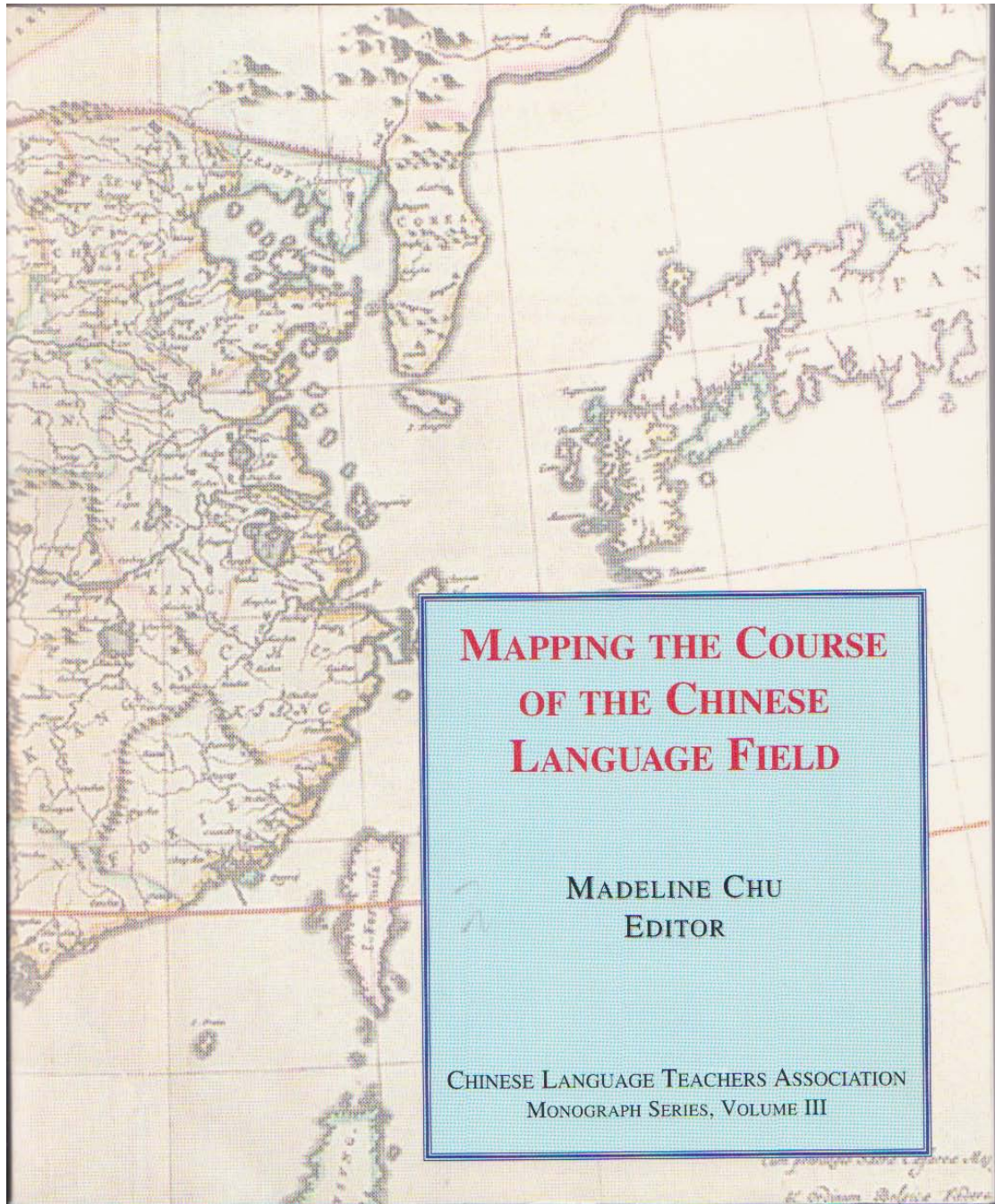


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CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS


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INTRODUCTION

Learner variables, such as motivation and affective factors, are very important in understanding holistic learning processes. Research has shown that motivation directly influences how often students use language learning strategies, how well they perform on curriculum-related tests, and how long they persevere and maintain their second language (L2) skills after having completed their language studies. A broad understanding of language learning motivation helps us promote successful L2 learning and tailor our teaching to students' diverse needs and goals.

It is urgent to investigate motivation variables in the field of Chinese language teaching and learning. In recent years, a nation-wide interest in learning the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) has emerged in the United States. According to the statistics issued by the Modern Language Association (Brod 1988; MLA 1991; New York Times 1996), languages with the highest enrollment growth rates in the United States at the college level are Chinese and Arabic. Chinese language enrollment expanded 72% between 1980 and 1990, and 36% between 1990 and 1995. With the increase of enrollment in Chinese language courses come several changes in the aspects of learners regarding their learning interest, goals, and motivation. Before 1980, students' interests were generally in the academic areas such as Chinese language, linguistics, and literature. Since then, with the increase of economic and trade exchange between Asia and the United States, the interests of students are frequently found in the areas of business-oriented international studies. Moreover, the ethnic background of the student body has also changed, and the percentage of Asian-American students has increased dramatically. While the changes in student body and motivation in learning Chinese are obvious, little research has yet been conducted on Chinese language learning



motivation. The present study investigates the motivation variables in learning Chinese as a foreign language at the university level.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Gardner and Lambert (1959) first studied second language learning motivation. They studied the relationship between attitude/motivation and the achievement of an L2 learner and identified two motivational orientations: integrative and instrumental. "The orientation is integrative if the student wishes to learn more about the other cultural community because he is interested in it in an open-minded way to the point of eventually being accepted as a member of that other group" (Gardner and Lambert 1972, 3). An *instrumentally* oriented student, however, hopes to derive a special benefit such as career-based opportunities from knowing a foreign language and typically has little interest in the target language and culture. Gardner's early studies suggested that integrative motivation was more powerful than instrumental motivation because the L2 learner's ultimate goal was not only to attain language competence but also to achieve "psychological integration" with the target culture. In their later studies, however, Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) found that instrumental motivation was also an effective factor in L2 learning, and integrative motivation may not necessarily be superior to instrumental motivation. Those who are integratively motivated, however, are probably more successful at a later learning stage, mainly because psychological integration sustains students' interest in learning the language longer (Gardner 1985; Dornyei 1990).

Gardner and Lambert laid a strong foundation for the theory of L2 learning motivation, (1959; 1972; 1974) and was supported by subsequent studies (Laine 1984; Gardner 1985; Svanes 1987). Some studies, however, found insignificant or even conflicting results with those of Gardner and his associates (Lukmani 1972; Pierson, Fu and Lee 1980; Oller 1981). Clement and Kruidenier (1983), for instance, suggested that certain motivation factors are context specific and may not be discovered and analyzed by using the integrative/instrumental approach. In other words, the integrative/instrumental approach has certain limitations on the learning environment. Recently, researchers such as Crookes and Schmidt (1991) and Oxford and Shearin (1994) have called for extending the current notion of L2 learning motivation by adding integrative motivation theories of general psychology. Ultimately, what these studies suggest is that it is important both to be context specific, and to explore the motivation construct in a broad approach.

In the context of Chinese language learning, students' expectations of the learning task and outcome are important factors. This is mainly because the task involved is

quite different from that of learning European languages. The present study incorporates expectancy-valence theories in investigating the motivation of Chinese language learning. Vroom defined valence as an “affective orientation toward particular outcomes” (1964, 14) and Lewin (1951) considered it “the psychological value of a particular goal.” Expectancy is defined as the “effort that will lead to successful performance.” (Oxford and Shearin 1994, 21). Vroom postulated that any action could potentially lead to a wide range of results, and the valence (i.e., relative attractiveness) (1964, 14) of the results, as well as the expectation that the action would lead to the desired outcome, determined the effort exerted toward the particular action. Thus, the extent to which a person values the outcomes, the probability of achieving the outcomes, and those effortful behaviors that lead to perceived success constitute an important motivation factor. A person has an idea about the possible consequences of an act, and therefore, makes conscious choices leading to potential consequences according to the probability of achieving the desired outcome. To apply expectancy models to language learning, it is assumed that the valence of learning outcomes, expectancies of learning ability, and probability of obtaining the outcomes greatly influence the student’s motivation.

MOTIVATION AND CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNING

The retention rate of LCTLs such as Chinese and Japanese is low at universities in the United States. For example, it is reported that the attrition rate among students who take Japanese is sometimes estimated as high as 80% (Mills, Samuels, and Sherwood 1987). Samimy and Tabuse (1992) reported that learning less commonly taught languages can produce strong negative affective reactions from the students because the high difficulty level of the learning task may hinder their learning motivation. This is especially true for students who are not aware of the level of difficulty of learning Chinese. According to the data of the United States Foreign Service Institute, it takes English-speaking Americans at least three times longer to learn Chinese than French and Spanish, mainly because of the difficult Chinese orthographic system. Students, who are not psychologically prepared for the challenge of the language, may become frustrated at the beginning of their learning and a major affective and motivational barrier may be formed. Further, in learning Chinese or Japanese, the expectations of students toward the learning task and effort required often may not match the reality. For instance, a student may have decided to learn Chinese because of a fascination with the orthographic calligraphy, but may not be aware of the immense effort required to master the art. Consequently, students may develop negative reactions to the language, and their motivation may greatly decrease.

In recent years, the percentage of Asian-American students enrolled in Chinese classes has rapidly increased. Such a change in the ethnic composition of the student body may also bring about changes in motivation variables. Since most Asian-American students have some language background, e.g. they may be able to speak a Chinese dialect or have learned some Mandarin in Chinese heritage schools before they entered the university, their motivation may vary from those who are not Asian-American.

Ultimately, identifying the motivation variables in Chinese language learning and discovering how much these variables account for variations in Chinese language achievement are the purposes of this study. It will compare the initial motivation of students of different ethnic backgrounds in choosing to learn the Chinese language and the motivation that promotes students to continue their Chinese study beyond the beginning level.

A STUDY OF CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION

Subjects

Students enrolled in the beginning and intermediate Chinese language courses from six intact Chinese classes at two U.S. universities participated in this study. The subjects consisted of 122 students: 77 Asian-Americans and 45 non Asian-Americans. Most of the Asian-American students could speak or understand a Chinese dialect when they enrolled in Chinese courses. It should be noted that even though most Asian-American students in this study can speak or understand a Chinese dialect, they had little background of Mandarin Chinese when they enrolled in the beginning Chinese courses. The students who had linguistic background in Mandarin Chinese were placed out of the beginning Chinese courses.

Since one goal of this study is to explore the reasons why some students persist in Chinese study while others do not, the sample consisted of students at two levels of proficiency: 81 at the beginning and 41 at the intermediate levels. Among the 41 intermediate level students, 37 were from the beginning-level classes and 4 joined in the classes by taking a Chinese placement test. The students at the beginning level had been learning Chinese for two months and students at the intermediate level had been learning Chinese for fourteen months when the questionnaire was administered.

Instruments

The instruments include a two-part survey questionnaire, which is presented in the appendix, at the mid-term and then at the final examinations of the semester. Part one of the questionnaire measures the motivation variables, including expectations of learning strategies and of efforts required. Seven-point rating scales for the motivational variables were used and multiple choices on a four-point scale were used to measure learner expectations of the learning strategies, efforts, and tasks. Expectations of learning strategies are assumed to be direct indicators of motivation; that is, persons who have high expectations of strategies and efforts would be actively engaged in their learning. Questions in this section were mostly adopted from the published motivation scales of language learning: the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardener 1985), and the questionnaire developed by Ely (1986). Because these two scales do not contain questions relevant to expectations of learning strategies and efforts, several newly designed questions were added. By including items from the previous studies and new items relevant to learning Chinese as a foreign language, a more complete and valid description of the motivation of the targeted population results.

Part two of the questionnaire was developed based on expectancy theories proposed by Vroom (1964) and Mitchell (1974). Expectancy theories conceptualize motivation as a function of value and expectancies. Learners therefore, have cognitive expectancy concerning the learning task and possible consequences of their learning efforts. They are aware of the cause and effect relationship and can make a conscious choice in their learning. Such expectations and desired outcomes become motivational forces that contribute to their language achievement. Questions were developed in two steps. First, a preliminary study was conducted where fifteen students from the beginning- and intermediate-level Chinese classes were asked to list the outcomes that they strongly desired to achieve from the Chinese classes that they were taking. The frequencies of the outcomes generated by the students were then calculated. Based on the results of the preliminary study, the six outcomes with the highest frequency were developed into a questionnaire. The final questionnaire had 18 items divided equally among valence, expected learning ability, and probability of achieving the outcome.

Each group of six items of the questionnaire represents the different outcomes that students desire to achieve in taking Chinese courses. Items 1 to 3 refer to language skills, e.g., *to speak Chinese fairly fluently, to communicate with Chinese-speakers in basic Chinese, and to develop reading comprehension of Chinese*. Item 4 presents the general concern of students, e.g. *to receive an "A" for the course*. This outcome is of a different type from the other five outcomes for it is an external reward, whereas other outcomes indicate the desires for language proficiency and

knowledge of different culture. Items 5 and 6 refer to cultural enrichment, e.g. *to better understand Chinese people and their way of thinking* and *to learn more about Chinese culture and customs*.

Items on valence were measured on a seven-point rating scale, while items on expected learning ability and learning outcomes were measured by probability on a scale of 0 to 100. The formula for the expectancy theory to be used in an educational setting is: $f(\text{motive} \times \text{ability})$ where $\text{motive} = \text{valence} \times \text{expected outcome}$; $\text{ability} = \text{expected learning ability}$. Such a method of developing the questionnaire and measuring expectancy was proposed and used by Mitchell (1974). It was assumed that valence and expectancies would influence the level of effort exerted in learning.

The second instrument consisted of mid-term and final examinations administered in all the classes. The examination format for the various classes was very similar, included listening and reading comprehension, writing production, translation, and grammar. The mid-term and final examination scores of each student were converted into percentage scores and averaged to become a compound criterion variable.

The questionnaire was administered during a regular class session. Students were asked to give their immediate reaction to the questions as accurately as possible and confidentiality was assured by using student ID numbers.

RESULTS

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was used to determine the motivation factors of students learning Chinese at the university level in the United States. Eighteen questions went through a correlation matrix, factor extraction and rotation procedures. Principal component analysis was used to extract factors that had eigenvalues of greater than 1.0. Four factors were identified and conceptualized as motivation of instrumentality: intrinsic motivation, expected learning strategies, efforts, and passivity toward requirements.

Motivation of instrumentality consisted of five items (Items 5, 9, 2, 7, 8). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale was .82. All the items in this factor have the salient trait of using language as a tool to fulfill certain goals: *to use Chinese when traveling to a Chinese-speaking country, to meet and converse with more and*

varied people, to use it with Chinese-speaking friends, and recognition of Chinese as an important language in the economic development of the world. In comparison with Gardner's concept of instrumental motivation, instrumental purposes from this factor are broader and more generalized.

The second factor, intrinsic motivation, had five items (Items 4, 1, 13, 6, 3). The Cronbach alpha for the scale was .61. Items in this factor indicate the internal appreciation and enjoyment of learning the language *because of: interest in the Chinese cultural heritage, in better understanding and appreciating Chinese art and literature, and enjoyment of the work.* These items emphasize the curiosity and exploring nature of human learning.

The third factor, *expectations of learning strategies and efforts,* remain with its five original items (Items 14, 15, 17, 18, 16). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was .68. Items 14, 17, and 18 are concerned with learning strategies. Item 15 is concerned with time commitment for learning, and Item 16 with class interaction.

The final factor, *passivity toward requirements,* contained three items (Items 12, 11, 10), and the Cronbach alpha was .54. The motivation in this factor came from *meeting a degree requirement* or from an external reason that *the classes are less demanding than other five-unit courses.* These items present a characteristic of compliance with requirements and a passive attitude toward taking Chinese.

Significant Predictors of Chinese Language Attainment

A multiple regression analysis was used to address the research question of how much different motivation factors can predict Chinese language achievement. All four factors identified from factor analysis entered stepwise multiple regression procedures as independent variables, and the score of examinations entered as the dependent variable. The data were sorted into four sub-groups according to the levels of proficiency and ethnic background: the beginning and intermediate, and Asian-American and non Asian-American students respectively.

The results showed that both intrinsic motivation and expectation of learning strategies and efforts are significant predictors of Chinese language attainment for the students at the beginning and intermediate levels respectively. For the beginning-level Asian-American students, 16.9% of the variance of the dependent variable can be accounted for by intrinsic motivation, and, for the intermediate-level Asian-American students, 10.0% of the variance can be accounted for by the factor of expectation of learning strategies and efforts (Table 1). In other words, the beginning-level students who had high intrinsic motivation received high

examination scores; the intermediate-level students who were willing to exert a high level of effort and to use effective learning strategies received high examination scores.

Both *intrinsic motivation* and *expectation of learning strategies and efforts* are significant predictors with the beginning-level non Asian-American students. For the beginning-level non Asian-American students, 15.7% of the variance of the dependent variable can be accounted for by intrinsic motivation. Both intrinsic motivation and expectation of learning strategies and efforts can account for 22.7% of the variance of the dependent variable. For the intermediate-level non Asian-American students, 6.4% of the variance can be accounted for by the factor of expectation of learning strategies and efforts (Table 2). Tables 1 and 2 show the results of the regression of the four factors with students of four subgroups respectively.

Table 1
Stepwise Regression of Course Achievement
Subgroups of Asian-American Students at Beginning and Intermediate Levels

Step	Variable in equation	R ²	R	T	p
1	Intrinsic motivation	.169	.411	6.366	.000
1	Expected strategies/efforts	.100	.317	2.430	.018

Table 2
Stepwise Regression of Course Achievement
Subgroups of Non Asian-American Students at Beginning and Intermediate Levels

Step	Variable in equation	R ²	R	T	p
1	Intrinsic motivation	.157	.397	3.508	.000
2	Expected strategies/efforts	.227	.476	2.468	.016
1	Expected strategies/efforts	.100	.317	2.430	.018

A forward stepwise regression was used to determine the variables that best predict language attainment. Entered into the regression procedure are all the variables in "intrinsic motivation" with the subgroup of Asian-American students at the beginning level, all the variables in intrinsic motivation and "expectation of learning strategies and efforts" with the subgroup of non Asian-American students at the beginning level, and all the variables of "expected learning strategies and efforts" with both ethnic subgroups at the intermediate level. Course achievement score was the dependent variable. The results are presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5. It was discovered that interest in one's cultural heritage was a significant predictor of language achievement for Asian-American students at the beginning level (Table 3), but at the intermediate level, expected learning strategies in a classroom was the most significant predictor (Table 4). For non Asian-American students at the intermediate level, expected strategies after class was a significant predictor (Table 5). No variables were able to enter the regression equation with the subgroup of non Asian-American students at the beginning level.

Table 3
Stepwise Regression of Course Achievement
Asian-American Students at the beginning Level

Step	Variable in equation	R ²	R	T	p
1	Interest in one's heritage (Item 4)	.253	.485	3.633	.001

Table 4
Stepwise Regression of Course Achievement
Asian-American Students at the Intermediate Level

Step	Variable in equation	R ²	R	T	p
1	Strategies in Classroom (Item 16)	.123	.350	2.724	.009

Table 5
Stepwise Regression of Course Achievement
Non-Asian-American students at the Intermediate Level

Step	Variable in equation	R ²	R	T	p
1	Speak Chinese after Class (Item 18)	.061	.247	2.36	.020

The results of regression analysis suggest that intrinsic motivation plays an important role in both Asian-American and non-Asian-American students

enrollment in Chinese classes. The most important items in intrinsic motivation include *interest in one's heritage* with the Asian-American students. *Expectations of learning strategies and efforts* are the motives that retain both Asian-Americans and non-Asian-Americans students for the intermediate level. Students who are interactive in class try to speak Chinese after class as much as possible, make a time commitment, and learn from feedback are likely to continue to the second year Chinese classes.

Differences among Subgroups: Independent T-Tests

Independent t-tests were used to discover motivation differences among subgroups of Asian-American and non Asian-American students at the beginning and the intermediate levels. Significant differences were found with students of two different levels of proficiency in two factors: *passivity toward requirement* ($t = -2.86$, $df = 120$, $p = .005$), and *expectations of learning strategies and efforts* ($t = 2.62$, $df = 120$, $p = .011$). Significant differences were also found with students of two ethnic subgroups at the beginning level in the factor of intrinsic motivation ($t = 2.47$, $df = 79$, $p = .018$).

The results showed that students at the beginning level had a higher score for passive attitude toward taking Chinese than students at the intermediate level. Students at the intermediate level, comparing to students at the beginning level, obtained higher scores on *expectation of the learning task* and lower scores on *passivity toward requirements*. These findings suggest that an appropriate expectation of learning strategies and efforts is an important factor for students to continue their Chinese beyond the beginning level. The passive attitude and compliance with requirements, on the other hand, may be a factor for some students to enroll initially in Chinese classes.

Students are generally more familiar with commonly taught languages such as French and less familiar with LCTLs such as Chinese. Their expectation of the learning task may develop and change in the process of learning Chinese. First-hand experience in learning Chinese may help students develop appropriate expectations of learning strategies and efforts. Consequently, students at a higher proficiency level may use more appropriate learning strategies and exert more effort in their learning.

Since no questionnaire had been administered to intermediate-level students at the beginning of their Chinese learning, we do not have the data to determine whether they had an appropriate expectation of the learning task and strategies at the very beginning of their learning or developed it later. Late development of expectation seems to be most likely. It is assumed that those students who did not have or did

not develop an appropriate expectation of their learning strategies were likely to discontinue Chinese before they reached the intermediate level. Those who wanted to continue may have quickly learned that the task of Chinese language learning was time consuming and demanding. Students may accordingly alter their expectation, develop expectations of the learning task and strategies, and continue learning at the intermediate level.

The results of t-tests also showed that there was a difference between the two ethnic subgroups at the beginning level. The difference between these two sub-groups was also demonstrated by the results of regression as presented in Tables 1 and 2. The results suggest that the Asian-American students at the beginning level have a strong orientation of *interest in one's own culture* (Table 3). They enrolled in Chinese language courses with the initiative motive of understanding the Chinese culture. *Intrinsic motivation*, and *the expectation of learning strategies and task*, on the other hand, motivated the students from non Asian-American background. Since the items in intrinsic motivation and expectation of learning strategies and efforts were all equally important to the non Asian-American students at the intermediate level, no particular item was able to enter the regression equation.

Correlations between Motivation Variables and Desired Learning Outcomes

Each item of the desired outcomes has three components: valence of the outcomes, expected ability and efforts to obtain the outcomes. These components went through a statistical procedure, and revealed a score for each item of the desired outcomes. Correlations between desired outcomes from the expectancy model and the motivation variables were conducted by using Pearson product-moment correlations. The high correlation coefficients among the variables provide the information about the constructs of motivation of Chinese language learning. Tables 6 to 10 present the correlations from the students of two different levels of proficiency and the ethnic background respectively.

Table 6
Correlations between Desired Outcomes and 4 Motivation Factors
Asian-American Students at the Beginning Level

Desired Outcomes	Motivation Factors				Avg. score
	Instrumentality	intrinsic	passivity	Expected efforts	
1. Speak Chinese fluently	.009	.041	.286*	-.109	.215
2. Communicate in basic Chinese	.225	.002	.347**	-.253*	.297**

3. Develop reading skill	.093	.017	.246*	-.208	.334**
4. Receive an "A" for the course	-.147	.037	.198	-.217	.336**
5. Understand Chinese people	.363**	.289*	.389**	-.193	.170
6. Learn Chinese culture	.387**	.204	.353**	-.261*	.063
Average score of the course	.220	.303**	-.051	-.151	1.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 7
Correlations between Desired Outcomes and 4 Motivation Factors
Non Asian-American Students at the Beginning Level

Desired Outcomes	Motivation Factors				
	Instrumentality	intrinsic	passivity	Expected efforts	Avg. score
1. Speak Chinese fluently	.139	.224	.133	.163	.077
2. Communicate in basic Chinese	.254*	.168	.279*	.024	.147
3. Develop reading skill	.209	.117	.208	.181	.060
4. Receive an "A" for the course	.030	.086	.136	.119	.419**
5. Understand Chinese people	.277*	.353**	.341**	.110	.005
6. Learn Chinese culture	.265*	.070	.395**	.069	-.020
Average score of the course	-.035	.391*	.008	-.05	1

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 8
Correlations between Desired Outcomes and 4 Motivation Factors
Asian-American Students at the Intermediate Level

Desired Outcomes	Motivation Factors				
	Instrumentality	intrinsic	Expected efforts	passivity	Avg. score
1. Speak Chinese fluently	.380**	.354**	.249*	.058	.150
2. Communicate in basic Chinese	.526***	.361**	.451***	-.116	.264
3. Develop reading skill	.536***	.289*	.468***	-.191	.331**

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4. Receive an "A" for the course	.064	.136	.127	-.179	.454**
5. Understand Chinese people	.617***	.517***	.591***	-.083	.205
6. Learn Chinese culture	.595***	.471***	.630***	-.103	.067
Average score of the course	.164	.151	.317*	-.268*	1.

* p < .05 **p<.01 *** p < .001

Table 9
Correlations between Desired Outcomes and 4 Motivation Factors
Non-Asian-American Students at the Intermediate Level

Desired Outcomes	Motivation Factors				
	Instrumentality	intrinsic	Expected efforts	passivity	Avg. score
a) Speak Chinese fluently	.364**	.368**	.502***	.008	.131
b) Communicate in basic Chinese	.375**	.346**	.397**	-.072	.186
c) Develop reading skill	.388**	.276*	.413 ***	.015	.127
d) Receive an "A"	.150	.219	.263*	.132	.262*
e) Understand Chinese people	.349**	.378**	.380**	-.001	.147
f) Learn Chinese culture	.348**	.449***	.386**	-.008	.149
Average score of the course	.071	.413***	.312*	-.123	1.

* p < .05 **p<.01 *** p < .001

Four motivation factors and the desired outcomes have higher correlations with the students at the intermediate level than students at the beginning level regardless of the ethnic background of the sample. As Tables 6-9 show, the motivation factors of *instrumentality*, *intrinsic motivation*, and *expected learning strategies and efforts* correlate to the desired outcomes significantly ($p < .05$). The differences between the two ethnic subgroups at the intermediate level are small: *intrinsic motivation* correlates to the average score of the course significantly only with the non Asian-American students, whereas *developing reading skill* correlates to the average score of the course significantly only with the Asian-American students. The difference between the students of the two ethnic subgroups at the beginning level is bigger than the sample at the intermediate level. For example, the desired outcomes of

communicating in basic Chinese and *developing reading skill* correlate to the average scores significantly with the Asian-American subgroup but not the non Asian-American subgroup. This suggests that Asian-American students receive high course scores when they have a strong desire to develop reading skills and communicate in basic Chinese.

Regardless of the ethnic background, motivation of *instrumentality* significantly correlates to Items 5 and 6, the culture-oriented outcomes with students at the beginning level, and to all desired outcomes except Item 4 with students at the intermediate level that is significant. The differences suggest that the motivations for beginning-level students are more culturally oriented, i.e. they want to use Chinese as a tool *to understand Chinese people* and *to learn Chinese culture*. The intermediate-level students have a broad motivation orientation, which includes the acquisition of cultural understanding and language skills. The *desire to receive an "A"* has a very weak correlation to motivation of instrumentality with students at both levels and of both ethnic backgrounds because such a desire is an external factor that concerns the formal course reward, rather than an outcome concerned with language and cultural skills. In addition, it is possible that students may not be concerned with the instrumental variables such as meeting and conversing with more varied people (which will reduce the score on instrumentality), but may be concerned only with the grade and thus, be able to actively engage in learning to achieve a high course grade.

Since instrumentality has a low correlation with the achievement score, correlations among four motivation factors are computed to further examine this variable. *Instrumentality* is significantly correlated to *intrinsic motivation and expectation of learning strategies and efforts*. The results suggest that instrumentality does directly contribute to Chinese language attainment through mediation, but does not directly contribute as the *intrinsic motivation and expected strategies and efforts* do. When students learn Chinese for certain purposes and use Chinese to accomplish their goals, they are highly motivated to try effective strategies. This finding is consistent with Dornyer's study (1990) in showing that instrumental goals contribute significantly to motivation for foreign language learners.

Intrinsic motivation significantly correlates to all desired outcomes except Item 4 with the students at the intermediate level, and Item 5, *understanding Chinese people*, with the students at the beginning level regardless of their ethnic background. The correlations between the intrinsic motivation and the desired outcomes also indicate that the *intrinsic motivation* of the beginning-level students is more culturally than linguistically oriented. Those who are highly intrinsically motivated want to learn more about Chinese culture. Students at the intermediate level, however, are both culturally and linguistically oriented since the correlation

between the intrinsic motivation and desired outcomes of both language and culture skills are significant.

Expectations of the learning strategies and efforts significantly correlate to most items of desired outcomes with students of both ethnic subgroups and levels of proficiency. Students who are willing to use effective learning strategies and to exert effort in learning also highly value the outcomes in the expectancy model. The correlations between expected strategies and efforts and the score of the course is significant with the students at the intermediate level, yet insignificant with the students at the beginning level. This suggests that *expected efforts and strategies* play a more important role in Chinese language attainment with the students at the intermediate level than students at the beginning level. This finding is consistent with the results of regression as presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Passivity toward requirements has either negative or little correlation with desired outcomes with all the students. This finding suggests that passivity toward taking Chinese is a different factor than other motivation factors for it seems to be more related to students' passivity in responding to requirements and coping with courses without engaging effort, than to motivation in the usual sense. It may be a factor that promotes some students' entrance into Chinese courses, but it does not sustain them to the intermediate level. The weak correlations between *passivity* and the other motivation factors, desired outcomes, and the course achievement score suggest that it may not belong to the motivation framework discussed in this study. Learning a foreign language is a creative process. Through such a process, learners infer language data and discover language rules, and derive a sense of competence. From the perspective of the nature of language learning, intrinsic motivation enhances whereas passivity inhibits learning a foreign language.

The only desired outcome that does not correlate to any motivation factors with students at the both levels and ethnic subgroups is *receiving an "A."* To further examine this variable, correlations among all desired outcomes are computed. It is discovered that the motivation to *receiving an "A"* significantly correlates with the motivation *to be able to speak Chinese fluently* ($r = .487, p = .000$), *to communicate with Chinese people* ($r = .311, p = .003$), *to develop reading comprehension skills* ($r = .412, p = .000$), and to the average score of course achievement ($r = .528, p = .000$). In other words, students who desire a high grade are also motivated to achieve basic language skills such as conversation and reading comprehension. They are usually able to achieve language proficiency and receive a high course score. To receive a high course grade is not correlated with culturally oriented outcomes. This suggests that it is possible for students who are only interested in acquiring language skills and a high course grade to be actively engaged in learning and to exert effort to achieve language proficiency.

DISCUSSION

Initial Motivation of Students with Different Ethnic Backgrounds

Asian-American and non Asian-American students share similar motivations for beginning Chinese language learning in that intrinsic motivation plays a significant role for both subgroups. The emphasis and orientations of their motivation, however, vary to a certain extent. Asian-American students are highly motivated by *having a great interest in their own cultural heritage*, as well as by *the desire to understand Chinese people*, whereas the non Asian-American students are highly motivated by *intrinsic motivation* and the *motivation of expectation of learning strategies and efforts*. The intrinsic motivation is the initial motivation for students to start learning the Chinese language. In addition, the expectation of learning strategies and efforts also contributes to the achievement of the non Asian-American students at the beginning level.

Another factor that may motivate students to enroll in the beginning-level Chinese courses is passivity toward requirements. The presumptions *that Chinese classes were less demanding than other five-unit courses* and that they could easily fulfill requirements motivate students to learn Chinese. This is especially true for students who have a certain language background, and who might think that the course would be less demanding for them because of their background. However, this learning expectation only motivates students to register for a Chinese course and may not match the reality: Chinese language courses are much more demanding than originally expected. As the data of correlations between desired outcomes and four motivation factors with students of both ethnic subgroups show, students who had this passive factor received low test scores and were more likely to discontinue their study before reaching the intermediate level.

The Motivation of the Students at the Intermediate Level

At the beginning level, the intrinsic motivation of learning about Chinese culture is a significant predictor for both ethnic subgroups to begin learning the Chinese language. At the intermediate level, however, the motivation is diminished, and instead, *expectations of learning efforts and strategies* becomes the significant predictor for students of both ethnic subgroups.

The above finding is not consistent with those of previous studies (Gardner 1985; Dornyei 1990). The findings of previous studies indicate that interest in a target culture is strongly associated with language attainment at higher language proficiency levels. Two factors may explain the inconsistency. One may reflect the

language background of the ethnic body of subjects in this study. Many students with Asian-American background possess a certain amount of linguistic knowledge of Mandarin Chinese or another Chinese dialect. They may anticipate having an advanced status in Chinese classes or, owing to their background, may assume they can exert less effort than other students. They enroll in Chinese courses because they are interested in their own Asian culture and expect that the course may be, for them, less demanding than other courses. They may, however, discover a gap between what they know or expect from learning Chinese and what a formal Chinese course requires. In the process of learning Mandarin Chinese, they may realize the extra commitment that the course demands. Consequently, those who are not willing to make considerable efforts in their learning may discontinue their study. Those who understand or gradually have realized the time-consuming process of learning Chinese may continue to the intermediate level. Therefore, the factor of *expectations of learning efforts and strategies* becomes a strong predictor at the intermediate level.

Another factor is the different language learning contexts, especially with non-Asian-American students. For example, many students, at the onset of Chinese instruction, are fascinated by the Chinese writing, but are not aware of the amount of time required to learn Chinese characters. In other words, they may not know the kind of learning task that awaits them. Students who study Chinese for one year gradually understand the importance of memorizing characters, and develop their expectations of learning strategies and effort. At this stage, expected learning task and strategies become the primary factors in predicting learning achievement. Oxford and Shearin (1994) also point out that language learners with established goals and a sense of self-efficacy, which they define as "one's judgment of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations," will focus on learning tasks and will develop strategies to complete the tasks.

In the process of learning, students gradually develop their expectation of learning task and strategies. Thus, it is not that intrinsic motivation disappears for intermediate students, but that expectations of the learning task and strategies becomes the best predictor of language attainment as a result of interaction between learning and motivation.

Desired Learning Outcomes and Motivation Factors

The desired learning outcomes in this study have three components: valence measured by the degree of appreciation, expectancy of learning outcomes measured by the probability, and the expectation of one's own ability to achieve the learning outcomes. These components emphasize the cognitive aspect, and goal-directed motivation. When an individual has goal-seeking motivation, he or she is

determined to fulfill the goal. Furthermore, the clearer and more specific the goal is, the more effective the motivation is (Knowles 1973).

As indicated from Tables 6 to 9, most of the desired outcomes correlate significantly to the course achievement with students at both levels of proficiency and the ethnic subgroups. The desired outcomes also correlate significantly with the motivation factors of instrumentality and expectations of learning efforts. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that when students believe that outcomes and learning performance will lead to certain meaningful results or valued instrumentality, they are most likely to be motivated to exert effort in learning. They will be motivated to use effective and high-level learning strategies to achieve the goals. Thus, the factors of *desired outcomes*, *valued instrumentality*, *purposeful efforts*, and *effective learning strategies* correlate and interact with each other to form a strong motivation to promote students in their learning. When students see the internal relationships among these factors, they are motivated to identify specific outcomes, employ strategies to accomplish them, and develop a sense of self-control in their learning.

The desired outcome or goal can be an external factor. For example, Item 4, to receive a grade of A, has the highest correlation with achievement scores of the students at both proficiency levels and ethnic groups. A further analysis of the correlation coefficients revealed that the desire for a high grade correlates significantly with speaking Chinese fairly fluently, communicating with Chinese speakers in basic Chinese language, and developing reading comprehension of Chinese. In a formal language-learning setting, students who are motivated to receive a high achievement score also value highly the acquisition of language skills. As a result, they are likely to be actively engaged in their learning to achieve their goals.

IMPLICATIONS

Condry (1987) points out that people are born with an inherent desire to learn about the world and to interact with the environment that they find interesting. Such inherent desire provides the motivating force for our learning. The findings of this study suggest that learners are curious about and motivated to learn only the world that is relevant to them. Is a foreign language naturally interesting to students, especially to those who are taking the course? How can Chinese language become a part of a world in which the students will be highly interested?

The findings of this study suggest three implications. The first concerns the foreign language requirement. Instead of requiring students to take a foreign language for certain numbers of years or courses, they should be required to reach a certain level of proficiency. The results of this study show that passivity to the foreign language itself and to the course requirements correlates little or negatively with Chinese language attainment. When students take the language to fulfill requirements, or think that the course is less demanding than other five unit courses, they are likely to be passive in their learning. Those who choose the task as a requirement are more oriented in finishing the task than being interested in the learning process of doing the task. In most universities in the United States, however, one or two years of foreign-language study is required for a degree program. Such a requirement, measured by the numbers of classes or hours taken and the amount of grammatical knowledge covered in a course, does little to motivate a student to learn the language. To maximize student learning, the language requirement should be changed to one that measures how much students can use language to communicate.

When a foreign language requirement specifies not how many credit hours are to be taken but a language proficiency level is to be attained, passivity may cease to be a relevant motivation. When the usefulness of the foreign language is emphasized, students can readily see the value of becoming proficient. Furthermore, when the language studied is one that is used by large American communities and that is important in today's economic development, the value of proficiency should become obvious. As Ramage (1990) proposed, the tradition of offering only European languages should be expanded to offer a wide range of such useful languages as Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese: that is, the languages that are currently needed in American business, diplomacy, and education.

The second motivation concerns with helping students set up clear goals of language proficiency. The findings of this study indicate that foreign language learning is a goal seeking process and the desired learning outcomes play an important role in their language attainment. When learners have goal-seeking motivation, they are intrinsically motivated to become competent in the skills that they are learning. The desire to be competent is intrinsically inherent in human beings. Such motivation explains the reason why children must acquire their first language to the extent that their language must be identical to the adult language (Gleason, Hay and Cain 1989). White (1959) noted that the intrinsic need to become competent to reach one's goal is an innate characteristic of human beings. Learning a foreign language will be intrinsically motivated if learners are engaged in goal-seeking and self-controlled processes.

The third implication is to help students develop an appropriate and realistic expectation in learning. The results of this study suggest that appropriate and

realistic expectations of the learning task and of one's own ability play an important role in starting and continuing to learn Chinese. The expectations of self and of learning outcomes interact with motivation. When students believe that they are able to make differences in their learning, they actively exert effort in pursuit of their goals. It is primarily important for teachers to help students develop their goals, a realistic expectation of the learning process. Teachers should create an encouraging and flexible learning environment where students can reflect on their expectations of their learning, and develop a strong sense of self-efficacy. Strategies that can encourage students to put effort in learning, and to develop a sense of success and self-control should be encouraged. Much research has been done in this area (Omaggio Hadley 1993; Scarcella and Oxford 1992). For example, teachers can use simulations and games to promote students' interest and put grammar in action for awareness activities (Frank and Rinvoluceri 1983) to enhance the effectiveness of a successful experience of learning.

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