyses between the ELMS and the students' performance in English. As noted from Table 6, the overall motivation scale (the ELMS) was significantly positively

correlated with the BFU and CUP students' performance in English (r = .17 and .15 respectively, $p < .01$). The students' motivation to learn English (ELM) was significantly correlated with performance in English across the whole sample with coefficients ranging from .17 to .24 ($p < .05$). Instrumental motivation (InsM) was significantly inversely related only to the whole sample's performance in English. And integrative motivation (IntM) was significantly positively related across the whole sample and to the TU and the CUP students' performance in English (r = .09, .17, and .14 respectively, $p < .01$).

Table 7. Correlations between ELMS and Performance in English

	Whole sample	TU	BFU	CUP
ELM	.17**	.23**	.22**	.24**
InsM	-.065*	-.03	.05	.03
IntM	.09**	.05	.17**	.14**
ELMS	.05	.06	.17**	.15**

Note. ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$

Conclusions and Implications

The present study examined Chinese EFL learners' English learning motivation in varying learning contexts and specific reasons for learning English. The following conclusions are derived from this research.

First, the majority of the whole participant sample and each university sample had moderate or even high motivation to learn English and was moderately or even highly instrumentally or integratively motivated to learn the language, as found in studies on similar populations in Chinese EFL learning contexts (Gao et al., 2004; Liu, 2007; Yang et al., 2010). Among the three university samples, the TU students were the least motivated both instrumentally and integratively to learn English; the BFU students had the highest overall motivation and were the most integratively motivated; and the CUP learners were the most instrumentally motivated. And some of the differences were statistically significant. The varying patterns demonstrated by the three different

university samples might be accounted for by a number of reasons such as different English learning environment, English teaching style and focus, status of the institution, proficiency, and gender.

Second, the students from the three varying learning contexts self-reported to be motivated to learn English largely for similar reasons such as finding a good or better job, pursuing further study, and passing exams, which might be because they, though from different universities, shared a general Chinese culture and studied within the same educational system. Meanwhile, the specific reasons for each sample differed. For the TU students who were the most proficient in English and generally enjoyed the best English learning environment (e.g., more exposure and access to English and English speakers as well as more opportunities to use the language), external motivation was not an important reason to learn the language. On the contrary, they tended to appreciate the language more and learned it for more integrative reasons such as personal interest and communication with English speaking people, as explained by Gardner and his associates (Gardner, 1985; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). For those CUP and BFU students, who were less proficient in English and did not have the best English learning environment, external motivation still constituted an important reason to learn the language. However, even for these students, the more proficient learners tended to be more integratively motivated as well. As China's economy keeps on flourishing and the communication between China and the world is becoming more and more interactive, the students' motivation to learn English may continue to vary in terms of both pattern and specific reasons, which justifies the need for continued research on this issue.

On the whole, the students in this study were more motivated to learn English for practical reasons even though TU participants, specifically, seemed to learn English more for integrative purposes. And for all students, motivation was indeed significantly correlated with their performance in English.

It may be helpful to share these motivations among students to encourage them to learn the target language for a certain purpose. In this way, motivated students may remain motivated in spite of any difficulty and those without any motivation may thus become motivated through peer pressure. Nevertheless, more importantly, it will be highly useful to increase EFL learners' English learning motivation because it is so closely related to their performance in the target language.

Finally, although the present research recruited a large number of participants at varied English proficiency levels from different EFL learning situations in Beijing, the role of gender and proficiency in motivation was not explored. In addition, since motivation was found to be so closely related to students' performance in English, it is necessary to research various strategies to enhance language learners' motivation to learn a second or foreign language. Furthermore, due to the complexity of teaching and learning, what may work in one case may not work in another. Future research on the actual effectiveness of these strategies in diverse classroom settings would be a welcomed contribution.

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